Teen Mother Perceptions of Support Program Influences on Self-efficacy, Parenting-efficacy, and School Success

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We hereby certify that this dissertation, submitted by your name, conforms to acceptable standards and fully fulfills the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor in Education from College of Saint Mary

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Dedication

To all the amazing and courageous teen mothers

who endure many challenges, yet persevere.

You hold a special place in my heart.

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Abstract

Teenage mothers endure many challenges and are at a greater risk of dropping out of school than their non-parenting peers. There are many well documented reasons for dropping out of school. However, there are some teen mothers who remain in school through graduation. Through qualitative analysis, this study examined the influences of support programs on self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success. The researcher explored support programs and reasons that some teen mothers, faced with varied challenges, manage to graduate from high school. The study design consisted of five interviews with females who were teen mothers as high school students. The narratives provided perceptions into the challenges encountered during high school as a teen mother. The view points of the young women also present a framework for exploring support program elements that most influenced their ability to graduate and develop self-efficacy and parenting-efficacy.

Key words: support programs, teen mothers, school success, self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, artifacts

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Despite the decrease in teen pregnancy rates for most of the United States and more progressive approaches from schools and the community in supporting teen mothers, there remain concerns for the numerous challenges faced by this group. Specifically, there continue to be inconsistencies with effective assistance and understanding within traditional high schools (Hallman, 2007; Lutrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004). Title IX protects the educational rights of teen mothers. School officials across the nation lack understanding of the act or continue to discourage teen mothers from participating in activities, pressure them into attending alternative schools, or continue to label them (Egan et al., 2012). Voices of teen mothers should be considered by school officials when making decisions pertaining to them and their overall well-being and success (Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005).

Educators should remember that teen mothers are multifaceted and are counting on them for guidance and support (Hallman, 2007). Cook-Sather (2002) focused on perspectives of those most directly affected by educational policy, the students. In order to support students, school officials and educators must hear what they have to say about their learning. Furthermore, Cook-Sather (2002) promoted for the authorization of student perspectives by changing the mindset and structure in educational institutions and relationships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore perceptions of women about the influential elements of support programs that impacted their development of self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and high school success, as teen mothers, prior to graduation from an urban Midwestern high school. Teen mothers rely on their schools and communities to assist them with strengthening self and parenting-efficacy. School officials endure challenges of

meeting graduation rates combined with poor school performance and increases in absenteeism (ASCD, 2011). Research on how to create a school climate that influences school engagement, academic achievement, and strengthening efficacy for teen mothers is becoming more important.

Marginalized youth generally have less access to the education, services, and supports they need to develop into fully productive, healthy, and engaged adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Adolescent Health, 2012). For several teen mothers, they are not equally able to access the information, guidance and support they need to act on their full capabilities. There are teen mothers who succeed despite enduring many challenges and facing much vulnerability. By providing opportunities for teen mothers to explain their perspectives, schools and communities can perhaps learn more about sustaining student attendance, participation, and overall successes in schools that might not have been previously understood. Teen mothers, who have succeeded, have much to share about their lived experiences and might be able to provide insight to what positively works as a support.

Background and Rationale

Despite the recent decrease in teen pregnancy and birth rates in most states, the United States continues to have one of the highest rates among developed countries (Hamilton & Ventura, 2012; Kost & Henshaw, 2013; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2012; 2013). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), underlying causes for the decrease are not known as well as whether the decrease will continue. With the U.S. rates remaining up to nine times higher than other developed nations, teen birth rates continue to be a concern (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). There are potential increases in the socioeconomic burden of teen pregnancy and childbearing and potential negative impacts on teen

health and socialization (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; 2013; Holcombe, Peterson, & Manlove, 2009; Rosen, 2010).

Teen mothers remain at high risk for dropping out of school. Several research studies have found a significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and dropping out of high school. Hallman (2007), Luttrell (2003), Marcy (2003), and Pillow (2004) also provide numerous reasons for teen mothers not completing or leaving school early: lack of child care, family pressures, transportation difficulties, and mental health issues are some of the reasons.

Dropouts are much more likely to:

• Be unemployed or have lower-paying jobs;

• Partake in high-risk behaviors such as premature sexual activity, poor use of contraception, early pregnancy, delinquency, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide;

• Have financial difficulties and live in poverty;

• Utilize public assistance and social services;

• Serve time in prison;

• Be unhealthy (physically or psychologically);

• Be single parents;

• Have children who drop out of school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; 2013; Rapp-Paglicci, Dulmus, & Wodarski, 2004).

With the increased demands in schooling needed for well-paying employment, receiving a high school diploma and pursuing higher education are becoming essential for financial success (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012). Only about half of teen mothers get high school diplomas by age 22 compared to 89% of non-parenting young women (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012; Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010). In addition, 38% of teen mothers who had a child before turning 18 were less likely to graduate from high school, and 19% of those who drop out, earn a GED (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012; Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010).

During the 1920s through the late 1960s, pregnant and teen mothers did not receive education equal to their peers. School officials routinely expelled or excluded the teens; often, families secretly sent them away to maternity homes (Anastasiow, 1987; Foster & Miller, 1980; Scholl, 2007). Maternity homes provided secret housing for unwed pregnant teens to hide the shame of the family (Manserus, 1998). Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 protects the educational rights of pregnant and parenting teens (Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2001). The Act prohibits the expulsion or exclusion of students from any school activity or program based on pregnancy, parenthood, or marital status (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Egan et al., 2012). The federal government, by passing Title IX, enforced the importance of creating equal educational opportunities for parenting teens; the Act reduces barriers that may interfere and encourages academic learning and achievement (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Egan et al., 2012). Unfortunately, school officials across the nation continue to discourage pregnant and parenting teens from participating in activities,

pressure them to attend alternative programs or schools, and penalize them for pregnancy related absences (Egan et al., 2012).

In addition to the pressures of completing school, teen mothers endure other challenges while trying to balance their roles and responsibilities. These challenges impact the well-being of the teen and her child. Some researchers documented teen mothers endure social disapproval, depression, social isolation, and intergenerational family conflict (Herman, 2008; Kalil & Danziger, 2007; Pinto-Foltz, Lodgsdon, & Derrick, 2011; Sadler et al., 2007; Shanok & Miller, 2007). Furthermore, teen mothers tend to have low self-efficacy and low parenting-efficacy (Kalil & Danziger, 2007).

Society has the potential to provide programs, support, and interventions that improve learning, health awareness, parenting skills, and the efficacy of the teen mother (Amin, Browne, Ahmed, & Sato, 2006; Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Goyer, 2004; Rosen, 2010; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005; Sadler et al., 2007). The Department of Human Services, in September 2010, under the Pregnancy Assistance Fund, granted 24 million dollars to stakeholders of 17 states to support parenting teens continuing their high school or postsecondary education (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). Stakeholders consisted of high schools, institutions of higher education, and community agencies (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). As a competitive state grant program, the fund provides a network of support services to assist in completing educational degrees and to offer access to health care, family housing, and other supports (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012).

Despite the structure and approach of schools for teen mothers operating in a more progressive manner than in the early 20th century, parenting teens have been excluded for

decades (Pillow, 2004). Parenting mothers are multifaceted; they are mothers, learners, and adolescents (Hallman, 2007). Educators, policymakers, and society should consider the academic environment, social and economic stressors, and the well-being of the teens as critical factors and challenges of parenting. Educators and officials have the responsibility to develop alternative interventions, support programs, and policies that enhance the quality of education and services provided to teen mothers.

Problem Statement

Research has led to the development of alternative interventions, support programs, and policies in an attempt to enhance the quality of education and services provided to teen mothers (Amin et al., 2006; Bos & Fellerath 1997; Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Marcy, 2003; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005; U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2006). Programs vary on their focal issue and location. Some focus on building school based support and curriculum; others are community based and center their attention on teen mother wellness and parenting skills development (Amin et al., 2006; Kalil & Danziger, 2007; Pinto-Foltz et al., 2011; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005; Sadler et al., 2007; Shanok and Miller, 2007). There are some programs that consist of collaboration between schools and community agencies (Marcy, 2003). Some states have passed welfare policies based on school attendance and successes of teen mothers (Bos & Fellerath 1997; Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

There is limited research about the perceptions of teen mothers regarding support programs and the combined impact on efficacy and school success, demonstrating the need for detailed exploration for the effects and influences of support programs. Marginalized youth generally have less access to the education, services, and supports they need to develop into fully

productive, healthy, and engaged adults (Office of Adolescent Health, 2012). For several teen mothers, they are not equally able to access the information, guidance and support they need to act on their full capabilities (Office of Adolescent Health, 2012). There continues to remain a lack of knowledge of the essential components of successful programs for pregnant and parenting teens, moreover, programs specifically designed to support pregnant and parenting teens are limited (Clay, Paluzzi, & Max, 2011). Pregnant and parenting teens need strong support networks and a comprehensive array of resources to help them become effective parents and parent effectively and become self-sufficient adults (Clay et al., 2011). There are teen mothers who succeed despite enduring many challenges and facing much vulnerability. Exploring the lived experiences of teen mothers who have succeeded in completing high school provided insight into what motivated them to remain engaged in school and successfully graduate.

Research Questions

The questions guiding this research study were the following:

1. What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain self-efficacy?

2. What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain parenting-efficacy?

3. What are the perceptions of women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, regarding the influence of support programs on school success?

Participants of this study were young adults who were teen mothers during high school. These questions provided a base concerning perceptions of their support programs while they were teen mothers. Interviews and further questioning probed for more information in order to gain a greater understanding of self and parenting-efficacy and school success from the teen mothers' perspectives. Understanding significant elements of support programs and efficacy attainment might help schools and community agencies to better assist teen mothers with their challenges, to offer the best and most supportive solutions to help young mothers stay in school, to strengthen child-parent relationships, and to provide hope for teen mothers to be positive healthy contributors to their community and society.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

Support programs offer educational opportunities and services provided in a caring and encouraging environment to help teen mothers to help endure and overcome challenges. Some parent support programs are school-based which provide parenting knowledge, support, and behavioral modeling for teen mothers (Sadler et al., 2007; Williams & Sadler, 2001). Other support programs involve community mentors, outside agencies administering support, or the collaboration of school and community support through skills training, wellness development, family involvement, and providing financial incentives (Bos & Fellerath, 1997; Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Marcy, 2003; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005; U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

Support programs in this study pertained to community programs that collaborate with schools to offer opportunities for teen mothers. If the school has a parenting class, the

collaboration pertains to supplemental lessons to an existing curriculum. If the school does not have a class, the program representatives collaborate with the facilitator of a teen parenting group to provide additional support and awareness for the teen mothers. The programs have consistent contact with the mothers at school as well as offering services off-site. Services consist of parenting skills and child development, providing a mentor, and learning how to care for oneself.

Traditional Schools are public high schools within an urban Midwestern city. The schools are characterized by an organizational structure to education with a focus on academics (Ellison & Trickett, 1978). Emphasized are administrators' leadership skills and teachers' authority in the teaching process; students are not strongly involved in the decision making process or curriculum development (Ellison & Trickett, 1978). For the purpose of this study, traditional schools represented the regular public high school approach to education. Any teen support programs were additional supplements to the curriculum.

Alternative schools are schools that provide a comprehensive program with an integrated range of support services to parenting teens separate from the typical delivery system designed to deal separately with their needs (Amin et al., 2006). Alternative schools provide students to have a greater role in the learning and decision-making process (Ellison & Trickett, 1978). For this study, alternative schools provided academic courses in a non-traditional setting with flexibility in scheduling. Flexibility in time spent at the alternate setting and courses taken varied to accommodate the availability of the teen mother. Support programs were additional supplements to the curriculum.

Teen mothers are women who have graduated from high school, are between the ages of 19-24 years, and became teen mothers during high school, between the ages of 13-19. UNICEF (2008) defines teenage pregnancy as a teenage female between the ages of 13-19, becoming pregnant who has not reached legal adulthood. For the purpose of this study, the women were in high school and within the ages of 13 and 19 years when they became teen mothers.

Self-efficacy is the teen mother's self perception of having a voice and being effective (Sherer & Adams, 1983). Self-efficacy encompasses social, nurturing, and general tasks as well as psychological and physical well-being (Kalil & Danziger, 2007; McDonald et al., 2009). Bandura, as cited in Griffin (1998), defines self-efficacy as beliefs about one's ability to successfully perform a given behavior and assists in determining possible initiation of behavior, how much effort will be put forth, and behavior maintenance while enduring challenges. Griffin (1998) identifies Hackett and Betz (1981) as the first to propose that self-efficacy might be of particular significance in understanding women's development, while Lent and Hackett (1987) later suggest low self-efficacious persons, regardless of actual ability, tend to relate failure experiences to personal ability deficits. Female adolescents already may be suffering from these effects prior to becoming teen mothers and additional obstacles serve to reinforce those beliefs after their babies are born (Griffin, 1998).

For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy incorporated aspects of the definitions provided by the different researchers. Self-efficacy pertained to perceptions of teen mothers on: enduring challenges, being actively listened to, and having confidence in themselves. Self-efficacy development focused on the level of determination and motivation of the teen mother. Strong efficacy pertained to a teen mother having strong personal skills to perform tasks and the

belief in her ability to succeed. Low self-efficacy was a result of the teen mother doubting herself and her ability to overcome obstacles and find success.

Parenting-efficacy is teen mothers' self-perceptions of strength and fulfillment in their motherhood role (Hanna, 2001). Parenting-efficacy relates to the degree of parenting stress and irritation the teen mother perceives in relation to her interactions with her child as well as her overall parenting role (Kalil & Danziger, 2007). For the purpose of this study, parenting-efficacy pertained to perceptions of teen mothers in their ability and confidence in being effective parents. Strong parenting-efficacy referred to a teen mother having strong understanding and knowledge in child rearing and in performing parenting tasks. She believed in her ability to provide for and raise her child with great success. Low parenting-efficacy was a result of the teen mother doubting herself in raising her child or children. She did not believe in her ability to overcome parenting obstacles and struggles with high levels of stress, depression, and anxiety. Table 1 provides a comparison of self-efficacy and parenting-efficacy.

Table 1.

Comparison of Self-efficacy and Parenting-efficacy

Self-efficacy	**Parenting-efficacy**
Self- perceptions of abilities	Self-perceptions of parenting abilities
Level of determination and motivation	Motherhood role
Strong and low levels	Strong and low levels

Self-efficacy sources: Bandura, 1986; Griffin, 1998; Lent and Hackett, 1987; Sherer &Adams; 1983. Parenting-efficacy sources: from Hanna, 2001; Kalil & Danziger, 2000.

School Success is high school graduation. The teen mother achieved school requirements needed for graduation. Success was a result of improved school attendance and

grades, earning credits, achieving average to above average grades, and remaining on grade level status (Williams & Sadler, 2001). For several teens, regardless of school status prior to pregnancy, expectations of motherhood led to reevaluations of priorities and motivated them to remain in school or return after delivery as well as be determined to improve grades, graduate, and consider attending college (SmithBattle, 2007).

Artifacts are two to three objects that hold significant value to the teen mothers. The objects represented the high school period of the participants and offered a new dimension to their perspectives as well as provided for added material culture (New York Libraries, 2013). An artifact can provide insight into the lived experiences of the participants' histories (New York Libraries, 2013). They are material evidence of what the teen mothers' value and believe (Norum, 2008).

Assumptions

The researcher utilized the qualitative paradigm. Assumptions are indicative of the preparation and progression of the researcher for the study. Social constructivist worldview include assumptions that individuals construct meaning from the world in which they live and work; meanings are multiple and varied (Creswell, 2008). Researchers search for complexity of views and rely on participants views of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2008). Reality has multiple perspectives based on participant views and explanations of a particular event (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2005). Participants of the study had their own perceptions and shared their own voices about experiences with teen support programs and having self and parenting-efficacy, basing their perceptions from their social and historical perspectives (Creswell, 2008).

Epistemological assumption permitted the researcher to collaborate and spend time with participants and reduced the distance with that being researched in the qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 2013). Methodological assumptions of qualitative research presume that research design is emerging, inductive, and formed from the researcher's data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). Design of the study materialized from the literature review and interview data collection. Participants answered interview questions and shared their experiences truthfully. The researcher sought to understand and interpret findings with the knowledge that she has been shaped by her own experiences and background (Creswell, 2008). There were no preconceived notions of apparent themes that may emerge from the data. Themes transpired from a comparison of the literature review and participant quotes.

Summary

The researcher explored teen mother perceptions of support programs influences on their development of self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success. Continued challenges and their effects on teen mothers as well as inconsistencies with school implementation of Title IX, demonstrate the need to continue caring about teen mothers (Egan et al., 2012; Lutrell 2003; Pillow, 2004; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005). Stressors of becoming a teen mother impact learning, high school diploma attainment, and wellness. Teen mothers depend on the support of their schools and community programs to assist with the strengthening of efficacy and skills needed to overcome challenges. Social constructivist worldview assumptions find meaning from interactions with participants and from complexity of views (Creswell, 2008). This study focused on teen mothers' perceptions, having lived through the phenomenon being studied, voices of teen mothers provided for a more detailed examination (Hallman, 2007). With the

varied options available to teen mothers, further inquiry of support programs and their influences on school success and efficacy was required.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The United States continues to have one of the highest rates of teen births among developed countries (Kost & Henshaw, 2013; Hamilton & Ventura, 2012; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013, 2012). Teen mothers remain high risk for dropping out of school. Economic hardships, lack of child care, family pressures, transportation difficulties, and mental health issues are some reasons teen mothers drop out of school (Hallman, 2007; Lutrell, 2003; Marcy, 2003; Pillow, 2004). Teen mothers attempt to balance several roles; they are mothers, learners, and adolescents (Hallman, 2007). Educators, policymakers, and society should consider the academic environment, social and economic stressors, and the well-being of the teens as critical factors and challenges of being a teen mother.

Teen mothers did not receive equal education as their peers during the 1920s through late 1960s. School officials routinely expelled or excluded the teens (Anastasiow, 1987; Foster & Miller, 1980; Scholl, 2007). Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 protects the educational rights of pregnant and parenting teens. The Act prohibits the expulsion or exclusion of students from any school activity or program based their pregnancy, parenthood, or marital status (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Egan et al., 2012). The federal government, by passing Title IX, enforced the importance of creating equal educational opportunities for pregnant and parenting teens, reduced barriers that may interfere, and encouraged academic learning and achievement (Egan et al., 2012). Unfortunately, school officials across the nation continue to be inconsistent with the implementation of the Act and continue to discourage teen mothers (Egan et al., 2012).

Teen mothers endure several challenges while trying to complete high school and balance their roles and responsibilities. These challenges impact the well-being of the teen and her child (Kalil & Danziger, 2007; Pinto-Foltz, Lodgsdon, & Derrick, 2011). Some researchers (Herman, 2008; Kalil & Danziger, 2007; Pinto-Foltz, Lodgsdon, & Derrick, 2011; Sadler et al., 2007; Shanok & Miller, 2007) documented that pregnant and parenting teens endure social disapproval, depression, social isolation, and intergenerational family conflict. Furthermore, teen mothers tend to have low self-efficacy and low parenting-efficacy (Kalil & Danziger, 2007). Teen pregnancy and parenting impact the teens' health and is linked with negative social and economic effects (Holcombe et al., 2009; Rosen, 2010).

Schools and communities have the potential to establish programs to assist with improving learning, parenting skills, self and parenting-efficacy, and wellness in teen mothers (Amin, Browne, Ahmed, & Sato, 2006; Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Goyer, 2004; Rosen, 2010; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005; Sadler et al., 2007). Educators and officials have the responsibility to develop alternative interventions, support programs, and policies that enhance the quality of education and services provided to teen mothers (Egan et al., 2012). The potential possibilities for teen mothers and their children demonstrate that there should be continued care and focus on teen childbearing.

Schooling for teen mothers is more progressive than in the early 20th century. Teen mothers have been excluded, isolated, and segregated from the learning environment in which other students take part (Pillow, 2004). To understand why teen mothers have been stigmatized as they have, it is first necessary to examine the historical background of teen motherhood.

Historical Context

Societal reasons for the cause of pregnant unwed teens have changed throughout the years. Foster and Miller (1980) provide societal reasoning for unwed teen pregnancy from the 1920s through the 1960s. During the 1920s, unwed teen pregnancy was a result of immorality, mental deficiency, or bad companions. Poverty and broken homes were listed as the main reasons for teen pregnancy in the 1930s. In the 1940s, psychological factors were the dominant causes, while in the 1950s delinquent behavior and a disturbed society were blamed. Eventually, during the late 1950s through to the 1960s, multiplicities of factors were considered; there was no longer a single or dominant cause (Foster & Miller, 1980).

Adolescence is a time of insecurity, struggle, and frequent turmoil. Teens undergo the establishment of sexual identity, independence, peer conformity, and self-image (Foster & Miller, 1980). The female teen focuses on her body as hormonal changes affect weight, body contours, and height; she learns to integrate these changes with her self-image (Foster & Miller, 1980). The ability of the teen to meet developmental changes directly affects the establishing of personal values and a strong sense of identity (Foster & Miller, 1980). The teen is able to become a mother even before she is fully aware of her body and before she develops a strong sense of identity. Prior to 1960s and 1970s, school curriculum did not provide teens with sexual education; school officials thought such programs would influence the teens into sexual activity if the matter was addressed (Anastasiow, 1987).

In the early 1960s, school officials recognized the increase of pregnancy at the high school level and enforced the dominant ethic of excluding pregnant girls (Anastasiow, 1987; Scholl, 2007). Low socio-economic students, for the most part, no longer received any form of education, while middle class pregnant girls, if their families requested, could have a teacher

visit at the home and allow for the continuation of the core school subjects (Anastasiow, 1987). Some middle class families secretly sent their pregnant teens to maternity homes (Scholl, 2007). Despite having some form of education, there were no teachings of child development or of parenting skills (Anastasiow, 1987). Overall, unwed pregnant or parenting teens were punished, blamed, and shamed (Scholl, 2007). According to Pillow (2004), before the 1970s, the term teen mother was not used; the focus was on unwed mothers of all ages.

Passing and Implementation of Title IX

In the later 1960s and early 1970s, as part of the civil rights movement and with the passing of Title IX, schools were pressured to create classes for pregnant students, especially with the increase of middle class students becoming pregnant (Anastasiow, 1987). The established school classes isolated pregnant teens from the rest of the student body, again due to the dominant thought that unwed pregnancy was morally wrong. Additionally, school officials segregated the pregnant teens due to the common thought that adolescents are highly suggestible; the concern was pregnant teens would influence their peers into becoming sexually active (Anastasiow, 1987; Scholl, 2007). On the contrary, the male partner was rarely excluded from school (Anastasiow, 1987). Some schools began to include instruction on child care with topics focusing on the feeding and bathing of the infant. Sex education was not part of the curriculum (Anastasiow, 1987).

During the 1970s, with the establishment of organizations such as Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the March of Dimes, and several other new programs that addressed physiological, developmental, genetic, and contraceptive information, some form of sex education developed (Anastasiow, 1987). The issue, however, was that schools only taught the information in home economics, a class limited to seniors and with females predominantly

registering to take it (Anastasiow, 1987). By that time, the majority of teen mothers 15 and under had already dropped out of school, particularly those living in poverty (Anastasiow, 1987). Schools in poverty stricken areas attempted to provide classes for the teens. The classes focused on middle-class moral thinking. School staff was not culturally proficient and there was little understanding of the realities of how the pregnant and parenting teen lived in poverty (Anastasiow, 1987). Along with the lack of understanding of poverty, school staff continued to teach a value judgment in their programs. The programs emphasized the immorality of teen pregnancy, illegitimacy, and sexual intercourse. There was an underlying thought that the pregnant female was bad and the blame was rarely placed on the male (Anastasiow, 1987).

Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, more schools allowed pregnant teens to attend regular classes. There was more pressure for them to be placed in separate classes. With a lack of understanding and an underlying label of being immoral, most pregnant girls dropped out of school, especially those living in poverty. Additionally, schools' interpretation and implementation of Title IX varied and were inconsistent. Even though Title IX bars discrimination against pregnant and parenting students, there was, and continues to be, a lack of awareness and enforcement effort to eradicate the discrimination (Egan et al., 2012).

Egan et al. (2012) demonstrated how several schools across the nation continued to bar pregnant and parenting students from activities and programs, pressured them to attend alternative schools, and penalized them for pregnancy-related absences. Title IX, which passed in 1972 and became effective July 12, 1975, was the landmark law that banned sex discrimination in federally funded education programs and activities (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Egan et al., 2012; Shaver, 2005; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). Title IX is a significant part of the civil rights movement (Anastasiow, 1987; Egan et al., 2012; U.S.

Department of Justice, 2001). There is specific language governing provision of the education for school-age mothers:

> [A] recipient shall not discriminate against any student, or exclude any student from its education program or activity, including any class or extracurricular activity on the basis of such student's pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy or recovery there from, unless the student requests voluntarily in a separate portion of the program (106.40, b as cited in Shaver, 2005).

Four decades after its passage, too few school officials, guardians, and students are aware that Title IX prohibits sex discrimination against pregnant and parenting teens (Egan et al., 2012). In general, the law mandates that schools provide all students who are, have been, or might be pregnant, or are parenting, equal access to school activities and programs, and to treat these students the same way as other students in the school (Egan et al., 2012). The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, from 1972-1975, translated Title IX into specific regulations; President Ford signed the Title IX regulations on May 27, 1975 (Valentin, 1997).

