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Exploration of the Perceived Success Factors and Barriers for Teen Mothers

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Exploration of the Perceived Success Factors and Barriers for Teen Mothers

by
Janet Marks

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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Janet Marks

Name

March 31, 2018

Date

Acknowledgments

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). I started on this educational journey at age 31. Graduating from college was a something I had dreamed of, and to see my dreams and aspirations come to life, was a pretty amazing feeling. To some it was just another graduation, but to me, it was a major milestone. I was a single mother at 15, and I had to prove to so many people I was going to complete high school. From that graduation on, I was determined that one day I was going to be Dr. Marks! Dr. Sonja Feist Price, thank you for setting the bar high and being a great supporter.

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This journey has been difficult, but with determination and faith, I know I can do anything I set my mind to.

Abstract

Exploration of the Perceived Success Factors and Barriers for Teen Mothers. Janet Marks, 2018: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: success, education attainment, resiliency, barriers, motivation parental support

In 2015, there were 229,715 babies born to teens between the ages of 15-19 years of age. Over the past few years, teen births have decreased, however the United States still has the highest rate of teen pregnancies.

There have been successful teen mothers who have completed high school and have proceeded to attend college and graduate with either a two or four-year degree. It is important to understand this study was not intended to justify research on teen pregnancy or condone teen pregnancy, but there needed to be an awareness made regarding adults who were teen mothers and how they overcame barriers after becoming a teen mother.

When a teen gives birth to a child, she is now transitioning into motherhood, and it is important to know what it takes to overcome the stigma that follows teen mothers. Teen mothers are faced with many barriers, and these barriers could be any type of difficulty that prevents teen mothers achieving their own personal success.

By collecting data through semi-structured interviews, this study provided awareness of how adult women overcame the stigma of teenage pregnancy. Each participant defined the success they had experienced in different ways. However, the focus was success, and learning how teen mothers have overcome and knocked down barriers in order to be successful is important. The intent of this research was to bring about an awareness that teen parenting programs work, and they are important to have in place for teen mothers. Although the number of teen mothers has continued to decrease, there are still teen mothers, and they should have programs available to help them reach their definition and desired goals of success.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Although the rate of teen pregnancies has steadily declined from 1991 to 2014 by an astonishing 61% (Romero et al., 2016), there are still untold stories of the teen mothers who were successful and the barriers they may have faced, and researchers have missed the mark on reporting these success stories. There is no rationale as to why the births have decreased, although some have suggested it is due to prevention programs, abstinence, or increased use of birth control. The problem was it was not known why some teen mothers are successful and why some are not. This research focused on positive outcomes for adult women who were teen mothers.

Phenomenon of interest. Even though teenage pregnancy has slowly decreased in the last decade, researchers question whether prevention programs are effective in reducing teen pregnancies (Stein, 2010). The other question is whether the teen parenting programs are effective. Research concerning success stories of women who became mothers at a young age are far and few between; therefore, the question is about which factors helped them be successful.

The results of many studies indicate that there are discrepancies regarding teenage pregnancy prevention efforts. For example, Wind (2010) found that an increase in contraceptive usage among teenagers lead to a decline in the teenage pregnancy rate in 2000. The decline in teen pregnancy occurred across all races (Wind, 2010). In 1991, condom usage among students in the United States increased by 46.2% (Santelli, Orr, Lindberg, & Diaz, 2009). Student condom use increased in 2003 to 63%, but that rate decreased to 61.5% in 2007 (Santelli, Orr, Lindberg, & Diaz, 2009). The decline in condom use among students in the United States indicated a trend reversal. Wind (2010)

emphasized that for African American teenage females, the pregnancy rate declined by 45% from 223.8 per 1,000 in 1990 to 122.7 per 1000 in 2005. Ricks (2016) reports Black and Hispanic teen births rates are “disproportionately higher than White adolescents” (p. 12). However, the teen pregnancy rate increased to 126.3 per 1000 in 2006. Among Hispanic teens, the pregnancy rate decreased by 26% from 169.7 per 1,000 in 1992 to 124.9 per 1000 in 2005, before rising to 126.6 per 1000 in 2006. Among nonHispanic white teens, the pregnancy rate declined 50% (from 86.6 per 1,000 in 1990 to 43.3 per 1,000 in 2005), before increasing to 44.0 per 1000 in 2006 (Wind, 2010).

Background and justification. The research on teen pregnancy can be alarming and, at times, casts a dark cloud over teen pregnancy. Researchers tend to focus on the negative effects of becoming a teen mom, but not the positive effects.

Teen parents who do not complete high school are at a disadvantage in the job market and are more likely to raise their children in poverty. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Pregnancy, a child born to an unmarried teen mother has a 27% chance of growing up in poverty. If the mother has not earned a high school diploma or equivalency degree, the child will grow up in poverty 64% of the time. If these numbers are correct, the steep decline in teen pregnancy rates between 1991 and 2002 kept 460,000 children out of poverty (Greenwell, 2010). Kramer and Lancaster (2010) believed teen pregnancy can be generational because although teen pregnancy does not cause these outcomes, there can be a relationship between teen pregnancy and socioeconomics.

Qualitative Research Approach

Creswell (2013) stated, “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 43). Qualitative research starts with a theoretical framework to

study problems that individuals face. The researcher gathers data and analyzes the data looking for themes. Once the data and themes have been sorted through, a final report is developed and provides solutions or possible solutions to the problems by showing proven literature. (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) explained the five qualitative approaches to inquiry: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research. To study the problem for this research, phenomenological and narrative approaches will be utilized to develop a solution to the problem at hand. Narrative research entails the collection of stories of an individual that are told to the researcher (Creswell, 2013). These stories that are shared with the researcher are experiences, and the experiences told in this research will be used to show the experiences of adult women who became mothers as teens.

Phenomenology was a large part of this research. A phenomenology study shows the similarities of the participants (Creswell, 2013). For this research, the author looked at how the participants experienced their teen motherhood to better explain and show the various themes of teen mothers.

Relevance to the Discipline

Because the researcher of this study was a teen mother and wants to help new teen mothers, it is important that the researcher know how to lead organizations that offer programs for teen mothers. It is believed that failure comes along with success because failures are learning experiences from a leadership perspective. From personal experience, the researcher has learned that the bumps in the road can be one's best learning experiences. Frederick Douglas (1857) stated,

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom,

and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. (Frederic Douglas as cited in the *Huffington Post*, 2011).

As a teen mom at the young age of fifteen, the author of this research was able to attend a program for expectant and/or teen mothers. The program was a private, nonprofit residential treatment facility that provided comprehensive services in a home-like environment to females who had been abused, neglected, abandoned, or who were experiencing pregnancy/parenting with mental health and behavioral issues. The program was a long-term facility and provided services to teenagers ages 12-17. The program also provided intensive care and support, parenting classes, prenatal and childbirth education, educational support, job skills training, independent living skills, and transitional housing assistance. Unfortunately, on November 26, 2013, the home closed due to lack of funds and a decrease in enrollment.

Most leaders are expected to be motivational, have intelligence, be trustworthy and confident, have compassion, possess self-discipline, be inspirational, and have commitment and intellectual stimulation, just to name a few. (Bass & Bass, 2008). Low (2011) defined *values* as a core belief, often what a person strongly believes in. As a leader in Of Greater Worth Than Gold, Inc., the researcher is striving to be the best leader to girls who are in need. When teens enter into motherhood, she is entering adulthood abruptly and will more than likely need support systems in place to help her along the way (Leese, 2014).

Of Greater Worth Than Gold, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that is geared towards working with young girls ages 11-17 years of age. Some of the girls with whom this organization works with are students in the local school district, and they are teens who are either pregnant or have already become a parent. Youth are matched with a caring adult volunteer who is trained to focus on positive reinforcement, trust-building, and the achievement of goals, by engaging youth in one-on-one outing and group adventures in the community. Mentors and youth agree to meet for between 8-10 hours per month for a full year.

Of Greater Worth Than Gold, Inc. offers youth, who have already been identified as at-risk, an opportunity to work with a caring mentor to improve their ability to develop a positive attitude towards their future. The long-term goal of Of Greater Worth Than Gold, Inc. is to empower the young person to break the habits that are leading to trouble in school and in the streets. This organization also wants to focus on life skills.

Additional goals of OGWTG include establishing a strong network of support with family and the school systems, launching a series of fundraising activities that will successfully fund the expanding program, establishing an effective training program for mentors who will increase their ability to be successful communicators, and establishing an effective monitoring system to protect both the youth and the mentor.

The Research Problem

Teen parenting magnifies psychological, economic, and social problems for teen mothers and their children. Without social support from families, peers, and/or school counselors, teen mothers are likely to drop out of school. As teen dropout rates increase, so do the poverty rates of these teens (NCSL, 2016). Teen births are also associated with lower income due to the lack of completing high school. Many teen mothers become

dependent on welfare such as food stamps and Temporary Assistance (TANF).

Transportation could be a barrier to these services, especially in the case of a teen who is already experiencing poverty. Not having transportation could prevent a teen from attending school and not being able to take her child to daycare. If a school would offer onsite daycare, it might be more feasible for teenage mothers to attend high school (Sadler et al., 2007).

For teen mothers who worry about day care for their children, school-based programs help out tremendously by offering onsite day care for their children. Onsite day care provides a sense of security knowing that their child is in a safe environment and are not too far from the parent (Mollborn, 2007).

Some researchers reported that becoming a mother as a teen has made a positive change in some young mothers' lives. However, the media and other reports continue to state the obvious; which is, teen mothers tend to drop out of school and depend on welfare. Smith, Gilmer, Salge, Dickerson, and Wilson (2013) conducted a qualitative study of adolescent mothers participating in the Mama Club. These researchers suggested that support programs should be put in place right after birth (Smith et al., 2013). Support systems within the teen mother's family are also important factors in the success of being a teen parent. Social support tends to be more accepting from their mates and mothers versus community social support such as nurse practitioners, social workers, and or school counselors.

Teen parents are not always prepared for parenting; therefore, they tend to lack parental skill development. Poor teen parenting amplifies psychological, economic, and social problems for teenage mothers and their children. Lack of parenting skills and low educational attainment may lead to a need for programs that will assist teen mothers with

adjusting to balancing school, motherhood, and work (Sadler et al., 2007). Parents with limited parenting skills often have difficulty providing for their children and require assistance with parenting skills to be able to keep their children in the home.

Deficiencies in the evidence. Although there is a great deal of research on how to prevent pregnancies and the negative aspects of teen pregnancies, there is very little research on the successful outcomes of teen mothers as adults. Researchers have contributed educational attainment or lack of educational attainment to teen pregnancy; however, as SmithBattle (2007) stated, “Relationship is increasingly challenged by quantitative and qualitative evidence” (p. 349). There are gaps in the evidence, such as teen mothers’ perspectives and the professional outlook for teen mothers and how organizations can better serve this population (SmithBattle, 2007).

Audience. Creswell (2015) stated the audience for research can be teachers, administrators, parents, or students (p. 10). The audience can be anyone who can benefit from the research and findings. For the purpose for this research, the audience will be academic researchers, teen mothers, parents of teen mothers, and educators.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this research:

Academic attainment. Refers to high school graduation. Teen pregnancy and high school education has been compromised for many reasons (Mollborn, 2010).

Success. Success refers to the accomplishment of an aim or purpose (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

Barriers. This term refers to “a natural formation or structure that prevents or hinders movement or action” (Merriam-Webster, 2016)

Motivation. This term refers to energy or an aspiration that moves a person in a

positive direction or in a direction that will be rewarding (Thompson, 2010)

Perseverance. This term refers to being steadfast in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

Socioeconomic. This term means relating to, or involving a combination of social and economic factors (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

Self-Efficacy. Chin and Trimble (2015) referred to self-efficacy as, “people’s confidence in their ability to negotiate and cope with perceived interactions and incompatibilities in language” (p. 99)

Resiliency. According to Ricks, resiliency is “the ability to succeed despite adversity and distinct feature of the strengths perspective is that individual resilience is recognized” (2016, p. 3).

Parental involvement. Parental involvement has not been researched in depth under teen pregnancy. Parental involvement includes parents of teen youth and how they play a part in their child’s mentoring. Delmonico and Spencer (2015) researched a mentoring program that involved parents. Twenty-four mentoring programs were studied, and they found several variables of parental involvement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate women’s experiences about being teenage mothers who had overcome challenges and had become successful in their academic and professional pursuits while raising their children. Also, this study looked at the support systems that teen mothers had or lacked.

Most recent studies focus on how to prevent teen pregnancies, but few have been based on how to ensure that teen mothers have a better quality of life and can provide the support and care for their children and themselves with appropriate education and social

support. Research has shown that it is possible for teen mothers to be successful; however, there have to be certain programs and support in place: i.e. mentors, childcare, prevention programs and strong support systems to name a few.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teen pregnancy has decreased over the last few decades; however, teen pregnancies still exist and continue to have a certain stigma. Although the number of teen births has decreased in the world, the number is still high in the United States compared to other countries (Huang, Costeins, Kaufman & Ayla, 2013; Kearney & Levine, 2014), and only a small percentage of teen mothers complete school. During the years of 1991-2005, the rate of teen mothers had decreased by 33% in the United States (Perper & Manlove, 2009). However, in 2006, the rate of teen pregnancies began to rise again (Perper & Manlove, 2009). The rates are even higher among African American and Hispanic adolescents (Huang et al., 2013). With the rates being higher and the likelihood of school dropout rates increasing, teen mothers are at higher risk of experiencing mental health issues (Huang et al., 2013). The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported the rate of teen pregnancies dropped 61% between the years of 1991-2014 (CDC, 2016). It is reported by CDC that the United States spends \$9.4 billion annually for teen mothers and children (2016). Education, parenting, the media, peer pressure, socioeconomic factors, and cultural issues all contribute to this dilemma.

