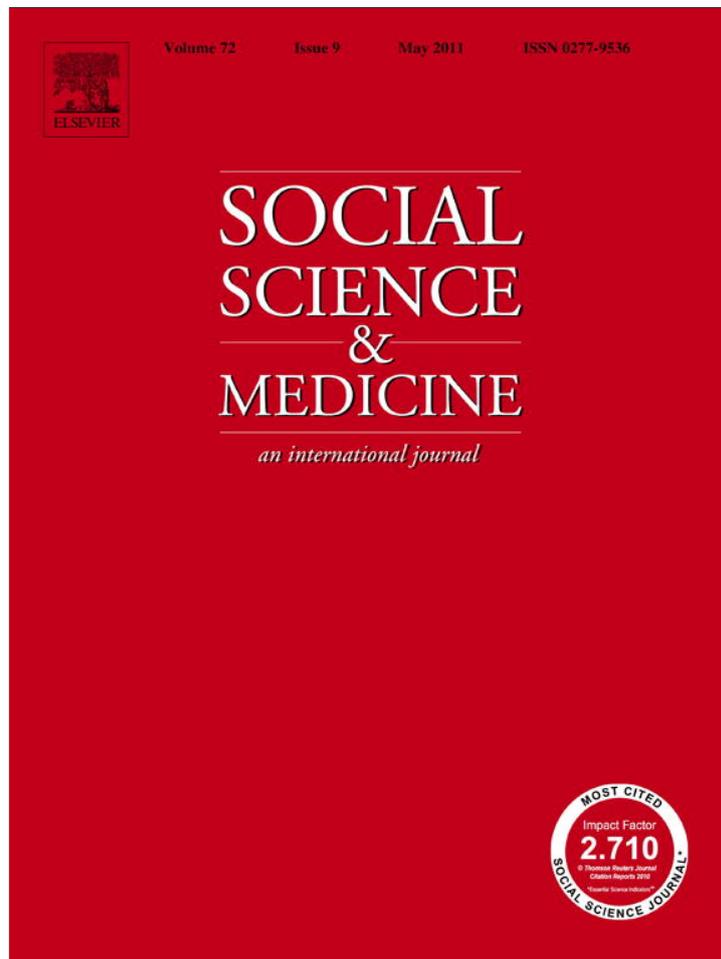


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## Adolescent men's attitudes and decision-making in relation to an unplanned pregnancy. Responses to an interactive video drama

Maria Lohan <sup>a,\*</sup>, Sharon Cruise <sup>a</sup>, Peter O'Halloran <sup>a</sup>, Fiona Alderdice <sup>a</sup>, Abbey Hyde <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast, 10 Malone Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT9 5BN, United Kingdom

<sup>b</sup> School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems, University College Dublin, Ireland

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### ABSTRACT

This study confronts a gender bias in research on adolescent pregnancy by exploring adolescent men's decisions relating to a hypothetical unplanned pregnancy. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with adolescent men ( $N = 360$ ) aged between 14 and 18 years attending schools in the Republic of Ireland. The study, the first of its kind in Europe, extends the small body of evidence on adolescent men and pregnancy decision-making by developing and examining reactions to an interactive video drama used in a comparable study in Australia. In addition, we tested a more comprehensive range of sociological and psychological determinants of adolescent men's decisions regarding an unplanned pregnancy. Results showed that adolescent men were more likely to choose to keep the baby in preference to abortion or adoption. Adolescent men's choice to continue the pregnancy (keep or adopt) in preference to abortion was significantly associated with anticipated feelings of regret in relation to abortion, perceived positive attitudes of own mother to keeping the baby and a feeling that a part of them might want a baby. Religiosity was also shown to underlie adolescent men's views on the perceived consequences of an abortion in their lives.

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### Introduction

Understanding adolescent pregnancy has been a key focus in scientific research and public policy priorities across western developed nations for almost three decades. What is clear, however, in all of this immense research is the relative absence of research in relation to *adolescent men* and adolescent pregnancy and, particularly, in relation to adolescent men's involvement in pregnancy resolution decisions. The aim of this study was to explore adolescent men's decisions in relation to resolving a hypothetical unplanned pregnancy in their lives and to deepen understanding of the psychological and sociological determinants of their hypothetical decisions. A greater understanding of adolescent men's views on adolescent pregnancy and pregnancy resolution would re-frame adolescent pregnancy as an issue for adolescent men as well as adolescent women and would inform gender inclusive pregnancy prevention and counselling programmes (Lohan, Cruise, O'Halloran, Alderdice, & Hyde, 2010).