According to Title IX regulations, school systems are required to: a) provide equal access to school for pregnant and parenting students and treat pregnancy like any other temporary disability, b) provide equal access to extracurricular activities for pregnant and parenting students, c) excuse pregnancy related absences for as long as is prescribed by the student's medical doctor, d) state that any separate programs for pregnant or parenting students must be voluntary and schools must offer opportunities equal to those offered to non-pregnant and non-parenting students; e) designate a coordinator who will be responsible for overseeing compliance; and f) nondiscrimination policies and grievance procedures must be made public

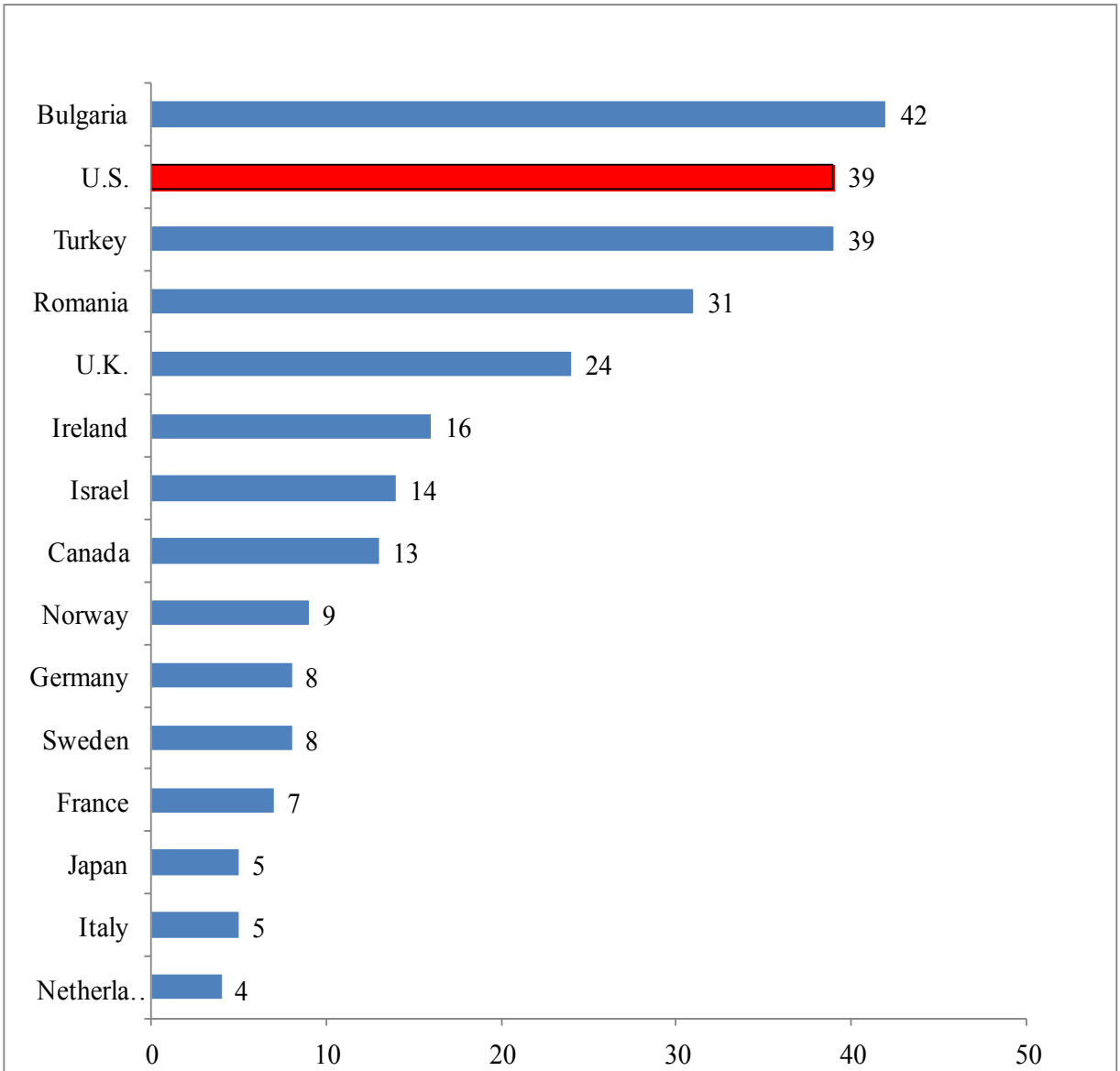
and school systems, after self-evaluating, modify practices that have not complied (Department of Justice, 2001).

Despite detailed regulations, policies, and prohibitions of Title IX, discrimination continues to exist. Inconsistencies of school officials' implementation of Title IX and the impact on pregnant and parenting students demonstrate the need for more awareness and enforcement (Egan et al., 2012). Furthermore, districts, and more specifically schools, should provide additional support in extension to Title IX, and encouragement that can improve pregnant and parenting teens' chances for success. In addition to the pressures of completing school, pregnant and parenting teens endure other challenges while trying to balance their roles and responsibilities.

Challenges of Teen Pregnancy and Parenting

In recent years, although rates vary from state to state, teen pregnancy rates and births in the United States have been declining. The declining rates also reflect, in part, differences in the makeup of race, socio-economic status, and overall population composition (Hamilton & Ventura, 2012). The United States continues to have one the highest rates among developed countries (Kost & Henshaw, 2013; Hamilton & Ventura, 2012; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013, 2012). Figure 1 displays U.S. rates remaining up to nine times higher than other developed nations based on 2010 data. Teen birth rates continue to be a concern due to the potential increase in the socioeconomic burden of teen pregnancy and childbearing (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; 2013), with the numerous impacts of teen pregnancy on society in general, and more particularly on parenting teens and their children.

Figure 1. Birth Rates Among Industrialized Nations

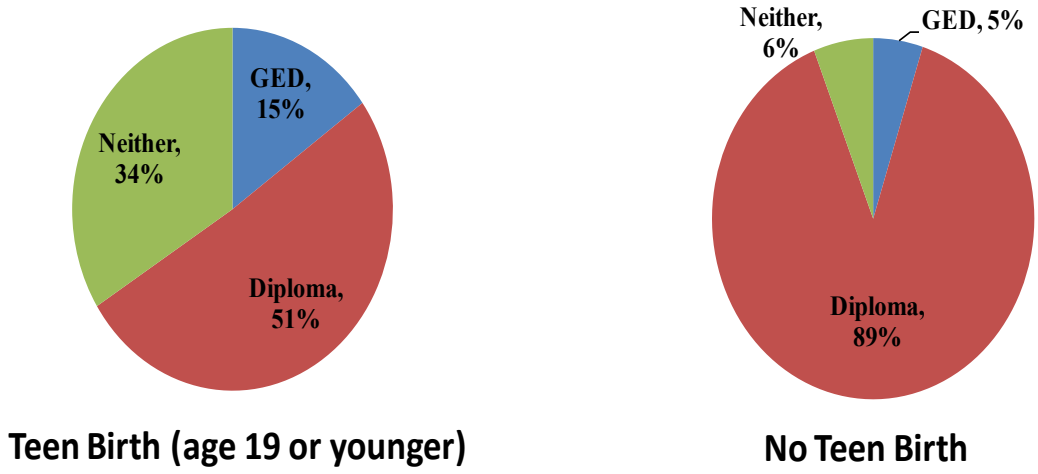


Center for Disease Control used this chart to provide data on live births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 years. Data results for international nations adapted from United Nations demographic yearbook 2008 available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008.htm. U.S. data , provided by the National Center for Health Statistics, adapted from "Births: Preliminary data for 2009, " by B.E Hamilton, J..A.Martin, and S .J. Ventura, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, (59)3. Coypright 2010 by the National Center for Health Statistics.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2012) and the Center for Disease Control (2010) stated that the number one reason, selected by female teens, for dropping out of school, was pregnancy. Not only are teen mothers more likely to drop out of high school than any other group, they are more likely to become dependent on welfare (Marcy, 2003). Receiving

a high school diploma and pursuing higher education are becoming essential for financial success (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012). Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the percentages of teen mothers who earn a diploma or GED by age 22 compared to those who are not teen mothers, provided from research by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2012) and Perper, Peterson, and Manlove (2010).

Figure 2. Diploma or GED Attainment by Age 22

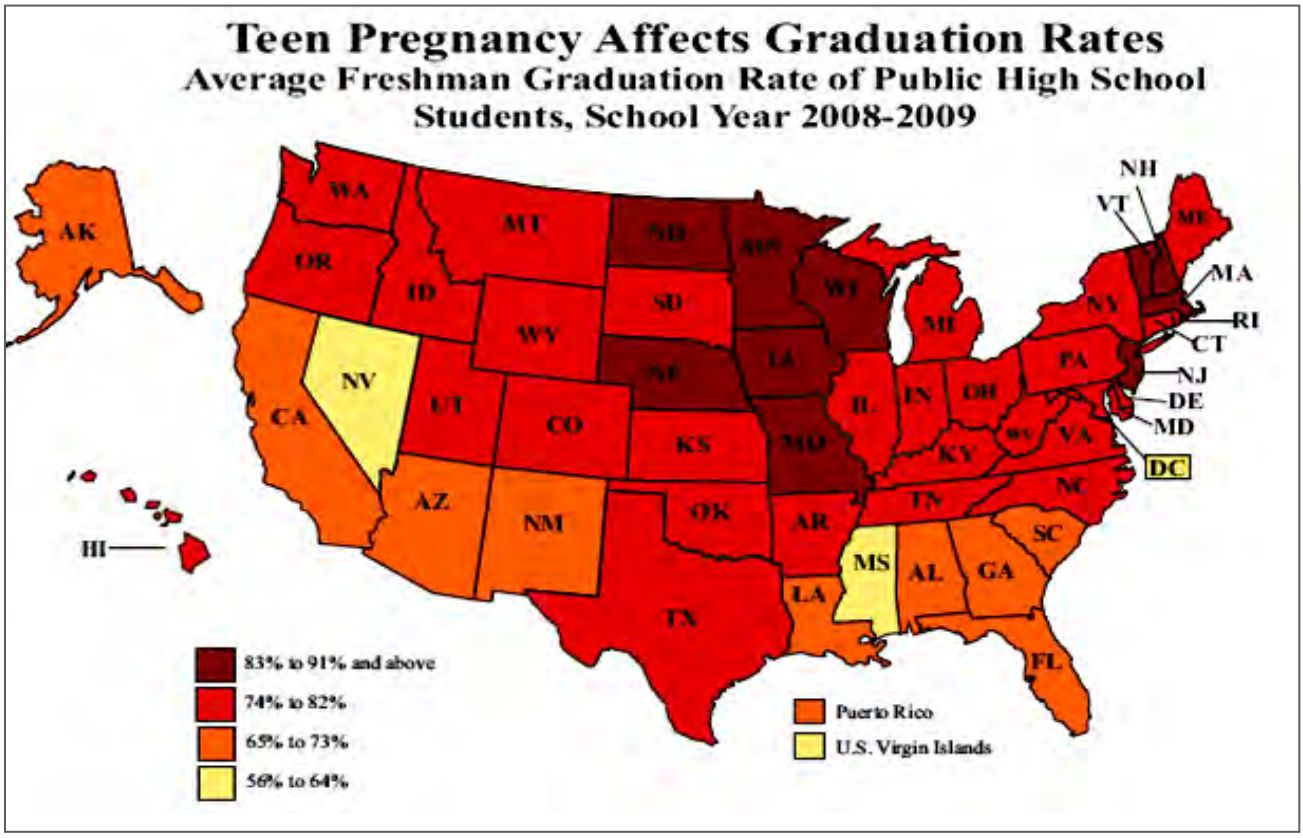


Data distribution of young women who had been teen mothers and their chances of earning a high school diploma by the age of 22 in comparison to young women who had not been teen mothers. Reprinted from "Diploma Attainment Among Teen mothers," by K. Perper, K. Peterson, and J. Manlove, 2010. Copyright 2010 by Child Trends, Washington D.C. Retrieved from http:// www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2010_01_22_FS_DiplomaAttainment.pdf. Permission to reprint granted by K. Perper (Appendix A).

Only about half of teen mothers get a high school diplomas by age 22 compared to 89% of non-parenting young women (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012; Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010). Additionally, 38% of teen mothers who had a child

before turning 18 are less likely to graduate from high school, and 19% of those who drop out, earn a GED (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012; Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010).

Figure 3. Graduation Rates Affected by Teen Pregnancy



The map displays the average graduation rate for freshmen attending public high schools. Pregnancy and parenthood affect educational achievement and can alter graduation rates. Educational achievement affects lifetime income of teen mothers. Approximately 67 percent of children born to teen mothers can earn a high school diploma. Reprinted from "Not Making the Grade: Academic Achievement Difficult for Teen Parents," by M. Comlossy, 2010, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Copyright 2010 by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Permission for duplication granted by M. Comlossy (Appendix A).

Approximately two-thirds of families started by teens are poor, and approximately one in four will depend on welfare within the first three years of a child's birth (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2010). About two-thirds of children born to teen

mothers earn a high school diploma, compared to 81% of their peers with older parents (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2010). Current graduation rates and specific rates for the Midwest are not available.

Several research studies have found a significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and dropping out of high school. Hallman (2007), Luttrell (2003), Marcy (2003), and Pillow (2004) provided numerous reasons for teens not completing or leaving school early. Pillow (2004) and Lutrell (2003) focused on the roles of school personnel and their limited educational research and knowledge of teen pregnancy. School personnel are involved in making decisions on a daily basis, impacting the educational lives of pregnant or parenting teens. Pillow (2004), Lutrell (2003), and Hallman (2007) emphasized the importance of school personnel in understanding how easily pregnant and parenting teens are labeled and misunderstood. They encouraged schools to acknowledge the stigmatization and inequalities that continue to exist regarding teen pregnancy and parenting; teen pregnancy and parenting should be an education policy issue. Furthermore, Hallman (2007) concentrated on considerations of the pregnant and parenting teens' learning and identity formation.

Identity Development

Hallman (2007) conducted a qualitative research study at an alternative school for pregnant and parenting teens, seeking to outline factors that contribute to learning. The Hallman study focused specifically on literacy practices and identity development. Students self-identified their ethnic backgrounds as African-American, Hmong, Mexican-American, Latina, and White. Participants' ages were 12 to 19 years. Two research questions centered on how pregnant and parenting teens' identities conceptualize from English curriculum and how the students shape their identities as pregnant and parenting teens (Hallman, 2007). Hallman

collected data by observing 250 hours of student-teacher interactions and participation, audio taping English classes, interviewing three teachers and five students, and collecting class and student artifacts for three school semesters (Hallman, 2007). Three themes emerged from the data collection: positioning the females as both mothers and students, viewing the school as a place of learning and community, and identifying the children as hope for the future specifically their mothers' futures (Hallman, 2007).

Hallman (2007) concluded there is a need to re-conceptualize the identity of the pregnant and parenting teen by looking beyond the pregnancy: she is a learner, a mother, and an adolescent. Concentrating on English curriculum, Hallman identified learning about students' literacy practices as a resource for educators and scholars in rethinking the identity of the pregnant and parenting student, and for better understanding the nature of curriculum that will best serve special populations, particularly those considered "at risk" (Hallman, 2007). In addition to Hallman's conclusion regarding rethinking the identities of pregnant and parenting teens, Kalil and Danziger (2007), Pinto-Foltz et al. (2011), Sadler et al. (2007), and Shanok and Miller (2007), considered identity as well as other factors such as social, physical, and family impacts on the pregnant and parenting teens. Their documentations included considerations of social disapproval, depression, social isolation, and intergenerational family conflict.

Psychological Well-Being

Shanok and Miller (2007) conducted a qualitative study addressing the nature of, and contributors to, depression in teen mothers, and the active factors in their healing. Participants included 80 adolescents ages 13 through 19 years attending a public school in an impoverished area of New York City (Shanok & Miller, 2007). Self- identified ethnic backgrounds consisted of: 49% Hispanic, 38% Black, and 10% Black and Hispanic (Shanok & Miller, 2007). Not all of

the 80 adolescents participated in all parts of the study. Researchers gathered data from three domains: 1) therapy sessions and clinical interviews (n= 42), 2) self-report measures (n=80), and 3) perspectives of all clinicians who worked on the study (n=4) (Shanok & Miller, 2007). Clinicians spent hundreds of hours with the participants in clinical sessions, school cafeterias and assemblies, and new student orientations observing a broad range of behavior and non-verbal data essential for evaluating depression. They also analyzed therapy sessions, examined clinical notes and conducted post hoc interviews. The interviews used questionnaire data from the Beck Depression Inventory and Edinburgh Postnatal Depression scale, and provided common symptoms of participant depression (Shanok & Miller, 2007).

Anger, in the form of irritability and sadness, ranked highest among the participants, while shame and guilt characterized the depressive symptoms with the greatest variance (Shanok & Miller, 2007). The participants shared that, when their families were sad or rejecting, they credited the symptom of depression to feeling trapped or wronged (Shanok & Miller, 2007). Support from family, especially the participants' mothers, combined with a feeling of validation of pregnancies, resulted in the successful use of self-advocacy and boundary setting skills (Shanok & Miller, 2007). Furthermore, interpersonal viewpoints proved beneficial in maintaining, alleviating, or contributing to depression among poor urban pregnant and newly parenting teen mothers (Shanok & Miller, 2007).

Along with identifying depression among teen mothers, Sadler et al. (2007) concentrated on the broader concepts of maternal characteristics and child development. Specific goals of this mixed-methods descriptive study were to describe maternal characteristics and outcomes, and to describe child developmental and health outcomes. Data was collected from participants in a school-based parent support program and a child care center (Sadler et al., 2007). A convenience

sample of 65 adolescent mothers, 53 with children, enrolled in the school-based child care center and 12 with children being cared for by family members, participated. A total of 68 children contributed to the study. The mothers' aged 14 to 19 years, were English speaking, and attended a large urban high school within an ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged community (Sadler et al., 2007).

Qualitative data collection consisted of direct observations, recorded reviews from the school and center, and interviews. Additionally, surveys and questionnaires provided for quantitative data. Maternal characteristics assessed consisted of: self-esteem, social stressors, depressive symptoms, support, parenting-efficacy, parent-child teaching interactions, as well as childbearing and maternal educational outcomes (Sadler et al., 2007). Researchers administered the Beck Depression Inventory along with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to assess maternal characteristics. Other questionnaires, inventories, and checklists measured environment sources of stress, parental confident, competence, and self-esteem (Sadler et al., 2007).

Participants indicated that 33% were mildly to moderately depressed, and 39% had experienced transitional homelessness (Sadler et al., 2007). For most, prior to enrolling in the support program, there was little social support and a significant number of negative life events (Sadler et al., 2007). Teen mothers participated in a high school based parent support program that focused on mother-child interactions, continuing in school, and learning about child health and development. At the end of the program, for those at-risk teen mothers, support and interactions provided promising opportunities for the mothers and allowed for them to stay engaged in school while their children were cared for in a school based child center that was a close and safe environment (Sadler et al., 2007).

While many studies were looking at effects and results of teen pregnancy on identity, Shanok and Miller (2007) and Sadler et al. (2007) instead identified contributors to parenting and self-efficacy, identity formation, and overall mental health and social needs from disadvantaged pregnant and parenting teens attending urban public high schools. Both studies utilized various qualitative forms of assessment to gather data, while Sadler and colleagues, and Kalil and Danziger also collected quantitative data. Shanok and Miller (2007) concentrated on depression and healing. Sadler et al. (2007) extended their research to include factors on child care and child development in addition to personal and environmental influences on parenting teen mothers.

Similar to the previous two studies, Kalil and Danizger (2007) concentrated on self-efficacy and parenting-efficacy by considering the influences of psychological and, more specifically socio-economic factors. Their mixed-methods study, conducted in Michigan, examined socio-economic and psychological well-being in 88 low-income teen mothers. Qualified participants consisted of 112 minor teen parents receiving cash assistance or subsidized health care coverage while living with their grandmothers (Kalil &Danziger, 2007). Under Michigan's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, teen parents are required to live in adult-supervised settings and remain in school to qualify for benefits. This study used two questions. The first concentrated on factors such as how well informed teen mothers were about welfare rules, whether they were living with their mothers, were attending school, and/or were working (Kalil & Danziger, 2007). The second question focused on how well the teen mothers managed on indicators of socio-economic and psychological well-being, specifically focusing on contributors to economic strain, poor school attendance, and parenting stress (Kalil & Danziger, 2007).

Researchers interviewed 91 of 112 original participants. Of those, 67 were teen mother-grandmother pair interviews. After the sessions, participants completed surveys addressing welfare experiences, demographics, mental health and parenting behaviors, family climate and stressful life events, and child rearing and household management (Kalil & Danziger, 2007). Descriptive analysis consisted of knowledge of welfare rules, living arrangements, school, income sources and economic well-being, ecological stressors, and psychological and physical well-being (Kalil & Danziger, 2007). A multivariate analysis provided data on school enrollment and graduation, parenting stress, and economic stress (Kalil & Danziger, 2007).

Researchers concluded that having high expectations for schooling might cushion the stress of parenting for young mothers, as well as supporting staying in school. Welfare and attendance requirements, as well as residing with an adult in a supervised setting yielded mixed and unclear results (Kalil & Danizer, 2007). Attendance requirements of the welfare program were indistinct in regards to increasing overall educational achievements or goals of the young mothers (Kalil & Danziger, 2007). Furthermore, significant effects of depression, child care problems, and domestic violence deserve consideration when designing programs (Kalil & Danziger, 2007).

In an attempt to determine causes of depression and stigmatization in parenting teens, Pinto-Foltz et al. (2011) conducted a longitudinal case study based on the experiences of five teen mothers participating in a community-based mental health intervention study. Originally, researchers recruited 97 teen mothers, ages 13 through 18 years, attending a Teenage Parent Program alternative high school, and screened for depressive symptoms within four to six weeks post-delivery. The Screening process utilized the Center for Epidemiologic Studies of Depression (CES-D) and Kiddie- Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia (KSADS).

From the 97 teen mothers, researchers selected five for the case study. Data collection consisted of audio-recorded information describing each participant's circumstances, with a focus on the mother's losses to attrition. In conclusion, home life resulted in strong symptoms of depression and stress. The participants described chaotic home environment with multiple demands, family conflict, limited access to transportation, and limited financial and social support as greatly impacting their well-being and efficacy (Pinto-Foltz et al., 2011).

Pregnant and parenting teens endure more challenges and stressors than their non-pregnant and parenting peers. Pregnant and parenting teens are multifaceted; they are mothers, learners, and adolescents (Hallman, 2007). Educators, policymakers, and society should consider the academic environment, social and economic stressors, and the well-being of the teens as critical factors and challenges of pregnancy and parenting. Traditional schools often do not consider all the variables and obstacles the teens face. Little to no meaningful support for pregnant and parenting teens exists within traditional schools. More commonly, school officials' responses are to avoid their needs or segregate them into self-contained programs within a regular public school setting or into an alternative setting equivalency program (Roxas, 2008). Schools have the obligation to provide resources to all students in order to help them overcome difficulties and succeed, especially if the students are already struggling with balancing multiple roles and enduring labels and societal stigmatization (Roxas, 2008; Pillow, 2004; Luttrell, 2003; Hallman, 2007).

Funding for Programs

Since the passing of Title IX, federal, state, and local statutes require schools to provide strategies and programs that support pregnant and parenting teens in overcoming barriers and succeeding in attending and graduating from school (American Civil Liberties Union, 2012). In

September 2010, under the Pregnancy Assistance Fund, the Department of Human Services granted 24 million dollars to 17 states' stakeholders to support parenting teens continuing their education (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). Stakeholders consist of high schools, institutions of higher education, and community agencies (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). The fund provides a network of support services to assist in completing educational degrees and to offer access to health care, family housing, and other supports (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). The Department of Human Services provides funding and resources to address teen pregnancy prevention through the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) and Title V State Abstinence Education Grant Program (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). More funding is given to prevention programs than parenting education. PREP grants 45 million dollars to 43 states and 33.5 million dollars for the abstinence funding (National Conference of State Legislature, 2012). Appendix B provides detailed distributions of monies per state and per program for the 2010 fiscal year. Visual representation provides a reminder of the limited resources given for parenting or pregnancy programs.

Pregnant and parenting teens endure such challenges as child care, transportation, physical and mental health issues, schoolwork, parenting responsibilities, and the labeling and discrimination from school officials (American Civil Liberties Union, 2012; Marcy, 2003). Center for Schools and Communities (1999) provided, in their best practices resources guide, various alternative educational programming. Researchers vary in their recommendations of effective strategies and programs.

Support Program Variation

Rowen, Shaw-Perry, and Rager (2005) conducted a formative research design on the essential components of a mentoring program for pregnant and parenting teens at an alternative school in Texas. Their study's purpose was to determine if the program helped prepare the teens for parenting and developing more effective social skills and financial awareness with the overall goal of having school success (Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005). The interviews and guided questions resulted in several emerging factors. The factors that provided the most support concentrated on parental guidance; personal growth and developmental classes; parenting classes for the teens; and peer support groups (Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005). The researchers emphasized the importance of teen voices and perspectives when designing programs to meet their needs.

Marcy (2003), with the assistance of the Center for Impact Research (CIR), hired 8 former teen mothers to interview and survey 181 pregnant and parenting teens and 42 teen service providers in Chicago Public Schools. The purpose of the quantitative study was to determine how pregnant and parenting teens coped with various educational systems. CIR attempted to develop an understanding of pregnant and parenting teens, the challenges they face, and attempted to offer the best and most supportive solutions to help young mothers stay in school. The researchers surveyed teen mothers for the effectiveness of regular, alternative, GED programs, and schools for pregnant and parenting teens. Additionally, students who had dropped out were also interviewed and surveyed.

Results concluded that several policies, strategies, and services need to be in effect to ensure pregnant and parenting teen school success (Marcy, 2003). Young mothers in school need to be provided with information packets which contain resources needed for school and

pregnancy assistance and schools need to establish transition programs for re-enrolling teens (Marcy, 2003). Schools also should offer night and weekend classes for working teens, have trained staff available to assist pregnant and parenting teens, and offer teen parenting programs on location (Marcy, 2003). Overall, the study concludes a collaborative effort needs to take place in order for teens to receive the support and assistance needed to remain in school and achieve success.