Although there has been a continued decrease in teen pregnancy for the past twenty years (Kearney & Levine, 2014), Hispanic teenagers show a higher rate in teen pregnancy than any other race in the United States, and because of their high rates, the number of teen pregnancies are still high (Kearney & Levine, 2014).

Education attainment is possible; however, teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school (Killebrew, Smith, Nevels, Weiss, & Gontkovsky, 2014). Freudenberg and Ruglis (2007) stated education is essential for good health; “the more schooling people have the better their health is likely to be” (p. 1). Freudenberg and Ruglis (2007) also

proved in their research there is a close relationship when looking at disparities in health and educational achievement.

Education attainment creates better health and financial stability; these two areas can create a successful life. Teen mothers' educational attainment research has shown "less than one-half of young women who had been teen mothers received a high school diploma by the age of 22 as compared with 89% of young women who had not given birth during their teen years" (Killbrew, Smith, Nevels, Weiss, & Gontkovsky, 2014, p. 69). To better assist teen mothers with their education, research has shown there are certain services that should be in place: educational support, counseling, and community resources (as cited in Marks, 2011). Strunk (2008) stated academic attainment can be supported within schools include clinicians to work with teen mothers and their families, school staff, and healthcare providers.

There are programs available for teen mothers; however, they are few and far between. For example, in Louisville Kentucky, they have the TAPP Program. TAPP (Teenage Parent Program) is for pregnant and/or parenting teen mothers who are currently in school. In 1970, TAPP was formed for middle and high school teen mothers to help reduce the dropout rate and to provide parenting skills, mentors, and a safe haven for the babies of the teen mothers. Currently, TAPP has a 97% graduation rate and has increased college enrollment. TAPP has been recognized as the most outstanding intervention program in the country by the National Organization of Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting (NOAPPP, 2004).

With a rocky U.S. economy, there is danger that government agencies could look for ways to cut costs and place money in other areas where it is also needed. According to the National Campaign.org, taxpayers spend \$9.1 billion for teen births per year. A

decrease in teen births could possibly decrease poverty. In 2010, President Barack Obama asked for \$185 million to spend on more comprehensive sex education programs. Prior to President Obama being elected, the federal government had spent zero dollars on comprehensive sex education programs. Obama had asked that the funds be allocated as \$114.5 million for the President's Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, including \$75 million for evidence-based programs, \$25 million for research and demonstration programs, and \$10 million for technical and training assistance (Boonstra, 2010).

The continued concern is what happens to the nearly one million teens who give birth every year. Do they go on to finish high school? Do they go on to college? Teen Pregnancy Statistics (2016) reported that approximately 2% of teen mothers go to college and get a degree. There are parenting programs available such as It's Your Game: Keep It Real located in South Carolina (Workman, Flynn, Kenison, & Prince, 2015). South Carolina: Reducing Teen Pregnancy among Middle School Youth is a project that was created to help reduce the number of teen births there. Currently, South Carolina is ranked number eleven with the number of teen births (Workman, Flynn, Kenison, & Prince, 2015).

This researcher did not evaluate programs; however, she has addressed many issues associated with teen pregnancy and other issues that teens face during their teenage years. Prevention programs tell part of the story, but not the whole story. It is important to hear from adult women who were teen mothers and have overcome the stigma of teen motherhood. Becoming a teen mother can have positive effects on a teen's life. It has been proven in previous studies teen parenthood tends to result in rates of teen dropouts and high rates of welfare dependency (CDC, 2016).

Having a support system in place is imperative for teen mothers. Support systems

can assist families to better help teen mothers attain their education and be successful. Success cannot be defined specifically in this sense because each teen mother will have a different definition for success and what that means. As cited by Marks (2011), a number of studies have found that after parenting education, adolescent mothers improved themselves and their environments and gave more appropriate responses to their children's behavior (Fox, Baisch, Goldberg, & Hochmuth, 1987).

Significance of the Problem

Teen parenting magnifies psychological, economic, and social problems for teen mothers and their children. Some of the most tragic outcomes are that teen mothers are less likely to complete high school and more than likely will end up on welfare (Minnick & Shandler, 2011). Teen births are also associated with lower income due to a lack of completing high school and furthering their education; i.e., postsecondary or trade school. Without social support from families, peers, and/or school counselors, teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school. As teen dropout rates increase, so do the poverty rates of these teens (NCSL, 2016). Many teen mothers become dependent on welfare such as food stamps and Temporary Assistance (TANF). According to Harris and Franklin (2009), there were close to 800,000 teens who became pregnant, and 60% of the teens in this count dropped out of school. Prior to TANF, which was developed in 1996 (Eshbaugh, 2007), families depended on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as a source of income (Eshbaugh, 2007, p. 98).

Education Programs in Orange County

The researcher of this study had the opportunity to volunteer at BETA. BETA program recently joined UCP of Central Florida. BETA is an alternative school for teen mothers and is part of Orange County Public School System (OCPS). BETA has been

servicing teen mothers for over 44 years. BETA also provides daycare for teen mothers' babies while they are attending school. BETA can service up to 100 young teens who are pregnant or parenting. BETA uses a more traditional curriculum with specific electives; Child Development, Parenting, Nutrition and Family Living (UCP of Central Florida, n.d.). BETA also provides after-school tutoring as well an enrichment program. The benefit BETA has that other alternative teen parenting programs seem to lack is transportation. BETA provides transportation for teen mothers and their babies through Orange County Public School (OCPS). BETA's mission is to provide teen mothers and families with tools and guidance on how to succeed in school, life, and as a parent. BETA has been successful because the people who work at BETA respect family strength and make commitments to help with empowering and helping teen mothers become self-sufficient. School-based parent programs that include support, mothering skills, mentors for teenage mothers, safe childcare for their children, and dropout prevention tend to be the most promising and tend to have higher success and better outcomes.

Dealing with the High Rate of Teen Mothers Who Dropout

One of the reasons for high rates (30-40%) of high school dropout is due to teen pregnancy (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Freudenberg and Ruglis believed one way to create a decrease in school dropout rates is to develop interventions within the schools. Having interventions and health professionals within the schools would provide students with the opportunity to go in person to discuss their issues. That professional in turn can mentor the student and help them with decision making skills or could develop a plan for the student to follow. Teen mothers have to have a sense of belonging and feeling as if they matter. Teen mothers who lack family support tend to look for support in other places, and that could lead to a negative outcome. Teen mothers need to learn how to

develop healthy relationships in order to move forward and be successful (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007).

Mentorship

Mentorship is critical for teen mothers. Johnson and Ridley (2015) stated, “Mentorships are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person.” (p. 33). Teen mothers need to develop relationships that are trusting. Meaning, to be a mentor to a teen mother, one should be always ready to listen and be understanding; not judgmental. Johnson and Ridley (2015) stated a mentor should understand their mentee’s emotional and personal development because it may require an intervention or immediate attention (p. 171). Also, a mentor can provide affirmation, encouragement, as well as emotional support (Johnson & Ridley, 2015).

In Texas, there is an alternative program for teen mothers called New Lives. After the program began, they began to receive feedback from their students stating they wanted to be involved in the mentor selection process. The students at New Lives, expressed they needed someone else to talk to, someone to confide in--a mentor.

New Lives conducted their own study with the teen mothers who were enrolled, 228 students in total. The makeup of the 228 students were African American, Hispanics and white teens. Out of the 228 students, New Lives narrowed the count to 56 and split the girls into two groups-- 7th-9th and 10th-12th grade. During the research, the researchers looked into several components: parental guidance and support, communication workshop/skills training, roles and responsibilities of the parents of pregnant/parenting teens (education and training), spiritual guidance, parenting classes for teenage parents, personal growth and development classes, and peer support (Rowen,

Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005).

The conclusion of New Lives' study showed it was evident the programs they looked at were needed by teen mothers. Rowen, Shaw-Perry, and Rager (2005) stated in their conclusion, "These essential components have been briefly described in this paper and should be considered vital to the success of a support and mentoring program for this at-risk teen population" (p. 231).

Mentorship with Teen Mothers

Mentoring is a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé (Bogat, Liang, & Rigol-Dahn, 2008). Mentoring programs are difficult to develop and maintain because teen mothers often face many barriers that prevent them from becoming an active member of mentorship. Barto, Lambert, and Brott (2015) looked at effective interventions over a 25-year span and found that mentoring programs are effective and prevalent for career development of teen mothers.

However, the downfall to mentoring programs is trying to develop and maintain the relationships when the relationship is not developed naturally. Natural mentors tend to be more successful than mentors who do not have a good sound foundation. This type of mentorship typically will end early, and research has shown this type of mentorship has a negative effect on youth participants (Bogat, Liang, & Rigol-Dahn, 2008). Mentors should be older women because they tend to be more supportive, and they tend to reduce stress in two ways: by providing emotional and instrumental support and helping with problem solving and stress (Bogat, Liang, & Rigol-Dahn, 2008).

Natural mentors are defined as nonparental supportive adults who are a part of adolescents' social networks (Hurd & Zimmer, 2010, p. 791). Hurd and Zimmer (2010) suggested African American teens have more natural mentorships due to

intergenerational relationships both within and outside of the family system (p. 792).

Researchers have shown that older African American women tend to take on the role of a play mom or a surrogate mom to help develop teen mothers and to help them by showing them ways to help their situation (Hurd & Zimmer, 2010). For African American teen mothers, it is very important to have a natural mentor.

Hurd and Zimmer (2010) reported on a study conducted by Rhodes et al. (1992) who worked with 129 African American mothers who had natural mentors and found that mothers with natural mentors had lower levels of depression than those who did not have natural mentors (p. 792). Rhodes et al.'s (1992) research also revealed participants in their study who had natural mentors experienced more positive outcomes and less mental health issues.

Hurd and Zimmer's (2010) end result of the research was that African American teen mothers can benefit from a natural mentoring relationship; it can be effective for promoting resilience. Teen mothers can benefit from learning how to seek out nonparental adults in their lives to help them with developing relationships (Hurd & Zimmer, 2010).

Healthy Start and Nurse-Family Partnership were also shown to be beneficial to teen mothers because these organizations help teen mothers build healthy relationships with outside nonfamily members. Hurd and Zimmer (2010) reported programs developed for teen mothers can also open up opportunities for important adults to come to meetings and mentor (p. 805). Hurd and Zimmer (2010) closed out their study by stating, "Natural mentors may have long-term promotive effects on adolescent mothers' psychosocial outcomes...this is the first study to examine this relationship longitudinally among a group of African American adolescent mothers transitioning into adulthood" (p. 806).

Parent Guidance and Support

Parental guidance and support are critical to a teenager's life, especially support from a teen mother's mother. It seems to be important for a teen mother to have family support; this is one element that can produce successful parenting (Burke & Liston, 1994). When teen mother has social support, the support is empowering to the teen mother and helps them with the sense of belonging. In some cases of generational teen pregnancy, parents might reflect on their own experiences in order to help their teenage child who is pregnant or parenting to do better or set goals.

When putting together programs for teen mothers, it should include counseling for teen mothers as well as their parents. Mama Club is a free community and faith-based teen parent education program that educates teen mothers on available resources (Smith, Gilmer, Salge, Dickerson, & Wilson, 2013). Mama Club was developed by an adoption agency. The club meets weekly during the fall and spring semester. The sessions held are less than two hours. During these sessions, teen mothers are given information concerning parenting and child development topics (Smith et al., 2013). Smith et al. (2013) found more than 55% of the participants reported being raised in a single parent home, and 83%, and their mothers were highly involved in helping them raise their baby (p. 26-27).

Having family support is important in teen mothers' success. Teen mothers reported that being raised by their grandmothers was very prominent in developing their own parenting skills. The quality of mothering was addressed in *Young African American Multigenerational Families in Poverty: Quality of Mothering and Grandmothering*. This research was intended to describe relationships of African American families and how they differ from one another. This study also revealed the criticalness of the relationship

between a teen mother and their grandmother and how important it is. Without the support of grandmothers and their relationship, teen mothers encounter difficulties in education, parenting, self-development, and occupational progress (Chase-Lansdale, Brooks, & Zamsky, 1994).

Teen mothers living with their parents are more likely to develop better parenting skills. In addition, school-based parent programs that include support, mothering skills, mentors for teen mothers, safe childcare for their children, and dropout prevention tend to be the most promising and tend to have higher success and better outcome (Eshbaugh, 2008).

Teen mothers depended on family support, especially from their mothers. If the relationship between a female and their mother is close, the female is more than likely to have less depression, more life satisfaction, a positive attitude, and better parenting skills (Schrag & Tieszen, 2014). However, there can be a flip side to this. African American females who are close to their mothers are more likely to follow their mothers' footsteps. If that mother was a teen mom, then Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) believe the child will also become a teen parent.

Absent Fathers and Educational Attainment

In a recent study, Gillette and Gudmunson (2013) found the absence of the father in a females' life could lead to teen pregnancy. In the United States, there is reportedly 52% of children living in single parent homes of African Americans and the between 1960 and 2010, 67% of African American infants were born to unwed mothers (Gillette & Gudmunson, 2013, p. 309).