The social context of the study is noteworthy. In the Republic of Ireland, it is illegal to have an abortion except where there is a real

and substantial risk to the life (as distinct from the health) of the mother. Women living in Ireland who decide on abortion/termination as a resolution to pregnancy travel outside of the country (usually to Great Britain) to clinics or hospitals offering such services (Layte et al., 2006). The pregnancy rate for under twenty-year olds was 26.1 per thousand in 1980 and has steadily declined to 19.8 in 2009. The rate of abortion has not similarly dropped over time. In 1980, the rate of abortion was 3.1 per thousand rising to a peak of 6.0 in 2001 while falling back to 3.5 in 2009 (M. O'Brien, Crisis Pregnancy Programme (CPP) personal communication, November 12th, 2010). There is no evidence to suggest a trend of illegal abortion. Ireland's proximity to the UK and the accessibility of its abortion services may have prevented a trend in illegal abortions occurring in Ireland. In 2009, the Irish Customs Authority, working in partnership with the Irish Medicine's Board, detected 62 cases (or packages) of importation of abortion-inducing substances. While purchasing abortion pills *may* develop as a trend into the future, at present the numbers are very low (M. O'Brien, CPP, personal communication, 8th December, 2010).

A systematic review of the extant literature on adolescent men and pregnancy resolution (Lohan et al., 2010) suggests that, in common with the study reported here, two previous studies used a role-play or vignette, combined with a questionnaire, to probe adolescent men's hypothetical decisions and decision-making

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 2890299441.  
E-mail address: [m.lohan@qub.ac.uk](mailto:m.lohan@qub.ac.uk) (M. Lohan).

processes. In a US-based study that presented adolescent men with a hypothetical scenario of an unplanned pregnancy in an ongoing relationship, adolescent men were more likely to choose to keep the baby and least likely to choose abortion (Marsiglio, 1988; 1989; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990). In a similar Australian study, adolescent men were somewhat more likely to choose abortion (39%) over 'keep the baby' (30%) or 'leave it up to her' (30.9%) (Condon, Corkindale, Russell, & Quinlivan, 2006). There is also a small body of literature that describes accounts of adolescent men's actual pregnancy decision-making experiences (Buston, 2010; Cater & Coleman, 2006; Holmberg & Wahlberg, 2000; Redmond, 1985; Vaz, Smolen, & Miller, 1983). Beyond these studies, there is a larger body of literature on adolescent men's attitudes to abortion, with particular reference to men's right to be involved in pregnancy termination decision-making. This literature has been almost exclusively conducted in the United States (hereafter US) (Bogges & Bradner, 2000; Ku, Sonenstein, & Lindberg, 1998; Marsiglio & Shehan, 1993) (for exceptions see Agostino & Wahlberg, 1991; Hooke, Capewell, & Whyte, 2000) and, in particular, amongst small and convenience samples of college men in the US (Coleman & Nelson, 1999; Esposito & Basow, 1995; Jones, 2006; Nelson, Coleman, & Swager, 1997; Ryan & Dunn, 1983). We begin by elaborating our hypotheses in the context of the current literature relating to adolescent men.

## Background literature

Explanations of adolescent men's attitudes to an adolescent pregnancy and pregnancy outcome choices are principally derived from a social constructivist model of human actions, incorporating variables that reflect adolescent men's social context (such as social class) and underlying values (such as religiosity). We refer to these as distal variables. In addition, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen & Madden, 1986) suggests that a person's attitudes towards a behaviour (especially the perceived outcomes of the behaviour), and their perception of what significant others would want them to do (subjective norms), influence their behavioural intention and behaviour. We refer to these attitudinal and subjective norm variables as proximal variables because, relative to distal variables, they tend to be specific immediate precursors of the behaviour – more proximate to the outcome (Carvajal & Granillo, 2006).

Three particular distal explanations of adolescent men's attitudes to pregnancy resolution choices stand out in the literature: religiosity, socio-economic status and masculinity, with the evidence for an association between religiosity and pregnancy resolution choices being the strongest. In the US and Europe, those with higher religiosity and/or less liberal moral attitudes are more likely to be anti-abortion (Agostino & Wahlberg, 1991; Bogges & Bradner, 2000; Bryan & Freed, 1993; Esposito & Basow, 1995; Layte et al., 2006; Marsiglio & Shehan, 1993; Misra & Hohman, 2000; Ryan & Dunn, 1983). In relation to socio-economic status, adolescents from poorer families tend to view an adolescent pregnancy somewhat more favourably than adolescents from more affluent backgrounds (AGI, 2002; Layte et al., 2006; Marsiglio, 1993; Rosengard, Phipps, Adler, & Ellen, 2005). Concomitantly, adolescents of parents from the lower socio-economic groups are less likely to approve of abortion as a resolution to an adolescent pregnancy (Marsiglio, 1989; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990; Marsiglio & Shehan, 1993). In relation to masculinity, whilst some studies suggested that getting a girl pregnant is a means for some adolescent men to express or validate their masculine identity (Kegler, Bird, Kyle-Moon, & Rodine, 2001; Marsiglio, 1993; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993), only one study has directly looked at the relationship between masculinity ideology and pregnancy