Amin et al. (2006) identified that limited focus and research have been given to school-based programs and their delivery of services. Amin and colleagues stressed the importance of evaluating comprehensive school-based programs for pregnant adolescents in order to establish strengths and weaknesses of a program model and to determine its effectiveness in handling various issues faced by pregnant teens and parents (Amin et al., 2006). The researchers elected to assess the impact Baltimore's Paquin School Program had on its teen participants. They examined quantitative data collected from a sample of Paquin School enrollees and their counterpart nonenrollees as well as qualitative data collected from the selected enrollees (Amin et al., 2006). The alternative school is fully integrated into the Baltimore Public School System, following the regular schedule, calendar, and curriculum. Additionally, the alternative school program provides employment counseling, parenting education, transportation assistance, child-care services, in-school health clinic services, family planning services, and health education (Amin et al., 2006).

The results of the study suggested that the student enrolled in the integrated school based comprehensive services program had higher educational aspirations and health awareness than those not in the program (Amin et al., 2006). Additionally, the data collection results displayed a pattern consistent with the theories that pregnant and parenting teen from low-socio-economic

background benefit more from a well-integrated comprehensive range of services, than by a more typical fragmented service delivery system designed to address various problems separately (Amin et al., 2006). According to Amin et al. (2006), by encouraging academic resources with other counseling services in a setting where the students feel comfortable, a comprehensive program may not only increase motivation and improve academic performance, but may also stimulate hope for the students' future lives.

Reforming Laws to Address Teen Mothers

The Center for Schools and Communities (1999) and the U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report (2006) focused on providing financial incentives to pregnant and parenting teens to encourage them to stay in school. In Pennsylvania, the Center for Schools and Communities published their original results in 1999 from their own study on school attendance for pregnant and parenting teens. Their guide of best practices addressed attendance issues and suggested the need for welfare reform laws, collaboration between schools, home and community agencies, and various other strategies. The relationship between school law and best practices was also discussed.

The resource guide identified poor attendance and high absentee rates are great concerns for schools among pregnant and parenting teens. Teens with high absentee rates tend to struggle with grade level material and learning. In addition, they are missing assignments or have limited access to instruction and cannot complete assignments. Eventually, many pregnant and parenting teens see school as being a hopeless endeavor and they often become labeled as unmotivated and uncooperative (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999). Under Pennsylvania law, Act 29 enforces truancy consequences for all students. Consequences include fines, parent education classes, and community service. These consequences are given to the

guardians of the students. Penalties for students can include losing their drivers' licenses for up to ninety days for a first offense, and up to six months for a second offense (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999). Students not yet of driving age will not be allowed to apply for a learner's permit for one year (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999). Being part of the student body, pregnant and parenting teens must abide by these standards.

Pennsylvania also made changes to its welfare laws. The reform increased focus on education and training programs. Teen parent guidelines now emphasize the need for minors to live with a guardian and require they participate in an educational program or attend school with the goal of earning a diploma or GED. School programs also support pregnant and parenting teen attendance. Monthly Attendance Reports (MAR) keep track of the number of days missed and the reasons for absences (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999). Letters, calls home, conferences, contracts, home visits, and informing the welfare caseworker are some of the strategies used to strengthen school attendance. The teens are reminded that they are responsible for their own attendance and to schedule outside appointments carefully. The teens are encouraged to organize their time wisely and to have alternative plans in case of childcare closings.

Incentives and collaboration between schools and community agencies are additional best practices mentioned in the guide. Personal recognition with certificates for accomplishments, Baby Bucks, and an end of year celebration with a drawing based on goals met, are incentives established with the cooperation of the teens. Community agencies provide several forms of assistance. Some donate products for the teens and their babies while others provide homework help, mentors, and family services (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999). There is no

mention of providing counseling services, child-care services, or academic assistance within the school. The little support offered comes from community agencies.

The U.S. Department of Education Clearinghouse Intervention Report (2006) provided analyses of the Ohio Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) and California Cal-Learn programs. Both programs used financial incentives for teen parents to remain in school. Limited information was provided in regards to the California program. The results met the Clearinghouse's standards with reservations (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2006). The report focused more on Ohio's program meeting the standards. Originally, from within twelve Ohio counties, 4,151 teens met the criteria for the program. The teens were randomly selected into either a control group or a program group which was subject to the LEAP program (Bos & Fellerath, 1997).

The program had several goals; the immediate ones were to decrease dropout rates and reenroll teens into school. Long-term goals consisted of higher rates of graduation and increased employment. Data was collected over a four year period; surveys and follow-up meetings were also part of the measures. Teens involved in the LEAP program had their welfare checks increased with an additional monthly amount if they attended school regularly. The teens not attending regularly had the additional monthly amount withdrawn from their checks. In addition, a bonus was given for each grade completed and for graduation. Case managers monitored attendance and explained the program rules; authorized transportation and childcare assistance; and provided guidance (Bos & Fellerath, 1997).

The findings of the program varied. In regards to the immediate goal, LEAP was able to increase school enrollment and attendance, especially with the use of financial bonuses and

incentives. The long-term goals had varied results. The graduation rates did not increase, except for one of the initial groups, and the employment rates were mixed (Bos & Fellerath, 1997). Despite the mixed results, the LEAP program was able to make a considerable impact on school attendance and enrollment; many students were able to increase their attendance at school, and achieve grade level completion and high school graduation (Bos & Fellerath, 1997). Mixed results showed in employment. There was an increase in employment for initially enrolled teens, but not for those who were not initially enrolled in the program or school. Overall, LEAP provided useful solutions needed for preventing teen parents from dropping out of school or from falling too far behind due to poor attendance (Bos & Fellerath, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

Pregnant and teen mothers are a high risk group for dropping out of school. Many diverse reasons for leaving school have been well documented. Pregnant and parenting teens face several challenges from being labeled and misunderstood, to lacking counseling and economic support, to health concerns and child welfare, to personal well-being and family conflicts, as well as social exclusion. States and school districts vary in their support and out-reach programs for pregnant and parenting teens. Some programs use financial incentives to encourage the teen parent to stay in school, others integrate classes and programs within the school to assist the students. Some school districts establish alternative schools to address the specific needs of pregnant and parenting teens. The common understanding, across the nation, is federal and state statues must provide a strong foundation to ensure equal opportunities to pregnant and parenting teens. Despite the mandated laws, school officials and community members are the ones to ensure that the students have necessary resources, support, and

protection. Pregnant and parenting teens want to feel that school officials care and are not giving up on them and their potential possibilities.

Theoretical Context

Within the past four decades, since the passage of Title IX, there has remained a need for effective support for teen mothers. Teenage mothers were noted in the literature review to be more at-risk to drop out of high school. Additionally, research demonstrates the varied factors that challenge the pregnant and parenting teen. Some common factors are: personal, school barriers, financial difficulties, and social exclusion (Hallman, 2007; Luttrell, 2003; Marcy, 2003; Pillow, 2004).

School-related issues may include a lack of school cooperation with regard to attendance policies, accepting credits from alternative programs, transportation to and from childcare, allowing teen parents to leave for general parenting responsibilities, and staff acceptance and care. Economic reasons for dropping out are obvious for a teen parent. The teens may feel that work is more important than completing high school; there is a feeling and self-imposed pressure to earn money to provide for the child. Personal challenges range from mental and physical health issues to poor self-efficacy. Again, there still exists a stigma to becoming pregnant or a parent as a teen. Social exclusion, loss of friends, not feeling accepted, or being unfairly labeled are common. During this challenging and possibly uncomfortable time, teen parents might deem it best to leave school prematurely.

The literature review provided information about several programs that are integrated within a regular school, alternative school, or community agency. Each program emphasized supportive strategies to assist pregnant and parenting teens. The consistent theme that emerged

from the literature was the importance of school staff demonstrating that they care about the pregnant and parenting teens. Teens want to feel accepted and that they are of importance. School personnel support is vital as the teens struggle with all the stressors of becoming parents, continuing to be adolescents, and balancing roles. The pregnant and parenting teen voices should be heard and valued. Understanding more of the beliefs and behaviors of the teen mother might allow for stronger support and more effective programs.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theory originated from Social Cognitive theory of human functioning by Alberta Bandura (Bandura, 1986). Bandura concentrated on the beliefs of individuals as critical elements of human behavior and motivation (Bandura, 1986; 1993; 2006). Social Cognitive theory focuses more on personal growth through mastery and other enabling experiences as the normative developmental process during adolescence (Bandura, 2006). The theory emphasizes more on how the structures of social systems influence teen behavior, functioning, and well-being than biological and intrapsychic confusions (Bandura, 2006).

The perception of being able to reach a goal and produce a positive outcome determines the level of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs are also a result of the judgments that people hold about their capabilities to learn or to perform at certain designated levels (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's Social Cognitive Model says that there are three factors that influence self-efficacy: a) behaviors, b) environment, and c) personal/cognitive (Bandura, 1986). There are also four processes that produce self-efficacy beliefs: a) cognitive, b) motivational, c) affective, and d) selection (Bandura, 1993). A person develops self-efficacy from mastery experiences in which goals are achieved through perseverance, overcoming obstacles, and from observing others succeed through persistent effort.

Self-efficacy beliefs provide the basis for human motivation, personal accomplishment, and well-being (Bandura, 1993; 2006). People become motivated to act only if they believe that their actions can produce desired consequences (Bandura, 1993; 2006; Strecher, DeVellis, Becker, & Rosenstock, 1986). These self-perceptions determine how well people persevere in dealing with adversities, depression, stress, and with the life choices they make (Bandura, 1993; 2006). Self-efficacy is also a strong indicator of the self-regulatory practices (Bandura, 1993; 2006). Self-efficacy determines how well people learn to go about the important task of self-correcting actions and cognitions.

Self-efficacy beliefs help support or encourage the outcome one expects (Strecher et al., 1986). In regard to teen mothers, confident individuals expect successful outcomes or consequences, social encounters, and academic skills. The opposite is true of those who lack confidence. Teen mothers who are uncertain about various skills tend to anticipate rejection even prior to taking any action which may lead to social isolation or limited possibilities (Bandura, 1986; Kalil & Danizer, 2007). Teen mothers may well realize that academic skills are important for passing classes and graduating which may lead to successful future, so they put forth more effort with their work habits. On the other hand, if a teen mother struggles with confidence in her academic capabilities, she may not be willing endure challenging course work, show more apprehension and self-doubt, and may not even consider being able to graduate. According to social cognitive theory, when self-efficacy belief and outcome expectation differ, the self-efficacy belief is more likely to determine the behavior (Bandura, 1986, 1993; Stecher et al., 1986). Teen mothers who believe in their capabilities and efforts, despite having doubts about being able graduate or pass classes (outcome expectations), are more willing to try and put forth more effort in the endeavor.

In reference to parenting capabilities, teen mothers may realize the importance of building strong bonding relationships with their children. Teen mothers may realize that confidence, patience, and determination are essential for building the parent-child bond. A confident mother may realize that developing parenting skills is necessary for her child's well-being, growth, and development. If, however, the teen mother has low confidence in and doubts about her skills, she may hesitate to participate in learning effective parenting skills or struggle to form a bond with her child, potentially missing promising opportunities.

Development of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

According to social cognitive theory, individuals form self-efficacy beliefs by interpreting information from four sources: performance or mastery experiences, vicarious experience, verbal persuasions, and physiological reactions (Bandura, 1977; Strecher et al., 1986). Mastery experience is how individuals evaluate the effects of their actions (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). Interpretations of these effects help create efficacy beliefs. Success increases self-efficacy; failure decreases it. Adolescents, in addition to the interpretations of their mastery experiences, form their efficacy beliefs by observing others perform tasks (Bandura, 2006).

People, with limited experiences or low confidence in their abilities, are prone to vulnerabilities and to sensitivity about their beliefs (Bandura, 1993). Adolescents learn from those they consider models. Vicarious experience relates to social comparisons that individuals make with each other (Bandura, 1977, 1993). Social comparisons and peer modeling can be strong influences on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993). Teens with limited experiences tend to form judgments of their capabilities from their peer models. Self-efficacy beliefs are also

influenced by verbal messages and social persuasions adolescents receive from others (Bandura, 1977; Strecher et al., 1986). These messages can help motivate the teen to put forth more effort and persevere, resulting in the continued development of skills, self-efficacy, and a sense of empowerment (Bandura, 1993). Conversely, messages can discourage the teen weakening self-efficacy beliefs. Models take a vital part in the development of a person's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993).

Effective models are able to foster beliefs of people in their capabilities, ensuring that success is attainable (Bandura, 1993). Anxiety, stress, and mood provide essential information about efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). Positive mood promotes self-efficacy, whereas depression and anxiety diminishes it (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). With social cognitive theory, individual interpretation of mood and emotion is what is important, not the intensity of the mood or emotion (Bandura, 1977, 1993). Individuals with strong self-efficacy will view the emotional state as invigorating (Bandura, 1993). Those with self-doubt and low self-efficacy may consider it weakening or devastating (Bandura, 1993).

Consequences of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices people make and the courses of action they follow (Bandura, 1977, 1993). Individuals tend to choose activities in which they feel confident and capable while avoiding those in which they do not (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). If people believe that their actions will lead to the preferred consequences, they have strong motivation to engage in those actions. If people believe that their actions will not lead to the desired consequences, they will have little motivation to pursue the desired consequences. According to Bandura (1993), self-efficacy beliefs also help determine how much effort people

will put forth on an activity, the duration of persistence in confronting obstacles, and the degree of resiliency they will have when dealing with adverse situations.

Figure 4. Self-Efficacy Theory

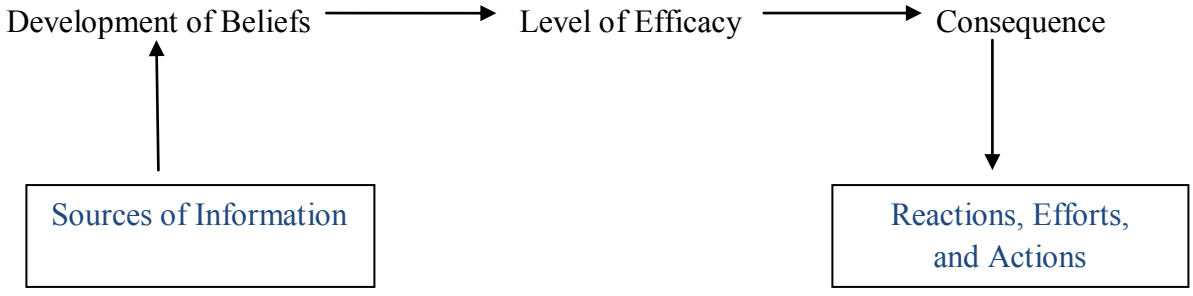


Figure 4. Self-efficacy Theory chart adapted from "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change", by A. Bandura, *Psychological Review, 84*(2), p.191. Copyright by the American Psychological Association.

Self-efficacy beliefs also influence thought patterns and emotional reactions (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). Strong self-efficacy helps individuals maintain composure when approaching challenging tasks. Individuals with low self-efficacy may believe that tasks are much more difficult than they really are. These beliefs may lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression incapacitating the individual's ability to effectively solve a problem (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). The interpretation of success or failure that a teen mother experiences as she engages in several tasks, throughout her high school years, influences the decisions she makes and beliefs she has. In addition, the knowledge and skills she has will also affect her actions.

Implications for School and Support Programs

Self-efficacy is both a personal and a social construct (Bandura, 1993). Groups develop a sense of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Groups share a belief in the attainment of goals and the ability to accomplish tasks. Schools develop collective beliefs: teachers being able to teach, students being able to learn, and administrators being able to create effective learning environments (Bandura, 1997). Support programs for teen mothers might have a collective sense of efficacy. Their goals and tasks encourage the empowerment of teen mothers and provide assistance in the development of efficacy.

People tend to rely on the judgments of others to create their own beliefs of self. Educators and responsible adults who provide meaningful tasks, support, and encouragement help ensure the development of a strong sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Young people learn from the actions of models (Bandura, 1993). Exposing teens to different modeling practices can affect self-efficacy beliefs. Demonstrating coping behaviors as well as verbalizing emotive statements allow for the individuals to view the model as similar to them, allowing for a connection (Bandura, 1993). With this connection, individuals experience greater achievement and self-efficacy under the guidance of the model (Bandura, 1993).

Assessing self-efficacy beliefs of the teen can provide insights about academic motivation, behavior, and future choices. Low self-efficacy, not lack of capability or skill, can be responsible for maladaptive behaviors, avoidance, and diminishing school interest and achievement (Bandura, 1997). Teens experiencing low confidence in the skills they have are less likely to engage in tasks in which those skills are required and are more prone to giving up quickly (Bandura, 1997). Program facilitators and educators should work to identify inaccurate judgments and implement interventions to challenge them (Bandura, 1997). There is a

connection between the difficulties that people experience throughout life with the beliefs they hold about what they can and cannot do (Bandura, 1993, 1997). School failures, misdirected motivation, and a lack of commitment are consequences of the beliefs many dropouts, socially disabled, and underachievers develop (Bandura, 1997).

Understanding human development allows school personnel to approach adolescents carefully and with a rich knowledge of possible personality and behavior influences, particularly when working with the challenges pregnant and parenting teens endure. With this understanding, creating supportive programs which incorporate the development of personal characteristics and strengths encourage academic growth and success. Learning the needs of the teens and how to positively support them are essential.

Summary

Title IX requires schools to provide equal educational opportunities for pregnant and parenting teens; encourages academic learning and achievement; as well as reduces barriers that may interfere. Despite the law, interpretations and implementations are varied and inconsistent. School officials across the nation still continue to discourage pregnant and parenting teens from participating in activities, pressure them to attend alternative programs or schools, and penalize them for pregnancy related absences (Egan et al., 2012). On the other hand, there are several support programs and opportunities that have been well-documented in assisting pregnant and parenting teens in achieving school success. For these programs and schools the type of support varies; some focus on academic curriculum, while others stress the well-being of the parent and child development. Common challenges of pregnant and parenting teens are financial, social, and familial. The diverse support programs address these challenges and offer incentives, while encouraging the teens to stay in school.

Within the regular school, officials and staff might benefit from understanding the multiple roles of pregnant and parenting teens, as well as understanding them as adolescents. Adolescence is a delicate stage where the teen is struggling with socially fitting in and adapting to physical changes (Child Development Institute, 2012; Santrock, 1999). Social Cognitive theorists hold that self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices people make and the courses of action they follow (Bandura, 1977, 1993). People tend to choose activities in which they feel confident and capable while avoiding those in which they do not (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). Learning what motivates teen mothers, might allow for schools to better support them, and approach them sensitively with a rich knowledge of possible influences. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how much motivation people have to put forth on an activity, the duration of persistence in confronting obstacles, and the degree of resiliency they will have when dealing with challenging situations (Bandura, 1993). Learning needs of teen mothers and how to positively support them is essential when trying to create a support system which encourages academic and personal growth.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study sought to better understand the influences of support programs on teen mother development of self and parenting-efficacy and on high school success. The researcher explored perceptions of young women who graduated from a Midwestern urban high school while being teen mothers. Alford Young, Jr. (2004) explains researchers tend to investigate behaviors of marginalized populations instead of focusing on what people articulate as their own understanding and thoughts of social processes. Without an understanding of the meaning-making processes of marginalized groups, dominant culture continues to be the only source of valid meaning creation (Young, 2004). Researcher intent was to explore the complex thinking and meaning-making processes of teen mothers, a marginalized group, as they negotiated what was essential for their school success and for strengthening self and parenting-efficacy. A means to achieving this understanding was to have young mothers voice their perceptions of these topics.

Research Design

The researcher employed the paradigm of qualitative research methods. Phenomenological qualitative research is a socially constructed inquiry of phenomena that is conducted through interviews, participant observations, and document analyses (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, qualitative research attempts to develop in-depth understanding of the participant perspectives (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research allows for rich description of meaning from gathered and analyzed data, and it also allows for interpretive understanding of the information gathered in the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002). According to Van Manen (1990), phenomenological research provides insight into reality, it does not develop

theory. Phenomenology researchers attempt to gain deeper understanding of the meaning of phenomenon and the everyday experiences of people (Van Manen, 1990).

In order to analyze how teen mothers understand and construct meanings of themselves as teen mothers and high school graduates, the researcher conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with artifacts sharing. The researcher recorded the interviews and sharing sessions, and took field notes. Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and how participants attach meaning to those experiences (Creswell, 2013). Conversing with participants during the interview process engages interplay between the verbal and nonverbal subjectivities of two people (Munhall, 1994). This interplay of perspectives allowed for feelings, thoughts, ideas, and principles to become intertwined during active conversations. Intersubjectivity is the interplay of verbal and nonverbal subjective worlds of two people, in this case, the researcher and teen mother (Munhall, 1994).

Each participant, during the interview and artifacts sharing session, explained her particular experiences in high school and the meaning of the artifacts. The researcher also documented observations using field notes (Creswell, 2012). During this time, the researcher needed to remain completely objective and avoid interjecting her own ideas (Creswell, 2013; Munhall, 1994). Interjecting personal ideas could compromise the data collection process during the course of interviews (Creswell, 2013; Munhall, 1994). Being objective and not inserting ideas into conversations allowed for the data, from the participants, to be more accurately reported (Creswell, 2013; Munhall, 1994).

The researcher employed analytic techniques that allowed concepts and themes to emerge from the narratives of teen mothers (Creswell, 2013). Using qualitative methods to gather and analyze data allowed for better understanding of what elements influence teen mothers to

succeed by graduating from high school, as well as complete understanding of what teen mothers consider to be key elements for building strong efficacy and promoting school success.

Participant Selection

Qualitative inquiry tends to focus on relatively small samples selected purposefully to allow for in depth understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Sample size, in a qualitative study, depends on researcher goals for purpose of the inquiry, on what is useful and credible, for what is at stake, and on what can be done with available resources and time (Patton, 2002). A smaller group study sample allowed for participant messages to be shared, verbatim, in an attempt to capture the essence of their stories. Qualitative samples must be large enough to ensure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered, but at the same time, if the sample is too large, data becomes repetitive, excessive, and unessential (Mason, 2010).

The researcher applied the principles of qualitative research with the sample size in order to follow the concept of saturation (Mason, 2010). Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 participants for a phenomenological study. Patton (2002) explained, "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth" (p. 46). The smaller sample assisted in providing a deeper sense of what support systems were in place that aided the participants in high school. The researcher recruited nine participants. Only five met the criteria for the study. Criteria for the participants of the study were: (a) between the ages of 19-24 years, (b) graduated from a public high school, (c) became a teen mother during high school, and (d) participated in a support program.

The researcher recruited participants using active outreach and passive strategies in a variety of community venues such as Building Bright Futures centers and collaborative partnerships such as Lutheran Family Services, Nebraska Children's Home, and the Visiting Nurses Association, grocery stores, and coffee shops. Building Bright Futures is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving lifelong educational outcomes for young people through a comprehensive network of community resources (Building Bright Futures, 2013). The researcher contacted the director of the Teen and Young Parent Program, an affiliate of Building Bright Futures for permission (Appendix C) to send a copy of the recruiting flyer (Appendix D) and post others at the organizations locations. The director posted the flyer and gave copies to her associates to post at their locations. Building Bright Futures representatives from Lutheran Family Services, Visiting Nurses Association, Nebraska Children's Home Society, and Educare were also contacted. All agency representatives were able to post the flyer in their facilities. The researcher posted the flyer also on the community boards at local grocery stores and coffee venues. Colorful recruiting flyers advertised the study. The flyer listed a set of criteria and a statement about the topic of the interview.

The researcher was not able to recruit enough participants using active outreach and passive strategies, and had to revert to another common form of purposeful sampling, snowballing (Creswell, 2012). Some participants and supervisors were asked to recommend individuals to be sampled who could contribute information that would allow for the discovery of meaning (Creswell, 2012) and allow for sample build up (King & Horrocks, 2010). Snowballing is an appropriate strategy for vulnerable, hard to access, and minority populations (King & Horrocks, 2010; Rubin & Babbie, 2009).

Once the researcher identified the participants, she contacted them to arrange a meeting. The researcher explained that the purpose of the study was to explore influences of support programs on teen mother development of self and parenting-efficacy and on high school success. Interviews were sets of questions about support programs affects on self beliefs, beliefs about parenting, and school success. The researcher explained artifacts as two to three meaningful items that helped the teen mother during her high school experiences. Artifacts can represent roles, support, or anything deemed meaningful for the participant. They signify the lived experiences of the participant. The researcher asked each participant to bring the two or three items to the scheduled session with the understanding that the artifacts will be photographed for record keeping purposes and for possible posting in the dissertation.

During the meeting, the researcher gave each woman the informed consent papers (Appendix E) allowing her time to read through the paperwork and time to ask questions. Once that process of discussing the consent form was complete, the researcher had each participant sign the paperwork to indicate her consent to participate in the study, be digitally recorded, and for her artifacts to be photographed. Participants, as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), received a copy of the consent form. IRB approval (Appendix F) was granted before initiating any form of contact with the participants.

The researcher interviewed five women, who were teen mothers during high school. Current ages ranged from 19 to 24 years. The young women are high school graduates, graduating from high school within the last five years. These women compiled a rich trove of experiences during many years of parenting and have had time to reflect with depth on their journeys in high school. All, but one of the participants, were unknown to the researcher. The young woman attended, during her freshmen year, the high school at which the researcher is

employed. The young woman transferred her sophomore year and attended a different school when she was pregnant and then became a mother. Each participant participated in a minimum of one support program during her high school years. In order to safeguard the identities of the participants, the young women are identified with the following pseudonyms: Laura, Mary, Tiffany, Tina, and Anna.