There are several areas of a young female's life that can be affected by their father being absent; educational attainment, physical health and development, higher rates of

poverty, early reproductive developments, and the likelihood of attending college (Gillette & Gudmunson, 2013). When compared to two parent households, children in a single parent home are less likely to attain education (Gillette & Gudmunson, 2013). The environment also has an influence on a teens success.

Although little research has been conducted on absentee fathers, it has been proven absentee fathers has an effect on teen girls. Young girls were more than likely to experience sexual development if their fathers were not present in the home (Gillette & Gudmunson, 2013). Gillette and Gudmunson (2013) stated, “indeed, girls who experience an early sexual debut are at higher risk of becoming pregnant as teenagers” (p. 312).

Maternal Role Attainment

Maternal role attainment has been defined as “the process of attaining the maternal role [that] begins when the mother and infant become attached: the mother becomes competent in providing care and finally she experiences joy and gratification in the role of the mother” (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014, p. 317).

Although this source is somewhat outdated, the source was included to show there are effective teen mom programs available. As cited by Marks (2011), Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, Connecticut has a program that includes daily parenting classes, outreach, transportation, legal services, family counseling and mental health services, liaison with health care providers, housing assistance, and parental modeling for young parents, along with safe, consistent, and developmentally appropriate child care for their infants and young children (Sadler et al., 2007). This type of extensive program is sure to have positive outcomes for teen parents. Sadler et al.’s study was conducted over a 3-year period. During this period, the results were astonishing: no children were removed from the teen mothers, zero subsequent births, and 100% of the teen mothers

graduated or continued onto the next grade.

Parenting Classes

Parenting classes are essential for promoting successful outcomes for teen parents. Parenting classes should include proper childcare techniques, methods of effective communication between parent and child, how to approach emergency situations, basic information about infant healthcare, and the importance of being a positive role model (Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005). Parenting classes are intended to help the teen mother know and understand how to take care of herself and her infant. This should also prepare her for childbirth and answer any questions she may have about the birthing process.

Motivation

Motivation is the willingness to do something conditioned on the action's ability to satisfy some need or the individual (Robbins, DeCenza, & Wolter, 2016). As a teen mother, being motivated and becoming one's own leader is essential to success.

Leadership has been a phenomenon for years (Clawson, 2006, p. 379). Most effective leaders possess the qualities of motivation, emotional intelligence, trustworthiness, confidence, compassion, self-discipline, internal inspiration, integrity and commitment (Bass & Bass, 2008). Motivational leadership is the ability of a person to understand circumstances and inspire others to work together to feel empowered to contribute positively and creatively toward common goals (Winston & Patterson, 2006). Hicks and McCrackern (2014) said it best: the best leaders are those with a strong motivational need for socialized influence. Persons who have the desire to influence others sometimes find themselves taking advantage of their power to satisfy their own ego. However, on the other hand a people who have a high need to be liked are often the

ones who go out of their way to make exceptions for particular followers (Hicks & McCracken, 2014). Hick and McCracken found the best leaders are those with a strong motivational need to influence; personal achievement was not as important. Leaders who are also coaches have a much better success rate motivating their followers.

Some teen mothers use their child as motivation. Teen mothers use their children to motivate them to finish school, secure employment, improve living conditions, and to show them how to love (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). Some teen mothers wanted to create better lives for their children and left them with another family member while they were out making a way for themselves and their child (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014).

As a teen mom, the author of this research had the opportunity to better herself and left her daughter home with her parents while she attended college. Teen mothers either will have a supportive family or have very negative family support. Teen mothers who have had very strong relationships with their mothers, seemingly were more determined to have a better relationship with their child (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014).

Social Support

Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) stated social support is a “network in which the individual perceives care from others, such as family, relatives, and friends and can receive guidance for help with daily tasks” (p. 316). Research has suggested teen mothers who have small support groups prior to having their babies will more likely continue to have small support groups after giving birth (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) stated teens thought they would share the responsibilities of raising their child with the father of their baby.

Some teen mothers have faced barriers regarding childcare. There are some

school-based programs that offer onsite childcare for teen mothers who are attending school. School programs that offer onsite childcare provides a sense of security to the teen mothers knowing their child is in the same building or at the same facility, not far away and easily accessible (Sadler et al., 2007).

Social support is important for teen mothers. Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) discussed the role of social workers who work with this population. It appears that teen mothers have more resources if they come together with other teen mothers versus seeking support from others who have not shared the same experiences. There are three steps Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) mentioned to develop social networks: (a) increase interactions with new people, (b) increase frequency of interactions with members already in the network and (c) increase quality of interactions (p. 324).

Social support from a mother figure can provide positive outcomes for a teen mom (Umana-Taylor, Guimond, Updegraff, & Jahromi, 2013). *Parent efficacy* “generally refers to individuals’ beliefs about their competence as a parent and specifically, their ability to positively influence behavior and development of their children” (Umana-Taylor et al., 2013, p. 746). Hispanics have the highest birth rates of all ethnic groups in the United States, and they are at a greater risk of poverty than African American teen mothers (Umana-Taylor et al., 2013).

Social support for women of Mexican descent has been researched, and according to their culture, support from their family is essential; therefore, support from their mother is key (Umana-Taylor et al., 2013). If the social support from the mother lacks positivity, the teen mom is likely to be unsuccessful; however, if the support from the mother is positive, the outcomes are more likely to be positive from the teen mom.

Umana-Taylor et al. (2013) stated social support and parenting behaviors are “largely

indirect via parenting behaviors (p. 748). Umana-Taylor et al. (2013) reported that teen mothers who have highly supportive families will be “better, and conversely, when social support is low, teen mothers may be at risk for maladjustment” (p. 748).

Some social support comes from being a member of different organizations such as churches or clubs. The teens who were researched in Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen’s (2014) study lived in a homeless shelter. These teens believed they were doing the best they could do at the time. These young mothers acknowledged they did not have any social networks in place and were seeking some type of relationship outside of the relationship they have with their children.

Due to the stresses that come along with being a young mother, trust is also a factor (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). Trust for teen mothers tends to complicate their situations even more. Trust brings about additional barriers for teen mothers. Barriers tend to block teens from reaching their potential. Unfortunately, teen mothers tend to feel hopeless, and breaking through these barriers can be a challenge. The mindset of teen mothers has to be changed in order for them to continue to move forward in life.

After Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) completed their interviews, the teen mothers realized they had a much richer support network than they realized. There were people in their lives who were willing and ready to offer support, but they just had to open up and ask for the support. Speaking up and letting people know what one needs can make all the difference in the world.

Teen mothers who lack social support tend to have poorer health and suffer from depression versus teen mothers who have support systems in place. Support systems have been shown to be more beneficial to teen mothers who come from nonparental adults. According to Hurd and Zimmer (2010), teen mothers whose support comes from their

mothers or paternal grandmothers have shown positive results with positive outcomes.

Teen mother support groups have proven to be effective. Teen mom support groups can provide motivation and social support that can lead to empowerment (Ricks, 2016). Developing teen support groups that are made up of teen mothers can provide teens strength, knowledge, and information about resources that may be useful for some (Ricks, 2016). Not only is it helpful, but also it can be beneficial to a teen mother who is feeling hopeless or has very little support.

Social workers who look to develop programs or work with teen mothers need to be mindful of the cultural challenges when working with minority teen mothers because they tend to have the higher rates of teen pregnancies (Ricks, 2016). If programs are designed based on cultural practices, then Ricks (2016) stated successful practices lead to program participation, and program participation leads to the “likelihood” of goal achievement.

School Support

The stigma for teen mothers says they (teen mothers) will most likely drop out of school after having their baby (Beers and Hollo, 2009). Unfortunately, teens who drop out of school tend to struggle with employment and cannot avoid the trap of poverty (Ricks, 2016).

There are some schools that offer support for teen mothers and these schools are just as important, if not more important for nonparenting teens. School support programs often provide support for teen mothers and help provide tools, such as goal setting. Also, these programs address different barriers they face: transportation, child care, child development, and parenting education (Ricks, 2016).

Studies have shown that by offering teen mothers alternative programs, these

programs can provide teen mothers with positive and supportive learning environment (Ricks, 2016). For some teen mothers, going to school is a way of avoiding or getting away from "troubling situations" (Ricks, 2016, p. 5).

Schools have been viewed as a supportive environment for teen mothers. Schools that offer alternative programs for teen mothers have been proven to reduce dropout rate, reduce the rate of repeat pregnancies, and increase high school continuation and attainment (Ricks, 2016). Rozie-Battle (2002) stated in her study of African American girls that early parenthood or poor academics does not allow teens to reach goals, and the possibility of not completing school puts them at greater risk of poverty (p. 61).

Most research stresses children of teen mothers tend to have a low birth rate, low scores in school, more behavior issues, and literacy difficulties (Ricks, 2016). It has been said there is a 50% chance that the children who are products of teen mothers will repeat a grade and are less likely to graduate (Ricks, 2016). Ricks (2016) found that children of teen mothers who were able to attend an alternative program had better results as students. The children showed positive child development and positive child-parent relationships. Ricks (2016) found that teen mothers who attended alternative programs that provided support were beneficial and effective and improved their circumstances.

Project S.M.A.R.T

Project Science, Math, and the Right Technology better known as Project S.M.A.R.T is a 4-year, \$1 million federal grant from the Women's Educational Equity ACT. This grant has been awarded to the Office of Innovation and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. Several schools in Kentucky have formed a partnership with Project S.M.A.R.T. The program's goal is to help teenage mothers excel in math, science, and computer science courses and to aid them in obtaining the skills needed to

pursue postsecondary education.

Along with Project S.M.A.R.T is TAPP, Georgia Chaffee's Teenage Parent Program. TAPP is for middle and high school pregnant/parenting teens. TAPP's mission is to prevent school dropout associated with teen pregnancy.

In 2004, the National Organization of Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting recognized TAPP as the most outstanding intervention program in the country (Paluzzi, 2004). Some example outcomes of TAPP include the following:

1. TAPP teen mothers deliver babies averaging a healthy 7 pounds 3 ounces--the average teen mother traditionally delivers low birth weight babies.

2. TAPP teen mothers' repeat pregnancy rate of students who remain in the program is less than 2%. The national repeat pregnancy statistic is 25% of teen mothers who give birth between the ages of 15 and 19 will have a second pregnancy within two years of their first child.

3. TAPP students rarely dropout, and the TAPP graduation rate is routinely higher than 94%. Teen pregnancy remains the Number 1 reason for school dropout in the United States among females aged 15-19.

TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)

TANF is a government assistance program that provides financial assistance for disadvantaged families. The TANF program provides grant funds to states and territories to provide families with financial assistance and related support services. State-administered programs may include childcare assistance, job preparation, and work assistance (Benefits.gov, 2017). TANF rules state that in order to receive this benefit, teen mothers must be enrolled in school and attend regularly (Ricks, 2016). Once a teen mother completes high school, the only way to continue the benefits of TANF is to either

enroll in a vocational program or to work 20–30 hours a week (Ricks, 2016). The issue that could arise from attending a vocational program limits the teen mom to employment opportunities for low-paying or nonskilled jobs. TANF can and has created a cycle that keeps teen mothers in poverty because they are unable to afford college, which in turn would create better paying jobs and provide opportunities to surpass poverty (Ricks, 2016). Ricks has shown if teen mothers are provided the proper resources, teens can excel. Without improved resources, teens will continue to deal with challenges, adversity, and other difficulties that shadow teen mothers. Ricks (2016) stated that teen mothers can take their situation and turn it around for success.

Theoretical Framework Overview of Family Stress Theory

Single parents are being stretched into having to provide for their families. The consequences can result in less time spent with their children, and this can put the parent in the middle of a struggle between work and family. Research and trends have shown this can lead to adolescent pregnancy and declining academic performances that could result in dropping out of school (Kearney & Levine, 2012).

The author of this study will use three theories to explain her research: Family Stress Theory, Theory of Resiliency, and Theory of Self-Efficacy. Family stress theory focuses on the stress and the roles they play in family development (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, & Klein, 2005). Family stress theory has a number of strengths; it is simple, easy to operationalize and test, and is useful for explaining a wide range of situations affecting the family (Bengtson et al., 2005, p. 281).

Family stress theory was originally called the crisis model developed by Reuben Hill (1949, 1958) who saw how stress affected families (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 208).

Zimmerman explained how family stress theory's ABCX model is used to define families

in crisis. The ABC-X model by Reuben Hill in 1949 explained how families during the Great Depression were affected. Hill looked at families who were dealing with unemployment as well as their financial resources (Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby & Miller, 2009). Family stress theory is relatively simple, so Hill studied the behaviors and the outcomes of stress during the Great Depression.

Nigerian researcher Amfani-Joe (2012) stated there has been a shift in Nigerian women. Women in Nigeria are starting to work outside the home as before, the man was the breadwinner and the wife was to remain in the home and raise the children. Amfani-Joe (2012) stated this is more common in the more developed countries such as the United States. Amfani-Joe (2012) believed this may be one of the causes of delinquent children. If Amfani-Joe's theory and the research are valid, this possibly could be one reason the United States has an increased numbers of teen pregnancies (2012).

The Crisis Event (A). The ABCX model has a definition of “a situation for which the family has had little or no prior preparation and must therefore be viewed as problematic (p. 139). The A in the ABCX model represents the crisis or the hardship. To help understand family stress theory and how it aligns with this particular study of teen mothers, the author of the proposed study looked at this theory in the following light: teen finds out during her freshman year of high school she is pregnant; A represents the stressor event. The teen mother has to tell her family about the pregnancy sooner or later because she will not be able to hide the pregnancy for long.

