Penn Libraries
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

University of Pennsylvania
ScholarlyCommons

Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) Dissertations

School of Social Policy and Practice

Spring 5-14-2018

MORE THAN A STATISTIC: EXAMINING PROMOTIVE FACTORS THAT FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE FORM OF COLLEGE DEGREES AMONG FORMER BLACK AND LATINA TEENAGE MOTHERS

Judith Gil
University of Pennsylvania, Judith.gil@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations_sp2

Part of the Social Work Commons

MORE THAN A STATISTIC: EXAMINING PROMOTIVE FACTORS THAT FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE FORM OF COLLEGE DEGREES AMONG FORMER BLACK AND LATINA TEENAGE MOTHERS

Abstract

Objective: While becoming a teenage parent brings about significant emotional and financial challenges, there are cases in which, in the midst of these negative statistics and results, some of the outcomes are positive through the trajectory of the adolescent's life. There are women who have been able to overcome the disadvantages of early parenthood and emerged stronger and more capable as a result of the personal growth they experienced. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees for Black and Latina women who were teenage mothers. This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of women who were once teen mothers, yet were able to overcome their circumstances and pursue higher levels of education. The ways that they were able to effectively balance parenting responsibilities in the midst of pursuing academic goals were examined. Additionally, the challenges and obstacles associated with attaining a college degree while being a teenage parent were explored.

Methods: A content analysis approach was used to analyze the data. The data was elicited through the use of a flexible format, consisting of open-ended questions and themes. The interviews were semi-structured, face to face and 45 to 60 minutes in duration. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Of the 15 women who participated in this study, nine identified as Black and six identified as Latina. Resiliency theory was used as the theoretical framework to help understand the promotive factors, those assets and resources, that facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees.

Results: The data illustrated common themes that provided insight and an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants as teenage mothers in pursuit of educational achievement. The interviews elicited accounts of their experiences on how they were able to attain academic success in the form of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Analysis of the data highlighted three major themes that illustrated how the participants of this study were able to attain college degrees after a teenage birth. Promotive Factors: Assets and Resources, Balancing Parenting Responsibilities and the Academic Pursuit and Challenges and Obstacles While Being a Teenage Mother and Going to School were the three major themes that emerged from the data.

Conclusion: The findings of this research study demonstrate that educational attainment for teenage mothers is possible with the appropriate assets and resources in place. The findings of this research study provide a glimpse into the experiences of teenage mothers and the difficulties that they face in reaching academic heights. The findings provide information for social work professionals and implications for social work practice.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Social Work (DSW)

First Advisor
Joretha Bourjolly, Ph.D.

Second Advisor
Stefanie Mollborn, Ph.D.

Keywords
Teenage pregnancy, educational attainment, teenage parenting, positive outcomes, assets, resources, resilency theory, content analysis, Latina youth, Black youth

Subject Categories
Social and Behavioral Sciences | Social Work

MORE THAN A STATISTIC: EXAMINING PROMOTIVE FACTORS THAT FACILITATE

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE FORM OF COLLEGE DEGREES AMONG

FORMER BLACK AND LATINA TEENAGE MOTHERS

Judith Gil

A DISSERTATION

In

Social Work

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Doctor of Social Work

2018

Jorettha Bourjolly, Ph.D.
Dissertation Chair

John L. Jackson, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean, School of Social Policy and Practice

Stefanie Mollborn, Ph.D., University of Colorado Boulder
Dissertation Committee

Dedication

"Being a young mom means that we met a little early, but it also means I get to love you a little longer. Some people said that my life ended when I had a baby, but my life had just begun. You didn't take away from my future, you gave me a new one." –Unknown

My son, my young man, my life, Argenis Rojas. You came into my life in a way that was unexpected. We have navigated this journey together and we have both overcome all of the negative statistics associated with teenage pregnancies and being the offspring of a teenage mother. Without you, there really is no me. I am who I am today because of you. You gave me another reason to strive, to succeed, to persevere. We grew up together and there is nothing about our journey that I would change. You have made me the proudest mother on the planet and I do all that I do to provide you with a positive model for continued success.

You asked me once, "Mom, do you think that there are teenage mothers that have been able to succeed academically the way that you have? Do you think that there are children of teenage mothers that have been able to do the same? I wonder if others share similar life paths as ours?" My response was that I was not sure, but if I ever decided to pursue a doctorate, that would my area of interest. And so here we are. You have always been my motivation. You are, and will always be, my reason, "Neni."

"Woman and girls can do whatever they want. There is no limit to what we as woman can accomplish." –Michelle Obama

To my precious nieces: I create this educational legacy for you.

Madison and Mia Maestro: Since the age of two, you have always associated Titi Judy with the words school and doctor. I am not sure how your little five year old brains process this, but it is my hope that, as the first person, the first woman in our family to attain a terminal degree, I have set the stage for you and future generations of girls and women in our family. I want you to continue to believe that you are strong, brave, courageous and that anything is possible. Titi Judy loves you with all her heart.

Emery Jade Heredia: You are precious and only a newborn. It is my hope that one day, when you can understand what this all means, that you too will create your own path towards academic success. Your birth has inspired me to continue to be a positive role model for the girls and women in our family. Little baby, Titi Judy loves you!

Acknowledgements

I begin by acknowledging my guide, God. You held and lifted me through challenges and obstacles. You never left my side. With your love and grace, I am here. Thank you for giving me the courage to turn my life story into a dissertation research study. I love you.

Mami y Papi: Llegaron a este país como inmigrantes de la República Dominicana con nada más que unos pocos dólares y sueños para la familia que un día crearían. La importancia de obtener una educación fue un concepto que siempre inculcaron en todos sus hijos. Gracias por todo lo que han hecho para proevernos a mí y a su nieto. Mami, todo lo que soy hoy te lo debo a ti. Gracias por los años de apoyo, especialmente durante un momento de incertidumbre. Sí, convertirse en una madre adolescente cambió mi vida para siempre, pero has estado allí a mi lado todos estos años. Sin el apoyo que me brindaste durante este evento que cambia mi vida, no estaría donde estoy hoy. Espero que estén orgullos. Gracias

(English Translation of the above) Mami and Papi: you came to this country as immigrants from the Dominican Republic with nothing but a few dollars and dreams for the family that you would one day create. The importance of attaining an education was a concept that you instilled in all of your children. Thank you for all that you have done to provide for me and your grandson. Mami, everything that I am today I owe it to you. Thank you for the years of support, especially during a time of uncertainty. Yes, becoming a teenage mother changed my life forever, but you have been there right beside me all these years. Without the support that you provided during this life changing event, I would not be where I am today. I hope that you are proud. Gracias.

Mr. Chris O'Donnel, my high school guidance counselor: Although you are no longer with us, I hope you are watching down on me and smiling BIG! You are the reason I was able to remain in school after my teenage pregnancy. The way in which you advocated for school officials to agree to keep me in the school despite strict Catholic school policies made a world of a difference. You kept a small picture frame with a picture of me and my son on your desk in your office. I hope you have been looking at us proudly. I have thought of you so many times during this process, and although I can't talk to you personally, I want to send you vibes filled with gratitude and love.

My sisters, brother and the rest of my family: Thank you for understanding when I wasn't able to attend family gatherings on the weekend. Thanks for always supporting me. Yahaira, thanks for the laptop you let me borrow almost four years ago. I never leave home without it!

My chairperson, Dr. Joretha Bourjolly: Thank you for believing in me and supporting my idea for this project from the beginning. Your caring and encouraging words throughout this process made a world of a difference. Thank you for agreeing to embark and lead me through this journey. I appreciate you deeply.

My committee: Dr. Stefanie Mollborn: I will never forget the first time I emailed you to introduce myself and discuss this dissertation research study. I will also never ever forget where I

was when I received your response to my email. It was like receiving a response to an email sent to your favorite actor. I was so surprised and excited. I began reading your work in 2014 while researching articles on teenage pregnancy and parenting. From the very bottom of my heart, THANK YOU for all of the extensive research and work you have done around teenage pregnancies, teenage parenting, life outcomes and educational attainment among this special population. Thank you for serving on my committee and for all of the valuable feedback you provided based on your research experience on this topic. I am forever grateful to have worked with you.

Julie Garcia and Diana Hunt: Thank you for the comedic relief and the support provided throughout my time in the DSW program. Our many conversations filled with laughter and the occasional road trips to DC kept me sane and provided a break from the routine of researching and writing. I love and appreciate our bond.

Dr. Kenneth Masenda: For the support throughout the years. You have been here since 2015 and have witnessed the many phases of Judith through this process. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Dr. Idalia Trent of Tyler Junior College: Thank you for that inspiring conversation over lunch a few years ago. As a Latina pursuing a doctorate, your words of empowerment and support remain in my memory-"Demuestrale que si se puede, que tu presencia vale!" Thank you!

My dear friend and DSW 2014 cohort member-Dr. Anniesha Quann Walker: We began this journey together and we had no idea what to expect. Not only were you a classmate, you quickly became a confidant and an amazing friend. I am forever grateful to have met you.

My friends and soon to be doctors- Alfredo Medina, Alesheia Baccous, Don Applyrs, LaMarcus Hall and Kimberly Colclough: While we may be in different stages of this doctoral journey, the support, encouragement and love you have provided is invaluable. Thank you for the late night conversations, the periodic check-ins and the numerous ways (personally and academically) in which you have been there for me during this academic endeavor. You had my back all the way through the finish line and I will definitely have yours when your time comes. I love ya'll!

The Black Doctoral Network, the PhinisheD/FinishED(Current/Future Drs)group and the Latinas Completing Doctoral Degrees group: Virtual communities of support on Facebook that provided a vast body of information and knowledge pertaining to the doctoral process. Thank you for always being a click away.

And last but not least-To the 15 women that participated in this research study. Each of your stories touched my heart in unique ways. The determination and perseverance to beat the odds associated with teenage parenting was remarkable. For some, it was the first time speaking openly about this experience. Through the laughs and the tears, you shared with me. Thank you for trusting me with that part of your life. My greatest and most sincere appreciation for your enthusiasm to participate in this research study. Several of you thanked me for, "Giving us a voice." I hope that through this research study, that has been fulfilled.

ABSTRACT

MORE THAN A STATISTIC: EXAMINING PROMOTIVE FACTORS THAT FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE FORM OF COLLEGE DEGREES AMONG FORMER BLACK AND LATINA TEENAGE MOTHERS

Judith Gil, LCSW-R

Joretha Bourjolly, Ph.D., MSW, Dissertation Chair

Objective: While becoming a teenage parent brings about significant emotional and financial challenges, there are cases in which, in the midst of these negative statistics and results, some of the outcomes are positive through the trajectory of the adolescent's life. There are women who have been able to overcome the disadvantages of early parenthood and emerged stronger and more capable as a result of the personal growth they experienced. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees for Black and Latina women who were teenage mothers. This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of women who were once teen mothers, yet were able to overcome their circumstances and pursue higher levels of education. The ways that they were able to effectively balance parenting responsibilities in the midst of pursuing academic goals were examined. Additionally, the challenges and obstacles associated with attaining a college degree while being a teenage parent were explored.

Methods: A content analysis approach was used to analyze the data. The data was elicited through the use of a flexible format, consisting of open-ended questions and themes. The interviews were semi-structured, face to face and 45 to 60 minutes in duration. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Of the 15 women who participated in this study, nine identified as Black and six identified as Latina. Resiliency theory was used as the theoretical framework to help understand the promotive factors, those assets and resources, that facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees.

Results: The data illustrated common themes that provided insight and an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants as teenage mothers in pursuit of educational achievement. The interviews elicited accounts of their experiences on how they were able to attain academic success in the form of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Analysis of the data highlighted three major themes that illustrated how the participants of this study were able to attain college degrees after a teenage birth. Promotive Factors: Assets and Resources, Balancing Parenting Responsibilities and the Academic Pursuit and Challenges and Obstacles While Being a Teenage Mother and Going to School were the three major themes that emerged from the data.

Conclusion: The findings of this research study demonstrate that educational attainment for teenage mothers is possible with the appropriate assets and resources in place. The findings of this research study provide a glimpse into the experiences of teenage mothers and the difficulties that they face in reaching academic heights. The findings provide information for social work professionals and implications for social work practice.

Keywords: Teenage pregnancy, educational attainment, teenage parenting, positive outcomes, assets, resources, resiliency theory, content analysis, Latina youth, Black youth

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

In the industrialized world, teenage childbearing is believed to jeopardize the path to adulthood by interrupting education, thereby curbing success in the labor market and ultimately leading to the persistent poverty associated with welfare assistance and low paying jobs (SmithBattle, 2000). By definition, adolescent pregnancy is pregnancy in females between the ages of 10 and 19, as this is the age group defined as adolescence (Molina, Roca, Sandoval & Araya, 2010). The belief that early childbearing results in lifelong negative consequences, including poverty, is a widespread collective notion and fundamentally structures programs and social policy responses to adolescent parenting (SmithBattle, 2000). A complex web of intersecting factors contribute to the overall lower educational attainment of teenage mothers, including societal expectations of them, the design and structure of educational programs, the teenagers' abilities and how the teenager perceives their own circumstances (Sosulski, Cunningham & Sellers 2006).

Previous research on this societal problem indicates that a majority of teenage parents have difficulty continuing their education, suffer financially throughout the course of their lives and produce children that may become teenage parents themselves. Very few of these teenage parents have positive expectations for their future. The reason for these negative outcomes may be linked to poverty as well as a lack of education (Strunk, 2008). These conditions increase the likelihood of a teenage pregnancy. Mollborn (2017) further adds that "understanding the effects of chronic exposure to disadvantage over time is key to understanding teenage motherhood" (pg.

65). Growing up in poor neighborhoods socially isolates adolescents from having positive adult role models that have been able to achieve success through positive means such as a formal education, employment and becoming parents later on in life (Wodtke, 2013). Some of these pre-existing disadvantages may give the impression to adolescents that teenage parenthood is normal life-course event (Wodke, 2013). Continued exposure to negative surroundings such as poor neighborhoods, negative school environments and community violence can likely diminish academic aspirations and the perceived costs of adolescent parenthood may decrease (Wodkte, 2013).

The United States has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies and births in the fully industrialized world, with 18% of all teenage girls expected to give birth before the age of 20 (Perper & Manlove, 2009). In the United States teenage pregnancy rate remains substantially higher, with teens being two and a half times more likely to give birth than teenagers in other developed countries. Teenagers in the United States are around four times as likely as teens in Germany or Norway, and almost 10 times as likely as teens in Switzerland to become pregnant (Kearney & Levine, 2012). In addition, there continues to exist a great difference among racial, ethnic and geographic locations in teenage pregnancy rates in the United States (CDC, 2016). Surveillance data for 9th to 12th grade students show that Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than Whites to engage in risk behaviors associated with early pregnancy. These include vaginal intercourse at an early age and nonuse of birth control (Fedorowicz, Hellerstedt, Schreiner & Bolland, 2014). Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing disproportionately occur among marginalized adolescents and present significant and often lifelong, social and health risks to parents and their children (Fedorowicz, Hellerstedt, Schreiner & Bolland, 2014). Latinas, African American and Native American girls continue to face disproportionate risk of pregnancy. Births

to teens in impoverished rural areas have risen sharply and girls in foster care are twice as likely to give birth as those in the general population (Farber, 2016). SmithBattle (2000) found that "goal directed and middle class girls were more likely to describe sex in cool, calculated, rational terms while carefully avoiding pregnancy" (pg. 32).

While we see changes in young people's sexual behavior that resulted in reduced risk overall of unplanned pregnancy and childbearing, continuing disparities in the incidence of early pregnancy among adolescents reveal the profound impact of social and economic inequality on youth's wellbeing in American society (Farber, 2016). Despite gains in reducing teenage pregnancy, this problem continues to disproportionately affect African American, Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native communities in the United States (Kost & Henshaw, 2012). From 2013–2014, teen birth rates decreased 12% for American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN), 11% for non-Hispanic blacks and Asian/Pacific Islanders, 9% for Hispanics, and 7% for non-Hispanic whites (CDC, 2016). However, in 2014, non-Hispanic black and Hispanic teen birth rates were still more than two times higher than the rate for non-Hispanic white teens, and American Indian/Alaska Native teen birth rates remained more than one and a half times higher than the non-Hispanic white teen birth rate (CDC, 2016). According to the National Vital Statistics Report, a total of 229,715 infants were born to girls ranging from 15-19 years old in the United States in 2015, a rate of 24.2 babies born to every 1,000 girls in that age group. The birth rates for teenagers aged 15–17 and 18–19 in 2015 were 9.9 births per 1,000 for the younger teenagers and 40.7 births per 1,000 for the older teenagers (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Mathews, 2015). Latina teens have maintained higher birth rates than Black and White teens (Minnis et al., 2012). Despite sexually active teens largely becoming more effective

at engaging in safe sex practices, the link between growing up in poverty and experiencing early pregnancy and childbearing remains (Farber, 2016).

The prevalence of teen parenthood in socioeconomically and marginalized groups has likely contributed to the high level of public concern about teen childbearing (Fursternberg, 2003). Since teen pregnancy became defined as a serious social problem, a great deal of research has examined why non-marital teen pregnancy is closely associated with minority youth status and urban poverty (Farber, 2014). Just as the phenomenon of teenage childbearing is racialized, so too are the major differences in income and general family well-being that result from the limited education that is usually associated with early childbearing (Barr & Simons, 2012).

Since the identification of adolescent childbearing as a significant social problem in the early-to-mid 1960s, teen mothers have been represented in the news and media outlets in a mostly negative fashion (Barr & Simons, 2012). The issue of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing has been a part of the national policy platform and continues to reserve a space on the agendas of national, state and local boards, and organizations.

The high profile of this subject has resulted in an interest in the factors that predispose young women towards teenage parenthood and the outcomes for them and their offspring. Much of this has served to emphasize the negative aspects and outcomes of teenage pregnancy. SmithBattle (2000) found that a "variety of interrelated factors such as poverty, low educational attainment, unemployment, family background, emotional/psychological difficulties and a history of sexual abuse were generally accepted as factors that increased a young woman's chances of becoming pregnant in her teenage years" (pg.36). Teenage pregnancy continues to present challenges to professionals in the field of social work who work with the adolescent population and their families.

While becoming a teenage parent brings about significant emotional and financial challenges, there are cases in which, in the midst of these negative statistics and results, some of the outcomes are positive through the trajectory of the adolescent's life and they have been able to overcome such obstacles. There are many women who have been able to overcome the disadvantages of early parenthood and emerged stronger and more capable as a result of the personal growth they experienced.