Retrospective interviews were the major source of data collection used in this study. Retrospective interviews allowed participants to recall and then reconstruct meaning from memory of something that occurred in their past (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The researcher interviewed a small sample of young women, who were teen mothers in high school, on a voluntary basis. Interviews were stopped when saturation was achieved; no new themes emerged indicating that the saturation level in relation to the original questions was met (Creswell, 2008).

Demographics

The demographic questions were designed to collect preliminary data from each participant, such as age at pregnancy, first becoming a mother, and at high school graduation. The data collected offered basic background information on each participant. Demographic questions provided further depth to the description of each participant and were used to make some generalizations about the participants as a group. The young women's average age was 20 years and they no longer participate in a support program. Despite the age and grade level of becoming a mother, all participants graduated at age 18.

Table 2.

Demographic Data of Participants

Participants'	Laura	Mary	Tiffany	Tina	Anna
Current Age	21	22	19	20	20
High School Graduation Age	18	18	18	18	18
Age Became Pregnant	14	17	17	15	16
Age First Became a Mother	15	17	17	16	16
Grade Level Became a Mother	10	12	11	10	11
Currently in a Support Program	No	No	No	No	No

Setting

Access and proximity contributed to the selection of the research setting for this study. Semi-structured interviews and sharing sessions took place in a quiet, private place where anonymity can be maintained. Creswell (2012) recommends that the setting be natural to the participant. Location was based on what was accessible to both the researcher and participant with reasonable driving time and proximity. The setting was selected with intent for establishing a sense of comfort and relaxation. For her convenience, each participant determined time and location for the session.

Each participant chose her home for the interview and artifact sharing session. Most women were available in the early evening between the hours of five and seven. Another participant chose late afternoon on her day off work. Most of the young women lived in their own apartments. The other two lived with their families. During three interviews and sessions, the child was in the home. For the two other interviews and sessions, the children were with

family members. Interviews and sharing sessions took place either in the kitchen or sitting room and lasted approximately forty-five minutes. The researcher sat on a couch or chair adjacent to each young woman, with a few feet of separation and face-to face interaction. During one interaction, the researcher and young woman sat on the carpeted floor in relaxed positions. Placed between the two was a small digital recorder to record the entire interviews and sessions. The face-to-face interaction in an authentic setting met Creswell's criterion regarding roles for the participants and researcher (2008).

Data Collection Procedures

Three data collection procedures were used in this study: a) semi-structured interviews, b) participants sharing personal artifacts, and c) field notes. The researcher contacted each participant by phone to schedule interviews and artifacts sharing sessions. She met with each participant individually to conduct the interview and artifacts sharing session. Each woman selected the location, date, and time. When meeting with each woman, the researcher further explained the purpose and her role of participation in the study. The interview and sharing session took approximately forty to ninety minutes. The researcher then asked if she can use a digital recorder to have a record of the interview and artifacts sharing session.

Interviews

One-on-one interviews (Appendix G) were the first technique used for data gathering. The researcher asked if she can use a digital recorder to have a record of the interview. She then interviewed each participant and took field notes. There were no interruptions during one of the interviews. There were minor interruptions during four of the interviews, a child playing or talking, and a family member briefly coming through the room. Interruptions were minimal and did not disturb the general flow of the interview. The researcher recorded the interviews. Rev, a

professional company, transcribed the interviews to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the responses. The researcher reviewed the transcribed interviews to ensure validity and clarity of information for each interview.

During the participant session, researcher awareness of effects on observational interpretation was essential (Creswell, 2013). The researcher becomes the main arbiter of data collection (Creswell, 2013). She digitally recorded each interview. Interviewing is one of the most powerful ways to understand human beings (Turner, 2010) and allows for a combination of informed assumptions and lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Both the interviewer and interviewee learn from the experience. McNamara (2009) recommends eight considerations during the preparation stage of interviewing: 1) Select a setting with minimal distraction; 2) explain the purpose of the interview; 3) explain confidentiality; 4) discuss the interview format; 5) provide an approximate length of time for each session; 6) give participants your contact information; 7) ask them for any questions before getting started; and 8) record the sessions.

The interviewer sought answers to open-ended questions so that the participants might reconstruct their experiences with minimal interruption from the researcher (Creswell, 2012; Turner, 2010). Interviews took approximately 45 to 90 minutes. The researcher shared with the participants that the questions were grouped in three sets. The focus of the first set was on the individual participant and her opinions of self. The second set focused on the individual as a teen mother. The third set focused on the experiences of the participant which led to high school graduation.

The researcher posed open-ended questions participants and allowed participants sufficient time for reflection and response. Probing questions were used to gather additional information and allowed for the interviewee to expand on ideas (Creswell, 2012; Turner, 2010).

Interviews were conducted individually with each participant. Time and location depended on the availability and schedule of the participant. Additional probing questions developed throughout the interviews. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview questions asked pertained to experience, feelings, knowledge, sensory awareness, opinions, and background (Creswell, 2013).

Artifacts Sharing

Artifacts enrich a study and are commonly overlooked sources of data, as they often offer information not typically available from observations or interviews (Norum, 2008; White & Beaudry, 2009). There is an integral relationship between objects (material culture) and people; both are bound to one another (White & Beaudry, 2009). According to New York Libraries (2013), the use of artifacts provides for an added material culture to research and assists in the construction and conceptualization of identity (White & Beaudry, 2009). Artifacts are objects that have intrinsic value independent of their informational content (Council on Library and Information Resources, 2001). They bestow insight into what people believe and value and allow for revealing of opinions and assumptions (Norum, 2008). Artifacts can be everyday items or functional in nature (Norum, 2008). Examples are: toys, recording, photographs, journals, clothing, gifts, religious icons, a path commonly visited, or any object that signifies meaning to a person (Norum, 2008; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011).

Information disclosed during the artifacts sharing session was the second form of data collection. The researcher asked if she could continue to use a digital recorder to have a record of the artifacts sharing session and reminded participants she would also photograph the artifacts. Participants brought two to three personal artifacts to share. They explained the meaningfulness of the artifacts in representing their high school experiences as teen mothers. The researcher

photographed the artifacts and took field notes of disclosures during the session. The artifacts represented the high school period of the participants and offered a different element to their perspectives (New York Libraries, 2013).

Artifacts can provide insight into the customs, preferences, styles, special occasions, work, and play, of the participants lived history (New York Libraries, 2013). The researcher carefully observed the participants in order to gain insights from the artifacts sharing sessions. Participants shared personal artifacts and their significance in representing lived history with support programs in high school. Artifacts were photographed and the researcher took field notes of the discussions. She asked the participants to describe the significance of each artifact and probed for further explanation. Each participant shared her perceptions and feelings concerning support programs for teen mothers in high school and their influences on efficacy and school success. The researcher interpreted the artifact by describing clearly the meaning shared by the participants (Lapan et al., 2011). Interpretations of artifacts can provide information about influences and significances on the past (Lapan et al., 2011) and construction of the current identity of the participant (White & Beaudry, 2009). Responses and body language were noted, in the field notes, and contributed to the analytical meaning and determinations made by the researcher. The body language also helped the researcher assess level of comfort with the question being asked as well as with the flow of the response.

Field Notes

Field notes are words or text recorded during an observation (Creswell, 2012). During and after the interview and artifacts sharing session, the researcher recorded both descriptive and reflective field notes. Descriptive field notes pertain to what happens during the interview and sharing process; the researcher recorded a detailed explanation of the event and participants

(Creswell, 2012). Reflective field notes also were documented. Personal thoughts, insights, and broad ideas that emerged during the interview and artifacts sharing session were also recorded (Creswell, 2012). Bryman and Bell, as cited in Thorpe and Holt (2008), identified three classifications of field notes: mental notes; jotted or scratch notes, and full field notes written up as promptly and as fully as possible.

Mental notes occur when taking notes may not be appropriate (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). In order to remain fully attentive or to not break eye contact, the researcher might use mental notes. Quick jotted notes occur when it is unsuitable to take full notes (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). When the participants share their artifacts or a personal story, to make sure to remain focused and alert, the researcher might jot a few brief notes instead of full ones. According to Thorpe and Holt (2008), "Keeping good systematic field notes is an essential part of undertaking qualitative research as observations and interviews are only useful to the extent that they can be remembered and recorded" (p. 97).

The researcher e-mailed a copy of the transcribed interview and artifacts session to each participant for member-checking verification (Creswell, 2012). Participants reviewed interview transcriptions for validation and to better understand their own experiences regarding influences on their high school success and efficacy (Van Manen, 1990). Participants talking about their perspectives made them more aware of what influences their thoughts and feelings about a topic. Following this assertion, participants should then have gained awareness from talking about what influenced them as teen mothers.

Data Analysis

After completing data collection, the researcher conducted data analysis. Interpretative phenomenological analysis involved detailed examination of the lived experiences of the young women (Lichtman, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Qualitative data analysis uses an inductive strategy to examine, in a natural setting and as a whole, the ideas and feelings of those being interviewed; it is about process and interpretation (Lichtman, 2013). During this phase of phenomenological reflection, the researcher uncovered and compiled the data into essential themes or codes (Creswell, 2013).

Generic approach to coding, according to Creswell (2009), entails collecting qualitative data, analyzing it for themes, and reporting four to five themes. These themes or codes were consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas common among research participants (Creswell, 2013). The researcher analyzed the interview and artifacts sharing session data for emerging themes and patterns. She used research questions as an organizational tool to compare the data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also categorized, from the interviews and field notes, reasons that appeared to be most influential in efficacy development and in assisting with high school success (Creswell, 2013).

The first step the researcher employed in her research study was to listen to the data on the digital recorder. This allowed her to develop a general idea of the perspective of participants and to understand the context of the conversations. She then had a professional transcribe each interview session verbatim allowing for the recording of data in an additional format. Once the transcription process was complete, the researcher began to look at the data and analyze it for essential themes (Creswell, 2013). Analysis based on the full transcription further allowed the researcher to understand what the participants were saying in the text (Creswell, 2013).

Lichtman (2013) uses the three C's of analysis to examine data: from coding to categorizing to concepts. This six step process allows for a thorough break down of textual data into meaningful concepts and the identification of themes or categories (Lichtman, 2013). Table 2 provides data analysis steps recommended by Lichtman (2013).

Table 3.

Six Steps of Data Analysis: From Codes to Categories to Concepts

Step	Step Title	Description of Step
1	Initial Coding	Develop a preliminary summary of responses. Initial coding can be a brief phrase or word that stands out from the transcript. When initial coding is completed with one transcript, continue the process with another one.
2	Revising Initial Coding	Modify, collapse, and rename codes.
3	Develop an Initial List of Categories	Organize codes into categories of either major topics or subsets of that topic.
4	Modify Initial List	Repeat the Step 3 process. Reread material and examine categories for significance.
5	Revisit Categories and Subcategories	Revisit list of categories, remove redundancies, and identify essential elements.
6	From Categories Into Concepts (themes)	Identify important concepts that reflect the meaning a researcher attaches to the data collected.

Note: Adapted from "Making Meaning From Your Data" by M. Lichtman, 2013, Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide, pp. 251-255. Copyright 2013 by SAGE Publications.

While implementing the six step process suggested by Lichtman (2013), the researcher color coded text appearing multiple times throughout the interview and artifacts sharing session. This process of open coding, as described by Leedy and Ormrod (2010), allowed for the finding of themes that were essential to the understanding of support program influences on teen mother self and parenting-efficacy and high school success. Once the researcher color coded text using different colored markers for different topics, she reflected on the data and organized it into a coding chart (Creswell, 2013; Madison, 2005).

The researcher also used NVivo 10 qualitative data software as a resource to assist in determining how to organize and manage data. As Creswell (2013) noted, software is useful for locating quotations and multiple perspectives of categories or themes. Software, such as NVivo 10, assists with analyzing, managing, shaping qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). Open coding identified specific categories from the data into a coding chart that allowed for description of influences of support programs (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Data Quality Measures

The researcher communicated her role in a way that the participants understood and accepted (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Failure to do so might have caused difficulty in the interviewing process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). During the implementation stage of the interview and artifacts sharing session, the researcher considered potential influences and biases. Considerations consisted of: a) verifying that the recording was working; b) asking one question at time with sufficient wait time; c) trying to remain neutral to responses and when documenting; d) encouraging responses with head nods and short probes; e) providing transitions between major topics; and f) remaining in control of the interview and questioning sessions (McNamara, 2009).

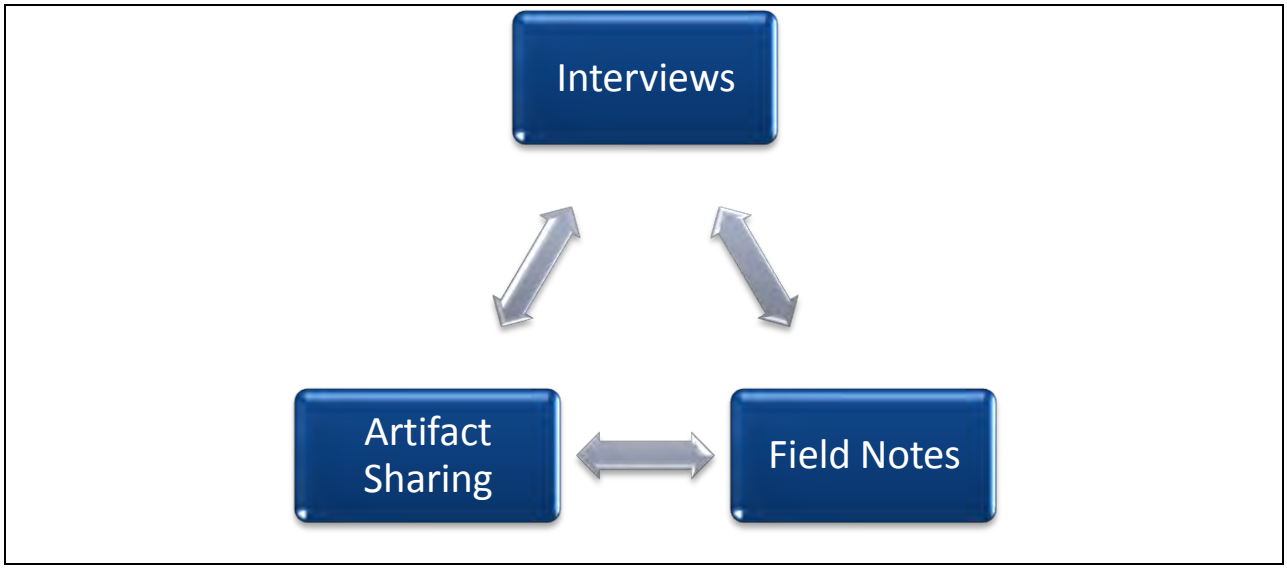
Another concern in research is research bias and assumptions. As part of the phenomenological method and qualitative methodology in general, recognizing and attending to biases and values during the course of the study is important. Bracketing is the recognition of personal bias in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; Van Manen, 1990). In the process of bracketing, the researcher identifies innate bias and addresses the bias accordingly. A social constructivist worldview researcher recognizes that her own past experiences and backgrounds influence how she interprets information (Creswell, 2008). The researcher places herself in the study, accepting that her own experiences will affect interpretation and uses that knowledge to find meaning in the perspectives of others about the world (Creswell, 2008).

As a high school counselor and teen parenting group facilitator, it was necessary for the researcher to be aware of personal biases. Personal thoughts and feelings concerning support programs had to be set aside during the interview process and artifacts session to minimize bias. She did not want participants to recognize her ideas and beliefs concerning teen mothers and support programs. The researcher also had to approach the topic and questions with care, not to create bias. This was a difficult process but had to be recognized and adhered to during the course of the study. During the development of questions, the researcher attempted to maintain an ethical stance by wording questions and probes carefully so as not to show researcher bias toward a desired outcome.

Triangulation occurred due to the use of multiple and different methods of data analysis to locate evidence for an essential theme (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation involves cross-checking multiple data sources and collection procedures to evaluate the degree to which all evidence converges (Creswell, 2012; Newton, 2011).

Tier one consisted of information from the interview process. Participant perceptions and responses offered indication of support program influences on teen mother self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success. Artifact sharing provided information for the second tier of triangulation. Each participant explained her experiences and relevant information pertaining to her involvement with support program and possible influences. Tier three consisted of the information from field notes. This study used a three-tiered data system. Figure 5 illustrates the data triangulation for this study.

Figure 5. Triangulation of Data



Three methods for collection provided for multiple data sources giving the study a high level of validation (Creswell, 2013). To provide further trustworthiness or validation, the researcher kept appraisal of all data collection, including individual interview transcripts, artifacts session notes, and correspondence with the participants (Creswell, 2013). Each woman had access to her own transcript for member-checking verification (Creswell, 2012).

As Creswell (2013) suggests, qualitative research is interpretive research where the inquirer is involved in experiences with their participants. Interpretation of data, according to

Creswell, involves the description of the individual and the setting, analyzing the data for themes or categories, and developing conclusions based on personal and/or theoretical meaning extracted from the data. The purpose of this session was to further saturate the data in order to arrive at credible and warranted assertions during the analysis stage. The researcher reached saturation from all the data collected (Creswell, 2012; Newton, 2011). Saturation indicates completion of the study when there is a judgment of little need for more sampling (Newton, 2011).

For further credibility of data, the researcher asked the doctoral committee chair to review the data and in particular the themes that emerged. This peer review confirmed with greater certainty that the themes selected were truly apparent in the data (Mertens, 2005). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined confirmability as qualitative equivalent to objectivity. Confirmability audit is a tool used to make certain the data and interpretations are accurate and not the imagination of the researcher. Data should be linked back to the original sources and the processes of synthesizing the data should be able to be confirmed (Mertens, 2005).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher was granted full Internal Review Board (IRB) approval prior to beginning the study. With approval, the recruitment of the participants occurred. Ethical guidelines call for participants to give informed consent. They were told what the researcher wanted to do and why. She gained informed consent from participants by providing each person with a letter explaining the study. Participants signed the paperwork prior to the interview process and were informed of the purpose, procedures, possible risks, possible benefits, information about voluntary participation and/or withdrawal, and measures to ensure confidentiality while taking part in the study.

Concerning participants and the possibility of identification, the researcher used pseudonyms to keep their identities unknown in the context of the research study. She used a code key to match the actual name of the participant to the pseudonym. The researcher kept the code key in a separate place to maintain ethical measures and to maintain anonymity of the participants. She worked to establish trust by explaining to the participants that all information shared would remain confidential. By establishing trust, participants would be more willing to share information honestly and without fear of data being compromised. While gathering, organizing, and analyzing the data, the researcher maintained ethical guidelines by assuring the data on the digital recorder and computer hard drive were secure and that only she had access to the digital information. Only the participants, professional transcriber, and researcher had access to the data during the course of the study. Each woman had access to her own transcript for member-checking verification. Recordings, notes, and transcripts are being stored in a secure location for up to seven years. The researcher created a protected computer file for electronic data and is keeping any hard copies of information secure in a locked file cabinet.

Limitations

Limitations are used to identify potential weaknesses of a study (Creswell, 2012). A limitation involved with this research study concerns the participants as part of a purposeful sample. By using a purposeful sample, the researcher was able to contact the participants with ease. The problem with using such a sample lies in the fact that its usage decreases the transferability of the data in qualitative studies. With snowballing, participants might also recommend others with similar views and experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010). The young women were from the same area, the researcher did not select participants from outside of the region.

Since the study included only a small sample of participants, their views cannot be considered representative of views of young women, who were teen mothers in high school, across the nation. The views are not transferable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The study focused on a specific group of young women who were parenting teenagers. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 24 years and all are high school graduates. State law considers an adult to be age 19. While there are younger parents with ongoing struggles in high school, the researcher did not select those younger than 19 years due to the fact they were be more difficult to access.

Another limitation concerned researcher bias, as was addressed in the measures section of this chapter. As a school counselor who works with teen mothers, it might have become difficult for the researcher to interview participants without focusing on personal experiences. Therefore, the researcher consciously recognized her bias and addressed it accordingly. Bracketing is the identification of personal bias in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; Van Manen, 1990).

A fourth limitation was that only five women between the ages of 19 and 24 years participated in the study. Each participant might have identified differently regarding parenting-efficacy and self-efficacy. Some might spend more time thinking about the topic than others and might be more willing to talk about it. Additionally, participant memory of high school varied due to year of graduation and recollection abilities.

Delimitations

Delimitations arise from limitations and are the result of specific choices made by the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2013). They are the conditions imposed by the researcher to limit the scope of the study; they are what she does not intend to do (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Leedy &

Ormrod, 2010). Several delimitations to a study are: choice of problem, questions, theoretical perspectives, qualitative paradigm, methodology, and theoretical framework (Simon & Goes, 2013).

Research design was a delimitation of this study. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore perceptions of women about the influential elements of support programs that impacted their development of self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and high school success, as teen mothers, prior to graduating from an urban Midwestern high school. Exploring the development of other characteristics was not intended with this study. Research questions were specific to the purpose statement and did not extend to other elements of teen mother development. The researcher did not deem other theoretical frameworks as relevant to the study. She chose only to use Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory.

The nature of the participants was another delimitation of the study. The researcher did not intend to explore perceptions from teen fathers, young men who were teen fathers during high school, or current teen mothers. She was solely interested in exploring perceptions of young women ages 19 to 24 who were teen mothers while attending high school. Location was also delimiting. The researcher recruited young women who attended an urban Midwestern high school, not young women who attended different school systems in different locations.

Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative phenomenological study of the influences of support programs on teen mother development of self and parenting-efficacy and on high school success. Through interviews and sharing of artifacts, participants explained their lived experiences as teen mothers in high school. The researcher gathered data by conducting semi-structured interviews and taking field notes of artifacts sharing sessions. The hope of the

researcher was for participants to gain personal insight about how they experienced high school success, efficacy, and how they relate it to their current situations. By virtue of these insights, combined with their potentially increased knowledge, the researcher desired that participants develop a new awareness of how they can continue to be fully engaged in their experiences. The researcher used the interview transcriptions and field notes for triangulation and to look for evidence of essential themes.

The emergent themes might provide educators and community members with a deeper exploration and understanding of teen mothers. The researcher also hopes educators and community officials will be able to critique the way they support teen mothers. Teen mothers are multifaceted. By focusing on perspectives of teen mothers, those directly affected by educational policies, school officials and educators might learn how to provide better support and guidance. Hearing from the teen mothers might also provide insight to restructuring support programs and strengthening effective elements.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore perceptions of women about the influential elements of support programs that impacted their development of self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and high school success, as teen mothers, prior to their graduations from an urban Midwestern high school. The researcher explored the degree to which five young women perceived support programs influences. These five women, who had been teen parents in high school, graduated despite difficult circumstances and challenges. Self-efficacy theory, which originated from Social Cognitive theory of human functioning by Albert Bandura, provided the theoretical framework in guiding whether young women found support programs impactful on their development of efficacy and school success (Bandura, 1986). Perceptions were recorded during interviewing and artifact sharing sessions. Data was then analyzed by using coding to determine overarching themes (Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013). The emergent themes were:

Self-efficacy

I. Have a Purpose and Sense of Responsibility

Parenting-efficacy

II. I Am a Good Mother

III. Guiding Adult

IV. Peer Support

V. Preparation for Parenthood

School Success

VI. Economic Affordability

VII. Future Possibilities

VIII. Adult Intervention

IX. Future and Financial Stability

The researcher collected a significant amount of data with which to refer and report on the three central questions that guided the purpose for the study. The research questions were:

1. What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain self-efficacy?

2. What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain parenting-efficacy?

3. What are the perceptions of women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, regarding the influence of support programs on school success?

The theoretical framework of Bandura's Self-efficacy Theory guided the development of research questions one and two. The questions were formatted with the intent of exploring support programs' possible effects on efficacy development in female adolescents. Question three extends from efficacy development into the ultimate goal of high school graduation. Three principal questions formed the basis for additional probing questions that were asked of each participant during her scheduled session. Participants were asked to share artifacts representing their journeys through high school, as an additional means to corroborating their interview responses.

Participants

Despite the purpose of the study focusing on young women's perceptions of possible affects of support programs on self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success, the researcher believed a brief description of each participant might contribute to a richer understanding of the data findings.

Laura

Laura was a 21 year old, African-American woman with a six year old son. At the time of the interview, the son was with her grandmother attending a church function. Laura graduated in 2010 from a public high school and attended college. She started taking classes, but stopped to work full time. After working and saving some money, she decided to return to school and continue her education. She learned that education would help her become more financially stable. At the time of the interview, she was balancing work, school, and full time motherhood. Laura lived in an apartment, with her boyfriend and son, and was in the process of searching for a different living situation. Her son attended first grade. With her mother and sister living in another state, she briefly considered moving to be closer. She reflected on her current support network, her schooling, and postponed any decision to relocate. In addition, Laura was in a custody battle with the biological father. She asked that I not disclose details for fear of legal ramifications.

Laura had a busy schedule working and going back to school. She was available on a Wednesday evening for the interview. The researcher arrived at 5:30 p.m., with Laura arriving shortly thereafter, energetic and displaying a commanding presence. She apologized for the condition of the apartment. The apartment was sparsely decorated and in slight disarray. A full laundry basket and additional clothes were in the middle of the living room. Used plates, toys,

and notebooks were scattered about the room. Pictures of her son, at various ages, were hung throughout the apartment. She was quick to share his accomplishments at school and pulled out a notebook of his drawings and writings. She proudly shared that they both did schoolwork and studied together. She wanted to make sure he understood the importance of school. A child's table with a common Disney theme was the only furniture in the kitchen. The living room furniture consisted of a single chair with ottoman, bookshelf, and a television stand.