The Resources (B). B represents the resources. The reaction of the family and how they cope during the crisis is another important piece to this theory. Coping has been defined by Amfani-Joe (2012) as the means of managing hardships (p. 129). Resources will reveal how families will process the crisis before and after. The resource will show

adequacies and inadequacies.

The Definition of the Crisis (C). C represents the definition of the crisis. Hill states when families attempt to define the crisis, they cause more hardship on the family rather than working through the crisis (Hill, 1958). How the family handles the news and whether or not they are accepting of the situation is the X which represents the crisis. According to Zimmerman (1995), stress is an unexpected and unanticipated event that happens in life; this is called nonnormative stressors (p. 209). Amfani-Joe (2012) explained the ABCX model only describes the precrisis variables and the crisis (p. 84). Following the ABCX model, Double ABCX model was developed by McCubbin and Patterson (Amfani-Joe, 2012).

Double ABCX Model

McCubbin and Paterson defined *family stress theory* as the “degrees to which the family system alters internal functions (behaviors, roles, rules, perception) and/or external reality to achieve a system (individual or family) that fits the environment” (p. 129). The Double ABCX model explains not only precrisis but also the after effects (postcrisis) of the crisis and how families process and handle the crisis. (Amfani-Joe, 2012).

A represents the initial stressor or crisis, B represents existing resources, C represents the perception of the event, and the meanings families attach to the crisis, and the X represents the crisis (Amfani-Joe, 2012). McCubbin and Patterson used C, the perception of the stressor, rather than the definition of the stressor (p. 88).

Family Stress Theory and the Book of Philippians

Family Stress Theory has been used to explain how families deal with crisis. Wilmoth and Smyser (2009) compared family stress theory to the Book of Philippians.

The book of Philippians is a letter written by Apostle Paul to the Philippian people. Paul often referred to the people in Philippians as “brothers” (Wilmoth & Smyser, 2009). The Romans imprisoning Jewish people which created the crisis. Paul was sent there to Philippians to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul was advising the Philippians on how to deal with the crisis at that time; 60-62 AD. Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

“6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he had done. 7 Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4: 6, 7 NLT)”.

Amfani-Joe (2012) explained the ABCX Model in laymen terms and correlated it to the Bible to help explain how this theory has been around about two millennia before Rueben Hill developed the Family Stress Theory in 1958. Amfani-Joe (2012) stated:

the ABC-X model was expounded throughout the epistle, each component can be identified in this brief admonition A (stress or event) = anything that might include anxiety, B (resources) = present requested God in prayer and petition; C (perception) = thanksgiving; X= (outcome)= peace of God. (p. 127)

Paul looked at the church as family, and one can find this theme throughout the Bible: Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19, Romans 8:16-21 and 1Corinthians (Wimoth & Smyser, 2009). Paul also expressed that stress can be either good or bad, positive or negative. However, for the purpose of this study, the stress caused would be considered negative stress.

Theory of Resiliency in Teen Mothers

In addition, the resiliency model of family stress adjustment and adaptation model

will be used as a framework for this study. Resiliency is defined as thriving or succeeding despite adverse circumstances (Patterson, 2001). Barto, Lambert, and Brott (2015) defined *resiliency* as a “paradigm shift from looking at risk factors associated with problematic situations to searching for more strengths-based personal attributes that help individuals overcome adverse or stressful situations” (p. 55). This is an extension to Family Stress Theory. Although this theory mainly focuses on stress, this theory can be applied to any situation the family may face. Teen pregnancy not only affects the teen, but also the families that are involved (Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby, & Miller, 2009).

Barto, Lambert, and Brott (2015) decided to refer to resiliency in their study as *personal resiliency*. Personal resiliency is referred to as the characteristics of optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptability (p. 55). When combining career adaptability and resiliency, it seems to become more favorable than risk factors, problems associated with teen motherhood (Barto, Lambert, & Brott, 2015).

Henry, Morris, and Harrist (2015) stated Family Resilience is moving into the third wave. The first two waves were referred to by Henry, Morris, and Harrist (2015) as the family resilience perspectives were conceptualized, researched and applied as a strengths-based approach focused on positive family adaptation despite significant risk using an integration of concepts from individual resilience, general systems perspectives on families and family stress theory (p. 22).

Wave 1: Resilient Families was a more in-depth explanation of the Family Stress Theory using the ABCX Model (Henry, Morris, & Harrist, 2015). Wave 2 included emphasis on family resilience and was defined by Hawley and Dehaan as the path a family follows as it adapts and prospers in the face of stress (Henry, Morris & Harrist, 2015, p. 23).

Hurd and Zimmer (2010) found, “African American teens face a unique set of

risks” (p. 790). African American teen mothers may encounter race-related, social, economic, and political marginalization, and these factors can cause an increase in more risk that results in a negative outcome (Hurd & Zimmer, 2010). Also, the stigma that society has placed on African American teen mothers can also result in a lack of support or the ability to find others willing to help them (Hurd & Zimmer, 2010). Some researchers have been able to observe some teen mothers being able to overcome the barriers of being a teen mom (Hurd & Zimmer, 2010).

According to Easterbrooks, Chaudhuri, Bartlett, and Copeman’s (2010) research on resilience, there are risks to early parenting, and teens are less likely to be knowledgeable about child development, have high expectation for their children, demonstrate less empathy when compared to older mothers, and more likely to exhibit parenting behaviors that are potentially abusive or neglectful (p. 1).

Although there are risks with entering parenthood at an early age, parenting early may be an opportunity for resilience. In a recent study that followed teen mothers for 12 years after childbirth, the researchers reported three types of profiles: normative, problem prone, and psychologically vulnerable (Easterbrooks et al., 2010).

“The Notre Dame Adolescent parenting project identified these same profiles, with ‘normative’ mothers (43%) viewing motherhood as one route to adulthood, ‘problem prone’ mothers (15%) exhibiting high risk behaviors, and ‘psychologically vulnerable’ mothers (43%) displaying depressive symptoms and viewing motherhood as compensating for negative self-images” (Easterbrook et al., 2010, p. 2). Some teens look at this entry into adulthood as a new beginning for themselves and their child.

Resilience among teen mothers can be quite complex and is not an “all or nothing” phenomenon (Easterbrook et al., 2010). Luthar and Zelazo (2003) “noted

increasing amount of evidence that resilience, when defined as ‘overt behavioral competence’ [that] may be accompanied by covert psychological distress” (Easterbrook et al., 2010). These researchers stressed to new researchers and upcoming interventionists to not overlook the limits of resilience and to include internal distress, such as depression.

Due to limited research, there has been little focus on career development (Barto, Lambert, & Brott, 2015). Barto, Lambert, and Brott (2015) chose to combine career development along with resiliency to impediments to housing, childcare, transportation, decision making skills, and occupational information (p. 55).

Easterbrooks, Chaudhuri, Bartlett, and Copeman’s (2010) hypothesized three different scenarios: a) some young mothers would show resilience in parenting; mistreating their children, b) mothers who showed resilience functioning would have greater protective factors, and c) there would be evidence of the “cost” of resilience in parenting among young mothers; risky behaviors and lower educational attainment (p. 2). After collecting the data, there were three clusters that developed: a) “typical/expected” group of normal-treating mothers, b) a “resilient “group, and c) a “vulnerable group. There were characteristics related to patterns of resilience within this study. The mothers who were in the resilient group had a residence, grandmother, emotional caregiving, and financial support, and frequency of social contact (Easterbrook et al., 2010, p. 6). The mothers in the resilient group were able to break the cycle of intergenerational maltreatment and had low rates of substantiated maltreatment.

Lee SmithBattle conducted a longitudinal study on teen mothers’ rise in educational aspirations, competing demands, and limited school support in 2007. SmithBattle (2007) conducted a longitudinal study that included a sample of 18 families, 41 participants, including 19 teen mothers, 22 parents, and one male partner (p. 352). The

purpose of the study was to look at the impact of teen mothers and their educational aspirations prior to giving birth and after birth and the challenges and barriers they faced while in school or after returning to school.

SmithBattle's (2007) findings included school barriers that disrupted teen mothers' educational progress, such as lack of support both educationally and personally. Also, the schools the teen mothers attended lacked onsite day care. Teens had to depend on public transportation to get their child to an off-site day care, and sometimes that was a challenge for them as well. Educational barriers included "cumbersome enrollment process, stringent attendance policies, lack of educational options and bureaucratic mismanagement" (SmithBattle, 2007, p. 361). SmithBattle (2007) shared the most prominent stories from the research that included the story of Pam.

Pam was described as a B/C student. She did not focus much on school until after having her baby. It was at that time Pam decided she needed to make a change in order to care for herself and her daughter. Pam started focusing on school and became a straight A student. Pam's parents were divorced, and she shared her parents had never graduated from high school. Pam also lived with her paternal grandmother. Pam was able to have her baby and continue school without any interruptions. Pam continued cheerleading, and she had the support of one teacher who drove Pam and her son to and from school and to daycare. Pam also attended parenting classes for teen mothers, while following the teacher's child development (SmithBattle, 2007, p. 364). When Pam finished her Junior year, she was told that if she continued on the path she was on, she could receive free tuition to the community college. SmithBattle (2007) stated, "Her case provides an instructive example of how school can reengage teen mothers and support their new aspirations as long as their needs for child care, housing, and economic stability are also

addressed by families or community resources” (p. 364).

SmithBattle explained educational attainment as being “fragile” and “beset by multiple obstacles” (p. 366). Educational attainment is decreased when there is no support from the school, when teachers are judgmental, and when there is a lack of family support. It appears that if any of these pieces are present, it is more likely a teen mother will not obtain educational attainment. When teen mothers receive prejudicial treatment by a teacher, the likelihood of the teen mom going on to complete school are decreased (SmithBattle, 2007). Teens are required to stay in school in order to continue their welfare assistance; however, the schools still have to put forth efforts to keep the teen engaged. Schools that offer support programs for teen mothers are more than likely to create a chain reaction, and teen mothers are more likely to attain their education. When using a person-centered approach, researchers looked for mothers who had similar traits: similar parenting styles, similar relationships, and similar current life challenges (Easterbrook et al., 2010, p. 7). According to Easterbrook et al. (2010), research demonstrated that resilience is not a trait or a stable pattern of functioning (p. 7). It is important to understand how teen mothers navigate through life after becoming a teen mother.

Theory of Self-Efficacy

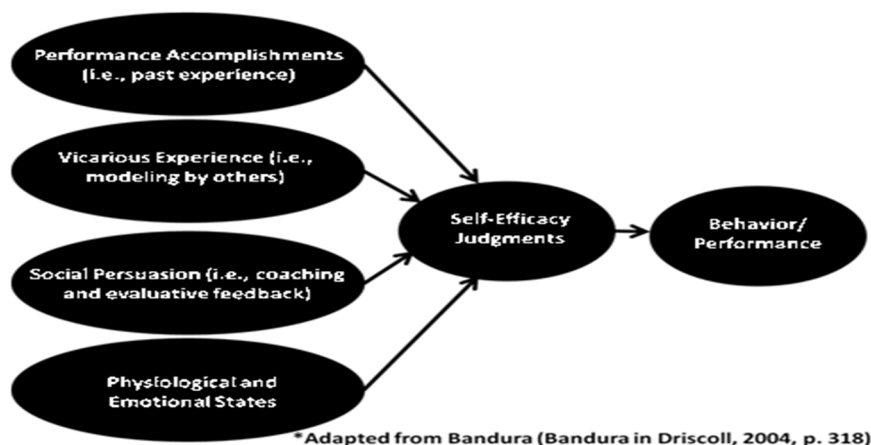
Bandura (1977) is the founder of the theoretical work of self-efficacy. *Self-efficacy* is the expectation of being able to overcome adversities by employing certain behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Bandura’s interpretation of self-efficacy is how much effort one will put into a task and for how long. “Parenting efficacy is particularly pertinent to adolescent mothers, who experience challenges and unique stressors during the early transition to parenthood” (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013). “Teens that develop intellectual

competencies and efficacy in managing their later life far are much better than their counterparts who do not” (Bandura, 1997).

Personal growth and development classes should be considered criteria for Teen Mom Programs. This would include resume writing, financial planning, interviewing skills, dressing for success, preparing for college, and conducting successful job searches (Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005). At some point, some teen mothers may seek a parenting program after they have dropped out of school. Even though completion of high school does not guarantee a successful adult life, having these classes can be beneficial for teenage mothers and could encourage them to overcome barriers that are associated with teen pregnancy. A person can develop self-efficacy through perseverance, observing how others succeed, and through overcoming barriers.

Turner (2011) stated, “Individuals’ self-efficacy beliefs are responsible in part for their willingness to expend effort on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting barriers, and how resilient they will be under favorable circumstances” (p. 34).

Figure. Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory



Strength Perspectives

Although there is a negative stigma that haunts teen mothers, there is another side to teen mothers--their strength. Becoming a teen mom can give teens a different perspective on life. Some teen mothers will become what has been modeled before them. For example, if their mother was a teen mom and never escaped the doors of poverty, the teen mothers are more likely to follow the same footsteps. However, some teen mothers use this phenomenon experience to improve their lives.