While there is no denying that early childbearing can create serious disadvantages for the young parent as well as for the future of the child, it is also very important not to overlook those who were once young mothers and were able to gain positive psychological benefits from the experience. Without denying the many difficulties associated with teenage parenting, there needs to be further exploration surrounding the circumstances that contribute to the successful management of adolescent parenthood. Examining factors that have allowed for academic success among these women can affect the development of policies to assist all teenage mothers.

It has been argued that the tendency to approach teenage pregnancy as a social problem has led to an exaggeration of negative outcomes and resulted in the positive aspect of teenage motherhood being ignored (Hoffman, 1998). Contrary to the idea that a teenage pregnancy "ruins" a young women's life and that it signifies the end of her education and aspirations for the future, the experiences of some young women can be positive and adaptive (Seamark & Lings, 2004). Protective factors may include good quality support from families, having positive relationships with partners, having jobs that they enjoyed and being provided with opportunities to improve their lives (Clarke, 2013). Similarly, Jessor (1991) adds that "these protective factors can buffer, moderate, insulate against, and, thereby, mitigate the impact of risk on adolescent behavior and development" (pg. 603). In addition, protective factors can play a role in

minimizing the impact of exposure to and experience with risk factors (Jessor, 1991). Some scholars have even suggested that having the responsibilities that come as a result of being a teenage mother can serve as a turning point in the lives of troubled adolescents (Brubacker and Wright 2006; Edin and Kefalas 2005).

Purpose of the Study

Although a great deal of attention has been given to the possible negative effects of teen pregnancy, few studies have examined any of the factors relating to the success of women who were teen mothers, yet went on to obtain a college degree. Clinicians, researchers, and the public at large generally believe that the lives of teenage girls are derailed when they begin parenting during adolescence (SmithBattle, 2005b). Because high school dropout is of greater societal concern that dropping out of college, most of the literature on teenage pregnancy and educational outcomes centered on the effects of pregnancy during high school (Stange, 2011). Having knowledge pertaining to college degree attainment among former teenage mothers could serve as a useful component in the design of programs and policies that look to improve the living standards of women who were once teenage mothers and had to interrupt their education due to a teenage pregnancy. Mollborn (2017) informs that "rather than presenting an unrelentingly negative view of the consequences of teenage motherhood, new research has identified complexities that suggest that we need to look for differences among teenage mothers' experiences" (pg. 65).

Although a review of the literature details previous research on teen mothers, the focus of this research study will be to offer an opportunity for those who have experienced a teenage pregnancy to be able to share their experiences on how they were able to successfully manage continuing their education and obtaining college degrees after having been a teenage parent.

Despite there being women who have been able to attain college degrees after having experienced a teenage pregnancy, an overwhelming majority have not. In fact, teen pregnancy often derails educational attainment. Only 50 percent of teen mothers earn a high school diploma by age 22 compared to 90 percent of women who do not have a teen birth (Maness, Buhi, Daley, Baldwin, & Kromrey, 2016). 21 percent of Black teenage mothers and 12 percent of Latina teenage mothers earned a GED(Child Trends, 2010). Diaz and Fiel (2016) found that "young women who experience a teenage pregnancy have a lower probability of completing high school than non pregnant teens"(pg. 105). Young teen mothers, who have children before age 18, are even less likely to graduate from high school. Of these young mothers, only 38 percent will graduate from high school and only two percent will go on to attain an undergraduate college degree (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). Stange (2011) found that "woman who enter parenthood earlier have much lower levels of postsecondary educational investment over the eight years following high school" (pg. 952). For these two percent of women that do attain a college degree, the consequences and stereotypes associated with teenage pregnancy such as low educational attainment, poverty, and welfare dependence did not prohibit them from pursuing their educational dreams. Due to the lower than average graduation rate among teen mothers, understanding which factors help those that do succeed is critical.

Although most teenage parents do suffer a long-term educational penalty for having children, this need not be the case. If they are provided with enough material resources and adequate structures are put in place, the teenage parent may be able succeed academically regardless of any initial socioeconomic or educational disadvantages (Mollborn, 2007). This research study attempted to discover how some women were able to expect a different outcome

after becoming teen mothers and continue their education well after having graduated from high school.

Since research on the success stories of former teenage mothers is rare, this study added to the already existing body of literature on teenage pregnancy by addressing Black and Latina women who were once teen mothers yet were able to overcome their circumstances and obtain higher levels of education in the form of a college degree. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2013) noted that "teenage pregnancy rates among Hispanic (36 percent) and African American (38 percent) girls are higher than those of other racial/ethnic groups. Mollborn (2017) adds that " birth rates for Latina and African American teenagers are roughly double what they are for White teenagers" (pg. 64.). This research study focused on the experience of Black and Latina women who were teenage mothers due to high prevalence of teenage parenting within these two groups, as compared to those of other racial/ethnic groups.

For the purpose of this study, the focus remained on those who went on to pursue post-secondary education in the form of a college degree. This study aimed to understand the shared experiences of women who were once teen mothers, yet were able to overcome their circumstances and pursue higher levels of education.

The data gathered can assist in providing possible strategies, interventions, and solutions for other young mothers in similar situations.

Research Questions

The study sought to explore/examine the following research questions:

1- What promotive factors have facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees among former Black and Latina teenage mothers?

2- How were these women able to effectively manage parenting responsibilities in the midst of pursuing academic goals?

3- How were they able to manage and overcome the many challenges and obstacles associated with attaining a college degree while being a teenage parent?

Significance of the Study

The promotive factors that fostered success were examined. This research study filled the gap in the literature and aided in providing a resource for other women who find themselves in similar situations, but are not sure how to overcome their circumstances. In addition, having knowledge pertaining to college degree attainment among former teenage mothers could serve as a useful component in the design of programs and policies that look to improve the living standards of women who were once teenage mothers and had to interrupt their education due to a teenage pregnancy. To the extent that social policies can assist teen mothers to further their educations, they might be able to enhance socioeconomic status of these women (Rich & Kim, 1999).

In the United States, being a teen mother often times comes with a perceived life sentence of lower socioeconomic status and lower educational attainment. Currently, images and information related to teenage pregnancy in the media are often focused solely on the negative outcomes and consequences (Rolfe, 2008; Yardley, 2008). However, there are some women who have been able to overcome great obstacles and adversity to reach a level of educational and academic success that many women, teen mothers or not, will not achieve. They have been able to work within the confines of higher education and navigate their course toward success. Regardless of the negative statistics aforementioned, some of these women have been able to face challenges and attain academic success.

Overall, this study contributed to the existing body of work on adolescent childbearing and education, while at the same time offering a reframing of the discourse by focusing on the successes of the women that were part of this research study. Teenage pregnancy may not be as negative as sometimes portrayed, particularly if professionals working with them and society support the mother (Seamark & Lings 2004). It provided a contribution to the social work knowledge base in that it fostered an understanding of the factors that lead to successful outcomes among young Black and Latina teenage mothers. This research study can contribute to the possible development and integration of effective practice techniques and strategies that will assist those working with this population, particularly social workers and mental health professionals.

Having an understanding of the different life situations faced by teenage mothers and their children, as well as the types of support that they lack and those that they already have, can inform future research on interventions that can help with improving the specific situations that are associated with being a teenage parent (Mollborn & Dennis, 2011). Mollborn & Dennis (2011) add that "teenage motherhood must be understood as a broad categorization that encompasses a wide array of backgrounds and circumstances" (pg.65).

Further research in this area exploring some of those factors that are deemed essential for promoting resilience, including personal strengths, interpersonal skills and community resources would be beneficial to achieve optimal development and lifelong resilience among disenfranchised teenage parenting populations. Resilience is fostered by protective factors, which improve the effect of risks on development. Researchers have explored the protective mechanisms that contribute to youths' resilience. Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski (2004) explained that "protective factors can have compensatory effects (i.e., their positive effect is consistent

across all levels of risk) or a variety of interactive effects (i.e., their moderating effect increases as the level of risk increases), and specific factors may moderate the effects of certain risks on outcomes at a particular developmental stage, but not be generalizable" (pg.68). Jessor (1991) adds that "adolescent risk behaviors are functional, purposive, and goal directed and that these goals are often central to normal adolescent development" (pg. 598). Engaging in early sexual activity may serve the function of gaining peer acceptance and respect in addition to going against the standards and societal norms established for teenagers. It may serve the function of gaining autonomy from their parents as well as asserting their transition from childhood into adolescence (Jessor, 1991). In understanding risk behaviors in the teenage years, Jessor(1991) further emphasized that these goals are "characteristic of ordinary psychosocial development and their centrality helps to explain why risk behaviors that serve such functions are intractable to change" (pg. 598).

Chapter 3

<u>Review of the Literature</u>

While research on adolescent pregnancy and childbearing is readily available, a universal identification of the exact issues and concerns surrounding adolescent childbearing remains difficult to find. For some (Luker, 1995; Kaplan, 1997; Domenico & Jones, 2007) the critical issues surrounding adolescent pregnancy and childbearing are the identification of resources necessary to support existing teen mothers and help them avoid additional pregnancies. For others (Horwitz, Kleman, Kuo Sung and Jekel, 1991; Corcoran, 1998) the critical issue is a quantitative presentation of the social costs (for the government, communities, the teen mother and her child) associated with the short and long-term effects of adolescent childbearing.

Namkee (1994) and Merrick (1995) were concerned with society's perception of adolescent behaviors and sought to enhance our understanding of adolescent childbearing, a sentiment confirmed by other authors as well (Kulkami, Kenney, and Lewis, 2010). They have used their research to heighten awareness, increase understanding and encourage advocacy. No matter the focus, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing is a controversial and a much explored phenomenon.

In the teenage years, competing demands of school and motherhood, such as finding time to study, missing school to care for the child, and limited income, can present significant challenges (SmithBattle, 2005a). Research studies and reviews of both the American and British literature indicate negative consequences for teenage mothers and their children. These include short term and long term medical risks to mother and child, increased rates of maternal depression, lower educational and employment status, and less optimal parenting practices

(Grindstaff, Phillips & Turner, 1990). Failure tends to be attributed solely to individual deficiencies and blame is placed on the teenage mother to explain her lack of achievement, instead of recognizing that there are a lack structures in place to help these young women succeed (Sosulski, Cunningham & Sellers 2006).

A concern with the already existing literature is that it relies heavily on information collected in past decades. Since the early 1990s, researchers, many of them inspired by their own research subjects, have shown earlier studies on the consequences of teen childbearing to be misleading (Barr & Simons, 2012). Mollborn and Jacobs (2012) noted that "since then, the structural and cultural contexts of teen parenthood have changed, leading us to argue that a renewed assessment of the life situations of teen mothers and their families is needed" (pg. 24). The available literature suggests that there is a debate concerning the exact effects of early pregnancy on schooling and socioeconomic status (Astone & Upchurch 1994; Brindis 1993 & MacLeod, 2002). In the United States, for example, Scott-Jones and Turner (1990) found in their sample of Black adolescents that "the experience of adolescent pregnancy depressed educational attainment and income in early and middle adult years" (p. 37). On the other hand, Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Morgan (1987) followed up on mothers first studied by Furstenberg in 1976 and concluded that the women who had become pregnant during adolescence remained at a lower level of education and income than comparable women who had delayed pregnancy. However, their education and income levels were far better than researchers would predict.

With respect to the remaining literature there were two problem areas. The first problem is that research on young mothers and their education is limited in focus to secondary education. However, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy (2012), approximately 51% of adolescent mothers earn a high school diploma. Although this is a small

number when compared to the 89% of adolescent girls who delay childbearing and obtain their high school diploma, more than half is still a significant success rate. The majority of the literature examining the issue of teenage mothers and education fails to explore the post-secondary educational considerations, that is, attendance, dropout and/or successful completion rates of young mothers who have completed high school and gone on to college. The failure to explore these pertinent issues has resulted in a significant gap in the literature on young mothers and their academic futures.

The second relevant issue that was encountered while researching the literature on the topic of adolescent mothers and higher education is the approach employed by many of the researchers from a place of deficiency and a dead end life trajectory (Furstenberg 2003; Corcoran 1998; Hoffman 2006; Fustenberg, Brooks-Gunn, Morgan 1987). As mentioned above, approximately 51% of adolescent mothers successfully complete high school (National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy, 2012). However, the literature on this topic continues to place more emphasis on the academic failures and shortcomings of young mothers rather than on their academic successes. This approach that focuses on the deficiencies has also painted a portrait of teenage mothers and their children as one of failure and a stunted life path. Although there are women who have been able to attain college degrees after having experienced a teenage pregnancy, many have not.

Previous literature has focused on the ways in which becoming a teenage parent affects educational outcomes for these young mothers. However, more recent literature demonstrates that being disconnected from school affects the possibility of an early pregnancy (Mollborn, 2017). Mollborn (2017) explains that "young women who will soon become pregnant are already changing their educational trajectories in ways that cannot be the result of teenage motherhood"

(pg. 65). Diaz and Fiel (2016) found that "adolescents with higher levels of behavior problems and delinquency also suffer weaker consequences of early fertility" (pg. 111). Erdmans and Black (2015) further add that teenage mother "were more likely to have been sexually assaulted or abused, to exhibit serious behavioral problems, to have dropped out of school at some point, to have engaged regularly in illicit drug as adolescents, to have been physically abused by a male partner and to have experienced a mental illness" (pg. 119).

Teenage Pregnancy Rates for Latina Youth

Hispanic adolescents have more than twice the pregnancy rates compared with white adolescents (Maness et al., 2016). More than half (53%) of Latinas in the United States become pregnant at least once before age 20. In 2011, the pregnancy rate among Latinas adolescents was nearly double the national average (127 vs. 72 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15–19), and Latina teenagers were twice as likely as others to give birth (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012).

Presently, Hispanic teens have the highest teen birth rate at a level of 70.1 per thousand, which is nonetheless a sizable decline from a rate of 104.6 per thousand in 1991(Kearney, & Levine, 2012). Latina teenage mothers are also more likely than other teenage mothers to have a repeat birth before reaching 20 years of age (Pfitzner, Hoff, & McElligott 2003). Such data indicate that not only are Latinas getting pregnant more frequently than other teenagers, they are carrying more pregnancies to term than teenagers from other racial and ethnic backgrounds and having multiple children during adolescence (Aparicio, Pecukonis & Zhou,2014). Research suggests that the presence of a pregnant or parenting adolescent in the Latino families can increase the likelihood that younger siblings will become pregnant during adolescence (Bouris et al., 2012).

In our national preoccupation with racial and ethnic differences, however, what is often lost is the strong relationship between poverty and teen births. Of the Latino subgroups, Mexican Americans have the highest teen birth rate (at 88.7 births per 1,000 15- to 19-year-old women), followed by U.S. Latina girls of Puerto Rican descent (67.1 births per 1,000) (East, Slonim, Horn, & Reyes, 2011). For Puerto Ricans, the fertility rate is similar to the general US population, but their teen birth rate is 25 percent higher. Puerto Ricans are also one of the poorest groups in the United States, which suggests that for Puerto Ricans, poverty may play a significant role in early childbearing and parenting (Erdmans & Black, 2012). Most of these adolescents continue to live with their families of origin after their babies are born (Manlove, Mariner, & Papillo, 2000).

Teenage Pregnancy Rates for Black Youth

There were 155, 370 pregnancies in 2011 to non-Latina black teen girls age 15-19. Their pregnancy rate was 92.6 per 1,000. Roughly 4 in 10 non-Latina black teen girls will get pregnant by the age of 20 (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012). Comparisons across ethnic groups show that among African American adolescents, 66 % are sexually active compared with 49 % of Hispanics and 40 % of Whites (CDC, 2012). African American adolescents begin engaging in sexual activity earlier than youth from other racial groups and have more sexual partners (Eaton, Kann & Kinchen, 2005). Because African American adolescents engage in risky sexual behaviors at higher rates than other ethnic groups, they face increased risk for negative consequences associated with risky sexual behaviors, including pregnancy, when compared to other ethnic groups (Eaton et al., 2005). Specifically, 44 % of African American women reported an unintended pregnancy and about 31 % of White women compared with 43 % of Hispanic women (CDC, 2012).

Predisposing Factors for Teenage Pregnancy

Adolescence is a time when young people begin to develop their identity and relationships with peers. It is during this time when they begin to engage in risky behaviors that can have serious consequences for their future. At the same time they are often facing educational demands and career choices, all of which make adolescence complex and challenging. At a time when they are beginning to explore sexuality, the risk for pregnancy is high. As it relates to risk behaviors, Jessor (1991) adds that adolescent "risk behaviors can jeopardize the accomplishment of normal developmental tasks, the fulfillment of expected social roles, the acquisition of essential skills, the achievement of a sense of adequacy and competence, and the appropriate preparation for the next stage in the life trajectory, young adulthood"(pg. 599).

Studies by Mollborn (2012) and Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham (2007) indicate that factors that can influence teenage pregnancy may include being in single parent families, lack of parental supervision, peer pressure to engage in sexual activities before the teen is emotionally or mentally ready, low self- esteem, lack of positive family interaction and lack of future oriented goals. In single parent families, parents are assumed to have less control of the youth's behavior because of financial constraints that reduce supervision and strain parental coping resources. This can potentially undermine emotional bonds between parents and their children and increase the risk of participation in risk behaviors (Zito, 2013). In families where there is conflict, pregnant adolescents reported lower levels of communication with both mother and father, less satisfaction and happiness in general, and more school and economic difficulties (Guijarro et al. 2001).

A number of socio-ecological factors in childhood and adolescence are associated with girls increased risk for teenage pregnancy and childbearing (Hendrick, Cance & Maslowsky, 2015). Risk and protective factors are understood to occur at different systems levels, with increasing risks shown to be especially harmful to a youth's development (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007). It is not assumed that risk factors directly cause teenage pregnancy. Rather, these are characteristics commonly associated with conditions in her environment that may place a girl at higher risk for teenage pregnancy and childbearing. Some of these risk factors include low levels of parental monitoring, little family involvement and peer and community norms that are accepting of early childbearing (Meade et al. 2008). The association between early fertility and negative long term outcomes, including educational attainment, are increasingly subject to debate as a growing number of studies show that the disadvantages associated with teenage motherhood are due to some extent to mothers' disadvantage before they gave birth (SmithBattle, 2007). Previous studies indicate that there are numerous factors strongly associated with the onset of sexual behavior and teenage pregnancy (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007). Low self esteem, low educational expectations, living in a single parent family, having a teen mother and low religiosity were found to be associated with increased risk of pregnancy (Gibson & Kempf, 1990; Small & Luster, 1994). The absence of a father or a father figure is associated with pregnancy among teenage girls. In a large majority of studies, investigators have reported that parental control and regulation is closely related to adolescent pregnancy or pregnancy risk in that the more closely the teenager is monitored, the fewer the chances that she will be exposed to early sexual intercourse (Miller, Benson & Galbraith, 2001). In neighborhoods where violence is of concern, a parent's main focus may be to keep their children safe and little attention may be placed on monitoring romantic relationships or sexual

activity (Harding, 2003). Wodtke (2013) adds that "if families reside in poor, violent neighborhoods for an extended period, parents' attention may rarely be focused on preventing children from engaging in early or unsafe sexual activity, thereby elevating the chances of adolescent parenthood"(pg. 1768).