resolution decisions. An Australian study (Condon et al., 2006) found that those male respondents who opted for the continuation of a hypothetical pregnancy were characterised by 'low masculinity', defined in terms of the Male Role Norms Inventory (Thompson & Pleck, 1986).

Two additional explanations namely idealisation of pregnancy and parenthood and self-esteem were tested in Australian research (Condon et al., 2006; Corkindale, Condon, Russell, & Quinlivan, 2009). Within the context of a hypothetical pregnancy/relationship scenario, respondents who opted for continuation of the pregnancy were characterised by high idealisation of parenthood (Condon et al., 2006). Similarly, respondents who opted for continuation of the hypothetical pregnancy had lower self-esteem.

Arising from the current literature, we hypothesise that adolescent men's support for abortion instead of continuation of the pregnancy (keep the baby or adoption) is associated with five social context (distal) variables, as follows: Lower levels of religiosity, Higher socio-economic status of parents, Higher stereotypical masculine beliefs, Lower idealisation of pregnancy and parenthood, and Higher self-esteem.

We turn now to the proximal variables and, specifically, to the influence of adolescent men's attitudes and subjective norms. Results from the US and Australian studies show that males' pregnancy resolution choice in the event of an unplanned adolescent pregnancy is significantly related to their personal beliefs about the consequences of the pregnancy outcomes choices (abortion; keep the baby) (Corkindale et al., 2009; Marsiglio, 1989; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990). In addition, adolescent men's perceptions of how significant others (parents and best friend) would expect them to behave predicted their pregnancy outcome choice (Marsiglio, 1989; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990). The influence of parents was not tested in the Australian study. However, the finding in the US research that perception of parental attitudes was significantly related to adolescent men's pregnancy resolution choice is consistent with research on the predictors of adolescent women's choices (Brazzell & Acock, 1988; Cooksey, 1990; Henshaw & Kost, 1992), or indirectly related to adolescent women's choices (Evans, 2001). Thus, we further hypothesise that adolescent men's support for abortion instead of continuation of the pregnancy (keep the baby or adoption) is associated with two sets of proximal variables, namely, Perceived favourable parental attitudes to abortion and Favourable respondent attitudes to the consequences of abortion.

## Methods

### Research design

The data come from a cross-sectional survey of adolescent men attending secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland between September 2008 and September 2009. The study was approved by the School of Nursing and Midwifery Research Ethics Committee at Queen's University Belfast.

### Participants

We divided the country into four regions of equal size. Within each region, we wished to recruit schools that represented variation in terms of the following criteria: socio-economic advantage/disadvantage, urban/rural, religious/nonreligious, single or mixed sex. Sixty-two schools were randomly selected and approached. Of these, 13 agreed to participate. The overall response rate of 21% is similar to the Australian study (Condon et al., 2006) and participating schools did not show a particular demographic bias. We do not claim the sample to be representative of adolescent boys in Ireland. However, the participating schools represent a broad

spectrum of schools across the stratification criteria (see Table 1). Reasons cited by school managers for not participating were: lack of time and lack of resources, timetable difficulties, that their mixed sex class/school structure was problematic for the participation of boys only, and lack of computer facilities.

Within the participating schools, a total of 569 participants were identified by teachers as eligible to take part in the research by virtue of being in particular grade years and classes. Of these, 360 participated, giving a response rate within the schools of 63 percent. The non-response rate is broken down as follows. Of the total number of participants identified and invited to participate in the research, a small percentage (7%) did not receive parental consent. An even smaller percentage (2%) of the sample opted themselves out. The remaining non-participants (27.8%) were absent for the administration of questionnaire one and/or participation in the IVD. The achieved sample size is similar to comparable studies in the US ( $N = 325$ ) (Marsiglio, 1988) and Australia ( $N = 386$ ) (Condon et al., 2006). The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are described further below under Results.