Laura offered the researcher her` chair and ottoman. As Laura positioned herself on the floor, the researcher did likewise in an attempt to establish a higher comfort level. The intent of the researcher was for closer proximity and eye level, in order to better enable conversation. Laura lay on her side when the interview began and eventually sat up towards the end. Throughout the process, she intermittently folded and toyed with her laundry items. Laura became emotional several times during the interview. For instance, she came to tears when talking about people who were most helpful to her, and when describing the ways she changed after becoming a mother. Laura also cried while sharing how she overcame obstacles to graduate from high school. After the artifact sharing, with the recorder turned off, she moved closer to the researcher to share some details regarding her legal issues, asking they not be disclosed in the study.

Laura became pregnant at 14 and a teen mother at 15. At 14, she represented an age group younger than the other participants. Laura was forthcoming about her experiences with support programs in high school. With more personal matters, she was reserved and would not disclose much information. For example, she only briefly discussed being raised by a single mother, with minimal involvement on the part of her father. She did not elaborate on how an absent father might have affected her later decisions; she also did not offer much insight into the

rest of her childhood. Off the record, as previously mentioned, she was more forthcoming with details about her personal life. She elaborated on her feelings about both her absent father, as well as about the history of her relationship with her son's father. Despite coming to tears several times during the interview, Laura displayed passion and self-confidence while discussing future plans for her and her son.

Mary

Mary was a soft-spoken twenty-two year old bi-racial woman with a five year old son. The interview was scheduled on a Wednesday, her day off from work, and began, at approximately 6:00 p.m. At the time of the interview, Mary's son was with her mother. She was a quiet reserved woman who kept her responses to a minimum. She did not disclose details, and answered with brevity as the questions were posed. Mary offered little elaboration or depth in her responses, even with additional probing questions.

Mary lived in a modest middle income apartment with her fiancé. The apartment was fully and comfortably furnished. Attention to detail was noticeable, as everything seemed to have a proper place. Family pictures and wall hangings with positive words adorned the walls. The kitchen was colorfully decorated and provided a sense of warmth and comfort. Mary lit a candle, and its fragrance filled the area. Living conditions were immaculate and orderly. There were several storage containers of toys and school supplies. Pictures of Mary, her son, and other family members were displayed on the refrigerator and in several frames lining walls and bookshelves. Mary sat adjacent to the researcher at the kitchen table. She was quick to smile and was very hospitable.

Mary became pregnant and a mother at 17. She mentioned the encouragement and support of her mother, and that their mother-daughter relationship was always a strong one. She

did not share any information about her biological father. The researcher observed evidence of Mary having a strong commitment to her education: after graduating from high school, she began to attend a private college for nursing while working full time. Mary also made apparent her dedication to motherhood by imparting how her plans centered on her son and how she could provide the best for him. Mary was methodical and meticulous in how she responded and did things. She was calm and answered each of the questions of the researcher with precision.

Tiffany

Tiffany was a petite nineteen year old Caucasian woman with a two year old son. She was energetic and amicable. Her voice resonated strength, despite its youthfulness and use of simple language when responding to questions or probes. She lived with her mother and step-father. At first, Tiffany preferred to meet at a local coffee shop, but after more disclosure from the researcher about the study, she changed her mind. With permission from her step-father, the researcher arrived at the home upon the agreed time of 6:00 p.m. The location of the home was in an upper-middle class neighborhood. The home was orderly, clean, and well maintained. The researcher and Tiffany sat next to each other, on the couch in the family room, adjacent to the kitchen. The living room and kitchen were decorated in warm browns and reds. Embellishments of dried flowers and plants, kitchen fixtures, and various décor enhanced the designer feel of the home.

At the time of the interview, Tiffany's son was present and playing with his toys. During the process, there were a few instances when Tiffany briefly stopped to help her son with a video game he was playing. She was able to continue talking, and the interruptions did not hinder the interview. Tiffany began with sporadic glimpses into her life, and plans, both immediate and long-term. She said she and her boyfriend were soon going to be living together in their own

apartment. She was presently working and considering taking some classes at a local community college. Tiffany shared that she had a tumultuous relationship with her child's biological father, but that he did help watch their son so she could complete high school and graduate. She stressed several times how much she matured since becoming a mother, while her son's father continued to use drugs and alcohol, as well as to be inconsistent with employment. Tiffany revealed how previous to becoming pregnant, she engaged in substance abuse as part of the "popular party" group. She forced herself to consider lifestyle decisions carefully after becoming a mother. She made her son's needs, as well as his future, major priorities.

Tiffany discussed how her mother and sister also bore children during their adolescences. Whether this influenced, or led to Tiffany becoming a mother, she did not say. Throughout the interview, Tiffany remained energetic, candid, and showed optimism regarding her and her son's futures. She shared details of her experiences and continued to disclose information as the researcher was done recording. She continued to remember information she considered pertinent.

Tina

Tina was a twenty- year old bi-racial woman with a four year old daughter. Her daughter attended pre-kindergarten. She was available mid-afternoon of her day off from work. We scheduled her interview a week after she moved into a new apartment. The apartment was modestly and tastefully decorated. We sat in the living/family area on a new wrap around couch. Everything was in order and pristine, with no loose papers or items lying about. Her daughter's room appeared more lived in, with walls painted pink, hand-drawn pictures hung upon them, and toys displayed around the room. The daughter was engaged in her room, drawing pictures, while watching a Disney movie. She did come out a number of times to show us some of her

drawings, very politely interrupting her mother. She listened to instructions and re-directions given by her mother.

Tina became pregnant at 15 and a mother at 16. She worked two jobs and was attending a community college for health sciences. Despite being soft-spoken, she exuded strength, confidence, and determination. She made direct eye contact with the researcher, often using hands for emphasizing some points, and in the manner she interacted with her daughter. She was patient and direct while parenting her child. During the interview and sharing session, Tina was organized and orderly with her thoughts and responses. She thought through each question before responding. Tina offered elaborate responses, and many details, without much probing from the researcher. The only point of interest not discussed in depth was the death of her father, which occurred when she was a child. At the time of the interview, she was not in a relationship and considered herself to be self-sufficient.

Throughout the session, Tina kept reiterating the importance of being focused and financially stable. She was open about her life experiences, which included being a part of the court system due to her mother reporting some concerns to child services. She did not detail the accusations or conclusions. Tina stated it was during this process she re-examined her priorities, focusing on caring and providing for her daughter. She became emotional during the interview several times, even crying as she explained how she overcame this challenge, and others. She also came to tears as she discussed those who assisted and supported her during high school and pregnancy.

Anna

Anna was a petite twenty year old bi-racial woman with a four year old son.

She had recently moved into her own townhome. The day of the interview was a work day for Anna, and she scheduled the session for later in the evening after she provided transportation for several family members. Consequently, the interview was scheduled for 7:00 p.m. Upon entering the home, the researcher observed that is was sparsely decorated. Anna's home was dark, and the only room with light was a living room. This room was furnished with only a couch, loveseat, and end table on one side. Opposite the couch and loveseat was a television with stand. Lighting was provided by a single overhead light in the center of the room. A few toys were on the floor along with a box of DVDs.

The researcher did not have access to the rest of the home. A single large picture of Anna's son was framed on the wall along with a flag of the Philippines. Anna offered her couch as a spot for the interview. She sat adjacent to the researcher. Her son remained at play during the session. Anna's son was active and wanted attention throughout the interview and sharing session. The researcher interacted with him, so that his mother could answer the questions. Many times Anna was engrossed in sharing her thoughts and did not stop talking while assisting her son.

Anna became pregnant and a mother at the age of 16, and was 20 at time of interview. She lived alone with her son, and was not in a relationship. She worked full time and was attending college. The researcher observed some discomfort in the participant. She did not display much confidence. This was detectable in her mannerisms. She shifted uncomfortably during the interview and several times laughed nervously while responding to some of the questions, however, she was determined and driven. She mentioned the importance of education and providing for her son and self. Anna took time to mention those who had remained supportive and involved in her life, most notably her parents and friends.

Support Programs

Support programs offer services and educational opportunities in a caring setting. These programs provide resources and encouragement needed to overcome challenges. Some parent support programs are school based and others involve community agencies and facilitation. School based support programs provide parenting knowledge, support, and behavioral modeling for teen mothers (Sadler et al., 2007; Williams & Sadler, 2001). Community or outside of school agencies provide support, at times with the collaboration of schools. Community support services include mentoring, skills training, wellness development, family involvement, and financial incentives (Bos & Fellerath, 1997; Center for Schools and Communities, 1999; Marcy, 2003; Rowen, Shaw-Perry, & Rager, 2005; U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

Table 4.

Support Programs of Participants

Participants	Community Support Programs	School Based Support Programs	Collaboration of School and Community Support Programs
Laura	X	Parenting Class	X
Mary	X (2 programs)	Parenting Class	X
Tiffany		Parenting Class	X
Tina	X	Parenting Class	X
Anna		Parenting Group	X

participated in school based and community support programs, at their respective schools. These school-based programs collaborated with community programs to offer support services and other opportunities for teen mothers. The support programs included developing parenting skills,

financial counseling, goal setting, and nutrition information. Some opportunities offered were for post high school plans such as college and career exploration.

Tiffany and Anna participated only in school based support programs. For those support programs, outside agencies provided assistance. Two types of school-based support programs in which they participated were a teen parenting class and a teen parenting support group. In the school teen parenting class, outside agency collaboration pertained to supplemental lessons to an existing school-offered parenting class. If the school did not have a class, instead offering a weekly group session, as in Anna's case, outside program representatives collaborated with the facilitator of a teen parenting group to provide additional support for the teen mothers. The programs' facilitators maintained consistent contact with the mothers at school, as well as offering additional support services at off-site locations. These services consisted of interactions with other teen parents, extended tutoring services, nutrition counseling, and child care provision.

Findings

The researcher incorporated participant quotes as often as possible to increase the richness of the response (Patton, 2002). Verbatim quotations provided for a deep understanding and gave participants a voice. Quotations are forms of evidence, explanation, and enhance readability (Cordon & Sainsbury, 2006). Participant quotes showed the strength of their views or the depth of feelings in ways that researcher narration could not (Cordon & Sainsbury, 2006).

Question 1. The study sought to investigate the perceptions of young women, who were teen mothers in high school, with regard to possible influences of support programs on self-efficacy. The question was posed in such a way as to direct participants to recall their time

before becoming pregnant. All participants struggled with differentiating between their teen and teen mother roles. As a result, the five individual interviews, with artifact sharing, yielded one major theme in regard to self-efficacy.

I have a purpose and sense of responsibility. Throughout the interviews, all participants addressed having to mature and grow up faster than peers. Despite what they thought of themselves prior to being pregnant and mothers, each participant described how becoming a mother gave her a sense of purpose, responsibility, and enhanced her determination to succeed. All participants displayed difficulty in distinguishing themselves as either teens, or mothers. Their roles as mothers surpassed their self images as pre-parenting teens. Several shared that they always had drive, confidence, and focus. That drive, confidence, and focus became stronger once they identified themselves as mothers, and participated in support programs.

Faster growth and maturation. Tina shared how participating in a support program, "…made me more confident as a person…I learned like what I should be doing as far as taking care of myself, and I just felt more confident because I felt like I was on point with that stuff." Mary was always driven in high school, with a goal of attending college. She added that participating in a program strengthened her drive,

> …it made me realize that-how important growing up was going to be and how I was going to have to grow up a little bit faster than all of my peers…this whole thing made me a little bit more mature.

Laura, prior to becoming a mother, perceived herself as tough and not in need of advice, "…I thought I was the stuff, I guess. I thought I was like, mighty. I thought I was grown". Upon joining the group, her perceptions adjusted, "Um, being with the group, inside the group...it

helped me to understand, like I'm not done and I'm not grown and I'm not an adult and I'm none of that."

Tiffany described herself as belonging to a set of teens she described as "popular and party people" before becoming pregnant. She considered herself confident, as well as a person seeking fun. When she began participating in a support program, Tiffany's self perceptions changed, "…it completely did [change] in the beginning so participating in those [programs], it's like, kind of put everything in the reality like, this is how like I'm looked upon but I shouldn't even look upon myself that way." Her reality had changed and consisted of being responsible by doing what was healthy for her and the baby, "I did knock everybody that was in that situation [drugs and partying] out of my life and just had to concentrate on making myself how to be healthy and keeping him healthy and doing everything I needed to do." Similar to Tiffany, Anna considered herself a rebel. Anna's parents often punished her for various acts of defiance, such as not listening, leaving the home without permission, or staying out past an established curfew. According to Anna, she knew it all and did not have to listen to anybody. Once she participated in the support program and became a teen mother, her perspective changed, "I just figured that I had to grow up faster just because I was the only one taking care of him. And um, it [the support group] just kind of changed like the way that I looked at myself." She shared that the support group helped, but becoming a mother was the primary factor in her growth and maturity. She chose to become more responsible in her decision making, and parenting,

> …before I became a teen mom I just thought I knew everything, but now that I'm a teen mom, I don't know I just feel like acting like that, it was dumb. I wish I'd just never acted like that, but I think it's just a part of growing…I will help my kid never act like that even though I acted like that.

Consequences for every decision. Prior to motherhood, several of the participants lived in the present, with no regard for the future. They based their decisions and actions on immediate gratification. There was defying of parents, alcohol or drug consumption, and sexual activity. Tiffany stated that once she became a mother and participated in the parenting group, she thought through her decisions more carefully, and considered possible consequences for her actions. Before participating in a group and becoming a mother, she never pondered her future. Once she joined the support group and became a mother, she changed her thoughts,

> Um, just how to care about yourself and care about what you're doing and how the chain reaction of things. Well, if I go to a party, what if I get pulled over. I mean, I'm drunk and now I have an MIP [Minor in Possession] as well and how would that affect my later life.

Similar to Tiffany, Mary alluded to changing her decision making processes,

> I felt like before I got pregnant, I wasn't really worried about my future or what I was going to do next. I mean, it's always been something that was important to me, but it wasn't something that I was 100 percent focused on. So, becoming a teen parent, just really made me see that, okay now I'm not doing this just for me and I don't have to make these decisions just for me and for my success, but I also have to do this for somebody else now.

Question 2. With question number two, the researcher sought to understand perceptions of the participants with regard to influences of support programs on parenting-efficacy. Participants were able to discuss, more in depth, their gravitation toward being more of a mother than a teenager. Self-efficacy and parenting-efficacy intertwined. All participants discussed in detail,

perceptions of their experiences with, and the influences of, support programs on parenting beliefs. Three major themes emerged regarding parenting-efficacy.

I am a good mother. All participants referred to a desire to be role-models for their children. They did not want to be burdened with the stigma of being a teen mother. Tiffany was determined not to allow herself or her son to be part of the negative images associated with teen motherhood. She referred to her son, and the higher statistical likelihood of future prison involvement as a result of being born to a teenage mother. She adamantly said, "…why am I going to be in that statistic? I'm gonna be the person that blows everybody out of the water." In addition, Tiffany provided a journal as an artifact of significance. For over a year, she wrote to her son explaining her perceptions of life. She wanted him to know about her challenges, determination to overcome, and how important it was to her to be a good mother. She shared,

> I wrote this in school and I just talked to him about everything…I started when I was eighteen weeks…and I just explained like who I was and who his dad is and I have pictures…I just explain what I'm doing that day and everything that happened in my day…It's written to him so um, I'm explaining to him like what my life is like and how everything is and how it really shouldn't be…and how it really should be and kind of my take on how I wish things were.

Writing in the journal provided her with a sense of purpose. Tiffany told how she used the process to develop an optimistic outlook, "… helping myself really, my hope through it." Journaling also gave her a purpose in establishing a forum to talk to her son during pregnancy, as well as during the early years of his life.

Anna talked about the influence of a support group, stating,

> I think the support group helped me, but I feel like me just becoming a mom it changed me who I was because I knew if I have a child I wouldn't be acting the way I was acting because I don't not want my child to act like that.

Echoing Anna's sentiments, Tina started to think more highly of herself once she became a mother. She said the support group helped her develop a sense of responsibility to properly raise her daughter. Tina stated,

> …regardless of how I feel about myself I need to pretend that I feel awesome about myself…I think the biggest thing is the fact that I have a daughter, and I need to raise her as a lady. But I was never a lady, basically. So that is the biggest thing.

She went into more depth to describe her transformation:

> As a teen mom, at first I was lost. Just lost. Clueless. I felt like I had no spine. I was just kind of noodling around trying to feel-see where I fit in. And then once that confidence was instilled in me I realized that I don't fit in anywhere. It's what I need to do for me and my child.

Similar to Anna and Tiffany, Laura shared that becoming a mother and participating in a teen parenting group allowed her to better understand herself. She compared herself to other teens who were in the group, but not as actively involved as she was, "…they did not want to be bothered with. They just wanted to find out life on their own." Unlike those who were not active participants, Laura chose to be an active, engaged member. As a result, she believed, once she became a mother, she found her identity. Before, she didn't know how to describe herself, "I didn't know me. I just knew I was a mom. I never knew anything about myself, but I was a mom though."

Guiding adult. All participants had adults in their lives who provided guidance. These adults gave support, pushed them to do better, and helped the participants stay focused. Guiding adults also provided participants with opportunities to enhance their futures.

Non-family intervening adults. Participants shared how various adults helped them to pursue goals and stay focused. The word 'push' was frequently used to describe how the adults encouraged them to persevere through difficult times and situations. Adults mentioned were: teachers, support program facilitators, social worker, counselors, and teen parenting group facilitators. Mary believed that it takes special people to effectively help teen mothers,

> Uh well, I think it takes a special person to understand what teen moms are going through. Uh, not everybody gets it and a lot of people, you know, have a biased opinion towards it, so uh, I think it's truly helpful to have those teachers that really want to be a part of a teen parent's life and see them succeed because it really does have an impact on that person. Uh, I don't' know how I would have really gotten through it without, you know, my teacher from my teen parenting class and Ms. Betty. I mean, just their encouraging words and the fact that they believed in you was really helpful.

Mary belonged to support programs that worked with her at school and at home. She shared, "Ms. Betty was awesome. If I had any concerns with anything with school or outside of school I could always go to her for assistance. She acted like a counselor to me." Mary spoke highly of Ms Betty and implied that Ms. Betty did a million different things she didn't have to do to help.

Tina also participated in school based and community support programs. She shared that the teacher for her parenting class at school instilled hope and confidence in Tina's abilities, both as a student and parent. Through the community support program, a mentor would visit Tina at

home and provide assistance with goal setting. According to Tina, the mentor who made home visits demonstrated genuine care. The knowledge that she was willing to come to Tina's home provided a deeper sense of care and encouraged her to stay focused. Tina said, "I felt like I needed that guidance…I felt like I needed someone to be right there and help me stay on track." The program provided her with mental and emotional stability. The program helped, "…financially, mentally, emotionally, I really liked going there as well. I felt good walking into there. It just made me feel better to be able to talk to someone."

Tiffany discussed the importance of her teen parenting teacher, "…she had helped many other teen moms go through this and just having knowledge….talking to Ms. Katie, I can talk to her. This happened, this happened, what do I do?" She would go to Ms. Katie with the big issues and her family with the smaller ones. She shared that Ms. Katie understood every situation and did not pass judgment. She felt the need to filter some of her concerns with parents and other immediate family members.

For Laura, the school social worker and support program facilitator were most helpful. They held her accountable and responsible for her actions. In addition, they gave her a sense of empowerment,

> They just played a big role because as long as you want help, they're there to help. As long as you want to help yourself, they're not those kinds of people that, you know, like 'Well, you shouldn't have did this. You shouldn't have got yourself into it.'

She continued to describe how the two guided her academically, and with parenting, saying,

> When you want some help or something, those are, those people they push. Ms. Patricia was [like] my mom. It makes me cry. At school, she made sure, she made sure she stayed on me…she made sure she pushed me as far as she could push me. Ms. Betty

> pushed me to be better for my son, you know it was more Ms. Patricia [pushed] for education and then Ms. Betty you got to handle your son before you can make sure you're taken care of. So they both were right and I had to listen to them.

Family intervening adults. All participants told how they relied on certain family members for support and resources. Mary shared that her family was the most helpful to her. Her mother and grandmother, "…were like my main supports. They knew what to do when I had questions and they would always be there to help me." As with Mary, Tina relied on her family for help. Her mother and grandmother, she said, provided her main support network. "My mom was helpful mentally. Never financially, but mentally she was helpful. My grandma was financially helpful. If I needed anything she would help me out." She remembered how her mother would stay up with her at night to feed the baby. She wanted to share one powerful story with the researcher,

> [My mom was] very supportive to the point where right after I had her, I was nursing and I was working overnights at Burger King. And my mom would literally like latch [the baby] on and like milk my other breast while she's nursing on this one because I had these crazy milk ducts that were under my armpits, and they were like-yeah, my mom is just awesome.

In addition to assisting Tina with complications of a blocked milk duct and the difficulties of breastfeeding as a result, her mother also provided counsel, "My mom was very helpful. My mom was a teen parent herself. So, hearing what she went through and what she had to do to get us where we are today, that was very helpful."

Peer support. Having a group of peers going through similar experiences at the same time was another factor that helped contribute to parenting-efficacy. All participants mentioned

the importance of their peers in the parenting support group. With Tiffany, it was her peers in the group, more than the facilitators, who were helpful in dealing with challenges. Once she became pregnant, her former friends stopped talking to her, but her participation in group helped her form new meaningful friendships. Mary offered similar thoughts, stating that her parenting peers provided, "…a support system in itself because we were all going through the same thing."

Baby father conflicts. Anna shared how her support group peers helped her cope, supported her, and helped her feel as if she was not alone. She was able to freely express herself in conversation, and they would understand. These peers aided Anna in dealing with her frustrations over a tenuous relationship with her baby's father. She stated,

> I mean, they didn't say that they saw it coming, but they kind of just helped me cope with it like umm…they just kind of helped me understand better because at first I was like I don't know why he doesn't want to be there, but they just yeah all the time they just help me understand.

Tina also experienced difficulties, saying her support-group peers helped her feel safe. She felt she could talk openly about her situation to her peers without being judged. One aspect she discussed with peers was her baby's father and their relationship. She described him as being crazy, aggressive, and angry. She felt tense with him at the same high school she attended. He chose to leave high school. The combination of supporting peers, with his absence, created for Tina a fuller sense of safety and security at school.

Laura was also engaged in a tumultuous relationship with her baby's father. Throughout her pregnancy, the father did not accept responsibility. Upon the birth of Laura's son, he acknowledged his son. Laura fought with his family, as well as her own mother over this

situation. Having the support group to talk about her feelings, thoughts, and frustrations helped her cope. She said,

> …if I didn't have support I would have nobody else to stress to. I wouldn't have nobody else to complain to so I feel like maybe I would have kept those emotions bottled up and I was a firecracker….I would have gotten into a couple of fights and I would have gotten sidetracked.

Shared experiences. Anna described how the parenting program helped her with parenting skills,

> I think it was just like talking to other teen parents, asking them like how-how they take care of some things or how they handle a certain situation I think I just did like missing pieces from everybody else and that kind of just helps me Like if I feel like, you know potty training. Like I'll ask other people how do this and because I don't know and then I don't know they will just tell me….and then somebody else told me that, well they'll end up telling you when they have to, you know go to the bathroom. So it just-I took bits and pieces from other people and it kind of just helps me in different ways, like if I don't feel like one way is working, I'll try a different way that somebody else tells me.

Laura shared the importance of belonging to a group of peers. She felt able to openly confide, without being judged, "We talked about everything in our groups." Participating in a support program allowed her to interact with other parents who experienced a similar journey and could provide her with advice and understanding. Laura said upon joining the group,

> It kind of let me know that I really haven't struggled…there's people there who had older kids and there's people there who had younger kids and it was just like, you know, it just lets me know that I really haven't experienced anything yet. I looked, I see kids all up to

> [age] five and it's like I'm getting ready to get there. So it kind of helped me to understand.

Mary also told how she benefitted from interacting with other teen mothers,

> Ms. Betty has a, uh, group of teen moms…you got to know other teen moms in the community other than just who you were going to school with…Ms. Betty would have activities for us to do with our kids or just with each other or just--just sit there and talk."

Former teen mothers. Two participants shared the importance of having guest speakers who were former teen parents. Tina recalled how she viewed the guest speakers,

> The different speakers that we had in that teen parenting class, that was helpful. Seeing there would be people-because I was eighteen, maybe seventeen still during that parenting class. There would be people like twenty-five who would come and speak to us and let us know, like, uh-huh, their experiences of being pregnant as a teen.

Tiffany shared that her support program invited former teen mothers to discuss their experiences, provide community resources, and share parenting information. She said her teen parenting program brought in many speakers, "…speakers of what other people went through, dealing with being a teen parent and being in high school…and how to care for a child, how to do everything in between and about school with is as well."

Preparation for Parenthood. Most of the participants mentioned that participating in a support program provided them with knowledge of what to expect from motherhood, and how to better prepare them for it. Topics ranged from nutrition and health care, to developmental stages of children, to finances. Even though all participants agreed that they learned about various skills and methods of preparation, they focused more on the support from peers and adults in their lives. They all revealed support groups had the greatest positive influences. Laura told of

how she enjoyed learning to make healthy snacks. Her regular diet had previously consisted of what she described as junk food such as fast food, potato chips, cookies and other processed foods. Laura also stressed that she learned the value of patience as a mother and program participant,

> I learned my patience in high school and again to help being a better parent. It came from being a parent. You need patience in here. You need reasoning. You need a blank mind. You need an open mind. I learned that by having a kid in high school.