Individual factors, including age, pregnancy history, relationship characteristics and activities, may affect the frequency of pregnancy through intention (Rocca, 2010). A young woman's attitude towards pregnancy and parenting may affect her intention in becoming pregnant. Rosengard Phipps, Adler & Ellen (2004) define pregnancy intention as including "degrees of "wantedness," "planning," "timing," and "happiness" regarding a pregnancy" (pg. 453). Older teenagers are more likely than younger ones to become pregnant and prior pregnancy is associated with increased risk of subsequent pregnancy (Rocca, 2010). Teenagers who consider themselves to be in a serious relationship and are committed to the relationship have more positive attitudes towards pregnancy than do other teenagers. The level of commitment to a particular relationship or partner may influence a woman's intention in several ways, such as shaping her perception of future economic security and parental investment (Rocca, 2010).

A number of studies indicate that low academic achievement and low career aspirations are strongly associated with the risk of teen pregnancy (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007). A study conducted in 1987 examined the influence of high levels of educational goals and the decision to carry or abort a pregnancy among 43 Puerto Rican teenagers. The findings of that study revealed that young girls who chose to undergo an abortion had a higher degree of satisfaction with school and were highly interested in continuing their education, compared to the girls that decided to carry (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007).

Family risk factors influencing teen pregnancy include family structure and parenting practices (Miller, Bayley, Christensen, Leavitt, & Coyl, 2003). For example, teens that either come from small families and/or live with both of their natural parents are less likely to engage in sexual behavior at earlier ages than those from large families or those who have experienced divorce (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007).

There is also a relation between the level of education of the parent and the sexual activity of the teenager. Teenagers who have parents that did not complete high school are more likely to be sexually active at an earlier age. Teenagers who have mothers that completed high school or college reported the lowest rate of sexual intercourse (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007).

The communication patterns between the teenager and the parents have also been determined to influence the decision to become sexually active among teenagers and ultimately avoiding pregnancy. It was found that teenagers who received information related to sex and safe sex practices from their parents had a higher likelihood of becoming sexually active later in their teenage years (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007).

At the individual level, substance use and risky sexual behavior have been associated with adolescent pregnancy. There is evidence indicating that smoking, alcohol and drug use increase the probability of becoming pregnant among adolescents (Panova, Kulikov, Berchtold, & Suris 2016). Other studies have shown that adolescents who experience early sexual debut, with high frequency of sexual intercourse and greater number of sexual partners also have a higher likelihood of becoming pregnant (Panova et al., 2016). For young women and men who are either more likely to have early sex because they possess multiple characteristics associated with general high risk behavior or are already engaging in unsafe behavior, providing knowledge

about how to prevent pregnancy is necessary but not sufficient (Farber, 2014). When adolescents high risk sexual activity expresses low commitment to conventional achievement, their motivation to avoid unprotected sex or even pregnancy may not be strong enough to overcome emotional vulnerability and social norms that condone high levels of risk-taking (Farber, 2014).

Research findings suggest that young women from socially disadvantaged family backgrounds characterized by poverty, welfare dependence, large family size, early motherhood, academic underachievement, and low parental educational aspirations are at an increased risk of becoming pregnant at an early age (Woodward, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2001). Youth who live in challenging social and physical environments typically have negative psychological and cognitive responses to their surroundings, (e.g., low self-worth, low self-esteem and hopelessness) (Fedorowicz, Hellerstedt, Schreiner, & Bolland, 2014). In neighborhoods that are characterized by high residential turnover, poverty, and crime rates, and which are generally perceived by residents to be dangerous, adolescents tend to have early onset of sexual intercourse, low use of contraception, and high adolescent pregnancy rates (Miller, Benson & Galbraith, 2001). Residing in disorganized/dangerous neighborhoods and in a lower SES family, living with a single parent and having older sexually active siblings or pregnant/parenting teenage sisters, and being a victim of sexual abuse all place teens at elevated risk of adolescent pregnancy (Miller, Benson & Galbraith, 2001). Under these conditions, adolescent pregnancies may be a consequence of a lack of hope and the perception of few positive life options.

Individual factors are also important to note when discussing predisposing factors for teenage pregnancies. Among these are sexual factors and psychological adjustment factors. Sexual factors relate to the beginning and the frequency of sexual activity and biological factors such as the timing of menarche, which has been linked with teenage pregnancy (Woodward,

Fergusson, & Horwood, 2001). It has been argued that the timing of sexual development may place early-maturing girls at higher risk of forming opposite-sex relationships and becoming sexually active, with these patterns of early sexual activity in turn increasing their opportunities for risk exposure (Udry, 1979). Girls that experience pubertal development earlier than their same age peers are at higher risk for teenage pregnancy (Deardorff, Gonzales, Christopher, Roosa, & Millsap,2005). Because early developing girls may appear older than those girls their age, they may be accepted into old peer groups. Through their involvement with older teenagers, they may be exposed to and begin risky behaviors such as a risky sexual behavior and substance use earlier than their same age peers. Although these young girls may appear physically older, cognitively and emotionally they are at levels similar to peers their age. As a result, they do not have the decision-making capabilities necessary to navigate social situations they experience within older, more deviant peer groups (Hendrick, Cance & Maslowsky, 2015). Early developers are more likely to engage in substance use throughout adolescence compared with their peers (Cance, Ennett, Morgan-Lopez, Foshee, & Talley, 2013). The relationship between substance use and riskier sexual behaviors in adolescence is often attributed to the direct influence of alcohol and illicit drugs impairing sexual decision making (Townshend, Kambouropoulos, Griffin, Hunt, & Milani, 2014). There is some research that suggests that Latina teens that initiate early sexual behavior and become pregnant at an early age are more likely to date and have boyfriends who are gang members (Guzman & Dello Stritto, 2012).

Farber(2016) emphasizes that "while it is difficult to separate definitively the pre-existing factors that would elevate the risk for mental disorders among disadvantaged youth as distinct from the stresses of pregnancy and childbearing, the association is clear: Adolescents living in poverty and who experience multiple adverse childhood events also are vulnerable to depression,

conduct disorder, and early pregnancy(pg. 3). In high risk, economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, such as those primarily inhabited by Black and minority ethnic groups, teenage pregnancies are relatively more frequent (Muzik, Rosalind, Alfafara, Jonika,. & Waddell 2015). Such families often have limited access to and/or knowledge of services, including prenatal and post-partum physical and mental health support (Muzik et al., 2015). Farber (2016) notes that "for these most vulnerable youth, whose lives too often are filled with trauma, turmoil, unfilled emotional and other developmental needs arising from family and community patterns that may extend back over generations, the meaning of teen pregnancy is distinct from those teens who most need high quality sexual health services in order to prevent unplanned pregnancy" (pg. 2).

Outcomes for Teenage Mothers

Teenage childbearing is associated with deleterious outcomes across the lifespan for both mother and child (Hendrick, Cance, & Maslowsky, 2015). Studies have concluded that there are adverse consequences to teen pregnancy. However, some studies differ as to what extent those consequences affect teen mothers. Specifically, studies have conflicting outcomes when determining the effects of teen pregnancy on economic factors. Klepinger, Lundberg, & Plotnick (1999) argued that the consequences of teen childbearing support earlier findings. They found that teenage childbearing has "major socioeconomic consequences" (Klepinger, Lundberg, & Plotnick, 1999). Teenage motherhood can affect a woman's labor market outcomes through its impact on her education and/or work experience, as childbearing and caring are likely to keep her out of the labor market for some time (Kalb, Le, & Leung, 2015). These time and energy constraints are likely to serve as an obstacle to her educational attainment as well as future employment opportunities; a young mother may lack the credentials or work experience to earn sufficient wages (Diaz & Fiel, 2016). One of the major concerns is that early childbearing

interferes with human capital investment, causing young mothers to be disadvantaged in the work force and in relationship outcomes, and, as a result, are more likely to rely on public assistance benefits (Kalb, Le, & Leung 2015). They are more likely than older mothers to be live on welfare benefits, experience unemployment, lack in school and university qualifications and living in public housing (Wiggins, Oakley, Austerberry, Clemens, & Elbourne, 2005).

When pregnancy occurs among adolescents, the developmental tasks of adolescence— such as completing or pursuing one's education—run counter to the demands and responsibilities of parenting (Barber & East, 2014). Whether from a sociological, psychological or economic viewpoint, it is widely accepted that teen pregnancy has a negative effect on educational attainment.

As part of their 1994 study, Astone & Upchurch found that women who formed families early on were at a higher risk of leaving high school prematurely. Their findings also indicated that forming a family at an early age interfered greatly with educational attainment, particularly among African American women. The teen mother is defined as dependent, in a deviant form, and therefore is portrayed as not really being able to benefit from the education designed to produce her as an economic being (MacLeod, 2002). Teenage parents have an additional disadvantage over most childless adolescents because of their much greater need for material resources that far outstrips the available resources for teenagers (Mollborn, 2007). In the absence of educational and vocational opportunities, disadvantaged girls are less likely to contracept effectively and more likely to carry a pregnancy to term than middle class teens, whose college and career plans would be compromised by carrying a child (Kendall et al., 2005). Newer research (Diaz & Fiel 2016) indicates that " the lower attainment by teenage mothers can be

attributable to pre-existing differences-such as skills deficits that limit their socioeconomic prospects in the absence of a birth"(pg. 88).

The effect of teenage motherhood on health outcomes remains unclear. On the one hand, becoming a teenage parent can adversely affect health outcomes (Kalb, Le & Leun, 2015). This could be because childbearing and caring responsibilities at an early age, usually as a single parent, are stressful and detrimental to a woman's mental and physical health (Kalb, Le & Leun, 2015). On the other hand, teenage motherhood could also have a positive effect on health outcomes. This may be because early motherhood may change the priorities of young women, steering them away from risky behaviors for the sake of their future and that of their children.

Families are likely strongly affected by an adolescent's childbearing, given probable changes in family routines, roles, and responsibilities (East & Chien, 2013). Several studies have shown evidence that an adolescent pregnancy creates overall family stress, directly affecting a parents' parenting and parents' psychological health (East & Chien, 2013). An adolescent's childbearing likely has a large and profound impact on the adolescent's family, with the family unit needing to adapt to accommodate the teen's baby into the household (East et al., 2011). As with most major family transitions, changes likely occur in household composition, family routines, living and sleeping arrangements, and parents' work patterns— causing an increase in family stress, chaos, and general disruption (East et al., 2011). Family stress and tension are likely to be greater within teenage childbearing households than among adult new parents, though, because the teenager is likely unmarried and the birth was likely unplanned (Finer & Henshaw, 2006).

In addition, some family members may feel resentful of the financial burden on the family and having to support the teenage mother and her offspring. Child caring responsibilities

may fall on the teen mother's siblings, which can also bring about conflict within the family. Siblings might also resent that family resources, such as money and family members' time and attention, are now directed toward the parenting sister and her child and are shifted away from them (East et al., 2011). Individual family members likely also affected by a teenager's childbearing. The siblings of new teenage mothers might experience feeling tired and exhausted as a result of waking up in the middle of the night by the infant. This may cause a decline on the siblings' academic performance as they may now be distracted by a small infant now living in the household. Siblings of parenting teens given that they are exposed to the daily stresses and strains of living with a demanding infant and are likely involved in some way in the infant's care (East et al, 2011).

The mental health of teenagers at risk for becoming teenage parents is also of importance. In addition, black and Hispanic mothers reported higher levels of depressive symptoms than their non-Hispanic white counterparts (Rich-Edwards et al., 2006). According to the researchers, these outcomes were associated with the fact that the minority women had lower income, higher levels of financial hardship and a higher incidence of a negative pregnancy outcome (Rich-Edwards et al., 2006). Two of the most prevalent mental disorders by pregnant and parenting teens are depression and conduct disorder. Lesser and Escoto-Lloyde (1999) report that teenage pregnancy has been found to be a trigger for a range of mental health problems and suicide in young people and adolescents. Logsdon (2004) also notes that depression is of particular concern in pregnant and postpartum adolescents because of the potential impact on the infant. In a seven-year follow-up investigation of women who were pregnant as teenagers, Turner et al. (2000) identified that, consistent with other research, differences in social support and in personal

resources or attributes played a key factor in influencing the psychological condition or adaptation of young mothers.

Impact of Teenage Pregnancy on Educational Attainment

Education is a major pathway through which teenage parenting could affect a woman's later outcomes. The late teenage years is when young people prepare for high-school completion and make decisions regarding further education. Pregnancy and motherhood during this period may reduce the time available for and raise the   opportunity cost of schooling to the young woman, reduce her investment in it, and thus worsen her educational outcomes (Levine and Painter, 2003). Chevalier and Viitanen (2003) found that teenage motherhood decreases the probability of continued schooling after age 16 by 12-24 percentage points. As a particularly vulnerable population, teenage mothers may greatly benefit from earning a college education, but many do not do so (Sosulski, Cunningham & Sellers 2006). Academic performance and educational aspiration during adolescence are found to be related to educational attainment in adulthood. Teenage mothers are still less likely to complete high school or attend college than their peers who delayed childbearing (Hofferth, Reid, & Mott, 2001). In fact, researchers noted that the gap in post-secondary education rates between early and later child bearers has actually risen 27 to 44 percentage points from the 1960's to 1990's (Hofferth et al., 2001). Specifically, Hofferth and colleagues (2001) found that college attendance rates represented the biggest difference in schooling between young mothers and their peers who delayed childbearing (29% vs. 73%).

As mentioned, one of the primary areas where teenage parent's outcomes may suffer is educational attainment. Many studies have found a negative effect of becoming a teenage parent on educational outcomes (Hotz, Mc.Elroy, & Sanders, 2005; Ferre, Gerstenbluth, Rossi, &

Triunfo, 2013; Hofferth et al., 2001; Ferguson & Woodward, 2000). Other research has found no negative effects of teenage parenting (Mollborn & Dennis 2011; Rich & Kim 1999; Seamark & Lings, 2004). In other words, becoming a teenage parent does not cause school dropout, but rather, preexisting socioeconomic and other factors cause both parenthood and dropout (Mollborn,2007).Teens who are disaffected from school are more likely to engage in unprotected sex, view pregnancy as positive and drift into pregnancy (SmithBattle,2007).

Teenage parents also describe education as a pathway to educational and employment opportunities. Research by SmithBattle(2005b) concluded that "Mothering transforms the meaning of school and often resets the course of teens as they reevaluate their goals and priorities for the future and their prior academic status. The responsibility of caring for a child provided a compelling reason to reinvest in education as a pathway to future opportunities, a finding that is consistent with prior research" (p. 366). Providing adequate educational opportunities has been cited as the most effective long-term solution to ending poverty (Cohen 1998; Friedman 1999). However, obtaining employment that that does not require high levels of education is promoted as the best means for teenage mothers to be able to support their families (Sosulski, Cunningham & Sellers 2006). Obtaining employment that does not require a high school or college diploma is often encouraged for the young mother. A heavy emphasis can sometimes be placed on the young parent by their own parents to provide financially for their children. As a result, obtaining employment becomes a priority. Despite the aforementioned pressures, teenage mothers are blamed for not being interested in academics (Sosulski, et al., 2006). Educational institutions, too, may tend to downplay educational achievement for pregnant teenagers, by channeling them into programs that focus on parenting skills and family rather than on college preparation (Lutrell, 2003). Luttrell (2003) explained that educators send messages

"that academic learning is secondary [in school-based teenage pregnancy programs] and that most staff believe that, regardless of a student's capability, her pregnancy and early motherhood forecloses the possibility of educational and career success" (p. 18). Young mothers may internalize the message that they can be only good parents or successful students, not both. Without the necessary encouragement and adequate preparation, it seems that they are unlikely to matriculate in college (Sosulski et al., 2006). Watson, Vogel & Wubenna (2017) further add that "in addition to the challenge of completing high school, two major barriers, stigma and segregation, often complicate the already daunting task of graduating while parenting" (pg.3).

The importance of aspirations and goals for adjustment during adolescence are manifested conceptually in several ways. They provide a yardstick or standard to help adolescents weigh the degree to which different choices will help or hinder their chances of achieving desired goals (Camarena et al. 1998). As a motivational force, they influence the degree to which effort is expended on tasks that make the achievement of aspirations and goals possible (Camarena et al. 1998). For adolescent mothers forced to confront new parenting demands, a clear set of aspirations and goals may provide an important protection as a guide through difficult choices and serve as a buffer against the discouragements and stressors they experience. For some, becoming pregnant and giving birth to a child furthered or renewed, a stronger commitment to finish school (Mollborn, 2007). In these instances, these young mothers attained a college degree as a result of becoming a teenage mother.

Although the evidence strongly indicates that aspirations are protective for young mothers, the importance of matching goals with the necessary supports and resources available is essential if the positive outcomes are to result. SmithBattle (2007) studied the narratives of adolescent mothers and concluded that while almost all of the mothers framed their pregnancy as

an unintended mistake, the mothers with the most supports and encouragements were the least likely to believe that their futures were limited by this mistake. Although adolescent girls who become pregnant generally exhibit higher levels of delinquency and/or antisocial behavior than their never-pregnant peers, those who transition into motherhood tend to reduce their involvement in such behavior (Bar & Simons, 2012). While pregnancy was rarely planned by these teens, becoming a mother became a reason for planning the future as mothering anchored the self and created new connections to the world (SmithBattle, 2005b).The literature indicates that educational motivation, along with proper supports, has a positive impact on the short and long-term futures related to the academic achievement of young mothers. Along the path of continuing their education, it is logical to assume some support systems were in place, which aided these women in continuing with their education. Studies have shown specific support systems were viewed to be most beneficial by teen mothers (Brosh, Weigel, & Evans, 2007; SmithBattle, 2007). These support systems included parents, friends, teachers, spouses, social workers, or mentors. Yet for others, they may not have had the support systems in place and instead had to plot a course of action on their own. For some, lack of emotional and/or tangible support from family as well as instability within the household present substantial challenges to educational attainment (Minnis et al., 2012). Additional barriers to academic success may include unreliable childcare, inconsistent support and a history of family conflict. Indeed, continuing the pregnancy and choosing to parent her child often necessitate that the adolescent abandon her goals to graduate high school or go to college (Barber & East, 2014).