Strength can come from any negative experience (Ricks, 2016). Negative experiences such as becoming a teen mom can help with giving the teen mom the strength to be a good mother. It is believed that teens are motivated, ambitious, and have high expectations to live successful lives (Ricks, 2016). According to Ricks, (2016), the strength perspective is built on nine assumptions:

1. All people, no matter how problematic their situations, possess strengths that can be marshalled to improve the quality of their lives.
2. All environments, even the bleakest, contains resources that can be utilized for problem solving and life enhancement.
3. The upper limits of a person's capacity to grow and change are unknown.
4. Although potentially devastating, trauma, abuse, illness, and other adversities can be sources of challenges and opportunities for growth.
5. Client motivation is fostered by a consistent emphasis on strengths as defined by the client.
6. Empowerment can be conferred by supporting self-efficacy and personal power, choice, control, and commitment.
7. Professionals are not experts on clients' needs, but collaborators in

empowerment.

8. Discovering clients' strengths requires a process of cooperative exploration by clients and professionals. Topics for exploration include what clients want for their futures and what abilities they have shown in the past and present.

9. Focusing on strengths helps practitioners discover clients, abilities, and how they have managed to cope and survive, even in the most challenging circumstances. This is empowering for clients and also turns practitioner's attention away from the temptation to blame the victim or otherwise pathologize (p. 2-3).

These nine assumptions make this theory different from any other theories; resiliency theory looks at how to take adversities and turn them into positive outcomes (Ricks, 2016). The strength theory is also versatile; it can be used in different disciplines.

Strength and academic success tend to go hand in hand with teen mothers. Some teen mothers had a whole new attitude and commitment after becoming a parent (Ricks, 2016). Ricks (2016) also reported some teens who had dropped out of school, actually returned to school after giving birth. Teen mothers can have the desire to make a better life for themselves and their child. Teen mothers who have the desire to be better parents often see the advantages of education and economic stability (Ricks, 2016). This type of strength can be explained through the strength perspective.

Summary

Teen mothers are faced with such strong stigmatism that create automatic barriers for teen mothers. Teen mothers have many obstacles to overcome while raising their child: daycare, finances, poverty and how to avoid it, graduating high school and going on to college to obtain a degree. While there have been many studies on teen mothers, very few have focused on the adult woman who was a teen mother.

Absent fathers also contribute to teen motherhood by not being present. It is important to have the support of family and community support as well. Without these structures in place, it has been proven the likelihood of teens graduating high school are very slim.

It is important to understand what techniques were used, what support systems were put in place to help teen mothers to reach their success goals, and how can these techniques be integrated into programs for teen mothers.

Research Questions

This study explored perceived success factors and barriers for teen mothers. Four research questions were used to guide this study:

R1. What are the experiences of women who were former teen mothers as they tried to achieve personal and professional success?

R2. What have teen mothers experienced as barriers and triumphs as they worked toward personal and professional success?

R3. What strategies and recommendations would teen mothers share as they pursued personal and profession success?

R4. What support systems did teen mothers experience as they tried to achieve personal and professional success?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this phenomenology study was to investigate and explore women's experiences as teen mothers who had overcome challenges and had become successful in their academic and professional pursuits while raising their children, including the support systems teen mothers had or lacked.

Qualitative Approach

The research method chosen for this study was qualitative. Qualitative research was chosen to better understand or to seek out the understanding of how the participants' experience helped mold them into the persons they have become and to have a more in-depth insight about how they define success after becoming a teen mom. Creswell (2013) stated qualitative research provides a structural description of the experiences and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience.

Creswell (2013) explained the five qualitative approaches to inquiry: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research. Phenomenon is the exploration of the phenomenon that a group or individuals have experienced (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology was used as the qualitative design for this dissertation research study because a phenomenological study investigates the experiences and meaning making of the participants (Creswell, 2013). For this research study, the author examined participants' experiences to better explain and determine the various common themes of teen mothers.

For this research, purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants. Purposive sampling is a "type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher selects the units to be

observed on the basis of her own judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative” (Babbie, 2004, p. 183). Researchers use purposive sampling to intentionally select individuals and sites in order to understand a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The participants for this focused study on teen mothers were recruited through social media: Facebook and Instagram.

Procedures

The researcher used social media; i.e. Facebook and Instagram. Participants met the study’s criteria, and after verifying criteria, the researcher selected ten participants for the structured interview process.

The researcher initially planned for two weeks to recruit participants online. However, the researcher recruited for an additional eight weeks for a total of ten weeks. Recruiting was random; meaning, some weeks, there were multiple interests, and other weeks, there was no interest. The researcher had three participants who did not follow up after being sent the consent forms. That created the additional weeks to recruit three more participants. The researcher used the snowball sampling technique to recruit until the desired number of participants were reached. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling method often employed in field research whereby each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing (Creswell, 2015). The researcher made contact with each participant as they expressed interest. The researcher then contacted each participant, explained the study, and asked each participant to submit a consent form.

Participants were given a date, time, and instructions about how the interviews were going to be recorded. Initially the researcher was going to use Zoom; however, after several attempts and conflicts, the researcher decided to use a call recording application downloaded through the Apple store. Therefore, it was much easier to conduct interviews over the

phone and record the calls.

Call Recorder Lite is a program developed by Component Studios, LLC. Call Recorder includes the following features: records incoming calls, records outgoing calls, downloadable and shared recording via e-mail, iMessage, Twitter, Facebook, and Dropbox. This is a free application; however, this application only allowed for a total of two hours, and for anything beyond two hours, the user had to buy extra credits, which represents minutes for recording calls. Participants were happy and comfortable with the process. Once the interview began, the researcher pressed the record button provided by Cal Recorder Lite in order to obtain the recording that was used to transcribe the interview. The interviews ranged from one hour to one-and-a-half hours.

Once all the interviews were completed, the researcher went back and analyzed the data. Once the data was analyzed, the researcher provided each participant with her interview transcripts, and she was allowed to make any changes to any of her responses, or, if she was pleased with her responses, each person was instructed to e-mail the researcher back with an OK.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of ten women who had become a parent between the ages of 13-18 years of age. Criteria for participation in this study included the following: being a teen mother between the ages of 13-18 years of age, being a high school graduate, and being currently employed. There were some variations with participants. Participation was voluntary, and each participant was given the option to opt out at any time. There was no compensation to the participants. Each participant's information and privacy has been strictly protected. The following chart summarizes the participants' information using pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Table. Participants' Information

Participant	Age	Age at time of pregnancy	High School Graduate	College	Repeat Pregnancy
Participant 1	33	12	Yes	Yes, BA	Yes, 17
Participant 2	34	17	Yes	Yes, BA	No
Participant 3	38	16	Yes	Yes, BA	Yes, 18
Participant 4	41	16	Yes	Yes, MS	No
Participant 5	41	12	Yes	No	Yes, 14
Participant 6	42	17	Yes	Yes, BA	No
Participant 7	48	18	Yes	Yes, EdD	No
Participant 8	50	15	GED	No	No
Participant 9	66	16	GED	3 years	No
Participant 10	41	17	GED	Some	Yes, 18

Note Interviewee names have been changed to protect anonymity

Data Collection Tools

The primary data collection tool used was structured/semi-structured interviews. According to Creswell (2012), a qualitative interview consists of questions asked to participants; these questions are open-ended questions, and the responses are recorded. The in-depth interview process included structured or semi-structured interviews with each participant. The structured interview is a data collection method in which an interviewer reads a standardized list of questions to the respondent and records the respondent's answers. Structured interviews are "more carefully scripted, asking specific questions in a specific sequence, sometimes without follow up" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher also used open-ended questions that allowed the participant to be more detailed about her experiences with minimal interruptions (Creswell, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews come in close proximity to "everyday conversation, but as a professional interview, it has a purpose, and it involves a specific approach and

technique” (Kvale, 2013, p. 11). Kvale stated that it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire.

Interviews that were semi-structured allowed the researcher to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of teen mothers. The interviews were one-on-one, which allowed the researcher to record individual responses through Call Recorder Lite. Creswell (2012) suggested using one-on-one interviews for participants who are not afraid to speak, who articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably (p. 217). Once participants agreed to participate in the study, the researcher contacted the individual and scheduled a time to conduct the interview. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose and her role in the study. Researcher informed participants the interview could last up to two hours. It was at that point the researcher began to record the call and the participants were made aware of the recording.

In order to maintain consistency, an interview protocol was used (see Appendix A). Creswell (2013) described an interview protocol as a guide that is about four to five pages with open-ended questions and space for the researcher to record responses from the participants. The researcher used the space on the form for the researcher’s notes that went along with the recorded transcripts.

Validation of instrument. During a methods course, the researcher conducted a pilot study for an assignment. The pilot consisted of conducting two interviews with questions that had been created by the researcher. The two participants were high school graduates who had become teen mothers between the ages of 13-17 and were currently working full time in a career position. Originally, there were twenty-two questions. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher decided some of the questions were irrelevant and made the adjustments to the questionnaire. The pilot interviews allowed the

researcher to re-evaluate her questionnaire and altered or added to the protocol in order to obtain a greater understanding of the phenomenon the participants experienced.

Data Analysis

For this study, the researcher analyzed the data using Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA). IPA was chosen to help the researcher develop a better understanding of the lived experiences of adult women who became teen mothers between the ages of 13 and 17 years of age. The IPA includes in-depth interviews that can be described as “conversations with a purpose” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012, p. 57). IPA involves a six-step process to analyze data collected from in-depth interviews: a) Reading and rereading, b) Initial noting, c) Developing emergent themes, d) Searching for connections across emergent themes, e) Moving to the next case, and f) Looking for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2012, pp. 82-101).

Step one. For this study, the researcher listened to the interviews three times once they had been completed. Step one of IPA is reading and rereading, and the researcher becoming actively engaged in the participant’s world is important (Smith et al., 2012, p. 82). In this case, using the concept of reading and rereading allowed the researcher to see how all the experiences were related and looked for common themes. Therefore, the researcher listened and re-listened to the interviews, read and reread all journal notes to obtain a full understanding of the lived experiences.

Step two. This step of IPA is the most detailed and time consuming (Smith et al., 2012). In this section, the researcher listened for and examined the language used that demonstrated things that mattered to most of the participants. As the researcher listened and read through the transcripts, the researcher looked for similarities and differences between the lived experiences.

Step three. This step involved developing emergent themes (Smith et al., 2012). Looking for emergent themes entails the researcher to take all the information and data collected and cypher out the data that is not as important to the study. However, it is still necessary to document information obtained to add value to the study. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012) reminded researchers to remember the importance of the “I and the P in IPA” (p. 91). The researcher took the transcripts from the audio and directed her attention to the notes that were the results from the audio recording. This allowed the researcher to discover themes from breaking up the narrative flow and re-organizing the data (Smith et al., 2012).

Step four. Step four, the researcher took the themes collected and developed a chart. “Charting or mapping is how the analyst thinks the themes fit together” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 96). At this point, the researcher collected the themes from the transcripts, separated them, and grouped them into different categories, and then put them back together by how they fit together.

Step five. Step five is moving from one case to the next. For each participant, the researcher completed and repeated the step process. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012) stated this is bracketing the idea emerging from the analysis of the first case while working on the second one. This allowed the researcher to keep the IPA idiographic commitment (p. 100). This process continued for each participant (Smith et al., 2012).

Step six. In step six, the researcher looked for patterns across the transcript and then themes (Smith et al., 2012). This step helped the analysis move to a more theoretical level (Smith et al., 2012). This step can be presented in the form of graphics or showing in social media connections for the group as a whole (Smith et al., 2012, p. 101).

Trustworthiness

The researcher established a sense of trust by reading and rereading the transcripts to discern codes, patterns, categories, and themes that emerged from the data by developing an understanding of the whole (Thompson, 2016). Thompson stated the researcher should conduct member checks, which consist of having the participants review the materials and data used for the study and allow them to provide feedback whether it is positive or negative (2016). Participants were given the opportunity to edit their responses if they were not satisfied with their response or wanted to add to their response.

Ethical Considerations

Once approval was granted, participants were recruited, and each participant was given a clear explanation about the reason for the study. Participants were made aware that this study was strictly voluntary, and each participant was given the opportunity to opt out of the study if she was uncomfortable at any time. Each participant was given an informed consent letter and was given one week to sign and return it to the researcher. Once the participants signed the paperwork, they were informed of the purpose, procedures, possible risks, possible benefits, information about the voluntary participation and measures to ensure confidentiality while taking part in the study. The anonymity of the participants was protected at all times through the use of pseudonyms. The information collected from the participants through the semi-structured interviews was organized and transcribed for analysis.

All data collected was stored on the researcher's computer and backed up on an external hard drive. Each participant was given a digital file folder that contained her interview and any notes taken during the data collection process. All handwritten notes were scanned and digitally placed in the participants' digital file folder, stored on the

researcher's password-protected laptop. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions related to the study. All participants were given the same questions and had their responses coded and were given their pseudonyms.

Potential Research Bias

The researcher of this study became a teen mom at the age of fifteen years of age and was raised in a two-parent home along with her older brother. Neither her mother nor father had any children outside of the family, and the mother was not a teen mother; however, she was a daughter of a teen mother. The researcher's grandmother had had the researcher's mother at the young age of fifteen in 1941. The researcher herself grew up middle class, and the family lived in a very nice subdivision on a good side of town. Her parents were very instrumental in helping and assisting the author with raising her daughter. However, the researcher took on the bulk of the responsibility because she believed it was her responsibility to create a life for her daughter and herself. Her daughter's father was very involved throughout the pregnancy, but once he graduated high school and went off to college, the researcher and her daughter were no longer a priority. She knew at that point that she had to make something of her life. She had to deal with a lot of negativity from within her close-knit family as well. However, she believes the negativity, and the "you won't do anything with your life" is the reason for the success she has reached today. She was determined to graduate on time, go to college, and obtain a degree.