### Video materials

Drawing on an earlier interactive video drama developed for research on adolescent men and hypothetical pregnancy decision-making in Australia (Condon et al., 2006), we developed a computer based interactive video drama (IVD) for this study. Through a film drama entitled 'If I were Jack', we told the story of a week in the life of a young man whose girlfriend has just told him that she is unexpectedly pregnant. An excerpt of this film drama may be viewed on the following website: [www.mediator.qub.ac.uk/ms/streams/Compilation\\_384K\\_Stream.wmv](http://www.mediator.qub.ac.uk/ms/streams/Compilation_384K_Stream.wmv).

Our primary motivation for the use of drama was to enhance the research participants' identification with the lead character and his cultural context. The process involved adapting the Australian script based on insights drawn from previous Irish research (Hyde & Howlett, 2004), consultations with our advisory group (comprised of sexual health practitioners and expert educationalists), and with young people in drama groups who conducted script readings for us. The film was produced using Irish actors in Irish settings and pilot tested prior to the commencement of data collection.

The IVD is approximately 25 min long and was designed to be watched by adolescent men individually, at their own computers, listening to the dialogue through headphones. In common with previous comparable research (Condon et al., 2006; Marsiglio, 1988, 1989; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990) the context is an ongoing relationship. The young woman seeking the abortion would travel to England for a legal abortion in a private clinic, which is the

dominant pattern of abortion for young women in Ireland. At crucial stages in the story, as Jack imagines talking to his friends and family or meets his partner in the park, each participant answers questions displayed on the monitor on how he thinks he would feel and act: "If I were Jack..." Finally, participants must decide whether he supports the continuation of the hypothetical pregnancy (keeping the baby or adoption), or supports the termination of the pregnancy. This hypothetical decision is made by the young man on his own. In this sense, his decision is not negotiated between himself and his girlfriend, which we anticipate would be subsequent to that point. The script at this stage says, "I don't know what she will decide but here is what I think." The responses to these questions were automatically saved to the computer programme. A paper and pencil questionnaire was given ahead of the video to assess predictor distal and proximal variables.

Answers to questions concerning self-involvement in the video indicated that respondents were engaged: 72% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the video 'got me involved in Jack's situation'; 85% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it 'helped me understand the effect an unplanned pregnancy would have on a guy like me'.

### Measures

#### Distal measures

**Religiosity.** The following single item was used: 'How important would you say religion is to you? Is it: very important, fairly important, fairly unimportant or very unimportant'. Religious importance was considered more representative of an intrinsic (or personal) religious orientation, in comparison to attendance, which reflects an external religious orientation.

**Parents' socio-economic status.** Responses to the following current UK's official National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) questions were used: 'Please indicate which best describes the sort of work your father does (if he is not working outside the home now please tell me what he did in his last job) a/professional or higher technical work, b/manager or senior administrator, c/clerkical, d/sales or services, e/small business owner, f/foreman or supervisor of other workers, g/skilled manual work, h/semi-skilled or unskilled manual work, f/other, g/never worked, h/not applicable'. The same question was asked about the mother.

**Educational aspirations of adolescents.** Responses to 'What do you think you will be doing when you leave school? were coded as 1/Doing a university degree or equivalent, 2/Doing a diploma or certificate, 3/On a training scheme/apprenticeship, 4/Unemployed, 5/Other, please specify'. A dichotomous university versus other variable was generated.

**Masculinity – The Male Role Attitudes Scale (MRAS: Pleck et al., 1993).** The scale tests the extent to which participants identify with cultural notions of masculinity – culturally derived beliefs and expectations about what men are like and should do. Participants responded to the 8 items using a four-point Likert response format from 'strongly agree' [4] to 'strongly disagree' [1]. Scores can range from 8 to 32, with higher scores representing higher levels of male role attitude. Items include: 'I admire a guy who is totally sure of himself' and 'It bothers me when a boy acts like a girl'. The Male Role Attitudes Scale achieved an alpha coefficient of reliability of 0.65 in the present study.