However, it important to note that some teenage mothers who come from a more advantaged background may be able to attain a college degree regardless of a teenage pregnancy. For those teens that come from a less disadvantaged background, the ability to rebound from a

life altering event such as teenage pregnancy is higher than those teens living in poverty and with fewer resources available (Fomby, Hawkins and Mollborn, 2014). Fomby et. al (2014) find that "one pathway for this rebound may be through the transmission of grandparents' resources to teen parent families, either through what grandparents provide directly to children or through grandparent's contributions to teen parents' human capital and resource accumulation" (pg. 735). Fomby et. al (2014) also indicated "that teen mothers whose parents had achieved more education had higher socioeconomic status themselves (as measured by educational attainment, assets and household income-to-needs) by the time their children were pre-school aged" (pg. 755). Mollborn (2017) adds that "these studies suggest complex patterns in which more advantaged groups sometimes experience greater and sometimes lesser effects of teenage fertility" (pg. 66).

In addition to these demands, school policies and practices can sometimes add an additional layer of problems for the teenage mother. These can undermine the teen mother's educational aspirations and create barriers for them to be able to succeed academically. SmithBattle (2007) further adds that for these young parents with educational goals "continuing and remaining in school can sometimes become complicated by cumbersome enrollment processes, stringent attendance policies, lack of educational options and bureaucratic mismanagement" (pg. 361). Schools must expand their efforts to identify and serve teen mothers in their communities and should improve the quality and effectiveness of the educational opportunities available to teen parents (SmithBattle, 2007). When school policies overlook the young mothers desires to do well academically and be a good parent, they contribute negatively by adding an additional roadblock to academic success.

Research on the exploration of college attendance by women who had been teen mothers is scarce and even scarcer on those that attained the college degree. The effects of teenage childbearing on completion of some college are quite large. There were four primary articles on post-secondary education and adolescent parenting that informed my research: Rehm (2000); Hofferth et al., (2001); and Sosulski et al., (2006). Each of these studies incorporated higher education into their examination of the academic trajectories of young mothers.

Hofferth et al., (2011) cited a study which stated that compared with women who gave birth at age 30 or older, teenage mothers have high odds of high school completion (high defined as 10-12 percent) and high odds of post-secondary schooling (high defined as 14-29 percent). The odds of post-secondary schooling among young teenage child bearers are 54% as high as those who delayed until age 30 (Hofferth, et al., 2001).

In their 2006 study on the experiences of a participant in a pilot program that supports teenage mothers who want to pursue a college education, Sosulki, Cunningham and Sellers determined that "institutional policy, services and programs should be designed to support participants in providing information and promoting relationships to foster trust, self-determination, personal obligation, self-advocacy and empowerment as well as to recognize participants not only as mothers but also as women and students" (p.333). Structural supports at the local community college enabled the participant to think that college was possible. Rehm's study determined that an individual's personal strengths and resiliency were factors that promoted continued academic success. Enhanced mental health functioning could be associated with less maladaptive coping and more protective factors for those college students who experienced a teenage pregnancy (Rehm, 2000).

A more recent research case study focused on the educational attainment in the form of graduate degrees among former teenage mothers (Benitez, 2017). The study examined the experiences of women in three specific counties in California. The findings of this research study determined that personal determination, perseverance and support systems in place allowed the teen mother to attain a graduate degree (Benitez, 2017).

Educational Attainment among Latina Teenage Mothers

Latinas have the highest dropout rate amongst all groups of high school students and lowest level of college enrollment (Castro, 1999). In light of teen mothers' heightened risk of becoming high school dropouts, Child Trends used released national survey data to explore high school diploma and GED attainment among women who had given birth as teens. They particularly looked at whether the teen mothers had earned these educational credentials by the time that they reached their early twenties. The findings indicated that slightly more than one-half of young women who had been teen mothers received a high school diploma by the age of 22, compared with 89 percent of young women who had not given birth during their teen years (Child Trends, 2008). Hispanic young teen mothers are the least likely to finish high school or its equivalent; less than half finish by age 22 (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012).

Educational Attainment among Black Teenage Mothers

In 2010, a study conducted by Child Trends found that "among those who had a child before the age of 18, 46 percent of black young women earned high school diplomas, compared with 35 percent of white and 34 percent of Hispanic young women" (Child Trends, 2010). Several years later, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2012)

found that "Black young teen mothers are the most likely to finish high school or its equivalent with two out of three doing so by the age of 22."

The Role of Social Supports

Social support plays an important role in ensuring healthy outcomes in the teenage mother and her child. Teenage mothers have needs for emotional esteem, material, informational, and network support (Logsdon & Koniak-Griffin, 2005). Social support to teenage mothers generally results in wellbeing as well as better parenting behavior and healthy maternal-infant interactions (Clemmens, 2001). On the other hand, a lack of social support for the teenage mother may have negative impact. In a sample of primarily minority pregnant adolescents residing in a maternity home, lack of social support and low self-esteem were observed to be strong predictors of depression symptoms (Koniak-Griffin, Walker, & deTraversay, 1996).

While the literature on social support is nowhere near as extensive as that on predisposing factors and outcomes, the role of family support is by far the most commonly researched type of support within the literature (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). Emotional and practical support, rather than financial support, is of significant importance (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). The role of support from the teen's mother, in particular, has been widely investigated. Caldwell & Antonucci's (1997) review of American literature suggests that, as a majority of teenage mothers live with their mother for up to five years after giving birth, their mothers are a primary source of housing, financial and child-care assistance. Co-residence with mothers has also been linked with increased educational attainment and stable employment for young mothers as well as better parenting and child developmental outcomes for their children (Bunting & McAuley, 2004).

Family support, in particular, is clearly important to teenage mothers with the person they most rely on for practical and child-care support being their own mother. For teenage mothers, short term, multigenerational co-residence has been associated with the mother's continued educational attainment (Gordon, Chase-Landsdale, Matjasko, & Brooks-Gunn 1997).

Some of the research suggests, however, that too much family support can be understood by the teenage mother as an intrusion on her independence and hence have negative consequences (Jacobs & Mollbourn, 2012). While a dense network greatly aids instrumental needs and can increase the amount of attention a child receives, it also threatens the mother's independence and ability to parent (SmithBattle, 2005a). The relationships between the daughter and the mother may suffer and become further complicated if the mother perceives the teen pregnancy to be a reflection of lower class behavior (Kaplan, 1996). Both parties can become angry and resentful which can further impact and debilitate the mother-daughter relationship. Adolescent parenthood can also have ripple effects on the older and younger generations in the family, as grandparents become co-parents for their grandchild and as children of teenage

mothers show educational and behavioral problems (Gordon, R. et al. 1997). Disputes between the adolescent and her mother about appropriate parenting and the adolescent's lifestyle are

also common(Logsdon & Koniak-Griffin, 2005).

Research suggests that particular family constellations provide a better environment overall for the adolescent mother (Jacobs & Mollbourn, 2012). For example, both living alone and marrying have been associated with negative outcomes such as an incomplete schooling. Adolescents living with both parents have been found to receive extra family support than those residing in one-parent households (Jacobs & Mollbourn, 2012). Social factors also contribute to

a woman's success in obtaining a college degree. If a student has parental support, educational goals, and the ability to handle stressful social situations, they are more likely to persevere (Logsdon & Koniak-Griffin, 2005).

Cultural Norms of Black Families

Generally, parental socialization and values of African-American parents mirror those of the wider community; however, for African-American parents, a history of persistent racial prejudice and discrimination is an important intervening factor that affects this process. (Julian, McKenry & McKelvey, 1994). Thus, socialization occurs within a broader social environment that is frequently incompatible with realizing a positive self- image. (Julian, et al., 1994). Explicit racial socialization (i.e., inculcating coping skills for survival in a hostile environment) is clearly a distinctive feature of child rearing among African-American parents (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990). A general distrust of government and social services is prevalent within the Black community.

There is a sizable body of literature that shows that family factors in the family of origin such as parenting practices are related to adolescent sexual behaviors and pregnancy risk (Hoskins & Simons, 2015). Single-parent homes are a prominent form of Black lower income families primarily because of the unavailability of men who are able to support a family (Hoskins & Simons, 2015). Having a single parent may assist in early sexual debut (Bonell et al., 2006). African American adolescents who report distant and problematic relationships with their parents tend to initiate sexual intercourse earlier (Chase-Landsdale and Brooks-Gunn 1994) and tend to have more partners and use contraception less consistently than peers (Small & Luster, 1994).

Hill (1998) defines African American families as "constellations of households related by blood or marriage or function that provides basic instrumental and expressive functions of the family to the members of those networks" (p. 18). Parents and other family members or close friends usually share household responsibilities. African American families tend to have a more broad definition of what constitutes as family (Pollock et al., 2015). These characteristics also lend to family systems that value interdependence or collectivism, which theoretically protect family members and reduce stress (Karenga, 2007). Strengths among the African American family include extended kinship networks, a strong reliance on religion and support against discrimination (McAdoo & Younge, 2009). Seniors are highly respected and their aging is viewed as authority and wisdom. Kinship bonds and religious orientations are part of African American family norms (Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, & Brooks-Gunn (2006).

The mother-grandmother relationship is especially relevant in young African American families. Severe economic hard ship often puts African-American adolescents and young women at risk for early single motherhood, and such poverty conditions continue once the baby is born (Wakschlag, et al., 1996). As a result, young mothers are highly likely to rely on kin networks, especially their mothers, for economic and emotional support, involving co-residence and shared care of children (Wakschlag, et al., 1996).

African American families tend to be more hierarchical and are more likely to be strict, to hold demanding behavioral standards, and to use physical discipline (Staples, 1997). Such strictness is, however, balanced within a context of strong support and affection. Grandparents, especially grandmothers, play a crucial role in the maintenance of the African American family (Staples, 1997).When mothers cannot fulfill their role, grandmothers often step in to parent children.

Older siblings play a key role in African American households (Staples, 1997). Older children, especially female, are often pressed into helping their mother with the care of the household. These responsibilities are both a source of maturation and strain for these siblings, who are most often the oldest female child in the household (Staples, 1997).

Some past research has found that teenage pregnancy is more acceptable among African Americans and Latinos and in predominantly African American or Latino communities than elsewhere (Mollborn, 2012). Mollborn (2009) found that African American adults reported weaker norms against teenage non-marital childbearing than other racial/ethnic groups, but Latino adults were not significantly different from others.

While these are general norms for Black families, there is the understanding and knowledge that not everyone who is part of this culture will behave in the same way or adhere to societal norms associated with the culture.

Cultural Norms of Latino Families

There appear to be some shared traditional values and experiences in the U.S. Latino population that affect teenage pregnancy, such as the value of motherhood, the influence of family and family communication, the impact of religion, and broader social factors such as the process of acculturation (Aparicio, Pecukonis & Zhou,2014). Hispanic families, like other ethnic minority families, vary greatly in education, income, age, geographic location, and time since migration to the United States (Julian, et al., 1994). In Latino families, there are major themes that are subscribed to. These include: the integral nature of family in their daily lives; functional dominance of males, complemented by a positive and traditional role for women; reinforcement of sex-role distinctions through child-rearing practices; strong kinship bonds; centrality of

children; repression of feminine attributes in males; and precedent for the male as head of the household (Julian et al., 1994).

Familismo, familism, refers to attitudes, behaviors and family structures operating within an extended family system and is believed to be the most important influence in the lives of Latinos (Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004). Latino families who express a higher degree of familismo are characterized by positive interpersonal familial relationships, high family unity, social support, interdependence in the completion of daily activities and the close proximity of extended family members (Romero et al., 2004). The concept of familismo refers to how closely connected an individual is to the family. It represents the central position of the family in the life of the individual (Velez-Pestrana, Gonzalez-Rodriguez, & Borges-Rodriguez, 2005). Because the family is of such importance, Latino parents tend to be overprotective of their children. Familism emphasizes the needs of the family as a whole rather than the individual's wishes and desires. Familism plays an important role in Latina adolescent reproductive health.

One qualitative study conducted with Latino parents concluded that although parents preferred that their children defer childbearing to permit greater educational opportunities, the value placed on the role of motherhood and the attention given to teen mothers sent conflicting messages to their daughters (Driscoll, Biggs, Brindis & Yankah, 2001). Becoming a mother in the Latino culture is sometimes perceived as more important and can hold higher value than attaining educational success.

Other studies indicate that in the Latino culture, early parenting can be supported. The young mother feels that she will gain respect from her family and the community should she become pregnant. The heightened sense of collective support and emphasis on traditional roles

for women in Latino culture can make motherhood a favorable option for some Latina teenagers (Rocca, 2010).

Cultural explanations for Latino family patterns have focused on the important role of acculturation (Rocca, 2010). Acculturation is a complex process that can occur both within the individual, as they relinquish values and characteristics of their culture of origin and adopt those of the host culture, and over generations, as offspring of immigrants are further removed from the influences from their parent's country of origin (Rocca, 2010).

Some research has suggested that the Latino parenting style, often characterized as domineering, conservative, and with significant differences in how male and female children are socialized, does not allow for open parent-child discussions of topics such as sexuality (Hovell et al., 1994; Romo, Lefkowitz, Corona, Au, & Sigman, 2000). As a result, these youth receive mixed messages about sexuality and obtain most of their knowledge related to sex from their peers. Since open discussions about sex and safe sex practices are limited, this leaves room for them to engage in risky behavior without the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions. Reluctance to discuss sex on the part of Latino parents implies that Latino adolescents lack both parental guidance on sexuality and essential, factual information about sex- related health issues (Guilamo-Ramos & Bouris, 2006).Latino parents tend to focus their discussions related to sex on puberty; the negative consequences of sexual behavior; and sexual morals, attitudes, and values (Guiliamo-Ramos et al., 2006).

It is important to note and acknowledge that while these are the family norms attributed to the Latino culture, not all members that identify as Latino/a will adhere to these family norms although they identify with the culture.

Educational Aspirations of African American and Latino Teenage Mothers

Many studies have found that teens reevaluate their goals, decrease risky behavior, and recommit to schooling as they anticipate mothering (SmithBattle 2007). In contrast with professional views, teen mothers often describe mothering as a gain that contributes to their maturity rather than a loss that jeopardizes their future (SmithBattle, 2007). They view education as a vehicle for a better future and take advantage of opportunities to overcome barriers. Their personal motivation and interests were driving forces in achieving academic success. Teenage mothers often exhibit remarkable resilience and resourcefulness when exposed to less than optimal familial and environmental conditions (SmithBattle, 2007). For many, the responsibility of motherhood has increased their levels of strength and competence, and had been the momentum to change direction and consider a career (Duncan, 2007). Consequently, they enjoyed being mothers and this was instrumental in enabling them to achieve positive outcomes for themselves and their children (Alldred & David, 2010). In many respects, these pregnancies provide the impetus for growth and development as the young mothers develop and utilize a combination of life skills which fuel the development of other adaptation strategies and protective factors (Clarke, 2015).

In further reviewing the literature, it was found that the relationship between emotional support and educational outcomes for African American teenage and Latina teenage mothers may also be attributed to differing aspirations for this group, suggesting that they may require additional support and encouragement with regard to educational needs (Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012).

Some studies have suggested that those young mothers who have strong achievement aspirations might then have a tendency to resent the pregnancy and then feel trapped in the

parenting role. For young women who are strongly attached to their role of student or future professional, conflict deriving from role expectations that no not align with these future goals might lead to feelings of resentment toward the pregnancy and subsequent difficulties in parenting (Barber & East, 2014). When pregnancy occurs among adolescents, the developmental tasks of adolescence-such as completing or pursuing one's education-run counter to the demands and responsibilities of parenting (Barber & East, 2014).

Young mothers may enhance their educational goals and aspirations but may feel that such goals are out of their reach, presumably due to both their relatively higher level of disadvantage pre-pregnancy and the added responsibilities associated with motherhood (Barr & Simons, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Resiliency Theory

There is a clear indication of the need to move away from the predominant message of failure and, instead, re-direct focus on developing and implementing policies and strategies to capitalize on teenage mother's potential for growth, which an early pregnancy has been known to impact (Clarke, 2015). With barriers eliminated, more opportunities become available for academic achievement among Black and Latina teenage mothers.

This research study steered away from the deficiency approach taken by many researchers examining adolescent parenting and education. Utilizing resiliency theory, a strengths-based approach, this research study attempted to fill a void within the literature by offering knowledge on the real-life experiences of Black and Latina adolescent mothers who have had academic success and have attained college degrees.

Resiliency theory is about the ability to deal with disruptive and stressful challenges, learning coping skills, and becoming more effective in dealing with life events in a way that promotes a healthy well-being for everyone (Henry & Milstein, 2004). Resiliency focuses on an individual's strengths, problem-solving skills and promotion of positive attitudes. This study challenged the overwhelming perception that teenage childbearing and parenting goes hand in hand with failure and the notion of being stagnant as a result of what is perceived as poor decisions. In looking at resiliency theory as the theoretical framework to guide this study, the promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment among these former teenage mothers were explored.

The theory focuses attention on positive contextual and social factors, and individual, intrinsic variables. These variables are defined as promotive factors (Zimmerman, 2013). Promotive factors operate in opposition to risk factors and help youth overcome negative effects of risk exposure (Zimmerman, 2013). Promotive factors are identified as assets and resources.

Assets: Positive individual traits or personal attributes. These may include self-esteem, self-efficacy and other internal factors.

Resources: These refer to external supports outside of the individual and in the environment. These supports can come in the form of community organizations, schools, churches, mentoring programs, parental supports, supportive adults, mentors and youth programs that provide youth with opportunities to learn and practice skills (Zimmerman, 2013). Human, social and material capital are also resources that individuals can use as needed in order to succeed.

The term resources emphasizes the influences in the social environment and places resiliency theory in a more ecological context and moves away from looking at resiliency as only an individual trait (Zimmerman, 2013). It also points to the importance of external resources

and how they can be a focus of change to help individuals face risks and prevent negative outcomes (Zimmerman, 2013).

It is of importance to take into consideration the external supports in the environment, and not only individual characteristics, when examining factors that have contributed to educational attainment among this population. The theory specifically mentions that assessing promotive factors requires examining not only the qualities of the individuals, but also that of their family and environment. Resiliency theory provides a conceptual framework for considering a strengths based approach to understand child and adolescent development and informing designs for appropriate interventions (Zimmerman, 2013). The theory supplies the conceptual structure for studying and understanding why some youth grow up to be healthy adults in spite of risk exposure (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2007).