The researcher remembered reading articles about teen mothers and how their children had behavior issues, fell behind in school, and were more likely to repeat the same mistakes the teen mother had made. However, she was determined to not be a part of the statistics. Although she may not have completed college at the same time her friends completed, she went back to college at the age of thirty and completed a Bachelor's in three

years and later went back to school and completed a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling in 2006.

The researcher managed potential bias by bracketing (Smith et. al., 2012) and maintaining a research journal. The journal allowed the researcher to write down thoughts regarding participants and their reactions to the questions during the interviews. The researcher also wrote down her own thoughts in reflective notes throughout the process.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate women's experiences about being teenage mothers who overcame challenges and have become successful in their academic and professional pursuits while raising their children. Also, the researcher looked at the support systems teen mothers had or lacked. The results of this data can be used to help improve or give direction on what teen parenting programs need in order to help teen mothers be successful.

The following research questions guided this study:

R1. What are the experiences of women who were former teen mothers as they tried to achieve personal and professional success?

R2. What have teen mothers experienced as barriers and triumphs as they worked toward personal and professional success?

R3. What support systems did teen mothers experience as they tried to achieve personal and professional success?

R4. What strategies do former teen mothers recommend to help teen mothers today?

Participants

This section includes an overview of the women who participated in this study. The researcher wanted to take the time to honor the ten women who participated and have overcome barriers they faced as teen mothers. For the purpose of this research, the names of the ten women have been changed to protect their identity and confidentiality; therefore, they will have fictitious names.

Ernestine Whitley (participant 1). Ms. Whitley overcame her barriers after

becoming a mother at thirteen years of age. She completed high school on time and is a college graduate. She has a bachelor's in Criminal Justice and is currently employed full time. She was raised in a household with both parents along with older siblings. She currently has four children who are 16, 12, 8, and 4 years of age. She now shares her story to motivate other teen mothers.

Barbara Hill (participant 2). Ms. Hill overcame her challenges after becoming a mother at seventeen years of age. Ms. Hill had a difficult childhood and described her childhood as being dysfunctional. Ms. Hill did not complete high school, but she did obtain her GED. She also completed and graduated from college with a Bachelor degree and is currently working full time in Human Services. She loves her job, and she loves and has a passion for encouraging and teaching resiliency to young people and teen mothers weekly.

Mary Realist (participant 3). Ms. Realist overcame her challenges, roadblocks, and barriers after becoming a teen mother at the age of sixteen and again at eighteen. Ms. Realist's childhood was filled with multiple barriers: abandonment, substance and alcohol abuse, and abuse that was used as a means for love. Ms. Realist's graduation was delayed one year; however, she did graduate high school and currently holds an Associate and Bachelor degree. Ms. Hill is employed full time, she is a very spiritual woman and is happily married. In spite of her childhood and teens years, she shares her story now to encourage and motivate women of all ages.

April Soul (participant 4). Ms. Soul surpassed her barriers after becoming a teen mother at age sixteen. She completed high school on time and attended and graduated from graduate school. Although she became a mother at sixteen, she knows what it takes to make it. She has a determination and her thought process is she can do anything she

puts her mind to. She thrives when her back is against the wall.

Lilly Hall (participant 5). Ms. Hall overcame her trials and tribulation after becoming a teen mother at the age of thirteen and having her second child at age sixteen. Ms. Hall is the true definition of determination and sacrifice. Ms. Hall did the unthinkable; after becoming an emancipated minor, she signed herself and her two children into foster care until she was twenty-one years old.

Tracey Moore (participant 6). Ms. Moore had several barriers to overcome: verbal, physical and emotional abuse, as well as becoming a teen mother at seventeen and having a love-hate relationship with her parents. Ms. Moore has proven that with a determination, one can achieve anything an individual can put his/her mind to. She completed High School on time and holds a Bachelor Degree in Business Management. She chose to overcome her circumstances instead of being a victim of her circumstances.

Macy Mason (participant 7). Ms. Mason is the epitome of overcoming barriers. Ms. Mason is a high school graduate, college graduate and holds a Doctorate in Education. Ms. Mason became a mother at eighteen years of age. Ms. Mason is well spoken, and she does not look at her experience as being the underlying cause of the woman she is today; she is very humble, and she believes her experience as a teen mother was just her life.

Christine Jackson (participant 8). Ms. Jackson is a high school graduate, and she credits her success to God and her mother. She escaped the dark cloud that hovers over teen mothers by overcoming a teenage pregnancy at the age of fifteen years of age. Ms. Jackson completed high school, and she currently employed full time. Ms. Jackson has four children, and she praises GOD that none of her children experienced teen pregnancy.

Carol Smith (participant 9). Ms. Smith was the oldest of the participants, and she had so much knowledge and wisdom. Ms. Smith was raised by a single mother who worked two jobs to care for her children. When Ms. Smith was in school, teen mothers were not allowed to be in public school. Ms. Smith became a teen parent at age sixteen, and at that time she began working. Ms. Smith has overcome her barriers and other obstacles by being determined and challenging herself to be better. She obtained her GED and has completed three years of college. Ms. Smith believes in helping others and helping them to be the best they can be. She is a motivator and an encourager.

Martha Roberts (participant 10). Ms. Roberts is a high school graduate, and she has successfully overcome her dysfunctional childhood, alcohol and substance abuse in her family and becoming a teen mother at seventeen and again at nineteen. She currently is employed full time and is single raising her children. She has four children: 23, 21, 18, and 16 years of age. She still has dreams and goals, and she is still determined to go back to school and obtain a nursing degree.

Results

The researcher followed all the steps that were documented in Chapter 3 of this study. The researcher obtained permission from each participant who agreed to be part of the study. The researcher provided consent forms to each participant who sent an e-mail in response to the advertisement on social media. Once the e-mail was received, the researcher e-mailed each participant and requested she read through the form and sign it if she was still interested in being a participant for the study. Once the consent form was completed by the participant, the researcher contacted the participant and scheduled a day and time to conduct the semi-structured interview. The researcher also explained to the participant the process after conducting the semi-structured interview; the call would be

recorded, and participants were advised to read over their responses and if there was a response they wanted to edit, they could do so, and once they completed their editing, they were to e-mail the responses back to the researcher and that would conclude their participation in the research.

Each semi-structured interview was conducted on a one-on-one basis at various times. Some of the participants had to reschedule, and the researcher had to be flexible in order to conduct the semi-structured interviews. After each interview, the researcher advised each participant the turnaround for the document would take up to two weeks, and at that time, the response would be e-mailed to the participant. The researcher then listened to the interview responses and began to transcribe them into a Word document.

The researcher compiled all interview responses and developed a chart in Microsoft Word. The chart had six columns. The first column had the identification of each participant. The second column included the current age of the participant. The third column was the age of when they became a teen mother. The fourth column was the responses to whether they graduated from high school. The fifth column included the response to whether or not they attended college, and the last column, column six, was the responses given to whether or not they had a repeat pregnancy. A second chart was created to determine themes. The researcher listed themes, and under themes, she created a list with terms and marked the term for every time it was said by the participant.

Qualitative Data Analysis

After conducting all of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher had 28 pages of transcribed data. The data was transcribed to look for common themes. Saldana (2016) stated themes are phrases or sentences that describe what is or was going on during the time the phenomenology took place. Structured interviews are most commonly

used and known to be an easy way to collect data when conducting qualitative research (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ask questions, the participant responds to the question, and the researcher can ask a follow up question if deemed necessary (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Although Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, and Kangasniemi (2016) stated semi-structured interviews do not always provide rich data, the researcher discovered a lot of rich data after completing the interview process.

The researcher asked probing questions to obtain age, highest level of education, and whether or not they were employed. Participants in this research ranged from ages thirty-three through sixty-six. Each participant had a scheduled interview, and each interview opened with the researcher expressing appreciation for their willingness and time to participate in the interview process. The researcher again emphasized that at any time they began to feel uncomfortable to let it be known, and if they chose, they were told the interview would end at that point. All participants completed all twenty-three questions.

The interviews averaged approximately one hour, and a lot of information was shared. The researcher compiled a list of common themes. The researcher decided to conduct this part of the study by hand; meaning the researcher did not utilize any software to decipher the information provided from the interview responses.

There were four major themes found, and some additional information that was revealed that was not necessarily a theme; however, the researcher believed the information was important enough to discuss. Themes are used in qualitative research to group together information in order to group common ideas (Creswell, 2013). After conducting these ten interviews, each one had his or her own story, but they all had one

common factor--they were teen mothers before the age of 18 years of age. For all intent and purposes of this research, the participants will be referred to by number rather than their alias.

Also, the researcher made note, no participant mentioned the father's name of their child/children. Out of the nine women, only three of them mentioned their child's father. Participant 3 talked about how popular her child's father was in school and because of his popularity, and them being a couple, she too was popular. However, at some point, he was locked up, and she was left to take care of her children at that point. Participant 9 only stated her family did not want her child's father in their life. She also mentioned that her child's father did pay her hospital bill, but she did not say anything else after that comment. Another participant mentioned their child's father was allowed to ride in the car with her and her mother to her doctor appointments. No other woman mentioned the fathers. The researcher decided that it was just as important to make a note regarding the fathers of these children born to the teen mothers. Although this was not one of the themes but it was significant for the researchers to see who supported these teen mothers. The researcher has included dialogue from the interviews to show how instrumental the fathers were in helping the teen mothers get over their barriers and reaching success.

Participant 2 stated, "My mom allowed my daughter's father to ride to the doctor appointments with us." Although Participant 2's mother was disappointed with her daughter for getting pregnant, she tried her best to be a good parent, and she was as supportive as she could be. Parents of teen mothers have to make an honest effort in showing support for their daughters.

Participant 6 mentioned her child's father only to refer to his race as a reason her

parents were disappointed. Participant 6 stated her parents were strict Catholics. Not only was she pregnant as a teen, but she was also pregnant by an African American male. Her parents wanted her to terminate her pregnancy; however, she stated she never considered terminating her pregnancy, and because of her decision, her mother had taken her to Beta where she was dropped off along with a few groceries and some of her personal items.

Participant 3 was the only participant to go into great details regarding her relationship with her child's father. She and her child's father were in a relationship.

Participant 3 stated,

So, from thirteen to twenty-four I always tell people I hit life first. That is when a guy that I liked came into my life. I might have been sixteen, he might have been eighteen; and so, um, he was going through his own personal changes with his family dynamic, but he was selling drugs. He was a popular person here, and I got hooked up with him, then I became popular because he was popular.

When asked, who did you tell first, participant 3 stated, “

I told my daughter's dad, and I think I did that because he wanted a kid, and I think I didn't really process it. I look back on this now thinking, “Wow, to try to do any of this now,” (laughs) like I remember him saying, “I want a child.”

Findings for Research Question 1

What are the experiences of women who were former teen mothers as they tried to achieve personal and professional success? The interview question was, “Did you participate in a teen parent program? What is your success? How do you define success? What has been your success?” The following themes emerged from Research Question 1:

1. Children as Motivators. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, teen mothers may use their child as their motivation, and this was found in the data collected for this study.

2. Self-Efficacy as motivation. Teen mothers tend to rate education as a high priority. Teen mother's determination is what propels them to complete education and reach other goals or admirations (Turney, Conway, Plummer, Adkins, Hudson, McLeod & Zafaroni, 2011)

Children as Motivators

The first theme of this study was children as motivators. Once the data had been analyzed, it was apparent that their children were their motivators because each participant discussed how they were able to stay motivated because of their child. Of the nine women interviewed, six said their children were what kept them motivated. Aparico, Gioia, and Pecukonis (2018) stated teen motherhood can be a way of having and feeling unconditional love and can provide a sense of purpose. Motivation can come from various sources; however, in the case of teen motherhood, the children being motivators were consistent overall. While analyzing the data, it was apparent the child is what kept these young mothers wanting more. While telling their stories, the interviewer made notes of how their determination could be heard while sharing their experiences. For teen mothers who experienced substance abuse, that was their means of motivation; not wanting to be like their mother who had issues with substance and alcohol abuse.

Participant 1 discussed what kept her motivated by stating, "My motivation was my children and not wanting to become a statistic". She continued,

I was very smart in school, made good grades, always wanted to graduate high school and go to college. So, once I got pregnant, my family looked down on me,

mainly close family like mom, sisters, aunts, cousins etc. would make comments like I messed up my life, I'm not going to finish school, I will not be nothing in life. All I knew was they were wrong, having a baby would not stop my inner strife. I knew that even though I made a bad choice, it was not the end of the world, and I would set my goals and accomplish them. I did know once I got pregnant with the second child that my dream of going to college was delayed, but I knew at some point I would return.

Self-Efficacy Fueled Motivation

When asked how did you stay motivated? Participant 1 stated, Over the years I stayed motivated by wanting more for my kids and myself. I knew working regular jobs in which I started fast foods as a teen, then early adulthood to retail, then 20's to call centers. But those was just the paycheck-to-paycheck jobs that I know that I had to get away from if I want a better stable future for my family”

Participant 2 responded to the interview question regarding motivation by stating, My daughter because I did not want her to continue on this generational cycle of teen pregnancy; my mom was a teen parent, and I was a teen parent. I did not want her to be that. I wanted her to see something different. I knew that, ultimately, I was her teacher, and I have always show her because my mother would always say, “Do as a I say, not as I do.” Well, that’s not true, I wanted my child to do as I do, so, therefore, I had to give her something to do.