**Idealisation of Pregnancy and Parenthood Scale (IPPS: Condon, Donovan, & Corkindale, 2000).** The scale contains two subscales: the Pregnancy subscale, which consists of 10 items (e.g., 'Pregnancy

**Table 1**  
Breakdown of school types by socio-economic status, location, religious status, and gender.

1	Advan	Rural	Catholic	Mixed sex
2	Advan	Semi-urban	Catholic	Single sex
3	Advan	Semi-urban	Catholic	Mixed sex
4	Advan	Semi-urban	Catholic	Mixed sex
5	Advan	Urban	Interdenominational	Mixed sex
6	Advan	Urban	Interdenominational	Mixed sex
7	Advan	Urban	Interdenominational	Mixed sex
8	Advan	Urban	Interdenominational	Mixed sex
9	Disadv	Rural	Church of Ireland	Mixed sex
10	Disadv	Rural	Interdenominational	Mixed sex
11	Disadv	Semi-urban	Catholic	Mixed sex
12	Disadv	Urban	Interdenominational	Mixed sex
13	Disadv	Urban	Interdenominational	Mixed sex

is one of the happiest times in most women's lives'), and the Parenthood subscale, which consists of 11 items (e.g., 'Parenting is almost always enjoyable'). Participants respond using a five-point Likert format of 'strongly agree' [5] 'to 'strongly disagree' [1]. Scores can range from 10 to 50 for the Pregnancy subscale, and 11 to 55 for the Parenthood subscale, with higher scores in each subscale representing greater levels of idealisation of pregnancy and parenthood. The Idealisation of Pregnancy and Parenthood scales achieved an alpha coefficient of 0.65 for both scales in the present study. This is approaching 0.7 which is considered by Kline (2000) to be the minimum cut-off for establishing internal consistency/reliability.

#### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES: Rosenberg, 1965)

The widely used 10-item self-esteem scale was used. Scores can range from 10 to 40, with higher scores representing higher levels of self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale achieved an alpha coefficient of 0.80 in the present study.

#### Proximal measures

*Adolescent males' perceptions of the consequences of abortion.* Respondents were presented with a list of advantageous and disadvantageous consequences of abortion and were asked to use a dichotomous response format of 'important' or 'not important' for each of them (see Table 2). The actual phrases for these responses and those of the perceived parental attitudes (below) were originally drawn from focus group interviews with adolescents in Australia in relation to an unplanned pregnancy (Condon et al., 2006). These responses were also extended and validated through our discussions with adolescents and our advisory board in Ireland in the pre-production stage of the filmed drama.

*Mother positive (to keeping the baby).* Responses to the following items were used. 'What would my mother say [to the hypothetical situation of my girlfriend becoming pregnant]? a/Fantastic, I always wanted to be a granny, b/she's ruined your life, c/the best thing she can do is have an abortion, d/you'll have to have the baby, e/what are people going to think about us, f/you're a stupid idiot you've really messed up.' We created a 'mother's perception variable'. Categories a and d were coded as 'mothers who are perceived to be positively disposed to keeping the baby' and the rest as mothers who are not.

*Father positive (to keeping the baby).* Responses to the following items were used. 'What would my father say [to the hypothetical situation of my girlfriend becoming pregnant]? a/it's alright son

we'll stick by you, b/she's not living here that's for sure, c/well it's your problem Jack, you're a man now, d/you're going to have to get married, e/after all we've done for you this is how you repay us f/ Get out of this house, I don't want to see you again.' Category a/was coded as positive and the remainder were coded as negative. Different measures for mother and father were used because, based on our research and that of Condon et al. (2006) as noted above, the reactions of mothers and fathers were not gender neutral.

#### Data analysis

The factors influencing adolescent men's hypothetical decision to discontinue (abortion) versus continue the pregnancy (keep the baby and place for adoption) were analysed using a random effects logistic regression model allowing for between school variation (using Stata 11 and the 'cluster' option). All of the scales were recalibrated to run from 0 to 1 and transformed into median split variables to make coefficients in the subsequent regression analyses comparable.

## Results

#### Descriptive analysis

The socio-demographic profile of the sample suggests a reasonable cross-section of the adolescent male population in high schools in Ireland. The modal age of participants was 15 years and most participants (75.3%) were aged 15 or 16 years old. In relation to social class, 43% were of professional and managerial classes (work that requires degree level qualifications) and 57% were from lower middle class, skilled and unskilled working class and other (including never worked). In relation to religiosity, 60% of the sample stated religion was either very important or fairly important. The ethnic and religious homogeneity of the sample (87% white, 76% Catholic) is broadly reflective of the population of Ireland: 87% of the population identify as white Irish and Catholic (CSO, 2006).

In relation to the descriptive statistics of the scaled variables, the mean scores prior to calibration were as follows: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale – 30.37 (SD 4.20); the Male Role Attitudes Scale – 17.74 (SD 2.99); the Idealisation of Pregnancy Scale – 30.48 (SD 4.57) and Idealisation of Parenthood Scale – 32.25 (SD 5.36).