Resiliency theory focuses attention on positive circumstantial, social and individual factors that interfere with or disrupt developmental trajectories (Zimmerman, 2013). The theory provides a conceptual framework that can guide researchers and practitioners interested in developing and improving assets and resources for this population (Zimmerman, 2013). Zimmerman (2013) adds that "researchers suggest that those who cope in direct, problem-solving modes enhance the possibility that life's difficulties will be resolved in successful ways" (pg. 382). Resilience research also focuses on factors or characteristics that help individuals successfully manage adversity and difficult events (Garmezy, 1991; Rutter, 1985). Resilience for some is linked with coping and adapting to changes and circumstances (Markstrom, Marshall, & Tryon, 2000).

Risk behaviors such as early onset of sexual activity puts an adolescent at risk for outcomes that can change their life. Early pregnancy is certainly influenced by risk factors in the

adolescent's social environment (Jessor, 1991). By examining the assets and resources utilized

by former teenage mothers who have successfully earned college degrees successful strategies

can be highlighted as well as identifying supports and systems necessary to help with the success

of young mothers. In examining these resources, the emphasis will not only be on the former

teenage mother's own intrinsic qualities, assets, but also on the outside factors that facilitated and

fostered success.

Resiliency theory includes several models that describe how promotive factors can offset

and protect youth from the negative effects of risks (Zimmerman, 2013). Zimmerman (2013)

explains that "the protective factor model suggests that promotive assets or resources modify the

relationship between a risk and promotive factors and outcomes" (pg. 382).

Key promotive factors (resources) for adolescents include good schools as well as

connections to pro-social organizations in the community, high parenting quality, connections to

a positive peer group, and close mentoring relationships with competent adults on an

interpersonal level. On an individual level, good impulse control, orientation towards the future,

self-efficacy, and being able to adapt to difficult situations (assets) can benefit the adolescent

mother and promote success (Masten & Powell, 2003). Teenage mothers are vulnerable to

experiencing many of the risks previously cited as they are disproportionately likely to be poor

and of color, to experience early school failure, and to face family conflicts and maltreatment

(Child Trends, 2008). Remaining in school or returning to school may depend on the availability

of social support, resources for child care, presence of a caring adult and so forth (Jessor, 1991).

A theory such as resiliency theory can be useful to inform teen pregnancy programs,

shape policies targeting adolescent mothers, and most importantly, effectively support current

and future teenage parents in their journeys to achieving academically. Jessor (1991) emphasizes

that "programs need to design efforts that can reduce risk while at the same time promote protection; implementing these two strategies alone would not be optimal for producing change" (pg.600). In addition, programs should be designed to address multiple risk behaviors than specific behaviors alone. Young people growing up in negative social environments are at a higher disadvantage because not only are risk factors more intense and more prevalent under these circumstances, but also positive resources are less available, if not absent, for many (Jessor, 1991). Hoffman (2015) adds that "to really make a difference in the lives of prospective teen mothers, we need to help them delay birth *and* address at least some of the other deficits in their lives" (pg. 660).

Chapter 3

<u>Research Design and Method</u>

Qualitative Methods

The objective of this study was to gain insight from Black and Latina women who are former teenage mothers on their experiences with having children as teenagers and their ability to attain college degrees. In order to understand the women's perspectives on their routes to attainment of college degrees, a qualitative approach was well suited to this task (Ungar, 2004). A qualitative method allowed women themselves to be heard, which does not often happen when issues surrounding teenage pregnancies are discussed (Hudson & Ineichen,1990). Through personal interviews, the researcher best captured how participants interpreted their experiences, the factors that they viewed as challenges, and the factors to which they attributed their success. Because the number of teenage mothers that attain a college degree is so small, quantitative data cannot identify all of the factors or explore the circumstances surrounding the individual experiences of these women. Mollborn (2017) indicates that "increasingly, qualitative research differentiates teenage mothers in exploring consequences, finding differences finding differences among them that are not reducible to single factors" (pg. 66). Creswell (2007) adds that "qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem"(pg. 37). Qualitative research is conducted when a problem or issue needs to be explored. Qualitative research is also conducted when there is a need for a detailed understanding of a problem. These details can only be explored by meeting with participants face to face, in their homes or communities, providing them with the opportunities to share their stories and have their voices heard. Qualitative studies facilitate understanding and give voice to

the lived experiences of marginalized and/or stigmatized communities (Solivan, Wallace, Kaplan, & Harville, 2015).

Creswell (2009) notes that interviews provide subjective information for qualitative designs that are filtered through the views of the participants. Through qualitative research, the qualitative data is examined by working inductively from particulars to more general perspectives, whether these perspectives are called themes, dimensions, codes or categories (Creswell, 2007).

Content Analysis Approach/Inductive Analysis

There are numerous approaches for analyzing qualitative data. This study utilized the content analysis approach of qualitative research. Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitative content analysis is one of a number of research methods used to analyze text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Research using qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or meaning of the text. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) inform that "data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals" (pg. 1281). Because it is considered a useful technique to make sense of textual data such as interview transcripts, content analysis was considered the most appropriate method for this research study as it allowed categories to naturally emerge from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

An approach based on inductive data moves from the specific to the general, so that particular instances are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). The use of inductive content analysis is recommended when there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when knowledge is fragmented (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Analyzing the data inductively allowed the researcher to identify themes without preconceived expectations (Patton, 2002).

Sample Size and Recruitment Procedures

The study was reviewed by and approved by the University of Pennsylvania Internal Review Board in order to assure compliance with Federal and University regulations regarding human participants in research before contact was made with human participants (IRB Protocol 817137: Refer to Appendix A).

The sample size for the study was 15 Black and Latina women. In order to capture an array of life experiences among Black and Latina women on their path to educational attainment as teenage mothers, participants must have been between the ages of 28-48 years of age. In focusing on this particular age range, the researcher was able to obtain information on the promotive factors that were available to the participants in different age groups.

The participants were recruited through the Facebook social media platform. There are two private and closed groups that the researcher used to recruit potential participants. The groups are the Latinas Completing Doctoral Degrees and the Black PhD Network. Both are closed group pages, meaning that the page administrator must approve members and only group members can post to the page and view posted content. Because the target population is a rare and few in number, the researcher asked participants to refer others that they thought may be

interested or who may meet the criteria for the study. The participant shared the recruitment flyer used for this dissertation research study with other prospective participants. Interested prospective participants contacted the researcher for more information. The researcher did not contact the person. The researcher's contact information was included in the recruitment flyer. Utilizing this method did not negatively impact the participant's privacy, confidentiality or welfare.

Recruitment flyers were created, all of which featured the inclusion criteria for participation in the study (Refer to Appendix B for Recruitment Flyer). Referrals from colleagues and friends were also used in the recruitment process. Participants referred others that they knew met the criteria for the study. These recruits contacted the researcher conducting the research via email and telephone. Once they contacted the researcher, additional information was provided via email or telephone. Once the participant agreed to participate in the research study, an interview date, time and location was agreed upon.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews facilitated by a 'flexible format' open-ended set of themes and questions were used as a tool to facilitate dialogue and exploration (Bolton & Fitzpatrick, 1994). The interviews were recorded through the use of a tape recorder. The interviews ranged from 45-60 minutes in duration. Through informed consent, all participants were aware of the questions that would be explored in the interview (Refer to Appendix C for Informed Consent). The sample included Black and Latina women who had a teen birth and were able to attain a college degree.

Setting

The setting of the study was contingent on the availability of the participants. The researcher did not meet with any of subjects in their homes. The meetings between researcher and participant took place in quiet and private settings that ensured maximum privacy and efficiency with completion of the interview questions. The researcher included information about the setting on the interview face-sheet for the purpose of accountability.

Data Analysis

The data from these qualitative interviews was analyzed in multiple ways. The methods used to analyze the data utilized the inductive analysis approach include open coding, creating categories and abstraction. With open coding, there were notes and headings written in the margins of the transcripts while reading the text. The written material was read through as if reading a novel and this was done three times. This was done to facilitate and gain familiarity with the data. Headings were written down in the margins to describe all aspects of the content (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). This allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of the big picture with the aims of the research in mind (White & Marsh, 2006). The headings were then collected from the margins and on to coding sheets and themes were then generated (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). The purpose of creating themes was to provide a way to describe the phenomenon, to increase understanding and to generate knowledge (Cavanagh, 1997). When formulating themes by inductive content analysis, the researcher came to a decision, through interpretation, as to which codes to put in the same theme (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Through abstraction, the researcher formulated a general description of the research topic through generating themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Each theme was named using words that were characteristic to the content. Sub-themes with similar events and incidents were grouped

together as sub-themes and themes as the main themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). This abstraction process continued as far as is reasonable and possible. (Elo & Kyngas,2007).

The researcher did the transcribing for all 15 interviews. The coding of the data occurred manually and was done by the researcher. Coding was followed by the thematic organization of words, phrases and sections denoting similar codes, which were then synthesized into broader categories as explained by Webb (1999). This was achieved through underlining, noting, importing words or phrases that appeared to reflect key themes, and incorporating themes into notations of initial thoughts and concepts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Throughout this process a notebook was kept, recording themes and sub-themes as they emerged from the data.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of this research study, the researcher employed three validation strategies. These included member checking, reflective analysis by the researcher and peer auditing of several transcripts.

Member Checking

Shenton (2004), described member checking as the "single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study's credibility" (pg. 68). Creswell adds that "this approach, *writ large* in most qualitative studies, involves taking data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (pg. 208).

Member checking the accuracy of the data took place at the end of the data collection. The researcher selected three participants to read the transcripts of the dialogues in which they

participated. The focus was on whether the participant considered that their words matched what they actually intended to say.

Reflective Analysis

Monitoring reflexivity is described as essential in that it welcomes and explores the subjectivity of the researcher (Smith, 2006). Reflexivity impacts one's meaning making of the data (Smith, 2006). Through reflective analysis, the researcher kept memos and recorded impressions as they arose, in addition to noting patterns as they began to emerge in the data being collected (Shenton, 2006). By keeping memos and taking notes of feelings, thoughts or ideas as they emerged, the researcher became aware of her own personal biases and assumptions. Krefting(1990) informs that "once the researcher is aware of these biases, he or she may alter the way in which she collects the data to enhance the credibility of the research"(pg. 218).

Peer Auditing

Through the use of peer auditing, the researcher provided three of the transcripts to a colleague. The role of the peer auditor was to serve as a "devils' advocate and keep the researcher honest, in addition to asking hard questions meanings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In doing so, the researcher and the peer auditor discussed and compared interpretations of the data on transcripts.

<u>Inclusion Criteria</u>

- Participant's self- identified as Black or Latina.
- Participants had children between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age.
- Participants were between the ages of 28 and 48 years old.

- Participants completed an undergraduate college degree (Bachelor's degree) or completed a graduate or professional degree (Masters or Doctorate).

Exclusion Criteria

- Participants were not part of researcher's social network.

- Participants did not identify as any other race other than Black or Latina.

Statement on Human Subjects

Once participants agreed to meet with the researcher, the interview began with a brief explanation of the study and the purpose of research. The consent form was reviewed with the participant. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Each participant was informed that her participation was voluntary and that can withdraw from the interview at any given moment. The researcher began the interview by gathering demographic information on the participant before starting the interview.

The following information was explained to the participant:

The purpose of study, why they were being asked to participate, length of study, what is expected of participant, risks and benefits, issues concerning confidentiality and injury, payment and/or compensation for participating, and contact information was provided in case participant had questions or complaints regarding the study.

In this study, participants were asked to participate in a one-time interview for 45-60 minutes. The time with the participant covered the purpose of the research, question & answers, general information and interview. The potential risks in this study were minimal. Participants were informed they did not have to answer any questions they felt were uncomfortable to answer and were free to refuse to complete the interview. Subjects were informed that participation was

completely voluntary and that failure to participate would not result in any direct or indirect penalties. The researcher did not ask questions outside of the research topic. The researcher adhered to the questions on the study instrument that related specifically to the participant's experience with a teenage pregnancy, teenage parenting, and educational attainment.

Participants were provided with the name and telephone number of the primary investigator for the study as well as the telephone number for the Office of Regulatory Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania should they have any questions or concerns during the course of the study.

The information participants' shared was kept strictly confidential and secure. All information such as forms, transcripts and audiotapes, were kept in locked cabinets. All study data was stored on an institutionally secured and managed device or server. Once this process was completed the researcher destroyed all of the consent forms and audio cassette tapes.

The face sheets were kept in a separate locked file cabinet from the transcripts. The researcher did not use participants' names, personal data or information about where they live or work in the write-up of the interview. All transcripts were given an alias as a name to protect confidentiality. During the process in which the researcher worked on this project, the participant's privacy was protected. All precautions were taken to protect the privacy of the participant. The methods used to identify and contact potential participants included providing recruitment flyers and allowing the participant to contact the researcher if she wished to share her personal story related to the research topic. The researcher did not directly contact any participants. The decision to participate in the study was left solely to the participant. After they contacted the researcher, they were reminded that participation was voluntary. The participant

was informed that she had the right to not respond to any of the questions. In addition, she was informed that she also had the right to withdraw from the study without any risk to her

Participants were informed that there were no expected direct personal benefits to their participation in the study. However, they were informed that by participating they were contributing to increasing the knowledge base of the community of women who were once teenage mothers. Upon concluding the interview each participant was awarded a $10 gift card for participation in the study.

Reflective Statement

As a former Latina teenage mother, it is extremely important for me, the researcher, to be aware of personal biases, assumptions, expectations and preconceptions related to the research topic. Personally, I have been able to reach high levels of success both in my career as well as with my education. The factors that contributed to my overall success were continued family support throughout my high school years and well into my undergraduate and graduate education. In addition, my own personal drive has also been a continued factor in achieving every one of my academic pursuits. The importance of being a role model to my son in the hopes that he also reaches high levels of academic success, despite being the result of a teenage pregnancy, was also a driving force for me on a personal level. In reflecting on what some of my assumptions and expectations may be, the notion that all teenage mothers have had family support and that they would not have been able to reach academic success without family support is at the forefront of these assumptions. I am expecting that most of my participants will have had family support at some point in order to continue their education and persevere throughout. An additional assumption that is present is that I may feel that I know exactly what

the participant felt while going through such an experience. This is false and I will need to continuously remember that through the course of the interview.

On a professional level, the experience is a complete contrast to my personal experiences. A predominant number of the Black and Latina women that I have encountered who were once teenage mothers went on to become young grandmothers and became heavily reliant on public assistance and other government funded programs. Because of the many responsibilities that come as a result of being a young mother, many have not been able to purse higher levels of education. As a result of my personal experience and the professional experience with this population, the need to study factors that produce successful outcomes within this population is of high importance.

I am aware that my personal experiences related to the research topic are of a very sensitive nature and that in listening to participants sharing their own personal experiences may invoke feelings in me. Some of their narratives may be very similar to mine while others may be different and offer some insight. In researching this topic and interviewing study participants, I will need to continuously be aware of the way I am posing the interview questions so as to not create bias. I will also need to remember that while we may share the common experience of having been a teenage mother, our personal experiences are unique to us and should be respected.

This research topic is of extreme importance to me as it is a topic that my twenty four year old son and I have discussed in great depth. He has always wondered about the frequency with which teenage mothers become successful in the careers as well as their offspring having success in their own personal lives. This is also another area in which it will be imperative that I do not self-disclose any information related to my offspring or about my own experience with

the research questions. In doing so, I will avoid the perception of a power imbalance between myself as the researcher and the study participant. In addition, I will be very careful not to self-disclose any of my personal experiences with the research topic and will maintain my focus solely on the experiences being shared by the study participant. I am aware that this will be difficult to do, as the participants will be sharing personal information related to this experience which may be similar to my own. However, I will ensure that I adhere to professional boundaries through the course of the interview.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

The purpose of this research study was to explore the promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees for Black and Latina women who were once teenage mothers. In this research study, the interview questions focused particularly on the assets and resources available to the participants that made possible the attainment of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Additionally, the many ways in which they were able to effectively manage the responsibilities of parenting at a young age while pursuing goals and academic aspirations were explored. Lastly, the numerous challenges and obstacles that are associated with a teenage pregnancy and their ability to attain a college degree despite these roadblocks were examined. The research questions that guided the research study were as follows:

1. What promotive factors have facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees among former Black and Latina teenage mothers?

2. How were these women able to effectively manage parenting responsibilities in the midst of pursuing academic goals?

3. How were they able to manage and overcome the many challenges and obstacles associated with attaining a college degree while being a teenage parent?

This chapter discusses the key findings from 15 semi-structured interviews. The data was elicited through the use of a flexible format, consisting of open-ended questions and themes. Data was analyzed utilizing a content analysis approach to arrive at the findings. The interview questions focused on the initial reactions to the pregnancy, the decision to maintain the

pregnancy and continue their education, the life trajectory experiences of the participants and debriefing questions that focused on reflections on the experience, advice to young women in these circumstances and advice to parents and professionals working with this population. (Refer to Appendix D for interview instrument).

In order to ensure protection and confidentiality, participant names and the names of those mentioned in their interviews (i.e. names of children, mentors, spouses, significant others) were not used in this study; a pseudonym was assigned to each participant (Refer to Appendix E for participant profiles). In addition, the names of places and cities they mentioned in the interviews were changed to further protect their confidentiality. Of the 15 women interviewed, five had earned a Bachelor's degree, five had earned a Masters degree and five had earned a Doctorate. Nine of the participants interviewed identified as Black and six identified as Latina. Of the 15 participants, seven had their first child at the age of 18, four at the age of 17, three at the age of 19 and one at the age of 13. The age range of the participants was from 28-48 years of age, with the mean age being 34.8. Ten of the participants had their first child in the 2000s, three in the 1990's and two in the 1980s. All demographic information can be found on Table 1.

Resiliency theory was used as the theoretical framework to guide this research project. The promotive factors, and more specifically, the assets and resources that aided these women in attaining a college degree were explored. Within the theory of resiliency, assets are defined as an individual's intrinsic qualities and positive personal attributes. These may include a positive sense of self, determination, perseverance and a strong desire to succeed despite obstacles and challenges and other internal factors. Resources are defined as those external supports outside of the individual and in the environment. These supports can come in the form of schools, community agencies and organizations, federal and state programs, church, youth programs,

mentoring programs and supportive adults. The term resources places special emphasis on the individual's environment and the importance of available resources that can help individuals face risks and have positive outcomes despite the circumstances. The theory of resiliency places a specific focus on assessing external factors, the family and environment.