Laura also detailed learning to effectively interact with her son, and this interaction would be an important facet in her future role as collaborative partner with his schools. Laura said her support program taught how to aid her son's early childhood development. The support group stressed such aspects as his schooling, exercise, and how to improve his cognitive abilities. She said, "They told me you know like, stack blocks up because what we're going to do is see if he can stack blocks up. They're going to see if he can hop on one foot…..if he can lift it."

Tiffany stated that participating in a support program improved her skills in several areas as well. With the aid of peers and facilitators, she learned how to balance her various roles, as mother, student, and role model. Tiffany said her teen parenting class and teacher prepared her for learning how to care for her son during his first few months. Another area the group worked on was the importance of time management,

> Ms. Katie had us do this chart and it was like how you spend your day. How you spend your day in like what time is baby time? What time is work time? What time is school time? Cell phone, driving, everything and like, it just have to put it into reality.

The instruction in Tiffany's parenting class also included discussions on values, disciplining children, and overall views and topics regarding child rearing.

Mary indicated the facilitators of her support programs were deeply involved throughout her pregnancy, "…they were just always there, supporting and getting us ready and uh, just giving us information on what we were going to exp…what to expect…just getting you ready for parenthood and what to expect and all that stuff." Mary learned about the basics of feeding, changing diapers, and childbirth. Mary also bonded with other group members while participating in the various activities and discussion. Her active participation in the support programs fostered relationships with other teen mothers. At the time of the interview she revealed how she remains in contact with several other support program members. In addition, program participants provided her with a much-needed support system.

Economic Awareness. Several participants shared that participating in a support program provided them with a deeper awareness for financial stability and the need for budgeting. In addition, some of the programs offered incentives for attendance and participation.

Opportunities. Laura believed that her program helped open up professional opportunities. The facilitators of the school-based and community programs pushed her and continued to teach the importance of working. She said,

> They pushed us and to know, you know, letting us know that the only way you'll be able to actually take care of what you, your needs, and your child's needs, because your needs really don't matter, is to work.

Through her support program, she participated in mock interviews and learned to fill out job applications. When she secured interviews, her mentors provided transportation. In addition, Laura shared that her parenting group facilitator Ms. Patricia, and the program mentor, Ms. Betty, also offered positive references, and networked in the community to assist with

employment. She shared, "Knowing Ms. Patricia kind of opened doors for me at a couple of places too."

Mary also referred to the support program mentor's aid in learning some fundamental skills, such as finding affordable child care. She shared,

> Ms. Betty helped us with paperwork…that was a huge thing because daycare is not something you can easily find, especially something affordable for a seventeen-year-old, …just amazing in itself that they were able to help us in that way.

Financial awareness. While Tina had a strong work ethic instilled within her from a young age, she said she had to learn the importance of some basic life skills, such as budgeting or time management. She learned to manage money, as well as how to search for day care, pay bills, and balance bank accounts, from her support program class. In one activity, she was given an allowance to budget. She said, "We would budget our money on like an ADC allowance, and so we could see reality. Like wow, this is how it's going to be one day or this is how it can be done one day." Being aware also contributed to her determination to succeed past high school. She was focused what she needed to do in the future to ensure financial security. She stated,

> That ADC check which I believe is like $315.00 a month issued by the state comes like on the first or whatever, the first of the month. That was a reality check. I mean, I vividly remember sitting down with some of the girls I still talk to today, and we would like budget out our money and our bills, and we would see how far that $300.00 stretched. So it kind of put me at the point where this is not going to stretch for me. I don't need $300.00 a month. I need this weekly at least. So it helped me realize what it's

> going to be like after high school. Once I moved out of my mom's house and I had to start paying bills on my own.

Tiffany also shared the importance of using her money wisely, and the need for budgeting. When she was pregnant, she became more driven to work hard and save money for the purchase of a car. A car was already in her high school plans, but the purpose changed. Originally, the car was for more typical pursuits, such as her social visits, transportation to school, and also for employment. Once the baby was born, a car would be necessary for her to fulfill the role of mother. She would be going to routine doctor visits, taking her son to and from day care, as well as to and from a job.

Incentives. Several participants shared how they were able to earn points or money by participating in a program. Tina stated, "Every time I would do a parenting class, I would get points. And it was to the point where I could cash the points in. Get diapers, wipes, cloths, toys, anything. It was very helpful." Anna also mentioned the value of a point system. She stated that for every group meeting or activity, she would earn points. She said,

> …we could get like diapers and clothes and stuff because every time we go to a parenting group we got points and we could spend the points…everything for babies that you would need or whatever so we didn't have to spend money-money because a lot of us were young and we did not have any jobs.

Question 3. All participants strove to graduate from high school. Their goal was to remain focused and earn a diploma, despite any obstacles endured. Several factors contributed to their school successes. With regard to their successes, four themes emerged from the five interviews with artifact sharing sessions.

Future possibilities. Several participants referred to their support program mentors and teachers encouraging them to apply for scholarships, and taking them on college visits. Tina indicated her program caseworker helped to create a short-term goal plan. The caseworker visited Tina at home and each time reviewed her goal plan. This helped hold Tina accountable, and gave her ownership of her goals. In addition, Tina shared that she could not have graduated without the support of her program advisors. Referring to what helped her stay focused, she said,

> I took my first [college] campus visit with the program. That was one thing that opened up my eyes. I also received the Horatio Alger Scholarship through them. Well they helped me. They edited my papers. They made me aware of deadlines. That was also another big thing, a motivation to graduate. People's input was big on me in that it made me want to strive to succeed.

Mary also worked with the programs on post-graduation plans. She gave credit to her program mentor. Mary referred to the various methods of assistance provided by her programs,

> Trying to figure out scholarships and where to apply and all of that kind of stuff. We would always get information if we-if we had a question about that, we would just ask and Betty would get us all the information. She went and visited colleges with us and so she was very helpful.

Mary felt her program facilitators and parenting group leaders were invaluable to her establishing post high school graduation goals.

Like the others, Laura also indicated that her program provided support and kept her focused on graduation. She understood the value of education, but felt she needed urging,

> I'm getting an education that I have for further years to come. So [the program], you know, the, they way that they helped us you know, I feel like [without them] I probably would have gotten sidetracked. When I graduated I seen that, that was the biggest thing that I could have ever did. It's hard to go to school and be a mom and I experienced it so young that I'm okay with it. I know that I'll be okay with it in the future. I know I can just pick up and keep going. I know how to do it….It just let me know that I got to keep going because I got no excuse.

Adult intervention. Several of the participants shared the value of intervening adults with their graduating from high school. Tina considered herself to be focused and confident, however, there were times she needed guidance. She shared,

> I didn't feel like I was off track, but I felt like I needed someone to be right there and help me stay on track. I was going through living situations…and so they helped me with that. I felt good walking into their [the support program facility].

Family decree. Tina shared that her grandfather was the most helpful person in keeping her focused on graduating. He continuously told her to stay in school, graduate, and do something with herself. She shared,

> …he is the biggest person…in high school it was graduate, graduate, graduate, and then go to Harvard. But his high expectations of me let me know that if I ever was having a hard day, who cares, I still need to do my homework. I still need to go to class. I still need to not only graduate, but pass with good grades so that I can get scholarships.

Tiffany mentioned that her grandparents and mother were helpful in keeping her on track. Her mother would remind of the importance of going to school and not giving up. She said,

"…my mom too because every time I drive with mom, I was like, 'I'm tired over school, I'm way too tired.' She's like, 'No, you have to go. You have to. You can't, you can't not go." Tiffany felt the persistence of her mother was instrumental in achieving graduation. Like Tiffany, Anna was pushed by an adult. She referred to her father as being helpful to her completion of high school. She shared how he changed from being angry over her pregnancy to becoming her biggest advocate. Anna revealed,

> …he helped me basically financially with everything like if [the baby] was sick and he couldn't go to early Head Start, my dad would take a day off of work to watch him 'til he got better so I could go to school. Because he didn't want me missing any school and then until I got a job my senior year, he helped me buy everything.

Educator encouragement. Several participants mentioned receiving help and encouragement from educators. Without the support, many were not sure if they would have passed some of their classes, or graduated. Laura shared that she was able to earn elective credits through her support program. She said, "I can go down here [to the program facility] and I can learn how to be a parent and I can also get my credit, that was the like the best thing we had." She also stated that she was behind in credits as a junior and pushed hard to earn as many as she could to graduate on time. She told herself,

> I was leaving on my right year and I left. That was my biggest obstacle. You know, I just worked at it. I did any program I could take, any help I could take to get me a credit, I did. Any extra credit I could do, I did it. If I could double classes, I did. I did what I had to do.

Tiffany also mentioned assistance with schooling. She stated that her teen parenting teacher would allow her to come into her class, throughout the day, to get homework done. Ms. Rita knew the difficulty Tiffany was having with balancing her roles and budgeting time. She shared,

> …most of the time I did my homework in Ms. Rita's class which I never did at home so it really helped with me to get all that done…if I needed help with anything or like um, uh, like it I needed help with something like I needed to get something done right in there, she would kind of help me like, 'Hey, come over to my class. I'll write you a pass, you can get it done'.

Tina mentioned having tutoring services set up by her program. In addition to following up with her on goals and an action plan to achieve them tutors, she said, " They offered, you could go up there and do homework, and they would watch your kids." She did not utilize the service, but knowing it was an option provided a sense of security.

Mary took advantage of the extra help offered. She shared how all of her support programs contributed to her success,

> Uh well, in school, all of my teachers were extremely supportive. Like I mentioned, I had some harder classes…it was hard and I had to go before and after school and uh the program was helpful in the fact that they- I always knew I could leave [my son] and he was going to be safe…and I could get my school work done and my teachers were just really helpful because they all wanted me to succeed and they were all very willing to help me at any time. I mean, I even went in during study hour, study halls, or lunches

> and just to get help and to get all that done. Uh, then, you know, the teen parenting class, they wouldn't accept anything but the fact that we were going to get through it.

Financial stability and planning for the future. All participants referred to the importance of being able to provide for their children and of being financially stable. Most shared that they do not want their children to need anything. Almost all referred to working hard and having to push themselves beyond their perceived limits. For all, the driving force was to provide their children with a comfortable future. Tiffany mentioned that she became more focused on future goals. She changed from only thinking about her day-to-day school life, to what must be done to help her succeed in the future. She said, "Well, what am I gonna do with my life after I have this baby? Am I gonna just work at [fast food] the rest of my life or am I gonna actually like go to school and be something." Anna revealed similar beliefs, "…if I graduate it was going to be a better future for me and him [the baby], if I don't graduate we were going to be stuck or you know, so." She continued to discuss how her son pushes her to stay focused on her goals and to work harder. She said, "…becoming a teen mom is helping push harder just to reach [my goals]."

Stepping out of the struggle. Tina disclosed how she used the parenting class to develop a better understanding of the need for a secure future. She felt this was important towards providing a future for her child. She again referred to ADC financial awareness activity, and tied it to her own childhood,

> What I went through. What I saw my mom go through. I mean, as far, as like struggling, that type of stuff that was motivation to graduate. I felt like graduating is the

> first step to stepping out of the struggle because you can't really get anywhere if you don't graduate…let me graduate so I can apply for a more prestigious job.

Tina shared one artifact that kept her focused on her goals and motivated. She provided the researcher with a utility bill. She shared that she keeps an envelope posted on the refrigerator or laying on a counter as a reminder of what needs to be done. Tina does not ever want to struggle or forget the importance of being financially stable. She referred back to her strong work ethic and how she continued to maintain two jobs, while going to school.

Anna also referred to the struggles her parents endured during her childhood. She shared that neither of her parents graduated from high school and struggled raising four children. She was determined to succeed and said, "Just because I want him to have the life that I didn't have because my parents just kind of struggled…It makes me want really bad like to be where I want to be by a certain time." Anna was motivated, like other participants, by a desire to provide a better childhood than her own.

Laura revealed, when sharing her son's set of pictures as her significant artifacts, watching him grow and providing him a stable home was a priority,

> I got to give him what I didn't have, you know. It's a difference when you, when you, I feel like it's a difference when you don't have kids and it's like you're working to establish something because you, you know. You want to establish it and then you wanna have kids. Well, it didn't work that way for me. I had a kid, so now it's like, well you gotta establish for you and your kid, so that was my motivation. I don't ever want my son to be homeless. I don't ever want my son to want for nothing. I never want my son to know what it's like to go hungry, so that was my motivation.

Role-model and provider. All participants referred to motherhood as a significant motivating factor towards high school graduation. Becoming a mother also strengthened their drive to set and accomplish goals for themselves and their children.

No excuses. Tina felt she was at a time in her life when excuses would no longer be acceptable. She shared,

> I feel like graduating is one of the easiest accomplishments that can be basically handed to you. It's what you go through that can make it hard. I looked at it as a kid is not going to be an obstacle, but motivation to graduate.

Like Tina, Mary also discussed that she did not allow herself to think of any option, but graduation. She said,

> …my main thing was I had to do this. Uh, I wanted to, not just pass, but I wanted to get good grades and just that determination, I guess, is what got me through those rough-rocky patches because I don't want [my son] to ever look at a situation and be like, 'oh well, you didn't do this,' or 'you just got by with this, so why can't I?' So that was important for me to not only get by, but to do well in everything that I was doing and uh, I think, ultimately, that was my one big motivator is just how [my son's] going to look at me later on in his life when he's going through school and trying to apply for colleges and uh, you know, whether or not-where his success is going to be.

Mary always maintained her goal of graduating with honors. Becoming a mother pushed her even harder to accomplish the goal. She shared that her son gave her the strength to keep going. She kept in a small storage box several artifacts. She said, "All this stuff is something that I really wanted that uh, motivated me to get through school." Her first artifact was a purple

feather signifying her school's honor roll. She received the feather for her strong grade point average. The feather was given during a prestigious celebration acknowledging the high academic accomplishments of certain seniors.

In addition, Mary shared how her program gave her a mustard seed. She kept that seed as a reminder of what she needs to do to graduate. She said, "It's just a little mustard seed and it's like, uh, you know, it starts off small and then grows into something bigger and so they [the program] gave us this as a graduation thing." The seed reminded her of how each day she was moving towards her bigger goal of graduating and that she needed to take certain steps to get there. She also shared her high school diploma that keeps her motivated in college.

Laura also kept her son and her son's future impressions of her foremost in her thoughts. While looking at the various pictures during the artifact sharing, Laura continued to stress how she did not want her son to someday fault her for lack of follow through with plans. At this point, she thought of her struggle to remain in school and graduate, and how her son might react if she had not graduated. She said,

> It was like, so now, you know well if I don't do this, then he ain't gonna do it. If you don't graduate then he ain't got to do this and I don't want a dumb kid. I, I talked about those people all my life. I don't want my son to be that person.

My child, my motivation. Anna discussed how being the primary care giver to her son motivated her to stay focused. She kept her focus on graduation, with the ultimate goal being to provide a bright future for him. She also had a sense of urgency about her situation. Anna said,

> But now since I have him I think of him and I like think of him and his future…I think it just, it's making me push harder, just to reach it. Like, I would just be slacking it off. If he wasn't' here, like I can do it later or whatever--but I only have so much time.

Anna shared her son's baby book as her artifact. She indicated,

> When I look at it I just feel like I have come so far since then like this is the start and then. I mean, I have a long way to go but I just feel like it helps me. I pushed, you know, from January 5th 2010 until now….Yeah, so I just feel like it is, just whenever I look at it, I just feel like I've come so far, like, I'm not the same person I was. It just makes me want really bad like, to be where I want. I want him to have the life that I didn't have.

Laura shared how watching her son every day, watching him grow and develop, reinforced goals and helped with motivation. She provided a set of pictures as her artifacts. Laura shared that she had pictures of him everywhere, including in her purse, as a reminder of her intentions on graduation, providing for her son, and possibly going to college. She said,

> Um, every morning, every morning I looked at him, that that was my motivation, that is my motivation and I, he is expensive…I have to be able to make a little of money, because I have to give him what he wants, just him.

Laura continued to state that she had to stay focused and driven. Her own words to her son gave her the focus to remain on task. Every day before leaving for school, she would visit with her son as he sat in his crib, and talk. Laura revealed some of the details of these conversations, during which she would tell her son of her plans for their future,

> Every day before I go to school, it's I, I look at him and I say, I tell him, I let him know, I tell him all the time we're gonna have a big house. We're gonna have lots of cars. This

> is what we're gonna do. We're gonna have this, so I tell, you know. That is my motivation to this day. I never want him to say, well, mom you didn't do it. I don't want him to ever have an excuse on why he can't do something, because anything is possible.

Statistics. Some participants discussed the stigma attached to being a teen mother and its influence on their motivation. Tina became more determined to succeed and graduate from high school. She refuted the stigma of teen mothers being uneducated and school dropouts. She discussed her tenacity to graduate from high school,

> Just statistics really. That was another green light. Okay, I fall into the teen parent statistics. Statistically speaking, I was going to because my mom was a teen parent. So no surprise, but I'm actually going to graduate. So that was the main thing, was just first to not fall into that statistic bracket. Teen Parent came out right when I was pregnant. I was like these girls are stupid. Let me-let me graduate so I can't be looked at as stupid.

Mary briefly mentioned how, after becoming a mother, she focused more on school, "…my main focus was to stay focused and to not become the statistic." Similar to Tina and Mary, Laura talked about how several people in her community thought she was going to drop out. She became emotional when she said,

> I think a lot of people felt I wasn't' going to graduate and a lot of people thought that, like my church, I know they thought I was going to drop out. They thought I wasn't going to, you know, graduate. Um, because I was 14. I was young…Kind of a touchy subject, never talked about it.

Anna also revealed that her fear of being labeled a teen mother motivated her to stay in school and graduate. Her outlook on graduation changed upon becoming a mother, she shared,

> [My son] was kind of my motivation just to graduate because I always felt, you know, since I got pregnant that's the only thing I was really worried about, was graduating high school, because you know the only thing you hear about teen moms is a lot of them don't graduate and I did not want of be one of them, I did not want to be a statistic, I wanted to graduate.

Artifacts

Artifacts were explained as two to three meaningful items of inspiration or motivation, which helped the teen mother during her high school experiences. They represented anything regarded as meaningful for the participant, and signified her lived experiences and history (New York Libraries, 2013). The objects represented material evidence of what the teen mother valued and believed (Norum, 2008). Artifacts have intrinsic value independent of their informational content (Council on Library and Information Resources, 2001). They can be everyday items or functional in nature that signify meaning to a person (Lapan et al., 2011; Norum, 2008**).** Artifacts can add depth to a study and are frequently overlooked sources of data (Norum, 2008; White & Beaudry, 2009). Artifacts can provide insight into the customs and special occasions of the participants lived history (New York Libraries, 2013).

The intent of the researcher in using artifacts was to gain insight about the lived experiences of the teen mothers. In addition, by using artifacts, the researcher believed that a less common form of data collection might further enrich the study. Interpretations of artifacts can provide information about influences on the past (Lapan et al., 2011) and development of the participant's current identity (White & Beaudry, 2009). Participants shared personal artifacts and their significances with support programs in high school. Artifacts were photographed and

the researcher took field notes of the discussions. Participants described the significance of each artifact and the researcher probed for further explanation.

Contrary to researcher expectations, artifacts did not provide for novel meaning to the data collection. Artifacts ranged from objects created at the beginning of the pregnancy, and being added to throughout high school, to objects signifying a continued purpose, to objects representing graduation. Most of the artifacts represented abstract ideas such as the role of being a good mother, to the need for financial stability, to the attainment of high school graduation. The sharing and descriptions of the artifacts supplemented the information gathered from the interviews. Additional or new themes did not emerge from the sharing of artifacts. The researcher incorporated the information shared with the emergent themes from the interview findings. The researcher reverted to the themes when describing the artifacts shared by the participants.

Laura

Laura provided a series of pictures as her artifacts. She repeatedly said her son was her inspiration. She conveyed that her role as a good mother led to a commitment to stay in high school, encouraged her to focus on graduation, and gave her strength to overcome obstacles. Laura imparted the significance of her morning ritual,

> Every morning I looked at him, that was my motivation, that is my motivation. Him, just him, every year, him. Every day before I go to school I look at him and I say, I tell him. I let him know…what we're gonna do [and] what we're gonna have. Let's you know it's real. He's here to stay. He's not a toy. He's not gonna disappear. He's not

gonna vanish. He's here. I need to be there. I don't want him him to be homeless. I want us to be comfortable.

Figure 6. Laura Artifact: Daily Inspiration

Figure 6. Photograph of Laura's son. Looking at her son each day, inspired Laura to remain focused, determined, and motivated. Picture cropped to format page. Photographed and printed with permission.

Part of being a good mother, to Laura, was the importance of financial independence and stability. She referred back to morning ritual,

Every morning I looked at him and he is expensive. You got a mouth to feed. He wants this, so I, I feel like, for him to be my only child, I have to be able to make a little money, because I have to give him what he wants, just him.

Laura continued to refer to her childhood and wanting better for her son,

> I got to give him what I didn't have. We want to be able to have our own house, where nobody can say, look this is this and this is this, so you have to give us our house back. You didn't pay [for] this, I never want to feel that. I want to own my own place, where if I go and my son has nowhere to go, he always got a place to come back home to. I wanna be a home owner and I want to own my own cars. I don't ever want nobody to take anything from me.

Laura continued to stress how looking at her son motivated and influenced her decisions throughout high school. She provided a series of pictures depicting his various developmental stages as her artifacts.

Mary

Mary shared several artifacts pertaining to her journey throughout high school and the accomplishment of goals. She shared a box of artifacts symbolizing high school graduation. Graduating with honors from high school was always a goal for Mary. The first object, a feather, represented having a strong grade point average for the high school.

Figure 7. Mary Artifact #1: School Success

Figure 7. Photograph of purple feather given to Mary for academic success. Receiving the feather motivated Mary to continue to do well academically and graduate from high school. Picture cropped to format page. Photographed and printed with permission.

Mary's determination to graduate from high school influenced her decisions and focus. Becoming a mother did not sway her from achieving high school success. When she first began attending one of the support programs, Mary received a mustard seed. She shared that the mustard seed and program helped motivate her, "That really helped me because they were always there and taking us different places to check out different colleges or different teen parenting conferences." In regards to the seed, she imparted, "It's just a little mustard seed…it starts off small and then grows into something bigger…as a graduation thing."

Figure 8. Mary Artifact #2: School Success

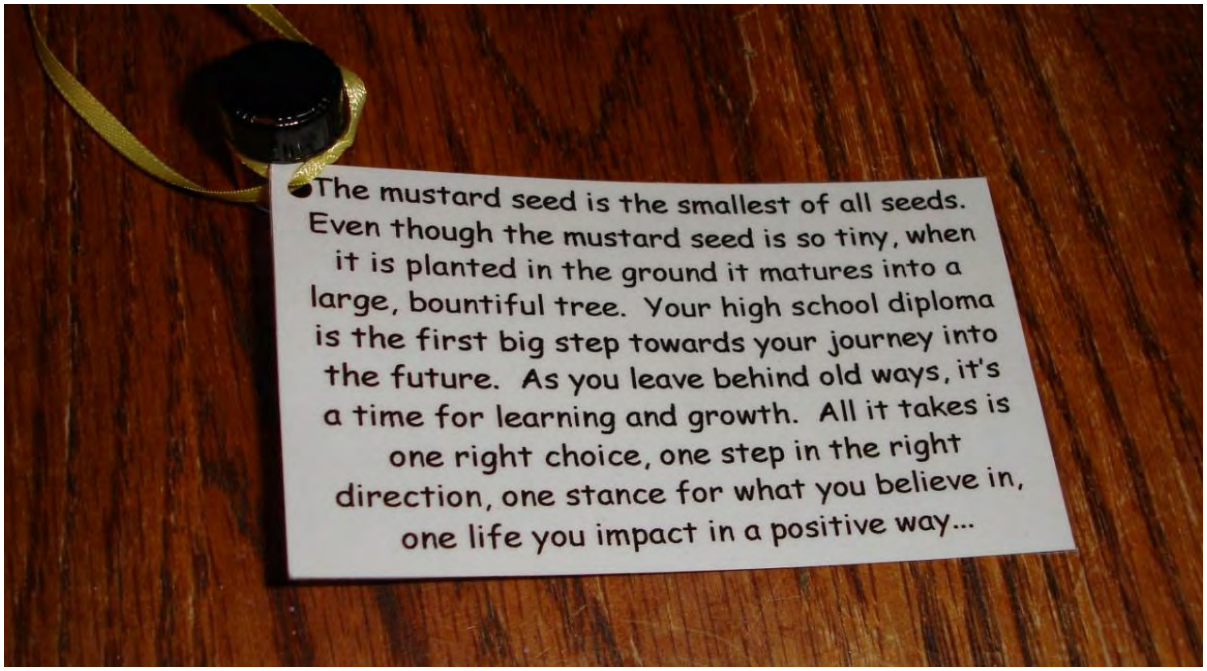


Figure 8. Photograph of mustard seed, artifact representing journey of growth throughout high school for Mary. Picture cropped. Photographed and printed with permission.

The last artifact pulled out of the box was a cross that used to hang above her son's crib. Mary conveyed, "I'm not the most religious person in the world, but it did play a part in welcoming him." She shared that looking at the cross gave her strength to keep going. She realized that she had to think of her son, in addition to herself, when making decisions and

determining upon what path to embark. For Mary, abstract concepts, represented with concrete items upon achievement, signified her journey through high school.

Figure 9. Mary Artifact #3: Strength

Figure 9. Photograph of crib cross representing inspiration and strength to overcome challenges for May. Picture cropped to format page. Photographed and printed with permission.