#### Explanatory analysis

Almost half (46.7%) of the adolescent men chose 'to keep the baby'. 'Abortion' was the next most preferred choice (18.9%), closely followed by 'leave it up to her' (18.3%), with 'adoption' being the least preferred option (16.1%) of the sample.

Model 1 tests the distal hypotheses (idealisation of pregnancy and parenthood, self-esteem, religiosity, masculinity and socio-economic status) as explanations of adolescent men's decision to choose abortion over continuation of the pregnancy (see Table 3). Respondents with high religiosity were over twice as likely as respondents with low religiosity to opt to continue the pregnancy rather than choose abortion (odds ratio 0.42,  $p = 0.000$ ). No statistically significant relationship emerged at the bivariate or multivariate level between educational aspiration (university versus other) and outcome choice. Fifty-three percent of the sample aspired to university, while 47 percent opted for a lower educational level or 'other' option. A dichotomous university versus other variable was generated. Overall, we conclude that the model testing the distal hypotheses is a weak one. The distal predictor variables, as a whole, accounted for a relatively small amount of variance in adolescent men's pregnancy outcome decisions (pseudo  $r^2 = 5\%$ ).

**Table 2**  
Adolescent male attitudes to the consequences of abortion.

	Important to me	
	N	%
What are the <i>good</i> things for me about going ahead with abortion?		
I can forget this ever happened.	194	53.9
I can finish school.	219	60.6
It won't upset the family and no one need know.	209	58.1
I can avoid being a really young parent.	243	67.5
I'm free to split with girlfriend if I want to.	131	36.4
No child of mine will grow up disadvantaged.	282	78.3
What are the <i>bad</i> things for me about going ahead with abortion?		
It's physically risky for girlfriend	319	88.6
There's a bit of me actually wants a baby.	256	71.1
It's morally wrong.	215	59.7
You can't change your mind afterwards.	267	74.2
I'd regret it for the rest of my life.	257	71.4
I feel it's risky mentally for girlfriend to go through with.	309	85.8

**Table 3**  
Predicting the choice of abortion rather than continuation of pregnancy using logistic regression (odds ratios, p values and confidence intervals in parenthesis)

Distal variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	OR	P	OR	P	OR	P	OR	P	OR	P	OR	p	OR	P
Pro-pregnancy group	1.03	0.909												
	(0.580 – 1.844)													
Pro-parent group	0.61	0.188												
	(0.292 – 1.274)													
High self-esteem group	1.44	0.300												
	(0.722 – 2.872)													
High masculinity group	1.62	0.248												
	(0.713 – 3.695)													
Stronger religiosity group	0.42	0.002							0.65	0.317			0.70	0.455
	(0.239 – 0.730)								(0.278 – 1.515)				(0.276 – 1.781)	
Professional/managerial (=ref category)														
Clerical/sales	0.83	0.655												
	(0.367 – 1.876)													
Manual	1.24	0.464												
	(0.694 – 2.225)													
Other	0.50	0.365												
	(0.112 – 2.241)													
<b>Advantageous consequences of abortion</b>														
Forget it happened			2.39	0.031			2.90	0.015	2.90	0.016			1.83	0.217
			(1.083 – 5.251)				(1.23 – 6.82)		(1.219 – 6.886)				(0.700 – 4.789)	
Finish school			1.02	0.922										
			(0.639 – 1.634)											
Not upset family			0.95	0.877										
			(0.496 – 1.818)											
Avoid parenthood			3.58	0.020			3.42	0.021	3.13	0.038			2.80	0.116
			(1.222 – 10.499)				(1.206 – 9.709)		(1.068 – 9.145)				(0.776 – 10.07)	
Can split with girl			1.51	0.178										
			(0.828 – 2.762)											
Child will not be poor			1.45	0.383										
			(0.631 – 3.323)											
<b>Disadvantageous consequences of abortion</b>														
Physically risky for girl					1.26	0.776								
					(0.263 – 5.983)									
Want a baby			0.31	0.002	0.33	0.008	0.34	0.017					0.40	0.039
			(0.149 – 0.649)		(0.141 – 0.750)		(0.137 – 0.820)						(0.167 – 0.953)	
Morally wrong			0.53	0.000	0.45	0.000	0.48	0.000					0.52	0.009
			(0.374 – 0.746)		(0.315 – 0.637)		(0.340 – 0.689)						(0.314 – 0.848)	
Can't change mind			0.70	0.149										
			(0.432 – 1.36)											
Would regret it			0.24	0.000	0.22	0.000	0.22	0.000					0.18	0.000
			(0.145 – 0.404)		(0.126 – 0.380)		(0.120 – 0.398)						(0.091 – 0.342)	
Mentally risky for girl			0.87	0.792										
			(0.302 – 2.495)											
<b>Perceived parental attitudes to keeping baby</b>														
Mother positive										0.12	0.000	0.17	0.000	
										(0.055 – 0.261)		(0.085 – 0.323)		
Father positive										1.00	0.991			
										(0.523 – 1.928)				
<b>Control for age</b>														
Age of respondent	0.88	0.453	1.03	0.856	0.77	0.025	0.80	0.046	0.82	0.135	0.80	0.182	0.73	0.042
	(0.631 – 2.228)		(0.758 – 1.396)		(0.605 – 0.966)		(0.635 – 0.996)		(0.625 – 1.065)		(0.578 – 1.109)		(0.544 – 0.989)	
N		258		291		291		291		287		291		287
Pseudo R-Square	0.05		0.11		0.23		0.30		0.31		0.15		0.37	