Several key themes emerged as a result of analyzing the data. A list of the emerged themes and their sub-themes are as follows:

1. Promotive Factors: Assets and Resources

    1a. Assets

        Sub-themes:

        a. Academically inclined prior to pregnancy
        b. Strong self determination to be more than a negative statistic
        c. Desire to prove people wrong

    1b. Resources

        Sub-themes:

        a. Mentors of similar racial background
        b. Social supports
        c. Family influence and support
        d. Financial resources
        e. Community resources
        f. Educational supports

2. Balancing Parenting Responsibilities and the Academic Pursuit

        Sub-themes:

        2a. Balancing life as woman and mother

        2b. Limited involvement in child's emotional life due to parenting responsibility

3. Challenges and Obstacles While Being a Teenage Mother and Going to School

        Sub-themes:

        3a. Lack of support and troubled relationship with father of child

3b. Lack of support by professionals

3c. Stigmatized as teen parent

3d. Lack of mental health treatment

3e. Negative influences in the community

3f. Unprepared for parenting responsibility

3g. Educational barriers

While becoming a teenage parent brings about significant emotional and financial challenges, there are cases in which, in the midst of these negative statistics and results, some of the outcomes are positive through the trajectory of the adolescent's life and they have been able to overcome such obstacles. There are many women who have been able to overcome the disadvantages of early parenthood and emerged stronger and more capable as a result of the personal growth they experienced.

The attainment of undergraduate and graduate college degrees among teenage mothers is rare. In spite of the many challenges and pressures associated with teenage pregnancy and parenting, the 15 women that participated in this research study were able to overcome these difficult obstacles and roadblocks. Their stories shed light to their early days as a teenage mother, the feelings related to this life changing event, and the manner in which they were able to endure and surpass these challenges. In order to better understand the manner in which they were able to succeed academically, the promotive factors that aided these women with obtaining a college degree are examined.

The following section focuses on the women's accounts of their experiences as a teenage mother pursuing academic endeavors. Excerpts from the data will be provided under each section to demonstrate the emergent theme.

The first set of emergent themes are related to the promotive factors that facilitated the ability to attain a college degree for these Black and Latina women that were once teenage mothers. The theme was divided into the two specific areas-the assets and resources. The assets are those positive individual traits and personal attributes. These may include self-esteem, the ability to be self-sufficient, a strong drive and other internal factors. The resources are the external supports in the environment. These supports can come from family members, community organizations, church groups and mentors.

The participants of this study each experienced unique circumstances. They were presented with a variety of problems and decisions to maneuver while handling the responsibilities associated with teenage parenting and attending school. The ways in which the participants were able to balance parenting responsibilities in the midst of pursuing academic goals are explored.

Lastly, the challenges and obstacles associated with attaining a college degree while being a teenage parent are detailed. These roadblocks varied among the participants, however, they each shared personal narratives related to the difficulties that they encountered through the trajectory of their lives while in pursuit of a college degree.

Promotive Factors-Assets

Academically inclined prior to pregnancy

Academic aspirations prior to the teenage pregnancy served as a primary asset for several participants in this study. Of the 15 participants, 11 reported that education was always important to them and that they were academically inclined prior to becoming a teenage mother. Several participants were in advanced placement courses and had plans to go to college after high school

graduation. They took pride in their membership in organizations such as the National Honor Society as well as being considered an honor roll student for most of their high school years. These existing positive academic attributes served as an important asset in the lives of these women. They identified it as a factor that fostered the ability to continue their schooling during and after the pregnancy.

While Sarah was aware of the challenges that she would face, her inclination towards academic success served as an asset that facilitated a positive academic trajectory. It was this innate quality that allowed her to persist in the midst of the roadblocks she encountered.

> *"I knew being a mother and going to school was gonna be tough. I just planned on just me getting through school and doing what I had to do no matter what. My education was always important to me. I knew there would be extra hurdles and barriers but no matter what, I knew what my ultimate goal would be and I wasn't gonna stop. I can't let my situation forbid me from attaining my goals-just moving forward".* (Sarah, 36, Black)

Diane's perspective on the importance of education served to shape her academic pathway in a positive way. Although unaware of the ways in which her life would change, there was a placed value on education before the pregnancy. This emphasis on education served as an important asset to succeed academically despite an early pregnancy.

> "*At 17, you never really know how, but you know that your life is going to change with a baby. I knew I had to be responsible and for me, my education was an important part of that. School is good, education is good and I was always getting good grades and I always knew that the best way was to go to school and finish it."* (Diane, 44, Black)

Similarly, Catherine shared her experience with performing well academically prior to her teenage pregnancy. Her ability to perform well academically served as a valuable asset in her pursuit of education following her teenage pregnancy. In addition, she made comparisons between herself as a teenage mother and woman who are not teenage mothers and have to attend

to their life responsibilities. Her strong academic inclination allowed her to move forward with her educational plans despite the parenting responsibilities that lay ahead.

> *"Me not going was never an option. I always did well in school. The way I saw it was, women get pregnant all the time and go to work so why did I have to think about stopping. No."* (Catherine, 35, Latina)

The personal recollection of the participants illustrates that academic achievements were a priority prior to the pregnancy. These women were faced with the responsibilities of teenage parenting and although they realized that it would be difficult, it would not deter them from pursuing an education. Education was valued and recognized as necessary. Their high academic expectations of themselves served as a motivator to continuing their academic pathways towards attaining a college degree.

Strong self-determination to be more than a negative statistic

Of the 15 women interviewed in this research study, 13 reported that either earlier in the process of becoming a teenage mother or at a later point in their lives, it was their strong sense of self-determination that allowed them to continue to persevere, despite the many challenges and obstacles they experienced. In these instances it was becoming a teenage mother that heightened their desire to achieve academically. As the data revealed, the desire to be more than a negative statistic was at the forefront of their thought process when deciding to continue to pursue academic goals, despite the many challenges and obstacles they endured as a result of becoming a teenage parent. For these women, being a negative statistic was associated with an inability to continue their schooling and being viewed as a failure by family members and society in general. In these instances, these young mothers placed high value on attaining a college degree as a result of becoming a teenage mother. New priorities and concerns emerged as they considered their futures.

Jada's teenage pregnancy shifted her views related to education for both herself and the father of her child. She was aware of the many negative societal labels associated with a teenage pregnancy and this served as a motivation for her persevere and push against these negative stereotypes. She was determined not to become a negative statistic.

> *"I was intentional with being the opposite of the stereotype, which is what I said to my son's father, like before we had a kid I didn't care if you finished high school or not but after, now you have to finish high school because now we are a statistic and we have to be better than that and so I always wanted to be intentional and be the opposite of what society expected me to become. I didn't wait for anyone to do anything for me. I signed up for SAT classes. I was fat, sleepy, tired(laughs) but I knew for sure that I was going to college and I was right there in the SAT classes."* (Jada, Latina, 32)

Of the 15 participants, two pursued academic goals years after their teenage birth, yet they shared the same feeling of not wanting to be considered a negative teenage mother statistic. This strong desire fostered their determination to return to school and pursue education years after becoming a teenage parent. Yet again, the experience of becoming a teenage mother strengthened their motivation.

In her narrative, Angela shares the difficulties related to returning to school as an adult. While her experience was a difficult one, she attributes her ability to attain her college degree to her relentless desire to succeed and defy all expected negative expectations of her. Although she experienced instances of self doubt and uncertainty, her innate drive to overcome obstacles and attain a college degree served as a continued motivation during her years in college. Her renewed interest and commitment to schooling allowed her to persevere during those times where she felt she would not be able to continue.

> *"School was stressful, and I think that because I went back as an adult learner I didn't get my BA until 2015. My associates when I was 26. I remember my last semester in college when I met with the academic advisor and they told me I had two classes left.*

*That is when I was about to quit. Working full time and going to college, I almost gave up. But thought to myself- you have come this far. You worked hard, you have to finish, I was not going to give up. I was just determined to finish." (*Angela, 45, Black)

Roxanne's motivation was driven by her desire to change the generational patterns of teenage pregnancy in her family. Both her mother and grandmother were teenage mothers, in addition to other extended family members. None of them had attained a high school diploma or college degree. Roxanne lacked the guidance and support from her family; support that teenage mothers need in order to succeed academically. Roxanne's determination and resolve to change the narrative and outcome of her life in a positive way propelled her into deciding that she did not want to become a negative statistic or stereotype.

"I went back to school when I was 25, the kids were already in school. But I knew I wanted to break the chains in my family because all the women were teenage mothers. I wanted to be the first to be different and not become a statistic. I wanted to be the first to walk the stage and get a degree. I was so determined to make my life and of my children different. I wasn't going to become a stereotype." (Roxanne, 33, Latina)

The participants narratives revealed the manner in which their self-determination to succeed motivated them towards pursuing academic goals in spite of a teenage pregnancy. Becoming a teenage mother served as motivation for these participants to strive towards positive outcomes for herself and her child. Moving away from the negative societal expectations for teenage parents was of importance to the participants.

Desire to prove people wrong

Lastly, 14 of the 15 participants that shared their experiences as a teenage parent pursuing academic goals reported a strong desire to prove people in their lives wrong, particularly those who doubted their ability to succeed due to an early pregnancy. Several women recalled significant experiences associated with the desire to prove people wrong. They were determined to prove that their lives were not over; that no one would dictate what their outcomes would be

and that they would defy the negative stereotypes associated with an early pregnancy despite the related obstacles, challenges and roadblocks. For these women, failure was not an option.

> *"I wanted to prove to everybody that just because I had this baby it didn't mean my life ended. And I always wanted to capitalize on what I had best-my brain. I always did well in school so I felt that is what I had to offer to the world and that's what I made sure to use to make the best of this situation-my smarts. Those that thought I had ruined my life-my goal was to prove them wrong."* (Diane, 44, Black)

> *"The negative perceptions that people have of you as a teen parent taught me, really taught me, that I can control this and that no one was going to determine what my outcome was going to be, because everyone thought, "Well there you go Juliette, you just did it to yourself. Now you're going to just be another person floating in society. And that's not who I was going to be, I knew I had to do more. I had to prove people wrong."* (Juliette, 36, Latina)

> *"It was just an inner battle with myself to prove my family wrong. Because the minute they found out I was pregnant it was like, of that's it , you're done with your schooling, you're gonna end up living off of the system and this is what they were already imagined for me. That I was gonna be on welfare and never go to school. I was going to prove them and anyone else wrong."* (Chantel, 31, Latina)

The narratives above provide examples from the data on the participant's strong desire to prove people wrong, particularly those that doubted their ability to continue their college education and attain a college degree. Their desires were strengthened their ability to move forward with their educational goals. As with their desire to be more than a negative statistic, their desire to prove people wrong came about as a result of becoming a teenage mother. The teenage pregnancy served as a factor that positively influenced their desire to prove people wrong and continue to establish, maintain and pursue academic goals.

Promotive Factors-Resources

The assets detailed by the participants played a significant role in their ability to pursue academic goals while attending to a child as a teenage parent. However, there were also external factors, those resources in their environment that facilitated their ability to attain a college

degree. In the following section, the resources available to the participants will be shared, followed by their voices pertaining to these distinct resources that were available and useful to them.

Mentors of Similar Racial Background

Mentors of the same racial or ethnic background of the participants were found to have played an instrumental role in the lives of several participants. The data revealed that their ability to feel that they could identify either racially or culturally with a mentor served as a tool that facilitated their ability to believe in themselves and their academic futures.

In her recollection, Angela shared that meeting other Black, educated woman served as the primary impetus for her to consider going back to school a number of years after her teenage birth. Angela lacked positive role models and influences in her life as well as in her community. The exposure to women who she could relate to on a racial and cultural level provided her with the necessary motivation to pursue educational goals. Prior to coming into contact with these role models, Angela had no academic aspirations. The following is a relevant memory shared by the participant:

> *"When I was 21, I was enrolled with Americorps and I ended up being around the most amazing strong, smart Black women that I had ever been around in my whole life. One of my mentors was Dr. S. and having a mentor as a teenage parent is very important. Especially one that looks like you. Anyway, Dr. S always spoke to me about going back to school to get my degree. She would always tell me you have to go back to school. This is how I started in a community college. Being around those powerful Black women changed the views I had about myself and my ability to do something positive, even if it took me forever. That was a huge turning point for me. Before that, no one had ever considered telling a young Black girl, a Black teenage mother, that this did not have to be her life. But Dr. S and those women, that's not how they viewed me. They saw my potential".* (Angela, 45, Black)

Like Angela, Roxanne also lacked positive influences in her family and neighborhood.

Roxanne dropped out of high school before the teenage pregnancy. Her life was filled with

substantial challenges and support systems were limited. Consequently, pursuing a college

degree was not an immediate priority. In detailing her experiences with mentors of the same

racial background, Roxanne shared that it was initially a Black woman that noticed her abilities

and encouraged her to consider finishing her GED program and enrolling in college. Before

coming in contact with a woman of color who served to encourage her and expand her interests

in pursuing GED attainment and a college education, Roxanne did not have academic or

educational goals.

> *"I was involved in a child literacy program with my daughter and this is when met Ms. L.*
> *The literacy program exposed the parents to the importance of reading with your*
> *children. They also had events for women that were considering furthering their*
> *education. So one day she approached me and said to me," You know, you are doing*
> *really well here. And she began asking me my plans for my academic future. I really*
> *didn't have any. The program offered child care for parents that were completing their*
> *GED. All these professional women of color providing this support and I just thought,*
> *"wow, they really believe in me. This is the support I needed all my life. I can succeed. To*
> *see someone that looks like me, a woman of color, it was just-wow. This woman was*
> *really big in my life and in my mind, I thank her every single day. Even after my GED,*
> *she asked me what was next because I had to keep going. Seeing her and her strength as*
> *a woman of color in a professional setting made me want to continue."* (Roxanne, 33,
> Latina)

A number of years after her GED completion, she met another mentor of color who

served as a motivator for her to enroll in college. The following excerpt from the data illustrates

the role that a mentor of color had on her decision to return to school. She recalled her

experience with him as follows:

> *"He was really inspired by my story and told me that he felt I would do great in human*
> *services. At that time, I kept on thinking, "Me, college? As much as I want to, I don't*
> *think I'm built for that." He would always tell me, " If I can do it, so can you. How will*

you know if you don't try?" And that's how I ended up applying and gaining acceptance to the school. I feel like the right people come in to your life at the right time. If he was able to achieve despite his obstacles as a man of color, I felt like I could do the same"

Two of the participants provided some of their personal insights and opinions on being a Latina woman and the challenges that are faced by this particular group. They shared the ways in which having a person of color as a mentor and motivator can shape the trajectory towards academic attainment. Having a positive mentoring relationship with adults to whom they were able to relate to made a positive impact on their academic trajectory.

Juliette details her initial feelings regarding the first time she encountered a Latina program chair at the community college that she attended. Meeting a woman of her same ethnic and racial background provided her with a positive reflection of what a Latina woman can achieve regardless of obstacles presented on the path to educational attainment. Prior to this experience, Juliette associated being successful with being White. This came as a result of the lack of exposure to professional women of color. Being around woman that she felt comfortable with fostered a sense of ease and promoted her ability to succeed academically.

" I feel that for women of color, there are so many forms of oppression for us and we are at the bottom of the hierarchy no matter where we are in our life and what we are doing. (pause). So I think the first person I met was our chair coordinator right. I don't know how to explain it other than she was a hard core veterana lady with burgundy hair, and her big hoop earrings. And she had her Masters but she was so gangster! (laughs). And she was Chicana!!To meet someone that, in my mind up until that point, being educated meant being White, right? And all the cultural norms that come with that. So to see this straight up bad a**, in her semi-not really professional attire, it was inspiring and it felt comfortable. Meeting her set it off for me like, "Okay, I could be her. If I worked hard, I could be her one day. I made decisions to take classes with professors that were women of color. Took classes with people you think you can feel comfortable around and you're not gonna feel stupid just by their presence. I don't know if I would have been able to succeed had I been at a predominantly White institution. Having that experience was definitely powerful for me." (Juliette, 36, Latina)

In the same manner, Jada experienced the encouragement provided by a Latina teacher who believed in her ability to succeed. She supported her in her academic trajectory while in high school and reassured her of her academic abilities. Jada did not feel supported by the White staff members in her school setting and related this experience to systemic oppression. With the help of a Latina professional, Jada was able to continue to believe in herself and her capabilities.

> *"I knew I was going to have to work twice as hard. Um, I mean, already being a Latina you have to work twice as hard, well sometimes three times as hard. And it's even harder when you don't have people that believe in you. In my school, none of the White teachers even looked at me. And you know, for me it's deeper because like it's that systemic oppression, that because of where you are, and because of what you did, this is where you stay now. You could have gotten out but no, this is where you stay. But you know, all it takes is for one person to believe in you. There was this one Cuban teacher. She was the only one that was like, "You know Jada, you can do this! You are in advanced placement in your classes. She told me she believed in me and served as a major support for me while in high school. She would always tell me not to let anyone make me feel like I can't make it. And I remember thinking, "Yeah, she's right. I'm gonna make it. I'm gonna do this and I'm not gonna allow anyone to instill doubt in me."* (Jada, 32, Latina)

Rosario recalls being initially exposed to college life by her aunt, a Black college professor. She shared that, at times, her aunt would take her to the college campus and this was her first time being exposed to Black and Brown college students. However, it was not until she began applying to colleges outside of her city that she met an African American staff member at one of the colleges that she applied who served as an instrument to furthering her education and connecting her to resources that would aid in her transition into a college outside of her hometown. Her recollection is as follows:

> *"I'm a firm believer that people come into your life, and God intervened for me to meet this person. He was a Black, an African American male and I met him over the phone when I was calling to follow up on the status of my applications. He began asking me questions and asked if I had considered applying for the University of A and I said no because I didn't think I could get in. He invited me to a college tour and I went. It all happened so smoothly. I met the admissions counselor, and was asked to complete the*

application. And that's how it happened. But it was through him and this important connection to a man of color that believed in the abilities of a young Black student. He introduced me to other administrators, the office of financial aid and other important folks. He was definitely an instrumental piece and I am not sure what my academic trajectory would have been had I not ended up there. He was a God sent." (Rosario, 47, Black)

The data in this section illustrates the role and importance of mentors of the same racial background for the participants. When educational goals were not a priority, it was the exposure to mentors of the same racial, cultural or ethnic background that set in motion their motivation to explore academic options. The participants' narratives reveal that, for these women, having someone with whom they could identify with, either racially or culturally, made a significant impact on their educational attainment. The mentoring relationship served as an integral component in their ability and enthusiasm to remain on course towards their academic goals.

Social Supports

The role of social supports was crucial in the lives of these teenage mothers attempting to earn a college degree while simultaneously caring for a child. The social supports described by the following participants derived from involvement in college campus sororities, friends, and church members and for some, from the father of their child.

Jada described her experience with social supports in the form of a sisterhood with the sorority that she joined on campus. In her experience, she was able to engage with women that had children. This served to diminish the feelings of isolation that she felt on a frequent basis, as she had no one that she could relate to as a young parent. Through this form of social support, she found a network in which she felt accepted and understood. Being able to have women that lived a shared experience assisted Jada through her college years.