Tiffany

Tiffany shared a personal journal for her artifact. She began filling the pages with her thoughts and drawings, once she learned of her pregnancy. Figure 10 is a photograph of the journal cover. Tiffany was eighteen weeks pregnant when she began to write,

> I just explained who I was and who his dad is and I have pictures. I just kind of explain what I'm doing that day and everything that happened in my day. There are pictures [of him] in my belly here and…the balloon from my baby shower. I am just explaining to him like what my life is like and how everything is and how it really should be and kind of my take on how I wish things were.

Figure 10. Tiffany Artifact: Inspiration and Hope

Figure 10. Journal depicting journey of pregnancy, motherhood, and high school for Tiffany. Artifact source of inspiration, reflection, therapy, and determination. Photograph cropped to fit format of page. Photographed and printed with permission.

Tiffany wrote in her journal daily and disclosed that there are sections that she will not show her son. Journaling was therapeutic for her. She released frustrations about his father, "I kind of explain everything with his dad because his dad was very wild and crazy when I was pregnant

and he kinda made me mad a lot." She told how she also wrote about the changes with her body due to the pregnancy, but did not elaborate verbally. Figure 11 depicts a journal passage where Mary wrote about aches in her legs.

Figure 11. Tiffany Journal Entry Referring to Body Changes

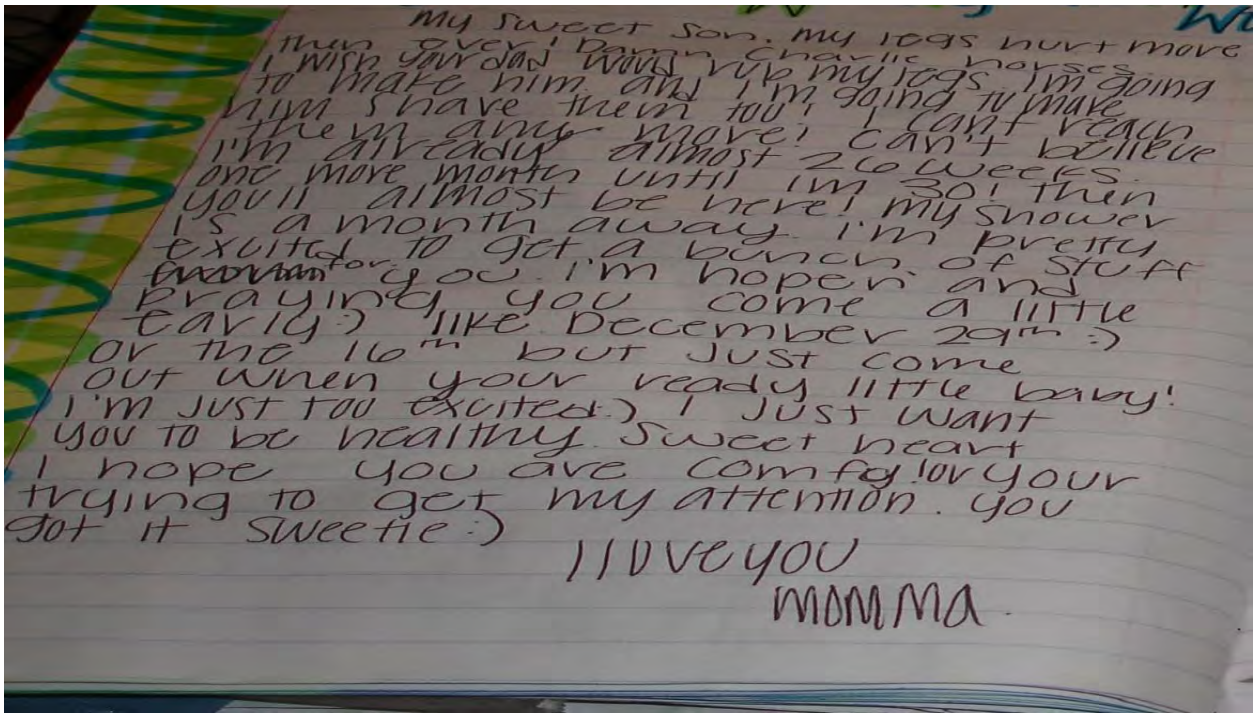


Figure 11. Journal entry disclosing body changes of Tiffany during pregnancy, specifically changes in her legs. Photograph cropped to fit format of page and enlarged to allow reader to read entry more clearly. Photographed and printed with permission.

Overall, Tiffany expressed, in the journal, everything she was feeling, thinking, and experiencing. She shared, "I chose this because obviously this is my day to day life when I was pregnant with him and I actually have [entries] when I was pregnant, after him being born, like he's 5 weeks, 4 days…6 weeks, 6 days." Tiffany conveyed how journaling assisted in her journey throughout high school. Writing on a daily basis kept her focused on her goals and what she deemed to be important. It also benefitted her well-being and reinforced positive interactions with her son. Journaling, she shared was a means for, "Helping myself really, my hope through

it." Determination increased and she thought more about future possibilities and goals. She no longer lived for the moment. Tiffany wanted to be a good mother. She referred to the stigma of being a teen mother several times and stressed how she refused to be labeled in a negative manner.

Tina

Throughout the interview and during her artifact sharing, Tina consistently brought up the concept of financial stability. Tina did not have any particular artifacts. She shared that she always placed an envelope with a monthly bill statement in an area she frequented daily. The envelope reminded her of goals and the need to remain focused at school and on task. There was no particular type of bill or envelope and it changed throughout her high school years. During the time of the artifact sharing, Tina had a utility bill on her kitchen counter, strategically placed so she would always see it. There were no other decorative or essential items placed on the kitchen counters. The envelope stood out and drew the focus of the researcher upon her initial observation of the area. Figure 12 is a photograph of her utility bill.

Tina recounted some of the information shared during the interview session. She discussed her determination to overcome the financial struggle faced during childhood and that her determination began at the age of fourteen. Becoming a teen mother only enhanced her tenacity to succeed by first graduating from high school and then attending college. She shared, "I felt like graduating is the first step to stepping out of the struggle…let me graduate so that I can apply for a prestigious job."

Although Tina adjusted her advanced education goals during pregnancy, the concept of being financially stable remained a priority. Originally, Tina wanted to attend a historically

black university and join a sorority. She altered her thoughts and goals as a result of the prospect of motherhood. She decided to attend a local college that provided assistance to her as a single mother. Tina stated, "It was just the school that changed. When I got pregnant all of that kind of extra stuff when down the drain. I just wanted to go to college and get it done with." Posting a bill requiring payment, in a prime location in her home was a daily reminder to budget and focus on responsibilities after high school.

Figure 12. Tina Artifact of Goals and Focus

Figure 12. Photograph of utility bill, artifact reminder of the need for financial stability, academic success, and focus. Photograph cropped to fit format of page. Photographed and printed with permission.

About budgeting and being financially aware, Tina shared, "It helped me realized what it's going to be like after high school once I move out of my mom's house and I have to start paying bills on my own."

While the researcher photographed the envelope, Tina began to describe an incident at the school of her daughter. She spoke again of the stigma attached to young mothers, which she struggles with, as she recalled the encounter,

> I was dropping her off at school and the lady was like are you mom? And I said yes. She said you look young. I said I am. She said how old are you? I said twenty. Then [my daughter] is like I'm four and a half. I'm like, oh, Lord. I do still hear it and it's something that I prefer to not hear one of those comments where it can just stay in someone else's mind. You know they don't really need to say that.

Despite also conveying that she is more confident and has stronger self-efficacy, since becoming a mother, she did tear up when recalling the encounter. Tina did not want to be judged or labeled for being a young mother. Tina has always placed a high value on being a good mother, no matter her age.

Anna

Anna shared a baby book containing several pictures as her artifact. The pictures depicted developmental stages of her son's growth from fetus to age two. At the time of the sharing, her son was four and she stated feeling bad about not updating the book. Anna disclosed, "It's just the start of it. I feel like [at the beginning] I put all my time into it because I never went anywhere. Look how far I've come." In addition, she expressed being embarrassed at not having any other artifacts to share. Despite not updating the book, Anna looks at it often.

She shared, "It keeps me focused on my future goals and keeps me going." The researcher sensed discomfort when Anna quickly took the book away and ended the discussion. Overall, for Anna, being a strong role-model and provider for her son influenced the decisions she made in high school and motivated her to graduate.

Figure 13. Anna Artifact of Inspiration

Figure 13. Photography of baby album, artifact source representing her inspiration source, her son. Photograph cropped to fit page format. Photographed and printed with permission.

Results Summary

The findings presented in chapter four represent a comprehensive collection of the major themes and corresponding subthemes that emerged from the data gathered. The data was

gathered during five thorough interviews with artifact sharing sessions. A total of five young women, who were teen mothers during high school, participated in the interviews with artifact sharing sessions. The exclusive views and perceptions of the participants produced the identified themes and subthemes. Despite the sample size being relatively small, it did not prevent the research from offering valuable insight in relation to the three original research questions. The principal themes that emerged in the research were addressed by multiple participants, ranging in ages and experiences, meeting data saturation and giving added credibility to the outcome. Additionally, each participant reviewed a transcript of her own interview and artifact sharing session. The following chapter provides a thorough reflection of the data, a detailed discussion of the findings, their significances, and recommendations by the researcher for future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Research Questions and Interpretation

The purpose of this study was to analyze and discuss what worked to keep teen mothers in high school and help them graduate. The researcher explored perceptions of five women about the influential elements of support programs. Analysis focused on factors that impacted their development of self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and high school success, as teen mothers, prior to them graduating from an urban Midwestern high school.

The use of an interview, combined with artifact sharing, proved to be both poignant and inspirational for the researcher. Research questions (Appendix G) were developed and organized into three separate categories related to self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success. School success, as defined by this study, was a teen mother graduating from high school. The responses by the participants in each of the three categories provided insight into what strategies were most helpful and supportive. Reflections of the young women allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of their challenges and accomplishments. Prior to this study, the participants, and many teen mothers, did not feel as though they had a forum to voice their perceptions and concerns, regarding their situations, outside of their support programs. Throughout this process, the young women were questioned, listened to, and heard. The young women, who were teen mothers, shared much about their lived experiences and provided insight into what positively worked and supported them as mothers during high school. This study revealed, through the perceptions of five young mothers, that a combination of school-based and community support were essential toward them remaining in, and graduating from, high school, while being teen mothers.

Interpretation of the Findings

Question 1: What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain self-efficacy?

The responses to question one yielded one major theme, with two subthemes. The participants indicated having a strong sense of purpose and responsibility. Most of the women stated they felt they had to mature and grow up faster than their peers. This implied an end to childhood and irresponsibility, and the beginning of responsible adulthood (Verduzco Baker, 2011). As one consequence, they struggled due to immersion in their roles as mothers, leaving behind their roles as teens. Much of their self awareness centered on their roles as mothers, and memories of a more carefree life as a teen had become distant. A few of the participants shared how they changed their behaviors upon becoming pregnant. Their behaviors shifted away from being selfish, not listening to adults, and not being concerned for the well being of others, to becoming more aware of possible consequences of their actions. The responses indicated an inner strength within all the participants that became more profound when they were mothers.

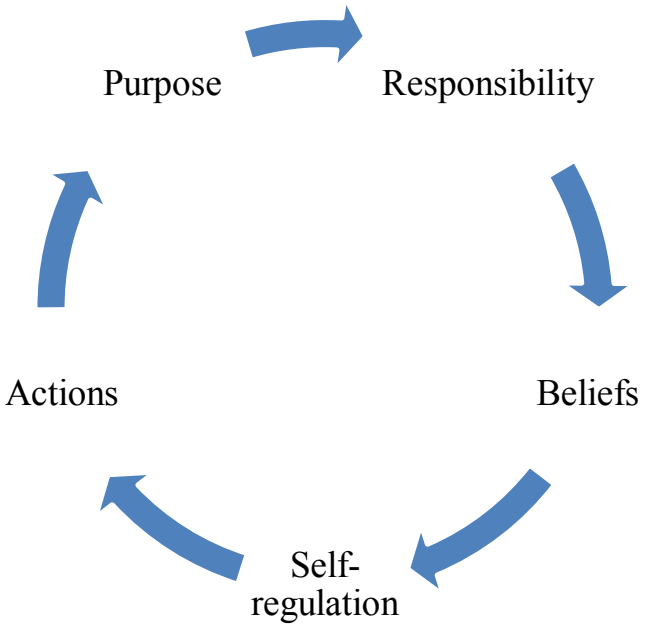
According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, adolescents are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them (Bandura, 2006). People are agents of self-regulation and action, adopted from personal standards and self-examination (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy is the foundation of human motivation, well-being, and accomplishments (Bandura, 2006). Bandura (2006, p. 3) stated,

> Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as

guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions.

Perception of ability to reach a goal and produce a positive outcome determines the level of self-efficacy. Figure 14 depicts the cyclical process of self-efficacy development pertaining to "I Have a Sense of Purpose and Responsibility" theme.

Figure 14. Cyclical Process of Self-efficacy Development



Participants shared how becoming mothers gave them purpose and enhanced their determination and sense of responsibility. Some changed dramatically, while others strengthened the existing drive, confidence, and focus, once they identified themselves as mothers and participated in a support program. Previous to joining a support program, and more so becoming a mother, most decisions were based on immediate gratification, as well as out of a sense of daily survival. Once several joined a support group and became mothers, they were

motivated to care about themselves and others, and, as one stated, pay attention to "The chain reaction of things." These women actively worked to construct meaning from their roles as mothers, and they developed a contention that devoted, mature, and responsible mothers deserve to be acknowledged for their hard work and sacrifice.

Participants expressed experiencing a transformation when they became mothers. An adult or mature woman is an essential component of the good mother while an immature girl is an essential component of the bad mother (Verduzco Baker, 2011). Adults are presumed to be stable, independent, rational and hold power, while female children are presumed as unstable, dependent, asexual, irrational and passive (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Verduzco Baker, 2011). Belonging to a support program and interacting with other teen mothers, some who continued to behave poorly, made the participants more cognizant of possible effects of their actions on their health and well-being of their children. Many found that priorities changed. They no longer dwelled on trivial matters, or typical teen concerns. Participants decided to distance themselves from gossip, rumor mongering, and social agendas. A paradigm shift was made toward focusing on doing what was healthy for their children and themselves. Many stopped interacting with their friends and developed new friendships from the support group. With new attitudes, participants were able to distinguish behaviors even within the support group, sharing there were teen mothers who did not focus on what they deemed to be important.

Tiffany shared,

> …there's some people that just didn't have the maturity level to be a part of [teen parenting class], I guess because there was girls in there that would fight while pregnant. Where after having a child, not something I would ever think about doing because how

would that react upon my child? How would that show my child what, what is right and what is wrong.

Laura also alluded to several people not taking advantage of what her support program offered. She indicated, "There were some that didn't want to be part of the group. You know, they didn't want to be bothered with. They just wanted to find out life on their own."

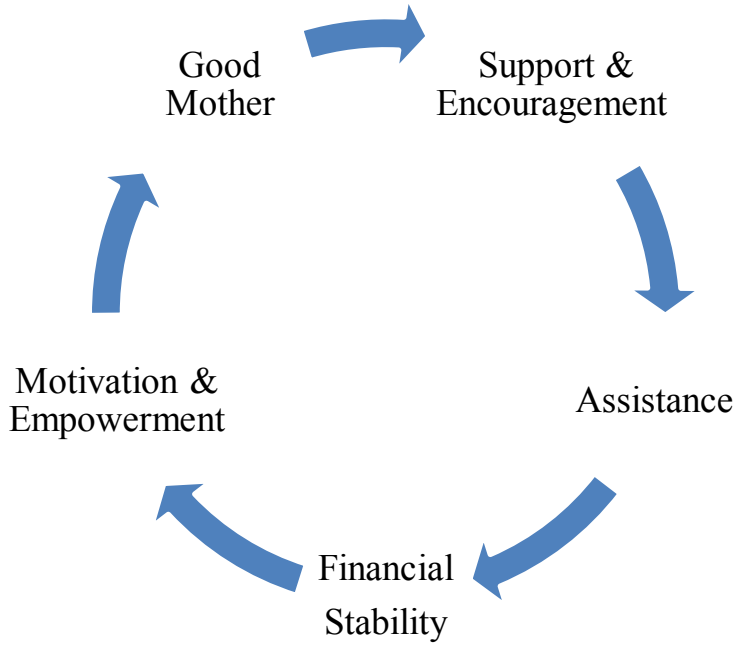
Beliefs affect goals and how well people motivate themselves and persevere when dealing with challenging circumstances (Bandura, 2006). Efficacy beliefs determine the choices people make at important decisional points. Factors that influence choice behavior can profoundly affect the courses lives take (Bandura, 2006). Social influences continue to promote certain competencies, values, and lifestyles. The participants shared they chose to grow up faster by taking on the responsibility of working harder and becoming more focused on what was healthy for the development of their children and themselves. The lack of being able to remember themselves prior to becoming mothers was an indication of a sense of purpose and responsibility. They would not allow distractions to deter them from taking on the additional role of motherhood, while still being in high school and working towards graduation.

Question 2: What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain parenting-efficacy?

This question yielded much data regarding support for teen mothers. The participants identified with the role of mother and were candid in their disclosures. They spent most of the interviews focused on that role and all that it encompassed. Although five themes emerged with several subthemes, the overall theme of being a good mother was the driving force for the participants. Participants wanted strongly to prove they were responsible, attentive to their

children, and were able to care for them. According to Bandura (2006), perceived parenting efficacy is an essential factor in adaptation to parenthood. Mothers with strong beliefs in their parenting efficacy experience more positive emotional well-being and better adjustment to the parenting role. Figure 15 depicts the cyclical process of parenting-efficacy development resulting from interpretation of interview and artifact sharing sessions.

Figure 15. Cyclical Process of Parenting-efficacy Development



The young women shared feeling burdened by negative judgments and societal presumptions of teen mothers. They were determined not to fulfill any negative assumptions of being a teen mother. They emphasized the sacrifices made for the well-being of their children, particularly the ways in which they put their children's needs before their own. Also, all participants stressed a determination to succeed educationally. The young women indicated that being a good mother was a time-intensive endeavor that made socializing impossible. Their lives

revolved around their children, not around being a teen with an active social life. They worked, attended school, and provided for their children.

Guiding adults, peer support, and preparation were vital components of developing strong parenting-efficacy in the participants. Social cognitive theory indicates many of the things or goals people seek are achievable only through socially interdependent effort (Bandura, 2006). With collective agency, people combine their skills and resources, as well as provide mutual support. Alliances are formed and people work together to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own (Bandura, 2006). For the young women, having the support of a mentor, family, and peers encountering similar experiences, helped foster beliefs they can overcome their new challenges, and helped them remain focused on goals. Support enhanced motivational commitment and allowed for the strengthening of resilience during adversity (Bandura, 2006).

According to Bandura (1977), teens with limited experiences tend to form judgments of their capabilities from their peer models. Self-efficacy beliefs are also influenced by verbal messages and social persuasions adolescents receive from others (Bandura, 1977; Strecher et al., 1986). These messages can help motivate the teen to put forth more effort and persevere, resulting in the continued development of skills, self-efficacy, and a sense of empowerment (Bandura, 1993).

The young women shared their willingness to take on the responsibility of motherhood, but also acknowledged they would have been limited in their accomplishments without a support system. That support included meeting the needs of teen mothers while providing encouragement. Encouragement came in various forms. All participants stated peer support was vital. The young women relied on other young mothers to provide encouragement and understanding, which was also beneficial with regard to relationship conflicts with the biological

fathers. Support from other teen mothers allowed them to open up and share their stressors without feeling as if they were being judged. Through listening to other teen mothers, either as co-members of the support program or guest speakers, the participants began to shed feelings of isolation, and gained confidence in their abilities.

Other forms of encouragement came from adults at home, at school, and through support programs. Families helped in taking care of their children while they attended school, provided basic needs, and financial assistance. In addition, family members continued to remind them of their goals and helped participants remain focused. Shanok and Miller (2007) concluded support from family, combined with a feeling of validation of pregnancies, resulted in the successful use of self-advocacy and boundary setting skills. Participants shared feeling validation when adults surrounding them refrained from negative judgment. These attitudes gave participants freedom to begin believing in positive outcomes.

Program support included non-judgmental adults holding the young women accountable; providing participants with opportunities to learn and adapt new skills; and teaching parenting techniques needed to prepare them for motherhood. Effective models take a vital part in the development of self-efficacy beliefs and foster beliefs of people in their capabilities, ensuring that success is attainable (Bandura, 1993). Bandura (2006) concluded a strong sense of parenting efficacy also functions as an enabling and protective factor that reduces vulnerability to emotional distress and depression. Anxiety, stress, depression, and mood impede the quality of parenting and affect the developmental shaping of children (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 2006; Strecher et al., 1986). Positive mood promotes self-efficacy, whereas depression and anxiety diminishes it (Bandura, 1993; Strecher et al., 1986). The positive input of families and support

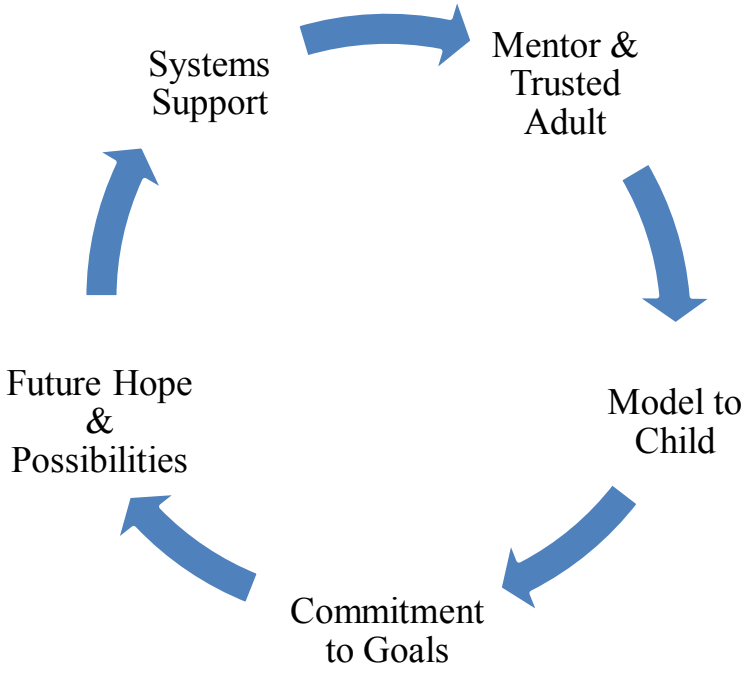
programs increased participants' beliefs in their abilities, and also aided motivation and empowerment.

Center for School and Communities Best Practices Guide (1999) mentioned the importance of providing several forms of assistance such as incentives and collaboration between schools and community agencies. Personal recognition with certificates for accomplishments, Baby Bucks, and an end of year celebration with a drawing based on goals met, are incentives established with the cooperation of the teens (Center for Schools and Communities, 1999). Belonging to a support group or program also provided financial awareness, opportunities for work experiences, and incentives to earn items and clothes they would need for their newborn children.

All participants mentioned the importance of being financially independent and being able to provide for their children. Several referred to learning the importance of creating a budget and learning how to balance needs verses wants in order to live comfortably. Laura mentioned participating in mock interviews and having the value of work instilled into her belief system by her support group mentors. Others used a new, more profound understanding of economics to strengthen already solid work ethics. The participants who earned points to buy various baby care items were appreciative. Having incentives encouraged participation in support programs, and participants motivated themselves through, in part, the incentives to maintain strong involvement in the groups. The young women felt they would still have belonged and participated, but the points added to the program. They benefited in several ways: in addition to having other teen mother support, they were able to learn essential parenting skills, form a strong bond with a trusted adult who became a mentor, and were able to save income by earning points to spend in the support program's baby boutiques.

Question 3: What are the perceptions of women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, regarding the influence of support programs on school success? The responses to question three yielded four major themes, with several subthemes. The interviews with artifact sharing revealed that school and family support were essential factors to the young women graduating from high school. The in-school and outside support programs provided opportunities, accountability measures, and encouragement. In addition, all participants were motivated by their children as well as awareness of perceptions of others. They wanted to prove to their children and others they are capable of school success, which they all believed would lead to future successes in other endeavors. Figure 16 depicts the cyclical process of school success attainment for the participants.

Figure 16. Cyclical Process of School Success Attainment



Throughout the interviews and artifact sharing, all participants shared the value of at least one teacher, mentor, social worker, or program facilitator who helped them navigate through high school. These individuals provided participants with guidance and assistance that would ultimately help them graduate. According to Bandura (2006), there are three primary methods through which efficacy beliefs contribute to cognitive development and accomplishment: students' beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their learning activities and to master academics; teachers' beliefs in the personal efficacy to motivate and promote learning; and the faculties' collective sense of efficacy that their schools can accomplish significant academic progress.

Self-efficacy beliefs determine the degree of effort people will put forth on an activity, the duration of persistence in confronting obstacles, and the degree of resiliency they will have when dealing with adverse situations (Bandura, 1993). All participants established as a primary goal, graduation from high school, and all appreciated achieving it. Laura, Tina, and Tiffany shared strong feelings about the assistance they received. Laura went as far as considering her mentor and program director a surrogate mother. In Tiffany's case, her teen parenting teacher served as a motivator and counselor. She shared everything with her and knew she would not be judged. Also, Tiffany believed she could share without any sort of filter, as she had to with her mother. All referred to the adults in the programs providing them with necessary information, advice, and being aware of their needs. From all that was shared, these individuals went beyond any job description. Roles consisted of being a motivator, positive influence, and confidant. At the time, these individuals served as mentors, teachers, and facilitators who recognized needs of the participants and who were willing to extend duty hours to assist the participants. For example, mentors personally drove participants to interviews or appointments, conducted home

visits during off duty hours, cheered on the participants during various activities or endeavors, and spent numerous amount of time researching post graduation options.