Note: Analysis clustered by school

We turn our attention now to the proximal hypotheses. In Model 2, adolescent men were significantly more likely to choose abortion over continuation of the pregnancy if they rated as important to them the following perceived advantages of abortion: being able 'to forget this ever happened' and being able 'to avoid early parenthood'. In Model 3, adolescent men were significantly more likely to choose to continue the pregnancy rather than abortion if they rated as important to them the following disadvantages of abortion: 'I'd regret it for the rest of my life', it is 'morally wrong' and 'There's a bit of me that actually wants a baby' (see Table 3). In Model 4, the significant predictors from Models 2 and 3 were included. All five predictors remained significant, with

'regret' being the strongest predictor (odds ratio 0.22,  $p = 0.000$ ) (see Table 3). Thus, we conclude that the findings support the hypothesis that adolescent men's support for abortion was associated with adolescent men's perceptions of the favourable consequences of an abortion. In Model 5, we re-ran Model 4 but also included the religiosity variable to ascertain whether the significance of the religiosity variable may be accounted for by the proximal variables in Model 4. We found that the religiosity variable was no longer significant. This suggests, following Baron and Kenny's (1986) analysis of mediation effects, that these attitudes in relation to the consequences of abortion mediated the impact of religiosity on the outcome choice. Further investigation revealed

that, of the five 'consequences' variables in question, it was particularly the 'want a baby', 'morally wrong' and 'regret' variables that accounted for the impact of religiosity.

In Model 6, we focused on the second group of proximal predictors: parental attitudes to keeping the baby. The results showed that adolescent men were more likely to choose to continue the pregnancy if they perceived that their mother would be in favour of keeping the baby (odds ratio of 0.12,  $p = 0.000$ ). By contrast, the father's attitudes were not significantly associated with adolescent men's choices. Looking at the proximal hypotheses in combination (Models 2–6), we conclude that the findings support both hypotheses that perceived favourable parental attitudes to abortion (mother only), and favourable respondent attitudes in relation to the consequences of abortion were associated with choosing abortion over continuation of the pregnancy.

In Model 7, we specified a final logistic regression to incorporate only the significant predictors – both distal and proximal – of adolescent men's decision-making from Models 1 to 6 in order to see if they remained significant whilst controlling for each other (see Table 3). Religiosity was included as a control variable. In this final model, the issue of potential regret in relation to having an abortion and their perceived mother's positive attitudes to keeping the baby emerged as particularly strong predictors of not choosing an abortion. Adolescent men who said that they would regret were six times more likely to choose to continue the pregnancy, compared to adolescents who would not regret. Adolescent men who perceived that their mothers would be positive to keeping the baby were six times more likely to choose to continue the pregnancy compared to adolescent men who perceived their mothers were not positive. The combination of the significant proximal and distal variables explained a substantial amount of the variance in adolescent men's choices of abortion versus continuation of the pregnancy (pseudo  $r^2 = 37\%$ ).

The results for an alternative model of abortion versus keep the baby (without adoption) are similar. The same seven step modelling approach was used and a final model included religiosity, 'forget' 'avoid' 'want' 'regret' and mother positive and resulted in a pseudo  $r^2$  of 0.52 compared to the 0.37 reported in Table 3 above. A further analysis of the main predictors of adolescent men's hypothetical choices in relation to 'keep the baby versus adoption' is also available from the corresponding author on request.

## Discussion

The results of our study suggest that the choice to keep the baby is the preferred choice – almost half (46.7%) of adolescent men would choose to keep the baby. Abortion was the next most preferred choice (18.9%). Thus, these Irish male adolescents show similar pregnancy outcome choices to the comparable US study (Marsiglio, 1989; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990), but were much less likely to choose abortion than respondents in the Australian study (Condon et al., 2006).