"Being a member of my sorority helped a lot. It really did. In the sorority I met women that were mothers too and like, we're gonna do this together and that's ok. It's ok to depend on others for that social support, because they understood the struggles that came with having kids and trying to earn the degree. So you didn't feel like this outsider or different because you had a baby." (Jada, 32, Latina)

Rebecca emphasized the importance of social supports for the teenage mother to aid in her educational attainment. She shared that her social supports came in many forms. The availability of these varied forms of social support assisted in making college degree attainment a possibility. Rebecca notes that social supports played an essential part in her educational attainment. With their help, she had time to study, take exams and prepare for classes. Without these social supports in place, her ability to attain her academic goals would have been a difficult task.

"Like I told you, from friends watching him, church members watching him, it took a lot of support from a lot of people. Just words of encouragement along the way. You just really have to have a great support system. I can tell you that anyone can't do this without the support and it doesn't have to be family. It can be a mentor, church members, anyone. I had people to call from all over. My grandma's friends. I knew I couldn't do it by myself. When you have a child and you don't know what to do, all you do is sit there and cry. So to just be able to have someone to say to you let me carry the baby and you go rest. That's a great help. May seem small, but it goes a long way."(Rebecca, 46, Black)

Juliette encountered forms of social support through the friends that she met on her college campus. Although support was available for her in the home, it was the social supports available in the community that connected her to a broader network of women. Through these connections, she was able to build a network that served as a significant form of social support. These networks provided the necessary resources for these young women to excel academically while handling parenting responsibilities. Learning to lean and depend on one another was a

valuable experience. As with other participants, meeting young women with a similar lived experience created a place of comfort for Juliette. With the available social supports, she was able to thrive in her academic setting. In addition to impacting her ability to attain her college degree, her involvement with this network of women awarded her with a new insight on life and the possibilities for her future. The exposure to these positive relationships served as a catalyst for change and provided her with a positive outlook on life. Eventually, Juliette was able to leave the relationship with the father of her children. The relationship was an emotionally and physically abusive one. Her involvement with these positive supports promoted an increased sense of self worth and provided her with a sense of togetherness.

> *"So I had, again, you know my mom and my best friend to—to help me with the babies. But when I needed, like, longer-term care, I would ask the women at the community college. They were very good at connecting us with resources and getting us extra study time, as they would call it, so I would say between the people at the college and my mom and my best friend that they were very helpful in helping…and then also, like I said, the network that the women had created for the parents in college, they would encourage us to swap clothes with each other, to swap babysitting hours, so they kind of showed us how to…create a network, so I don't think a lot of us knew how to be dependent on other people, right? So they were instrumental in helping us realize, like, okay here you are, with these issues and barriers you face; guess what? There are other persons, too, so if you two come together and you share resources, you're that much stronger as a unit, and so that became pivotal for us, too."* (Juliette, 36, Latina)

Roxanne explains that she found strong connections and social supports in her church. Roxanne's family supports were limited and community resources were unavailable to her. For many years, Roxanne's relationship involved domestic violence and she endured mental, emotional and physical abuse. It was through involvement in her local church where she received the necessary supports that aided her and her husband in addressing the multiple issues in their relationship. Friendships were established with other church members and these relationships aided her in considering college enrollment.

"A good source of support and motivation for my husband and I was the church. We started going to church counseling and for us it was better than regular counseling because of the spiritual piece. But anyway, in the church we met a couple and they were like mirrors for us. They had jobs in human services and it was through them that I began to consider a degree in human services." (Roxanne, 33, Latina)

Pamela's involvement in the United States military provided her with an opportunity to build her social network. The friendships formed as a result provided support and assistance when needed.

"I think for me, the supports-it was any kinds of friendships that I formed when I was in the military. And we would barter or trade things off each other. For me, if I wanted to take a class they would help with babysitting and I would help them if they wanted to pick up an extra shift." (Pamela, 48, Black)

The availability of social supports from coworkers was especially useful for Sarah. She shared her experience as follows:

"For me, it was coworkers at work. Some of them had babies at the time so they told me what to expect. Some provided emotional support and encouraged me to stay on track academically. They provided me with clothes for the baby, referrals to doctors that they knew were good, medication for morning sickness. Anything they thought would help me continue what I was doing." (Sarah, 36, Black)

Of the 15 participants, five found social support from the father of the child. These young fathers temporarily stopped pursuing their own academic goals and went on to obtain full time employment or multiple jobs to allow the young mother to focus on her education. Pausing their own plans for educational attainment allowed for the young women to focus on attaining an education without having to place a major emphasis on the financial challenges associated with teenage pregnancy. The following excerpts illustrate the ways in which the young fathers provided support:

"He ended up leaving high school. He went on to work full time to support our little family. Eventually he went back for his GED but for a long time he worked a lot. This helped me to focus on my schooling a little more." (Jada, 32, Latina)

"My husband played mister mom. He gave me full rope to do what I needed to do, school and work and he took care of everything in the home. It was his intention to go to school. But with the pregnancy and me taking night classes, he stayed with the baby." (Sarah, 36, Black).

The availability of social supports was deemed crucial for the above participants. With a network of social supports, these women were able to continue their education and attain a college degree. Having social supports in place made it possible for these young mothers to focus on their goals directed towards educational attainment.

Family Influence and Support

The significance of family influence and support for the teenage mother was a recurring sub-theme in the data. Of the 15 participants, 11 named family support as a resource that enabled their ability to pursue academic goals related to college degree attainment. Nine of the participants came from families where there was an intergenerational pattern of teenage pregnancy and low educational attainment as a result. This particular factor served to influence the participants in a positive way as it motivated them to work towards having a different outcome than that of their mothers and grandmothers.

Diane attributes her success to the supports she had in place, more specifically the support from her family. In the following excerpt, she shared her opinion on the importance of education and the ways in which her mother aided the ability for her to have a college experience. Although she eventually transferred to community school in order to be close to the baby, the family support provided allowed her to have a college campus experience for a short while.

"My best asset was I was good at school and I knew that education was the path for a better life for all of us. I was set up for going to places like MIT and PITT and I looked at going to community colleges. I was going to start there. But my mother as brilliant as she is, she wanted me to go away to college, she wanted me to have that college experience. She wanted to stay with the baby so that I could go away. So the first year I would come down twice a month to see her." (Diane, 44, Black)

For Catherine, the availability of family support as a resource allowed her to go to college away from home. Catherine's parents were available to offer childcare during the week while she attended college in another city, hours away from home. Although the college provided on site room and board, she would not qualify because she had a child. This was not the originally intended plan for her and her baby. However, the family support offered provided her with this opportunity.

"So when I went to orientation, and my father came with me, the first time I went was the first time that I had been on campus. And I picked that school because they are highly known for their early education program. So they have an onsite day care center. That's the reason why I picked the school. But the surrounding area at the time wasn't the best. And I couldn't live on campus housing cause I had a child and then the housing surrounding the campus didn't fit my budget. So my father was like "this isn't going to work." So the agreement was that my son stayed with my family and I went to school. My school was three hours away from my parents house. The arrangement was that I had four years to finish school and they would watch him. So Monday through Thursday I had my classes and I had two jobs and then Friday morning I would come home and stay with him on the weekend and that's how it was for the four years. And in the summer I took classes close to home so I was able to finish everything in four years." (Catherine, 35, Latina)

In her narrative, Jada describes being influenced by her parent's lack of education to further her own. Her parents were immigrants from the Dominican Republic and struggled economically. While there was a value placed on education, her parents did not have the necessary skills or knowledge to help her further her aspirations. Her older sister had become a teenage mother two years before Jada and did not pursue an education after the pregnancy. These two factors influenced Jada's decision to go to college. Despite the teenage pregnancy, she

wanted to be able to attain a college degree as it would facilitate a better future for her and her son. Their support made this goal possible.

> *"I mean, I had to go to school. My parents weren't college educated. And they struggled. And I didn't want that for myself. And I didn't want to struggle. And you know, my sister was also a teenage mother two years before me and she worked odd jobs. I didn't want that either. My family came together to help me. My boyfriend's grandmother lived in Boston, she would come down to help when needed. She would stay for weeks if we had an issue. There were times my cousins came to help. We have a big family. And when things didn't work out with my son's father, I was allowed to come live back home. And with this help not only did it help with going to school but I was also able to build on my professional network."* (Jada, 32, Latina)

For Isabel, the family influence and support described came from immediate and extended family members. In her narrative, she explained that the expectations of her were high since she would be the first one to obtain a high school diploma and subsequently a college degree. Educational attainment was encouraged within the family, and although there were initial reactions of disappointment, many family members aided Isabel in caring for her son. The availability of support from the family aided in eliminating the stress associated with locating child care.

> *"You know, at first they were upset because I was going to be the first one to graduate from high school and college. They had high expectations of me and my mother always talked to me about getting my education because she was not able to. Things are different in the Dominican Republic so she came here so that her children can have a better life. Anyway, when the baby came, everyone came together. My grandmother even got a visa to be able to come to the States and help the family out. I never had to worry about childcare or anything like that. And that was because of the help from my family.*" (Isabel, 28, Latina)

Rosario names her mother as her primary source of family support. At 13 years of age, her mother was involved in most of the decision making around her schooling. Her recollection of her academic trajectory and the support received from her mother from high school into college is as follows:

"So my mother went up to the school and they had a conversation about a school for teen girls in Bridge City and they told her I could go there and continue my school and that if she wanted to send me back to the school after I was done there that I could. So that's how we managed that. I continued in the same trajectory, I graduated at 16 because I had been skipped in grade school so yeah. I didn't miss a beat. My mother was always there but don't get me wrong, she held me responsible. She taught me how to handle my business. She taught me how to go and apply for day care. She taught me to do all those things. And even when I transferred to the University of A, she went into supreme administrator mode and she found out that one of the people that had lived in my neighborhood lived up there and she was putting me in touch with her so that I can find out about the area and all that." (Rosario, 47, Black)

Iris shared that all of her siblings had gone to college and this served as a positive family influence in her own academic trajectory. The necessary forms of family support were available to her as follows:

"My mother was a teenage mother herself and I just kept thinking like I have to finish school. All of my siblings before me had gone to college so the root was already there. My sister would help me out. She knew what it was like to write papers and everything so academically she was a huge support. I come from a huge family so I had tons of family so there was all of that. And since I lived at home, anything I needed with childcare or an emergency with the baby, my mother was there. The family was definitely one of the factors that helped." (Iris, 29, Black)

Rebecca attributes her ability to have been able to continue her schooling to her family.

"With the help of my family, in spite of my mother saying what she would do if I got pregnant, when it all came down to it, she was right there. She didn't babysit for me to go out, but when it came down for me to be able to go to work she was right there. She taught me old wives tales, mother things, my brothers were there for me to go to work, my grandfather was also there for me to go to work. So if it wasn't for them I don't know what I would have done." (Rebecca, 46, Black)

Juliette recalls that it was her mother who served as her main influence to attain her college degree. She was the primary source of family support. Juliette's relationship with the father of her daughter was violent and tumultuous. Her mother offered her housing and help with childcare. This form of support was crucial for Juliette as the relationship with the father of her children was negatively impacting different facets of her life, particularly her ability to attend

college. With the availability of this form of support, she was able to eventually move to her mother's home, go back to school and gradually exit the relationship.

> *"I would very much say my mom became pivotal in helping me get back to school. I think…she was busy with her life, but she really started to try to push me and encourage me to go back to the community college full-time, so she told me, like, "You can come home, and we'll turn the living room into a bedroom for you and the kids, and you can go to school and, you know, just get yourself a little part-time job to help with what you need for the kids, and…and so if I hadn't had her, there's no way that I would have been able to go back to school*." (Juliette, 36, Latina)

The data in this segment highlights the way in which family influence and support contributed to the educational attainment of the above participants. The availability and consistency of family support for the participants was an integral component towards the attainment of post secondary education in the form of college degrees.

Financial Resources

For the participants of this research study, financial resources came in varied forms. All 15 participants reported access to several types of financial resources. The availability of these resources came in the form of government assistance programs such as Medicaid, WIC and cash assistance, wages from full time and part time employment and financial aid grants and student loans. The availability of financial resources through government programs varied based on the period in which they were seeking governmental assistance.

The data demonstrates the manner in which access to government programs served as a resource for some of the participants.

Rosario became a teenage parent in 1984. In her recollection of the governmental assistance available to her, she notes that the time period in which she was receiving these benefits made a difference in the amount of financial resources available to her. The availability

of economic and financial resources facilitated her ability to adequately provide for her child while living away from home. If this resource was not available for her during that time of transition, there is the likelihood that she would have not been able to focus on academic goals.

> *"When I lived in the city I was receiving public assistance. I was never embarrassed to do so and I always knew to go to those offices for help. When I moved to another city, I also registered for public assistance, and this was pre-welfare reform so it was generous."* (Rosario, 47, Black)

On the other hand, Chantel, who became a parent post welfare reform, did not qualify for cash assistance. Aid was available to her in the form of Medicaid and WIC benefits. Chantel worked multiple jobs and was consistently enduring high levels of stress as a result. She noted that if she would have been eligible for cash assistance, the financial stress she faced could have been diminished.

> *"I wasn't able to qualify for financial assistance from welfare because I worked and my income disqualified me. But I was able to get Medicaid for me and my daughter and WIC for her. This was important because the income I was making was not a lot, even though I worked two jobs and I would always be stressed. Every little bit helped."* (Chantel, 31, Latina)

The availability of financial resources through full time or part time employment for several participants was an important factor. Several of the participants worked full time and part time jobs while managing parenting responsibilities and going to school. This was an important financial resource.

> *"Early on in my journey, I got a job as a secretary while attending the community college. I then joined the Air Force, which provided more financial stability."* (Pamela, 48, Black)

> *"When I was in high school I worked in a lawyer's office. After the baby came they told me they no longer needed me but I already had a job at the bank. I worked there full time*

and the nursing home on the weekend part time. I was working a lot while going to school." (Jada, 32, Latina)

The following excerpt demonstrate the ways in which one of the participants capitalized

on the opportunity of available financial aid funds and loans available to them as students to ease

the financial burden.

> *"Financially, I had to plan ahead. I would use the financial aid refund checks that we used to get at the end of the semester. In the summer, we wouldn't get refund checks so I would always hold the last check to use it in the summer. I had to be smart about how I was doing things. Those refund checks always got me through the semester.*" (Jada, 32, Latina)

> *"Even though I worked, I also used student loans and educational grants to help with the expenses of being a single, teenage mother."* (Catherine, 35, Latina)

Carol obtained financial assistance towards her education from her father.

> *"At first, financially it was really hard because my financial aid was nonexistent and my dad actually paid my whole semester because I got no aid. That was helpful because I was stressed out."* (Carol, 29, Black)

Lastly, Diane explains that she utilized all available financial resources that would aid her

in furthering her education.

> *"I decided to use public assistance. I knew that it was there and I knew that it would only be temporary. Because I was a single mom I didn't want to go to school full time and work full time because then what time would I spend with my daughter. So I went to school full time, worked part time and took public assistance. And I also always maxed out my loans every year so that I could pay my rent for the semester and bought her clothes for that season. I just planned it out that way."* (Diane, 44, Black)

The availability of varied forms of financial resources for the teenage mother was a vital

and necessary component for her to continue her academic path towards college degree

attainment. Without these multiple forms of financial support to these young mothers, financial

hardships and obstacles may have interfered with their ability to pursue academic goals. An

emphasis on attaining employment to meet the financial demands associated with parenting a child may have halted their academic aspirations.

Community Resources

Access to community resources played a unique role in the lives of some of the participants. These community resources were available in the form of support provided by a domestic violence shelter, a neighborhood child literacy program and involvement in Americorps. Three of the participants noted the use of these resources and how they served as a vehicle towards academic achievement in the form of a college degree. The availability of resources in the community served to connect the teenage mother to a broader network of resources and support. As with other resources available for the participants, those resources available in the community played an important role in facilitating academic achievement. The following are excerpts from the data provided by the participants related to the use of community resources:

> *"The DV (domestic violence) shelter was very helpful. They had a little backroom that was kind of like a little thrift store, so you could like go swap clothes for your kids, and they also had a pantry where you could get food. So the domestic violence shelter was pivotal or maybe it's because they had so many different resources and connected us with community resources."* (Juliette, 36, Latina)

> *"The child literacy program at my child's school program served as a major community resource. They connected us to other programs, like GED classes and continued education programs. In this program, I learned about the importance of education not only for my kids, but for me too. Just being in that program and learning along with my kid. They offered tutoring for college students and I took advantage of that. The math tutor worked really hard with me because I needed it. But I would have never known of all these resources for us if I was not involved in these community programs".* (Roxanne, 33, Latina)

> *"Through my involvement in Americorps I began to take a good look at the importance of education. Working in an elementary school through the Americorps program, it was a*

change in culture. This is when I realized that education was going to be my only way out. Because the women that worked here were so big on education, they allowed me to switch my schedule when I started school. It was a lot but this was a real good resource to have. They understood and were flexible."(Angela, 45, Black)

The use of available community resources enabled these teenage mothers to push forward with parenting and attaining college degrees. These community resources, although not specific to teenage mothers, were valuable and connected the participants to necessary resources, either directly or indirectly. Being able to establish connections within these community organizations and programs allowed for the teenage mother to gain exposure to the importance of education, not only for them, but also for their children. The connection to additional community resources, learning the skills necessary to help their children in their own academic paths and being exposed to a shift in perspective regarding educational attainment were all made possible through the utilization of resources in their community.

Educational Supports

Of the available resources, the educational supports in place for the young mother were vital in their ability to further their education. This sub-theme surfaced in eight of the 15 interviews. Two of the participants went to a high school for pregnant and parenting teenagers, with resources available in the school setting. This facilitated their ability to stay in school while being pregnant.

Rosario, who was 13 at the time of her pregnancy, was attending a Catholic high school and would not be allowed to remain in the school while pregnant. She would be allowed to return once the baby was born. For the nine months of her pregnancy, she was transferred to a high

school for pregnant teens. The availability of this educational resource allowed her to remain on

her *academic path.*

> *"So I had her in the summer between freshman and sophomore year so when the school found out I had to leave school for that spring, from January until June. So I had to leave that Spring semester before I had her. So my mother went up to the school and they had a conversation about a school for teen girls and they told her I could go there and continue my school and that if she wanted to send me back to the school after I was done there that I could. So that's what we did. I continued in the same trajectory, I graduated at 16 because I had been skipped in grade school so yeah. I didn't miss a beat. The great part of this alternative program is that you kept up with your coursework but they also had parenting programs. It was a good experience and it helped a lot, it helped me stay on track and not miss anything because of the pregnancy."* (Rosario, 47, Black)

Maria shared that she also went to a school for pregnant teenagers and informed that this

program was instrumental in staying on track academically. In this program, all of the child's

needs were covered. There was childcare available as well as medical care if necessary.