Educators and responsible adults who provide meaningful tasks, support, and encouragement help ensure the development of a strong sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Young people learn from the actions of models (Bandura, 1993). Exposing teens to different modeling practices can affect self-efficacy beliefs. Demonstrating coping behaviors as well as verbalizing emotive statements allow for the individuals to view the model as similar to them, allowing for a connection (Bandura, 1993). With this connection, individuals experience greater achievement and self-efficacy under the guidance of the model (Bandura, 1993). Therefore, support program mentors, facilitators, and teachers have the obligation to provide resources to assist in overcoming difficulties and succeeding, especially if the teens are already struggling with balancing multiple roles and enduring labels and societal stigmatization (Roxas, 2008; Pillow, 2004; Luttrell, 2003; Hallman, 2007).

The participants tended to rely on the judgments of mentors, teachers, and other program facilitators to create their own self beliefs. Several participants spoke about key family members motivating them to stay focused on the goal of graduation. These key people held education and graduation as essential components of life even before the young women became pregnant and mothers. The family members were persistent in reminding them of the goal and importance of having a diploma. These members were willing to assist the young women with child care, finances, and transportation.

Mary, Tiffany, Tina, and Anna had strong family supporters. For Mary and Tiffany, their mothers took on extra responsibilities to ensure that their daughters were attending school, getting additional educational support, and working towards graduation. Tina's grandfather and

Anna's father were their strongest school advocates. Tina's grandfather would remind her of potential possibilities. He maintained that she could enhance her future greatly by pursuing a college degree from her school's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curriculum. Anna's father would often watch her son so she could get extra help or take additional courses at night.

Throughout all interviews and artifact sharing, the participants alluded to their children as their main inspiration and motivation to succeed and graduate. The underlying theme, again, was the idea of being a responsible and good mother. Other motivating factors were: overcoming the negative stigma of being a teen mother, being a positive role-model for their children, and being financially stable. Most mothers believe that their parenting skills are under constant judgment (Lareau, 2003; Warner, 2005), however with young mothers, they are presumed to be bad mothers until they demonstrate otherwise (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). The participants were determined to disassociate themselves from any negative judgments of being a teen mother, which included not being able to financially support their children. Three participants referred to the struggles their families endured when they were children. They refused to have their children face similar difficulties. For them, the solution was graduating from high school, working, and attending college.

Adolescents need to commit themselves to goals that give them purpose and a sense of accomplishment. Without personal commitment to something worth doing, they are unmotivated, bored, or cynical. Having a vision of a desired future provides meaning to their activities, motivates them, and enables them to find the strength to overcome challenges to get there (Bandura, 2006). Kalil and Danziger (2007) concluded that having high expectations for schooling might lessen the stress of parenting for young mothers and encourage them to remain

in school. The young women held on to their dreams, understood that they had to make adjustments to them, and never doubted that they could succeed. Many revealed they wanted to help redefine the image of teen mothers. All their children gave them hope, inspiration, and motivation to work hard and graduate. They did not want to limit their opportunities by not graduating, nor give their children excuses to abandon goals when they become older and encounter obstacles. .

Implications/Recommendations for Education

As was previously mentioned in the literature review, teen mothers remain at high risk for dropping out of school. Also, dropouts are more likely to: be unemployed; have financial difficulties and live in poverty; be single parents; and have children who drop out of school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; Rapp-Paglicci et al., 2004). In addition, with the increased demands in schooling needed for well-paying employment, receiving a high school diploma and pursuing higher education are becoming essential for financial success (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012).

Marginalized youth generally have less access to the education, services, and supports needed to develop into healthy, productive, and engaged adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Adolescent Health, 2012; Young, 2004). Teen mothers rely on school and community support to assist them with strengthening self and parenting-efficacy. Not all teen mothers are able to equally access information, guidance and support needed for them to reach their full capabilities. There are teen mothers who succeed despite having to navigate through many difficult pathways with much vulnerability. Teen mothers, who have succeeded, have much to share about their lived experiences and are be able to provide insight to what

positively works as a support. Implementing teen parenting programs and support systems for teen mothers can strengthen efficacy and motivation to remain in school through graduation. According to Montecal, Cortez, and Cortez (2004), programs should address student, school, and family needs as well as value the student, family, and community. Having diverse support programs addresses the various needs of the teen mothers, their families, and the community.

In addition, several researchers have found key characteristics in reducing dropout rates. Montecal et al. (2004) outlined key program characteristics, taken from Intercultural Development Research Association's (IDRA, 2001) review of research of effective dropout prevention strategies that work for reducing the dropout rate of high school students. The characteristics identified were:

- All students must be valued;
- Involvement of at least one educator who is committed to the student's success;
- The concept of families as partners;
- Educational institutions must change and be innovative;
- Educators must have the tools necessary to ensure students success (IDRA, 2001; Montecel et al., 2004).

These characteristics can be extended from reducing dropout rates to also establishing effective support for teen mothers

After thorough analysis of the interview with artifact sharing, several factors of teen parent programs emerged as essential elements for strengthening efficacy and determining success. Support programs need strong leaders and compassionate mentors or group facilitators. Having the right, trusted adults to assist the teen mothers through their tumultuous challenges was revealed as a key component. Other significant elements were peer interaction, relevant

curriculum with financial awareness, and some connection with family. The strongest of the components, though, was relationship building. This was accomplished by mentors in the support programs and family support. One of the most positive aspects of the relationship building was the belief that the teen mothers were working with non-judgmental adults and peers.

School and community officials must first develop strong leaders to manage the support programs. The participants indicated several times throughout interviews and artifact sharing, that their program mentors or leaders were profound influencers and motivators. Confidence was strengthened, and focus more driven, after attending a program with a compassionate and devoted mentor, teacher, or leader. The unexpected support from teachers was also an important factor in the success of participants. From several of the interviews, teachers were willing to come in before or stay after school to assist the young women. Others provided tutoring and in some cases, extra credit work. Influential leaders and teachers empowered the young women, held them accountable, and raised expectations. These adults helped strengthen the development of high self-efficacy and parenting-efficacy. Strong efficacy, in turn, led to the courage and focus of remaining in school and graduating. For many, they have continued on to pursue higher educational goals.

Positive interactions with peers also played a fundamental part for the young women. From the interviews, the researcher found that many teen mothers had limited peer relationships and school involvement. The young women shared that having peers, with similar experiences, to share stories with and seek advice from, was essential for their well-being and developed a sense of belonging. Peers also helped with relationship issues. Many experienced the void of no longer being in an intimate relationship. The father of the baby did not live up to their

expectations or provide much needed support. The young women knew that they would not be judged by their peers and relied heavily on their support. The researcher found that support programs which incorporated discussion or small groups were indicated as being more helpful than those that relied solely on teaching of skills.

Participants in this study relied on certain family members for encouragement, child care, financial assistance, and other forms of support. Some of the teen mothers had a case worker who would come for home visits. The focus of the visit was the needs of the teen mother. This was a positive aspect of the support program for the young women. They had another adult to keep them motivated and focused, as well as one who held them accountable for their actions. As a result of this finding, the researcher proposes adding a home liaison component which can include home visits to discuss the multiple roles of a teen mother, multiple roles of the family members, ways to handle conflicts, child development, and to provide agency referrals. Other suggestions are small parenting groups for families, workshops, or chat circles. There are so many changes endured by the teen and family members during this time, learning how to balance it all in healthy ways would be extremely worthwhile.

Limitations of this Study

Limitations are used to identify potential weaknesses of a study (Creswell, 2011). Limitations involved with this research study concerned the use of a convenience sample. By using a convenience sample, data transferability decreases (Creswell, 2011). Some of the participants were selected by other participants of the study and by agency supervisors. A more credible method for selection would consist of all volunteer participation. A second limitation concerns the generalizability of the study. This study cannot be generalized to the population at large. It is possible this study could be generalized to Midwestern urban populations with similar

demographics. The main limitation pertaining to generalizability of the study involved the small sample size of the participants. Since the study numbered five participants, their perspectives can be considered as being a representative sample of their area, but not of young women across the nation. The age of the participants ranged from 19-25 years. The researcher did not select younger participants due to the difficulty of gaining access and the need for guardian consent. Younger participants might find it difficult to articulate challenges faced while still in high school. Older participants were not selected for recall purposes. The researcher sought recent graduates for high school who might recall their high school experiences better than those who graduated longer than five years ago.

A third limitation concerns researcher bias. The researcher is a school counselor working with teen mothers. An attempt was made to formulate questions so that researcher bias was not evident, but it was difficult. The fact that the study was based on support programs might have prompted participants to feel they should have answered the questions in a particular way. Probing by the researcher helped in further expounding answers to a question, allowing for a full range of details, without leading the participant. A fourth limitation was that only young women participated in the study. By only obtaining data from young women, the data became limited in scope.

The small amount of transcribed data also limited the study and its credibility, however, the data was rich with information, provided several themes, and allowed for saturation. The qualitative data obtained from participants was subject to interpretive analysis by only the primary researcher. Interview and artifact sharing questions were pre-determined. There was some flexibility in the interview for follow-up, probing questions and to delve further into

perceptions and reflections. There could have been additional information obtained through other research and interview questions.

Future Research

As the researcher interacted with the participants, she was struck by their candor and passion about sharing their stories. Several participants expressed dismay over never being asked to discuss their experiences, unless it was during their support groups or interactions with other teen mothers. They indicated eagerness to help others and the researcher in learning more about support programs, efficacy, and teen motherhood. More research that allows for voices of teen mothers to be heard is recommended. After all, they are the ones most directly affected by the decision being made or by the programs being implemented.

Further research focusing on more specific demographics might provide more insight into teen mothers. Understanding differences in ethnicity and cultural traditions, socio-economic levels, and gender might allow for more depth in the data collection and factors that influence high school graduation and success. Widening the age range might expand the number of participants volunteering, offering more opportunities for rich data collection.

From the interviews and artifact sharing, the topic of relationships surfaced frequently. Studying how various relationships affect the teen mother and her motivation to succeed might provide educators and community agencies with knowledge of how to collaborate with family or how to address the male void, either in a partnership or in a father figure. Many experienced the void of no longer being in an intimate relationship. The father of the baby did not meet their expectations or provide needed support. Peer interactions are often overlooked. Studying programs that focus on peer influences through small groups versus whole groups and their

influences on motivation, engagement, and graduation might also provide insight to teen parents. Understanding interactions and perspectives within the school, from administrators to staff members about teen parenting programs and what they provide to young people might offer information on how to create effective school-based programs and related policies to better serve the needs of this population.

Summary

The qualitative method of phenomenology with the use of interviews and artifact sharing provided for the gathering of rich, in-depth data. Participants wanted their voices to be heard and were candid in their responses about the influences of support programs on self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success. Five participants shared their experiences, evoking a deeper understanding of their challenges, inspirations, and opportunities. There is much research regarding at-risk students, such as teen mothers, and the reasons they fail to graduate from high school. This study took on a different angle, as the researcher chose to explore perceptions of the influences of support programs, on teen mothers, as they remained in high school through graduation. The researcher sought to learn whether support programs influenced the teen mother to remain in school and develop a strong sense of efficacy and resiliency. Support programs are essential to school success for teen mothers.

After collecting and analyzing data from interview and artifact sharing sessions, the researcher ascertained that teen mothers valued the connections made in the support programs more than the program curriculum. This is not to detract from the importance of the structure and content of support program. The participants indicated that the person who led the program determined the amount of participation by the teen. Having a trusted adult who demonstrated genuine passion for the teen mother, and was willing to go beyond what was expected, had more

influence on the teen than the program components. Programs must be presented with passion and dedication. Learning the needs of the teen mothers and how to positively support them was essential. This research study demonstrated that support program influences can be positive, and can help create positive outcomes, and are beneficial in the success of teen mothers.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Copyrighted Material

Map of United States

Researcher first contacted the National Conference of State Legislatures at the Washington number, 202-624-5400 seeking permission to use the map depicting teen parenting effects on graduation. The Washington office assistant looked up the information and redirected the researcher to the Denver office. The researcher called the Denver office at 303-364-7700. The office assistant transferred the researcher to Megan Comlossy, the creator of the map. Megan gave permission to the researcher to use her map "Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates" in her dissertation.

Date of contact: March 18, 2013

Time: 12:52

Pie Chart

Researcher, on March 18, 2013, contacted Child Trends' general number located under the website: www.childtrends.org regarding using the pie chart on diploma or GED attainment. A message was left seeking permission from the authors to duplicate the chart. The researcher received a return message by Kate Welti (maiden name Perper), one of the authors, regarding pie chart "Diploma or GED Attainment by Age 22". Ms. Welti granted the researcher permission to use the pie chart in her dissertation just as long as she cites the source.

Date of message: March 20, 2013

Time: 3:54 P.M.

Contact number: 202-223-9237 (Kate Welti's direct number)

202-223-9200 (Child Trends general number)

The researcher transcribed the message verbatim and locked it in a safe area.

Appendix B: Department of Human Services Federal Funding Grants

Federal Funding for Teen Pregnancy Prevention FY2010			
State	PREP	Title V Abstinence Education	Pregnancy Assistance Fund
Alabama	$789,678	$867,552	---
Alaska	$250,000	---	---
Arizona	$1,099,599	$1,260,254	---
Arkansas	$485,372	$619,862	$1,122,760
California	$6,553,554	---	$2,000,000
Colorado	$793,058	$647,131	---
Connecticut	$596,440	---	$1,999,991
Delaware	$250,000	---	---
District of Columbia	$250,000	---	$1,559,207
Florida	---	$2,601,681	---
Georgia	$1,707,218	$1,810,331	---
Hawaii*	$250,000	---	---
Idaho	$274,861	---	---
Illinois	$2,231,758	---	---
Indiana	---	---	$2,000,000
Iowa	$499,981	---	---
Kansas	$480,260	$359,879	---
Kentucky	$696,997	$839,352	---
Louisiana	$769,607	$976,757	---
Maine	$250,000	---	---

Federal Funding for Teen Pregnancy Prevention FY2010			
State	PREP	Title V Abstinence Education	Pregnancy Assistance Fund
Maryland	$962,931	$486,550	---
Massachusetts	$1,062,646	---	$1,648,438
Michigan	$1,754,708	$1,653,105	$500,000
Minnesota*	$868,121	$505,743	$2,000,000
Mississippi	$537,218	$824,462	---
Missouri	$991,673	$934,278	---
Montana	$250,000	---	$1,000,000
Nebraska	$306,743	$210,484	---
Nevada*	$819,320	---	---
New Hampshire	$250,000	$93,342	---
New Jersey	$1,412,929	$913,938	---
New Mexico	$346,571	---	$1,300,000
New York	$3,236,330	$2,991,440	---
North Carolina	$1,544,312	$1,585,347	$1,768,000
North Dakota	---	$76,707	---
Ohio	$1,916,033	---	---
Oklahoma	$615,320	---	$900,000
Oregon	$591,798	$556,194	$800,000
Pennsylvania	$2,046,335	$1,642,951	---
Rhode Island	$250,000	---	---
South Carolina	$760,906	$821,923	---

Federal Funding for Teen Pregnancy Prevention FY2010			
State	PREP	Title V Abstinence Education	Pregnancy Assistance Fund
South Dakota	$250,000	$122,552	---
Tennessee	$1,012,182	$1,141,533	$1,400,000
Texas	---	$5,402,595	---
Utah	$525,624	$319,037	---
Vermont	$250,000	---	$934,481
Virginia	---	$889,973	$1,500,000
Washington	$1,081,919	---	$1,567,123
West Virginia	$276,094	$313,767	---
Wisconsin	$930,024	---	---
Wyoming	$250,000	---	---

Note: *Did not apply for funding in 2010. These states did apply in FY 2010 and 2011, were awarded funding and were retroactively awarded funds.

**Florida applied for and was awarded FY2010 funds, but returned the money. Florida has not applied for subsequent grant funding.

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011)

Appendix C: Permission for Recruitment Flyer Postings

From: Terra Johnson T.Johnson@ecsomaha.org
Date: Wednesday July 3, 2013 Time: 2:39:39 PM
Subject: RE Flyer
To: Liliane Jamal

Hi Liliane,

Yes please share, I can pass this along to our collaborating agencies that work with the population we serve.

Thanks,
Terra Lynn Johnson

Director of the Teen & Young Parent Program
Early Childhood Services- Teen & Young Parent Program (ECS-TYPP)
P:402.559.1077
F:402.559.1062
www.ecsomaha.orghttp://www.ecsomaha.org/

This communication along with any attachments is covered by federal and state law governing electronic communications and may contain confidential and legally privileged information. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, use, reading, or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. If you have received this in error, or if someone is sharing this information with you, please reply immediately to the sender and delete/destroy this message. Thank you.

----------From: Liliane Jamal [Liliane.Jamal@ops.org]

Sent: Wednesday, July 03, 2013 2:39 PM
To: Terra Johnson
Subject: Fwd: Flyer

I originally sent this to Asenath, but received a return message of her no longer being at the agency. Please advise.

Liliane J. Jamal
Personal/Social Guidance Counselor
Omaha North High Magnet School
Office: 402.557.3422
Fax: 402.557.3439
liliane.jamal@ops.org

----- Original Message -----

Asenath,

I am working on my doctorate degree at College of Saint Mary's. My study is on teen mothers and their perceptions of support programs influences on efficacy and school success. I am wondering if there is any possibility of me placing a flyer in your home office or having you give one to your associates working with young women who were teen mothers. I am in the process of completing paperwork for IRB and need to include where my flyers are going. The flyers are my way of recruiting participants. I can give you more details. You can reach me on my cell: 402-320-5851.

Liliane J. Jamal

Personal/Social Guidance Counselor
Omaha North High Magnet School
Office: 402.557.3422
Fax: 402.557.3439
liliane.jamal@ops.org

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

Seeking young women's perceptions…

Who: young women ages 19-24 who were teen mothers during high school

What: volunteer for an interview and be willing to share 2-3 personal items that were significant to you during high school in representing your journey as a teen mother in high school

Requirements: must have been involved in at least one program during high school that offered services and educational opportunities for teen mothers; be a public high school graduate

Time: one pre-interview phone contact;

one 90 minute interview and sharing session

Location of interview and artifacts sharing session: a convenient place for you

Study conducted by: Liliane Jamal, doctoral student of College of Saint Mary

For more information please contact:

- **Liliane Jamal**
- **402-320-5851**
- **IRB SBS # 1305**

***Principal Investigator*: Liliane Jamal**

Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**	**Teen mother study Contact: Liliane Jamal 402-320-5851**

Appendix E: Adult Consent Form

IRB#: CSM 1305 Approval Date: Aug. 26, 2013 Expiration Date: Sept. 1, 2014

TEEN MOTHERS PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORT PROGRAMS INFLUENCES ON SELF-EFFICACY, PARENTING-EFFICACY, AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you have any questions, please ask. You will be asked to participate by sharing perceptions of the influences of support programs on teen mother development of self and parenting-efficacy and on high school success. You are being asked to participate to assist in the understanding of the influences of support programs on teen mothers. Having been teen mothers in high school, your participation will provide for a deeper understanding of possible influences of support programs on the development of self, parenting skills, and high school graduation.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

The reason for this study is to allow young women an opportunity to explain their experiences with support programs when they were teen mothers attending high school. Teen mothers rely on their schools and communities to assist them with strengthening self and parenting skills. Research on how to create a school climate that influences school participation,

Participant Initials _____

academic achievement, and strengthening of self for teen mothers is becoming more important. By providing opportunities for teen mothers to explain their opinions, schools and communities can perhaps learn more about how to better help teen mothers overcome challenges and find successes in schools that might not have been previously understood.

What will be done during this research study?

If you decide to participate in the study, there will be one pre-interview meeting to present the information about the research study. The researcher will contact you either by phone to set up a time and place to meet for an interview and sharing session. You will select a place where you feel comfortable for the meeting. The meeting will be between you and the researcher.

There will be one recorded interview and note taking meeting. The one time meeting will take approximately 90 minutes. The researcher will ask you questions about your experiences with support programs while you were in high school. The researcher will also ask for your opinions about being a parent and about yourself. The researcher will record the interview and take notes while you share your experiences. The sharing of a personal item will take place after the interview.

The researcher will ask that you bring one or more items of importance to you during your time in high school as a teen mother. The researcher will ask you to describe the item and what made it important to you during your high school years as a teen mother. The researcher will take notes of what you share and will take pictures of the item.

Participant Initials _____

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

There are no known risks to you from being in this research study. Talking about this topic may make you feel upset or uncomfortable. If you feel this way, tell your researcher so that she can provide with support resources.

Will you be paid for being in this research study?

You will not be paid or compensated for being in this research study.

What should you do if you have a concern during this research study?

Your well-being is the major focus of every member of the research team. If you have a concern as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the end of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. Your name will not be provided in the research. The researcher will use fictitious names so that your personal responses and information during the interview and sharing session will not be identifiable to you in any way, in the research. Fictitious names will be provided. All recorded responses or notes will be kept in a locked secure location.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person or agency required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Participant Initials _____

What are your rights as a research participant?

You have rights as a research participant. These rights have been explained in this consent form and in *The Rights of Research Participants* that you have been given. If you have any questions concerning your rights, talk to the investigator or call the Institutional Review Board (IRB), telephone (402)-399-2400.

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator, or with the College of Saint Mary. If the research team gets any new information during this research study that may affect whether you would want to continue being in the study, you will be informed promptly.

Documentation of Informed Consent

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study.

If you have any questions during the study, you should talk to one of the investigators listed below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. If you are 19 years of age or older and agree with the above, please sign below.

Signature of Participant: **Date:** **Time:**

My signature certifies that all the elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the participant. In my judgment, the participant possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

Signature of Investigator: **Date:**

Authorized Study Personnel

Identify all personnel authorized to document consent as listed in the IRB Application. Use the following subheadings: Principal Investigator, Secondary Investigator(s), and Participating Personnel. Include day phone numbers for all listed individuals.

Principal Investigator: _____ Phone: _____

Secondary Investigator: _____Phone: _____

Appendix F: Institutional Review Board Approval

August 26, 2013

Dear Liliane,

Congratulations! The Institutional Review Board at College of Saint Mary has granted approval of your study titled *Teen Mother Perceptions of support Program Influences on Self-Efficacy, Parenting-Efficacy, and School Success*.

The only suggestions from the board were the following:

- Please read the comments on your proposal (attached) and make corrections as indicated.
- Strongly consider increasing your participant number to 20 so that an addendum to your proposal will not be necessary in the event you do not initially get the number of participants you need

Your CSM research approval number is **CSM 1305**. It is important that you include this research number on all correspondence regarding your study. Your study is in effective through September 1, 2014. If your research extends beyond that date, please submit a "Change of Protocol/Extension" form which can be found in Appendix B at the end of the College of Saint Mary Application Guidelines posted on the IRB Community site.

Please submit a closing the study form (Appendix C of the IRB Guidebook) when you have completed your study.

Good luck with your research! If you have any questions or I can assist in any way, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Vicky Morgan
Dr. Vicky Morgan
Director of Teaching and Learning Center
Chair, Institutional Review Board * irb@csm.edu

Appendix G: Data Collection Form

Individual Interview Questions

Date:

Time:

Participant:

Demographic questions, research questions and questions for individual interviews

Demographic questions:

1. What is your current age?
2. At what age did you graduate from high school?
3. At what age did you first become pregnant?
4. At what age did you first become a mother?
5. At what grade level did you first become a mother?
6. Are you currently participating in any support programs?

Research question #1:

What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain self-efficacy?

Participant questions:

The focus of this set of questions is just about you as an individual teen. Try to picture yourself back in high school and remember how it was for you as a teen.

1. Describe how you thought of yourself during high school.

   Probe: Did participation in a support program change your thoughts about yourself? If so, explain how?

2. As a teen mother, while in high school, in what support programs were you?

   Probe for each program: Tell me more about _____program?

   Describe what you did, what it provided, where?

   How long did you participate in each program?

   (Note: ask about community or school if only one setting is discussed)

3. What people and/or programs were most helpful to you?

   Probe: In what ways?

4. If you experienced personal challenges or issues, how did you handle them?

   Probe: Explain if a support program helped you deal with the issues.

Research question #2:

What will women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, identify as important elements of support programs that influence the degree to which they attain parenting-efficacy?

Participant questions:

The focus of this set of questions is just about you as a teen mother. Try to picture yourself back in high school and remember how it was for you as a teen mother.

1. Describe yourself as a teen mother in high school.
2. What people and/or programs were most helpful to you as a teen mother?

   Probe: In what ways?

   (Note: ask about community or school if only one setting is discussed)

3. Explain if there was anything helpful to your parenting skills development, while you were in high school.

4. Explain if there was anything not helpful to your parenting skills development, while you were in high school.

5. If your thoughts about yourself changed once you became a teen mother, describe in what ways?

   Probe: Explain others' reactions to you becoming a teen mother.

Research question #3:

What are the perceptions of women, who were teen mothers when they graduated from an urban Midwestern public high school, regarding the influence of support programs on school success?

The focus of this set of questions is just about your experiences with high school graduation. Try to picture yourself back in high school and remember what you experienced that helped with high school graduation.

1. What people and/or programs were helpful to you graduating from high school?

   Probe: In what ways?

   (Note: ask about community or school if only one setting is discussed)

2. If there were any school challenges or obstacles, how were you able to get past them and graduate?

3. What else may have helped you graduate from high school?

   Probe: After becoming a teen mother, if your goals changed for the future, explain in what ways?

4. What do you believe would be helpful to have in a support program for teen mothers in high school?

Artifacts Sharing Session

1. Share the reasons why you chose this _____ in representing your journey as a teen mother in high school.

(Use this statement for each of the two to three artifacts.)

Observation and Field notes

Setting:

Participant:

Behavior and Body Language:

Additional information