Participant 3 responded to the question regarding motivation by stating, My children; I finally felt complete, and although I went through a lot with their dad, in terms of cheating and all kinds of stuff, they were my motivation. In my

mind, they were my goals, and I could not let them down; people were depending on me. These precious little lives that did not ask to be here need me, and I have to put everything I have into them.

When the researcher asked Participant 3, “How did you stay motivated,” She responded, “I don’t know; I don’t really have a pinpoint, I think I’m just wired that way. Just wired to keep going. It’s just like you have this drive. I think I’m disciplined by nature so even when I don’t want to move, I am moving.”

Participant 5 responded to motivation by stating,

You know, I have been asked that question over and over again. My boys kept me motivated. It was like that was what I was supposed to do. I was, like, I got myself in the situation, so I had to take care of them. I knew they had to eat, and I had to work, I had to do what I had to do.

Participant 6 simply stated, “I wanted a better life.” Participant 2 stated, “My daughter kept me motivated, and how I stayed motivated was the love I had for my daughter and wanting what was best for her.” Participant 8 stated, “I stayed motivated by taking care of my kids.” Participant 9 stated she wanted to give her kid a better life; “I saw some of my friends and just people drawing welfare, out partying. I just worked to have something.”

Participant 9 responded to the next question, “How did you stay motivated?” “I just wanted more; I wanted to keep climbing, and I was a believer, and I knew that God progresses you. I saw on my father’s side of the family that people had something, and I wanted that.” Participant 10 responded to motivation by stating,

My children. They have always motivated me to be better and do better. I look at my kids although they’re 23, 21, 18, and 16, I still want to give them things I

never could when they were younger. I know one day I'll have grandkids, and I want my grandkids to have a stable, loving, environment as well. So, I know I have to keep pushing to leave a lasting and inspirational legacy.

The data collected has shown that teen mothers are motivated by their child. As previously stated in chapter 2, Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) stated the same fact, and that is simply: children are teen mothers motivation whether it is to complete school or to be gainfully employed. The participants for this study spoke with such passion and while interviewing, the researcher could feel the compassion, the determination, and how their child motivated them. Some were motivated not only by their child, but by other entities such as a friend, a social worker, an educator or a family member. It is called tough love. Some expressed tough love also helped them to stay motivated and provided them with the attitude of "I can or I will" attitude.

Findings for Research Question 2

What have teen mothers experienced as barriers and triumphs as they worked toward personal and professional success? This research question was important to this study because the researcher wanted to look further into the barriers teen mothers experienced after becoming a teen mother. As a teen mother, dreams, aspirations and or goals become more challenging when they lack support (SmithBattle, 2006). SmithBattle (2006) noted educational attainment tends to be one the barriers teen mothers experience due to lack of educator's expectations of teen mothers. Emerging themes derived from research question 2:

1. Resiliency. Watson and Vogel (2016) stated motivation is a key component for resiliency. Watson and Vogel (2016) defined resiliency as overcoming obstacles.

2. Perseverance. The teen mothers in this study all have experienced transformation. Overcoming their obstacles and having a determination to overcome the obstacles has created transformation for the participants in this study. Obstacles such as graduating from high school, seeking gainful employment, obtaining housing, or attending and graduating college after becoming a teen mother can be a very challenging, and overcoming those obstacles requires not only motivation but perseverance (Watson & Vogel, 2017).

Resiliency and Perseverance Was the Enabler That Kept Them Going

Participant 1 stated her teachers were very kind to her and were very accommodating in every way they could and because of the support she received in school, she was able to graduate on time. However, not all teen mothers experience support within their school which can result in barriers.

Participant 9 stated when she was in high school, pregnant teens were not allowed in school. Participant 9 was forced to seek employment after discovering she was pregnant. Participant 9 stated her mother was already working two jobs in order to provide for her and her siblings. She stated once she had her baby, childcare was an issue. She was able to work full time and her mother was able to watch her baby and she also was taking night classes in order to get her GED.

Participant 8 stated she was an athlete in school. Her barrier was being able to continue playing sports and completing school on time. Participant 8 was able to graduate, not with her class, but during the summer. Participant 8 stated she had the support of her mother and was not treated like her other friends; “Some of my friends had been put out after telling their family about their pregnancies.”

Being determined and having a made-up mind seemed to be common language.

Some of the teen mothers had other family members that kept them motivated. Learning to take the negativity from family members was a mother's means of motivation that some of the teen mothers experienced. If the foundation has been damaged or the family has damaging situations, teen mothers are less likely to be stressed or troubled (Farber, 2014).

Participant 2 stated her barrier was school. She had already dropped out of school due to her pregnancy and having other personal issues. Participant 2 had a barrier-stepping out of her comfort zone. Participant 2 was worried about what others would think of her being a book worm. Instead of being the center of attention, she sat back and at some point, she realized she had to step out of her comfort zone and be a better person, a person her daughter could look up to. She stated, "For some people, they just need one person to believe in them to help give them courage to complete a task". Her courage came from her teacher who encouraged her.

Participant 3 expressed her barriers were created from a mother who suffered from substance abuse and a boyfriend who sold narcotics that eventually resulted in prison sentence. She was left to take care of her baby and to make a way for them.

I went and got a job and never stopped working. I did get childcare assistance forever, so it seemed. The daycare I grew up in actually took my kids in until the time we moved to Mississippi. My mom could not financially take care of us. I remember working for hours and not being able to take them to the doctor, I remember I had to ask my aunt to take them because my focus was providing for them. And I had section eight housing.

Farber (2014) told a story regarding a teen mother who had her first of three children by the age of 16. Farber further told the story of how they were at a hearing to

determine the fate of her children, and she was on her cellphone texting. The issue is the teen mother had been raised in foster-care and had been neglected by her mother.

Participant 5 shares her experience of having barriers to overcome. Participant 5 is a true testimony to resiliency. She had a determination to overcome her barriers of being in foster care along with her two children from the young age of fifteen until she was twenty-one years of age. She had two children by the time she entered foster care. She signed them into foster care so they could stay together. She stated,

Umm, well, I had my grandmother at first, I would say maybe for the first year or until I became a teen mom again. That is when I voluntarily placed my two children and myself into foster care.

She did not have the family support, and she was taught by her grandmother, “If you make your bed, you have to lie in it.” She knew she had a long road ahead of her with two children by the age of fifteen.

According to Child Trends (2011), studies have been documented regarding parenting teens in foster care that the outcomes for themselves and their children are very negative. The children are more likely to have behavior issues, repeat pregnancies, or be abusive or neglectful (Manlove, Welti, McCoy-Ruth, Berger, & Malm, 2011).

Other research has shown that school programs should not veer away from academics but focus on how to succeed beyond high school. Participants of this study shared their experience of barriers they were faced with, and mainly it was academic barriers. It has been shown and proven that childcare within the teen’s public school can be beneficial in helping and assisting with academic attainment. Providing childcare eliminates missed school days due to not having childcare or being financially able to afford childcare. Government assistance programs can be helpful in one sense; however,

if a teen mother is residing in the home with their parents who may be working adults, their income is accounted for, and, in many cases, puts the teen mother over the income level and unable to take advantage of childcare assistance through the government. Several participants stated in their interviews they were not able to obtain government assistance with childcare due to the household being over the income limits.

Findings for Research Question 3

What support systems did teen mothers experience as they tried to achieve personal and professional success? The following themes emerged from research question 3:

1. Academic and Community Support. Academic and Community support is a necessity not only for educational attainment but also for additional support to help keep teen mothers motivated.

2. Parental Guidance and Support. Turney, Conway, Plummer, Adkins, Hudson, McLeod, and Zarafoni (2011) found the young women in their study rated parental support with high importance (p.306).

Academic and Community Support

As mentioned previously, mentorship is quite important to a teen mother who is experiencing life in a whole new light. According to Larson, Bagnato, Miglioretti, Barone-Martin, and McNeal (2017), mentoring is important to teen mothers, and their children as the teen mothers have not matured or developed and lack the skills to take care of themselves and their babies. Moreover, the data showed 5 out of 9 women in this study attended a teen parent program. The teen parent programs ranged from providing government assistance, to providing teen parenting classes, to assisting the teen mothers with completing high school, to showing teen mothers how to earn money (they referred

to the money as earned points), to help with purchases needed for their babies or themselves. Participant 2 stated,

They had some type of program you attended, and they had lactation counseling, math classes. The more you attended, the more points you earned. You earned points to buy items. Some things available to buy were beds, changing tables, stuff like that; formula, diapers, stuff like that.

For some participants, enrollment in a teen parenting program was a requirement.

Participant 1 stated that while she was in high school, one of the electives classes, childcare services, was a requirement because she was utilizing childcare services at her school, and in order to keep her child in childcare, she had to take the class as an elective.

Participant 3 shared her experience about being in a teen parent program: “It was the most humbling experience of my life; I went there (Family Care Center) in order to get caught up and graduate.” Participant 5 and participant 6 both stated they attended an all-girls school for teen moms. Participant 6 stated,

When my parents dropped me off at the teen mom school, I didn’t have anything. I probably did not have a nickel to my name, so my mom went and brought me groceries when I first got there, but then that was it.”

The women at one point during the interview all expressed having a support system was very important, and the support system helped them reach their goals and overcome their barriers. Some participants had their mothers who provided support; others shared their support system came from a teen parenting program. School programs are not as prevalent as they once were, and that is due to public school systems that have expressed concern regarding pregnant teens being visible in the public-school system. Pregnant teens or parenting teens have had to create their own success or find

their own way without the assistance from the public-school system. Public school systems have discarded childcare services and parenting classes in hopes of avoiding or having to address sexuality because it has now been said to create a hindrance to other students (Chase, 2017).

All participants who participated in a teen parent program discussed their experience and shared how the programs supported them. Participant 8 stated, “These types of programs; they just do not offer any more. Programs for teen mothers tend to close their doors due to lack of funding.” She also stated there was an after-school program once she graduated because she worked there. She stated, “I had the option to have my child go there for daycare, but my mother helped me by keeping my child while I attended school and worked. I never attended the program; I just knew about it.”

Participant 9 discussed the programs she was aware of. She stated, “When I worked at ABC, we offered programs for teen mothers to take advantage of. Those programs included budgeting, caring for your child, and different incentives for completing these programs. I know, J, folks got cars and received a lot of incentives for completing the program and doing what they were supposed to do. A lot of the mothers who came through those programs are now my friends on Facebook. Dr. H was the evaluator over these programs under community actions. Those programs worked; some of them are teachers, about 10 of them bought homes from me, so they went from welfare to home owner. They have gone back to help others along the way because a lot of these teens today have mothers and fathers who are out there in them streets on drugs, crazy. So, it’s kids raising kids, and it is so sad. A lot of grandparents and aunties have to stand in the gap for these teens. Some don’t have anyone to stand in the gap for them.”

Parental Guidance and Support and Its Importance

Parental guidance is important to any teen's life; however, it is detrimental for teens who had become parents (Burke & Liston, 1994). One of the questions to each participant was, "Where did you go for support?" The responses to this question were overwhelming and filled with emotions for some.

Participant 1 stated,

I had limited support from my family and friends. My mom and dad felt like I had let them down, but they did not neglect me. I was totally responsible for my baby day in and day out. My dad gave me more emotionally support as he was more comforting to my needs and helped me more with my baby. My mother just went along with it because she was there.

Participant 2 responded to the same question.

During my pregnancy, my mom was there as best as she could be. She was very disappointed. She talked about it as if it wasn't really real to her. It wasn't real to her until she started taking me to my appointments. As for family support, I did not have emotional support, but family was there to help financially. My grandmother showed me a sign of encouragement. She was the last person I wanted to disappoint. She told me having this baby did not have to stop me.

Participant 3 stated, "I hid my pregnancy from everybody, but when my family found out, they shunned me and disowned me." Participant 3 also shared about her one uncle who never turned his back on her and was there supporting her and encouraging her throughout her teen parenthood years; "He was more like a father in my life rather than an uncle."

Participant 4 stated, "I received support from my family. The support I received

was mainly emotional, financial and prayer. This was the best support I could have received at that time. It helped me and prepared me for my journey”

Other teen mother participants received support from their grandmothers, who were their mother figures due to other circumstances. This was due to 3 out of the 9 women being a product of a teen mother. Those women were raised by either their grandmothers or aunts. As noted in Chapter 2, family support is helpful for the success of the teen mother especially from grandmothers because they tend to have more influence on teen mothers and show them how to parent (Chase-Lansdale, Brooks, & Zamsky, 1994).

Findings for Research Question 4

What strategies do former teen mothers recommend to help teen mothers today? Many of the participants expressed gratitude for the programs that helped them reach their success. Many participants expressed concern for teen mothers of today. They all realized the programs are far and few between; mainly due to lack of funding. The theme that emerged from research question 4:

Socioeconomic. Teen mothers expressed concerns regarding programs and what these programs should include. Turney et al. (2011) 2011 found concerns regarding lower educational levels, higher rates of poverty, and poorer life outcomes for children.

Socioeconomic

Although the number of teen births are still decreasing, the teen mothers of today would benefit from some of the programs the participants talked about in their interview.