How might we explain adolescent men's decisions? In the first instance, our research has been able to validate previously identified explanations in the Australian and US research (Corkindale et al., 2009; Marsiglio & Menaghan, 1990). In particular, it reinforces the saliency of components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Abraham, Henderson, & Der, 2004) in explaining the preference for continuing the pregnancy, namely: anticipated feelings of regret in relation to abortion; positive own mother attitudes to keeping the baby and a feeling that a part of them might want a baby.

In addition, our analysis extends understanding of the gender dynamics in relation to the influence of parents. The results show that it was the predicted mother's reaction to the news of the

unplanned pregnancy, rather than the father's that was influential on adolescent men's decision-making. This finding is also consistent with broader research that demonstrates the primary role of mothers in communicating with their adolescent and pre-adolescent children in relation to relationships and sexuality (Hutchinson, 2002; Hyde et al., 2010; Schubotz, Simpson, & Rolston, 2002; Sprecher, Harris, & Meyers, 2008; Walker, 2001). Thus, it will be important to include this parental distinction in future studies of adolescent men and pregnancy/pregnancy decision-making.

The results also show that, of the social context (distal) variables, religiosity was the strongest predictor of adolescent men's choices. At an international level, the finding is consistent with a number of studies that have shown that religiosity is associated with adolescents' attitudes (more generally) to abortion in the US and Europe as identified earlier. However, the relative importance of religiosity in relation to the other important social context variables is probably best understood with reference to the national context of Ireland. Although Ireland is becoming an increasingly secularized society (Cassidy, 2002), research also suggests that religiosity amongst young people in Ireland remains high relative to their European peers (Lewis, Cruise, Fearn, & McGuckin, 2006; Ziebertz & Kay, 2006). The abortion question itself has been the most highly politicised health and social care issue in recent decades in Ireland as evidenced by two referenda during the 1990s. A hegemonic discourse that fused religiosity and morality with a sense of nationhood (Irishness) emerged in the public debates surrounding these referenda endorsing the continuation of an effective ban on abortion in Ireland (Smyth, 2005) as noted above.

The non-significance of class in predicting adolescent men's choices is surprising. In cognizance of criticisms of parental and occupationally based measures of social class in relation to adolescents (Currie et al., 2008), an additional measure of educational aspirations was used but this further independent measure of 'predictive' social class was also not significant. Whilst this result runs counter to our hypothesis and is worthy of further investigation, our finding is consistent with broader research on 'equalisation' which suggests that social class demonstrates an uncertain relationship with health behaviours such as smoking (Currie et al., 2008) and sexual risk taking (Henderson et al., 2002) as well as broader health outcomes during adolescence (West & Sweeting, 2004). It is thought that this equalisation can occur when differences associated with age (the school, peer group, or youth culture) cut across those associated with class (the family, home background and neighbourhood), the net effect of which is to reduce, remove or even reverse social class differences during adolescence (West & Sweeting, 2004).

This study developed a culturally specific IVD and, relative to previous research, has tested a broader range of sociological and psychological factors in relation to adolescent men's hypothetical pregnancy resolution choices. The study thus offers a richer understanding of adolescent men's thought processes on how they might resolve – or plan to resolve – an unplanned pregnancy during their adolescent lives. By focussing on adolescent men, the study challenges the gender bias in research on adolescent pregnancy and invites men to be regarded as agents and partners in reproduction.

## Limitations

The hypothetical nature of our data does not permit us to draw conclusions about adolescent men's actual experiences of an unplanned pregnancy or the negotiated process of pregnancy decision-making. Further limitations are that we did not differentiate in our analysis those who were sexually active and those who

were not, those who had experienced an unintended pregnancy and those who had not and between those who identify as heterosexual and those who do not (we perceived that the inclusion of these questions would have increased refusals to participate by schools). In addition, we did not have a measure of peer influences on the decision-making process to include in the analysis. Our failure to find a significant association between some of the predictor variables, notably the idealisation of pregnancy and parenthood scales and the masculinity scale, may be due to the fact that these measures have somewhat weak internal consistency. Further research is required to test their validity. Finally, our main theoretical concern was to distinguish between the choice to continue with the pregnancy versus abortion. Given the ambiguity of the 'leave it up to her' category in terms of this distinction, in common with previous research (Condon et al., 2006), we did not include this. However, further qualitative research might explore reasons for why adolescent men choose or choose not to become involved in their partner's pregnancy resolution decision.

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