Participant 2 stated,

I would say forgive yourself first, then stop listening to the negativity that lives in your head. I think we tell and retell ourselves what others want us to believe, and

that becomes our truth. Well it's not; plus, people have been having children for centuries, it's ok. Second, be who you wished you would have seen as a child. Our children look up to us and will follow our steps. Make them count and don't be afraid to change and accept something different for yourself and your child that as a child you didn't have.

Participant 2 continued,

We need quality affordable childcare job training, and mentoring. Proper mentors would help identify those goals and the support needed to achieve them. Financial stability is key also. Someone that will help them realize that that child will need money for college or skill trade and saving is a large part of raising a family. I also encourage that they surround themselves with someone who will be honest with them while supporting their hopes.

Participant 3 responded to this question in this way,

My recommendation for any teen mom would be, don't allow society, family and friends to define you due to a mistake you have made. Life will definitely be challenging due to their current situation as a teen mom, but if they set in place a goal and be committed to it all things will be possible to achieve. I feel that teen moms will need a strong support system from those who truly would invest, challenge, and encourage them to move forward.

Participant 1 expressed the importance of staying motivated, focused, and keeping goals in mind. Participant 5 said to “remember it is not about you, but your child.”

Participant 6 stated,

Success is many things to many people, but to me, I define it as the ability to meet my goals. I define it in my own life it was my willingness to become the greatest

version of myself, to show up authentically and to embrace the challenges we all face in life to not only survive, but thrive. My children have been my greatest success. The ability to look into family patterns and behaviors that were unhealthy and toxic and to overcome and challenge belief systems. I believe that relationships are our most valuable treasure.

Participant 10 stated,

I don't define success as what the dictionary defines as success. Success has a different meaning for different people. Success for me is defined by setting goals and accomplishing those goals. It's not about being the richest or most popular person in the world, but having achieved what I set out to do, living comfortably, being someone for my children to look up to. Knowing my kids are going to be ok in this life after all we've been through as a family. That's success for me.

Participant 10's suggestion for teen mothers of today was

I would advise any teen mother to keep pushing, keep moving, keep hustling. Never give up no matter what obstacle you face. Your child is a blessing. Will it be hard, ABSOLUTELY! Will there be tears, ABSOLUTELY! But stay focused. Stay driven and it will all pay off in the end. Teen mothers today need a plan to better yourself and to stick with that plan. They need a great support system and when they see that they don't have it, it's ok to cut negative people off. Stop looking to social media for validation. Take classes there's so many programs to help teen mothers. Learn about finances and savings. These are things I wasn't taught but I make sure I have drilled into my children.

Summary

In summary, the purpose of this this study was to investigate women's

experiences about being teenage mothers who overcame challenges and have become successful in their academic and professional pursuits while raising their children. This chapter included participant profiles and responses from the interviews. All the data was obtained through conducting semi-structured interviews for this qualitative study. The interviews were then transcribed in order to get rich text and data. The researcher then listened to these interviews repeatedly to grasp the important and profound responses to better answer the research questions for this study. Following listening to the interviews, the researcher began looking for common themes by completing bracketing and note taking; journaling. An analysis data revealed that participants define success in various ways, and that teen motherhood does not define a person. Teen motherhood can create barriers, and it is up to each individual how to overcome these barriers.

Chapter 5 will provide a summary regarding the results, interpretations and limitations, and will discuss implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate women's experiences about being teenage mothers who had overcome challenges and had become successful in their academic and professional pursuits while raising their children. As the researcher advanced through this study, there were other studies related to this topic. The studies were not exactly aligned the same, but contained relevant literature related to this topic.

There is a lack in research that focuses on women who have overcome barriers and have surpassed the odds of being dependent on government assistant programs, living in poverty and unemployed. According to the National Campaign to prevent pregnancy, they stated in the research teen mothers who do not earn a high school diploma, their children are 64% likely to grow up in poverty (Greenwell, 2010).

The researcher of this study followed the qualitative methodology of phenomenology by conducting semi-structured interviews for the purpose of collecting data from the participants. The participants were of different nationalities; 1 Caucasian, 7 African Americans, and 2 Islanders, and all were adult women over the age of thirty. The participants of this research became mothers between the ages of twelve and 18 years of age. Now, they are all adult women whose age range is thirty-four to sixty-six, and eight are employed, and one is retired.

Summary of Findings

The outcome of this study validated that teen mothers do experience success whether it was graduate high school, attending college, graduating from college, obtaining advanced degrees, not living in poverty, or sustaining steady employment. There were four research questions that guided this study, and because of the rich data obtained, this research was successful.

Although previous studies stated negative outcome for teen mothers, this study revealed a different outcome. Ten out of 10 either graduated from high school or obtained their GED. Eight out of 10 participants attended college and of those eight, six of them have at least a bachelor's degree, and one has a doctoral degree. Two out of 10 had repeat pregnancies, and 6 out of 10 attended a teen parenting program.

Programing was important to those six participants who had attended a teen parenting program. Each participant admitted programming was very important for several reasons. The programs assisted them with educational attainment, provided financial guidance, parenting skills, and assisted with employment and overall support.

Limitations of Findings

This research explored the lived experiences of perceived success factors and barriers for teen mothers. Limitations were used to identify weaknesses of a study (Creswell, 2012). Limitations might include inadequate measures of variables, loss or lack of participants, small sample sizes, errors in measurement and other factors typically related to data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2015). The researcher identified two limitations: small sample size and self-reported data.

Small sample size. Creswell (2015) stated it is typical for qualitative research to use a small sample size. The larger the sample size, the more complex the research becomes. The smaller the size, the more in depth the information the researcher can obtain about each participant (p. 208). The researcher obtained in-depth data that better explained why and how teen mothers were successful in overcoming barriers that were presented in their lives while being a teen mother.

Self-reporting data. Not only was the sample size limited, but the data collected from the participants could potentially be an additional limitation. Because this study

included semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked participants to recall a certain time period to respond to the questions asked during the interview. Each participant gave an account of their past experiences; however, it cannot be determined if their own perceptions were accurate.

Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

Teen mothers have been portrayed in a negative light for decades. Unfortunately, few researchers have looked at teen mothers who are now adults to study how they survived teen motherhood and how they defied the odds. Since starting this study, the researcher found several stories of women who were teen mothers who are now successful professionals.

When conducting phenomenology interviews, it would be highly suggested to probe deeper into the experiences of teen mothers. Future research should look more into family dynamics and how the dynamics affect the decisions of teen mothers. Also, it is important to look at teen fathers and what could help them be successful men.

Another recommendation would be to conduct a program analysis of the programs teen mothers were a part of prior to completing high school. Probing deeper into teen parent programs would be beneficial by looking at what is being offered and what their yearly rates of success are. The success rates of teen parent programs would help future researchers develop additional programs for teen mothers or tweak current programs by being more successful and having higher educational attainment rates. In addition to these recommendations, further research is needed to look at teen mothers who are not from low income families and possibly middle class, two-parent homes.

The researcher came across two stories about successful professional women.

There was a story in the *Black Life, Arts and Culture (B.L.A.C.)* written in March 2014

regarding three African American women who are now successful in the Detroit, Michigan area (Ivana, 2014). The three women tell their stories of how they defied the odds of overcoming barriers as a single teen mother. All three women graduated high school, attended and graduated college; one became a medical doctor and has been practicing for 25 years. Another woman attended medical school and is in her third-year of nursing residency, and the other has a bachelor's in journalism (Ivana, 2014) and runs a nonprofit organization.

Another success story is about an African American woman who became pregnant at 14 years of age. This young lady's family dynamics were not the best, and there was a lot of negativity. When she told her family about her pregnancy, they disowned her and told her she would end up being one of those girls who has a lot of kids and lives on welfare. She worked while completing high school in order to pay for college. She was still in contact with her family, and when she shared with them she wanted to go to law school and become a lawyer, she was told she was not that smart. A year later she was in law school. She was offered an internship at a law office, and her last year of law school, they offered her a job (Pierce, 2011).

Although the teen birth rates have declined, this is not the time to cut funding for overall educational programs. There are reportedly 27 births per 1000 girls ages 15-19 (Mollborn, 2017). Therefore, it would be beneficial to have readily available programs designed for teen mothers.

It is clear that not all teen mothers live their adult lives on welfare and are unemployed with no high school education. Success for these women is all in what they make of it. Meaning, having a positive attitude, motivation, and resilience will take a person far.

The purpose of this study was to look at the experiences of teen mothers and how they overcame barriers. The study was able to meet its purpose and reached the conclusion that teen mothers can be successful adult women.

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[2011_11_01_RB_TeenParentsFC.pdf&p=DevEx,5068.1](http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Child_Trends-2011_11_01_RB_TeenParentsFC.pdf&p=DevEx,5068.1)

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Appendix A
Probing Questions

Probing Questions

1. What is your current age?
2. What is your highest level of education reached?
3. Are you currently employed?
 - a. Full time
 - b. Part time
4. What is your current income range?
 - a. Less than 25,000
 - b. 25,001-55,000
 - c. 55,001 – 75,000
 - d. more than 75,000

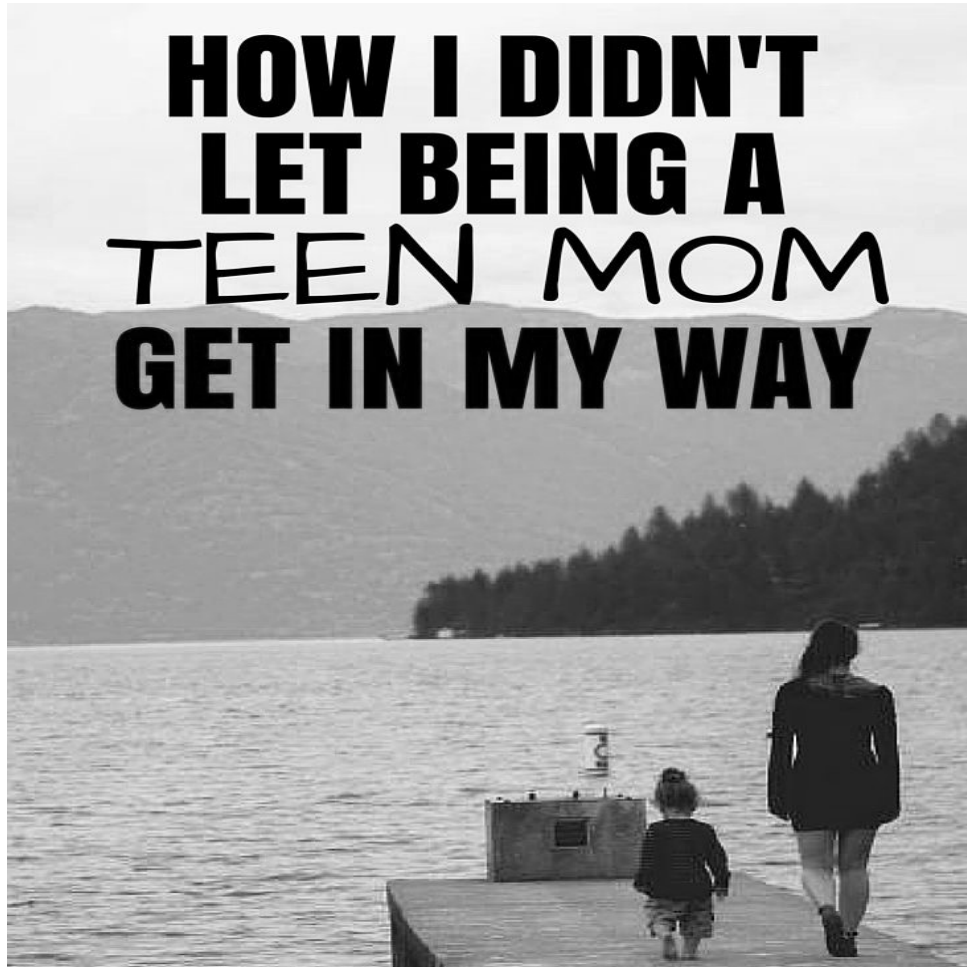
Semi Structured Interview Questions

5. How would you describe your childhood?
6. How were your teenage years?
7. Were you a product/result of a teen mom? If yes, did your mother complete high school?
8. How old were you when you found out you were pregnant?
9. Who did you first tell?
10. Did you complete High School? If yes, did you complete on time or were you delayed?
11. Did you participate in a teen parent program?
12. If no, where did you go for support?
13. What type of support did you receive?
14. Describe how your teachers were towards you after learning you were pregnant
15. Did you receive government support?
16. Did you ever consider dropping out of school?
17. When and how did you make the decision to attend college?
18. What was your motivation?
19. How did you stay motivated?
20. Did you have a repeat pregnancy as a teen?
21. How has being a teen mom shaped you into the woman you are today?
22. Who do you credit your success to?
23. How does it feel to tell your story?

Appendix B

Flyer

Flyer for Recruitment



Hello

My name is Janet Marks, MS, a doctoral candidate, and I am inviting you to participate in my dissertation research study about adult women who became a teen mother between the ages of 13-18. In addition, I would be very appreciative if you would inform potential participants who may be eligible and might be interested in the opportunity to share their story.

In order to participate in this study, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Identified as an adult woman who was a teen mother between the ages of 13-18
- 2) Must have been a single teen mother
- 3) Are currently employed
- 4) High School graduate

If you or someone you know might be interested, please contact me at 321-549-8440 or by email at: jm3370@mynova.nsu.edu