Transportation to and from school was provided, which lessened the burden for her and her

family. The necessary supports were in place to assist the teenage mother with finishing high

school and focusing on academic goals, despite the teenage pregnancy.

> *"I left the school that I was going to and went to a school for pregnant teens. Once I told my sister she enrolled me in a school for teen mothers and pregnant teens so they provided all the resources there so it eliminated the shame because we were all in the same situation. I didn't have to go outside to get prenatal care because everything was all there under one roof. It was a supportive environment. The teachers were rooting for us, they helped us with college applications, they allowed us maternity leave. It was supportive. The administrators they were accommodating. Never once did I feel that I made the wrong decision. They had the child care facility there as well. I didn't miss a step. But it was different in the sense of ok, now I have to take care of someone and myself while going to school. But it never deterred my goal of graduation. I still graduated on time."* (Maria, 33, Black)

A number of years later, she was able to receive childcare on campus. This available

support had a positive impact on her ability to remain in school. The availability of childcare on

campus proved to be of high importance and a valuable educational support. For those

participants that did not have this form of educational support, the lack of childcare served as an obstacle and roadblock to focusing on academic and career goals. For Maria, however, this was not a factor to consider.

> *"They had childcare at the college so I was able to get childcare there and there were open until 10 so I was able to drop him off and do what I needed to do. That eliminated the burden of having to wonder about childcare. That would have been a lot to have to worry about."* (Maria, 33, Black)

In her narrative, Juliette shared her experience with educational supports while in college. Workshops for single mothers created a network of support for them. This facilitated the opportunity for women to meet and share their lived experiences as young mothers on a college campus. It served to lessen the feelings of isolation that exists for some teenage mother. During the earlier stages of her college experience, Juliette's relationship continued to experience difficulty. The evening before a final exam, she was involved in an altercation with the father of her children, which resulted in a black eye for Juliette. As a result of her positive experiences with her professors, she felt comfortable in sharing this personal story. Her ability to do so had a significant impact and aided her college degree attainment.

> *"They would have every other Friday a mandatory workshop to attend, but they were very strategic in putting us in a room together every Friday, so we ended up meeting other women who were in a same situation, so that would be one system. Then there was another source of support where they would get us all together and have us fundraise. We would go on fun field trips with our kids, and so it was kind of creating an environment where you didn't feel isolated or you didn't feel like that nontraditional student that had kids, but everyone else was young and enjoying their lives and didn't have any responsibility. They were very strategic in making sure there were spaces on campus where people with kids could connect. Another thing was taking classes with professors of color. My earlier mentors had shown me how to write emails and advocate for myself. I'll never forget this experience with a professor. I had done everything in that class. I had an easy pass, but the night before my final, I got my butt kicked and I had two black eyes. I didn't want to go to class, and I called my school mentor and she said, "Let's go talk to her." So she walked me over to the class, and we were standing outside of the*

class, and she said, "Don't worry about it. I want you to come back in a week when you feel better, and you can take it then. I was not going to fail that class I worked my butt off in that class and it was those kinds of professors that understood which helped a lot." (Juliette, 36, Latina)

Pamela, who attended college while in the United States Air Force, shared the ways in which she took advantage of the educational benefits available to her as a young parent.

"With having a child I was thinking of having a job that would pay me but also thinking of staying in school. (pause). Once I joined the Air Force that become a viable option, being able to go to school for free. I was the smartest in my class in the Air Force. It dawned on me that I was really smart. When I got to tech school I got to my base and would provide recommendations of improving the process. They loved me and I finished up my undergraduate degree in the Air Force. Along with two associates degrees. I came to realize that the more you educate yourself the better the opportunities." (Pamela, 48, Black)

Rebecca found that college professors were understanding of her situation as a young mother and as a result, allowed her to bring him to class with her.

"Mostly all my teachers were understanding. He used to come to class with me sometimes and they wouldn't have a problem with it. And thank god for a great baby because he was well behaved. No one ever said no. the professors were good with that. Even taking him to the library was ok." (Rebecca, 46, Black)

As part of their experience, both Iris and Chantel shared the way in which their academic advisors were of support during their time in college by providing them with options that would shorten their time in college. Their recollection of this form of educational support is as follows:

"I wanted to be a nurse, I was a nursing major. I struggled through the pregnancy with the classes and so I changed majors to psychology during the pregnancy. I knew I could get done quicker with psychology. With nursing I would have to do an extra year and with a baby that was going to be very difficult. I don't want to be in school her whole life. We went through a list of majors. I thought about education, I went an interviewed but their policy was similar to nursing and I would have to stay longer. I spoke to my advisors in school and they told me that if I switched majors I could probably finish on time. The EOF advisor helped me with the transition to changing majors and helping me finish sooner than I would have had I stayed with nursing as a major." (Iris, 29, Black)

"When I started college, at that time, I was into nursing, so I wanted to become a nurse. But then as the coursework started getting difficult and with all these responsibilities I had to go down a less difficult route. I met with the EOF(Educational Opportunity Fund) advisor and talked about changing majors because becoming a nurse would take longer and I needed to be done with school because it was too much responsibility. So I decided on community health. Um, so yeah that was pretty much. And then after that I went from nursing to getting bachelors in health science." (Chantel, 31, Latina)

The above excerpts from the data illustrate the importance of educational supports for the teenage mother. The availability of these sources of support, both in the secondary and post secondary academic setting facilitated the educational pathways for the participants of this study.

Balancing Parenting Responsibilities and the Academic Pursuit

The promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment in the form of college degrees for the participants of this study impacted their lives in undeniable ways. The specific assets and resources available to these women proved to be beneficial in their academic trajectory. In spite of the promotive factors being in place to assist the young mothers, problem areas were identified.

The second theme that surfaced during the interviews was that of the balancing and managing of parenting responsibilities while being a teenage parent and going to school. Although the necessary assets and resources were in place assist these young mothers, their paths were sometimes complicated. Two major sub-themes emerged as part of the data analysis.

A number of the participants shared that their dating lives took on a new meaning. They were now faced with making decisions surrounding their dating lives, thinking about their children. Keeping the two identities separate was a new balancing act for the teenage mother. In addition, friendships sometimes came to a halt and some of the participants were no longer able to continue to participate in activities due to the new responsibilities associated with becoming a

parent. For some, going to study groups in school was impossible due to the responsibilities that having a child while in college entailed. A number of participants shared feeling overwhelmed and tired and, as a result, settled for average grades to attain the credits to pass their classes.

Participants shared that due to the overwhelming responsibilities related to employment and going to school, they were unable to be fully involved or engaged in the emotional lives of their children. While essential needs such as childcare, providing a stable and secure home for their child and educational needs were being met, a number of the participants shared that they were not present for important milestones such as the child's first steps, first words and other important events.

Balance of life as woman and mother

The balance of life as a woman and as a mother was a second sub-theme that emerged as part of the data analysis. This sub-theme was associated with the balancing of parenting responsibilities and their academic pursuits. Several areas in their personal lives were impacted by the demands associated with life as a women and pursuing a college degree. These included decisions around dating, loss of friendships and recreational time and an inability to participate in study groups with peers in school.

For Rosario, decisions related to dating and romantic relationships while she was in school were of importance. The decision making process around different matters related to dating was stressful for her. Although teenage pregnancy was considered part of the community norm in her neighborhood, it still carried the implication that the teenage mother was promiscuous, "fast" and "easy." As a result, Rosario experienced the feeling of being ostracized by the mother of a young man she was involved with. She had strong feelings that this was a

result of her having a child. In addition, she was highly concerned of what people would think of her or of the intentions of the young men she met. Consequently, she navigated the dating world with much precaution. Certainly, this is an important factor to consider when attempting to understand the ways in which teenage mothers manage these challenges in their early dating experiences as teenage mothers.

> *"I think a big challenge has always been the dating and relationships. When you get to introduce your child to the partner and not want to put a lot of men in front of your child, not want the to get close and not knowing where the relationship is going and not knowing what people think of you when you have a child and not knowing if they are looking for a quick hookup. So it made me be the kind of woman that put sex off in relationships for as long as possible. And that was definitely a maturation process because it took a few years to find my voice. We've spoken about a lot but I think that's an important piece to add. Relationships have another layer to them when you are a teenage parent and that's important for others to know. I don't think that it is something that is thought of but can definitely have an impact on the teenage mother, especially when she is trying to go to college and attain a degree. It can be an added stress and can hinder her progress."* (Rosario, 47, Black)

Jada shared that making decisions about dating always involved thinking of her child and her academic future. For some time after she and the father of her child ended their relationship, Jada refrained from allowing herself to become emotionally involved with anyone as she feared that it would interfere with her educational attainment. Making decisions around who to allow around herself and her son became a priority. Like Rosario, Jada exercised discretion in her decisions to date while managing parenting responsibilities and attaining a college degree.

> *"I protected him, and I was protecting me as well. Not taking chances with anyone, because didn't wanna fail. And once you let those distractions in, you can lose focus. And I couldn't let that happen. And then finding someone that can balance that and not keeping everyone at arm's length, because oh, you're not good enough to meet my kid. What if it doesn't work out, then what am I going to tell him. I just couldn't let all of that interfere with my academic goals. It's just different when you have a child."* (Jada, 32, Latina)

The following participants described a loss of friendships and recreational activities that resulted from the need to attend to parenting responsibilities and academic duties. For teenagers, peer involvement and recreational activities are central to this stage of development. However, for the teenage mother, responsibilities related to parenting and child-rearing took precedence over being able to spend time with friends and being engage in pleasurable, fun activities. Adjusting to these changes was difficult for the young mother. The participants experienced feelings of sadness and isolation as a result of the loss of friendships. The loss of friendships and popularity due to the teenage pregnancy was challenging.

"It was very hard, not being able to do the things that my friends are doing, experiencing life, um, you know, having fun, like doing things I couldn't do It was hard. When I look back at it, it did hurt a little. I was very popular; it was tough losing that for a while." (Roxanne, 33, Latina)

"You know, looking at my friends and not being able to do the things they were doing. Junior prom, I wasn't gonna be able to do that. I was in the dance troop, and they are like practicing and I'm just thinking," Yeah I'm gonna be huge at the end of the year, I'm not gonna be able to do that." So I already knew in my head that I was planning for the pregnancy, but I felt like my friends were doing their own thing so I felt like that was depressing." (Jada, 32, Latina)

Participating in study groups with friends and classmates was not possible for a number of the women interviewed. While being able to spend time outside of the classroom preparing for exams and studying, the responsibilities of parenting made it difficult to engage in additional study time. The time constraints and juggling multiple responsibilities at once made this impossible for the young mother. In addition, the time necessary to prepare and submit quality academic work was impacted by the lack of time to do so. While child care was available for

these participants, the hours provided for childcare were limited to school or work hours. The

following participants shared their challenges in this area:

> *"Like study groups, support groups for study, go to the library, you can't really do that when you have a kid. And you find yourself studying alone. I went through that when I was doing my MBA. So it was like I would work, come home, help him with his homework and then do my own. Everything about him came first and then me. I couldn't go to study groups because I couldn't go to coffee shops because I didn't have the time".* (Catherine, 35, Latina)

> *"When I finished high school and started by taking one college class or two at a time. I didn't have the resources or the time. I didn't have the time to go to the library or go to a study group, or go to the study center and drink an iced coffee trying to get my work one. I didn't have the ability to go to the library to turn in a quality paper because of the time constraints. It was just a lot."* (Pamela, 48, Black)

Lastly, several participants shared that before the pregnancy and parenting

responsibilities, they were students who excelled academically. Going to college as a young

mother with parenting responsibilities resulted in a change in their academic performance. These

women shared that they settled for average grades in order to pass the classes required to attain

their college degrees. Passing the class to attain the course credit became the priority. The

transition from being a high school student to that of a college student can be a challenging

period for some teenagers. Adjusting to the demands of college coursework proved to be difficult

for these teenage mothers that were managing and balancing several responsibilities

simultaneously.

> *"When I was in high school, I was on the National Honor Society and I was always very smart. While I was there, having the baby did not interfere with my grades. But then in college, it changed. It was a different kind of challenge with college courses and getting used to all of that. I wasn't working as hard because I didn't have the energy. I would get a C or a B in my classes and I would be satisfied with it. I was tired. Being in college with a baby was difficult, that transition and the responsibilities was a lot."* (Isabel, 28, Latina)

> *"Time to study was very hard for me. I rolled with it and my grades suffered. I didn't*

know what to do because I was doing it alone. I went from being on this incredible academic track, the top of my class, in an advanced placement program, and here I was having low grades in college. That was hard for me to accept and a big adjustment."
 (Diane, 44, Black)

The data in this segment illustrates the many areas in which the teenage mother struggled with balancing and attending to her parenting responsibilities while in search of academic possibilities. The adjustment to the different areas of their lives was challenging and, for many, tiresome.

Limited involvement in child's emotional life due to parenting responsibility

As a result of attending to their child's basic needs, four of the participants of this study shared missing out on significant events in their children's lives. They expressed feelings of guilt as they reflect back on their journey. Often times, these feelings followed them into their adult lives. The following excerpts detail the many ways that these young mothers felt as a result of being unable to be fully present in the lives of their young children. Although they understood and valued the importance of going to school and attaining a college degree in order to better provide for her child in the future, the limited involvement in their day to day activities took an emotional toll on these participants.

> *"I felt a lot of guilt. I never saw him take his first steps, or hear him say his first words. I missed those milestones. My parents would send me   pictures, like guess what he did today. Its like I was a mom by title, but not by practice because I wasn't really with him(cries). I just felt that logically, I was doing the right things, like working hard and going to school in order to support him. But looking back, when you're older I should have gone to community college and not away. When he was younger he would always walk around with a picture of me. He always knew I was his mom. My mother would always correct him like I'm grandma, that's your mom. When I would come home on the weekends from school, we would sleep together, and then when I would leave he would sleep on those pillows. He knew I loved him".* (Catherine, 35, Latina)

> *"I think I suppressed a lot of my experiences while trying to manage being a parent and going to school. It is painful to think of because, I mean, like for example. My daughter is 12 and she will ask me questions about my pregnancy, or when she was little, and I can't remember anything because it was such a blur. I think I was running around so*

much and my schedule was crazy, constantly running around. I didn't have transportation so all the running around I had to do. Constantly being on the bus. Jumping from one place to the other. That was my pregnancy. Running from work to school, to work, home and I was always trying to be on top of things. I couldn't be there for her emotionally maybe the way I should have been. And I know I was doing the right thing, but I feel guilty about it you know (silence)." (Chantel, 31, Latina)

"The balance, it was difficult. I feel like I missed out on a lot of milestones and alot of events because I was in school, working, the whole family obligation, feel like I missed a lot on my kids growing up , I feel like I didn't hold up my end of the bargain in being a wife and doing some of the duties that I felt I needed to hold up for my husband because he played mister mom while I went ahead and got the education. I missed out on family events. It was a lot that I gave up to pursue my goals. And you know, there is some guilt associated with that. I went to school back to back. From Bachelors, to Masters to Doctorate."(Sarah, 36, Black)

"I gave up a lot as far as being there for her with undivided attention, I missed a lot of her. Life by being in school, between both degrees I've been in school most of her life. Although she respects it, I felt like I gave up a lot because I was preoccupied with school, so I think that now being a settled adult I feel like I could have been a better parent and tended to her emotional needs as well." (Iris, 29, Black)

The balancing of parenting and academic responsibilities impacted the participant's ability to be present in their child's emotional lives. Due to the heavy demands and challenges associated with being a teenage mother and student, these participants were not always present for important milestones and reported missing important events.

The information provided by the participants provides a glimpse into the myriad of circumstances faced by the teenage mother while balancing parenting responsibilities and her quest towards attaining a college degree. These participants found themselves managing different aspects of their lives while striving for educational attainment. They recognized the ways in which pursuing an education and managing parenting responsibilities affected their lives during their academic process. The data revealed the impact on their lives as women, their friendships, their participation in study groups and their grades.

<u>Challenges and Obstacles While Being a Teenage Mother and Going to School</u>

The assets and resources available to the participants of this study made it possible for them to attain a college degree. These promotive factors allowed for educational attainment despite the many challenges and difficulties that are associated with a teenage pregnancy. The following segment will focus on the final emerged theme that specifies the challenges and obstacles that were experienced by the women interviewed. Each participant had a unique and distinct experience to share. Throughout the interviews, it was apparent that the participants faced multiple demands and stumbling blocks along their trajectories as a student and a teenage mother. These consisted of lack of support from and a troubled relationship with the father of the child, a stark lack of support from the professionals that some of the participants came into contact with and the substantial stigma experienced by the teenage mother. In the midst of these challenges, the lack of mental health services, referrals or discussions related to treatment for these young mothers were neglected and presented as an additional challenge. The negative influences in the community and the unpreparedness towards the parenting responsibilities that resulted from an early pregnancy presented some of the participants with additional obstacles. Lastly, the data revealed educational barriers that in some instances hindered a smooth educational journey.

Lack of support and troubled relationship with father of child

Four of the participants shared that the relationship with the father of the child involved relationship violence in the form of physical abuse, aggression and mental/emotional abuse. As a result of these problems, the women shared that it presented as a major obstacle when making the attempt to focus on educational goals. Being involved in a tumultuous and emotionally taxing

relationship interfered with their ability to focus on their education with a clear mind. The following excerpts illustrate these shared experiences:

> *"My daughter's father and I did not have the best relationship. He was very controlling and manipulative. There were a lot of fights and arguing around my daughter. I couldn't do anything without asking him and that was part of the control. I couldn't even imagine going to school. He wasn't going to allow that. As the time went by, the abuse became less physical and more emotional. Eventually I found my way out and learned to use my voice and say what I wanted but it was a long time before that happened."* (Roxanne, 33, Latina)

> *"He was physically, emotionally, and financially abusive, so I didn't have a whole lot of wiggle room, and so it actually…I knew I wanted to go back to school, but it wasn't going to be something that would be permitted for me to do until, I think, the second time the cops came to the house. We were living in a one-bedroom, like, backhouse garage that was converted, and they told me, like, "If we get called back here again, you know now that there is a law that allows CPS to take the kids," and I didn't know that. I just--- at that point, I was in a very abusive relationship, so that's what I was focused on. I was focused on him, right? Keeping him. That was my focus at the time. Only later did I began to realize if this relationship doesn't work out, I'm gonna be out on my ass, I'm not gonna have any money, I'm not gonna have any foundation, I'm gonna be screwed. And that's how I started to think about prioritizing my education."* (Juliette, 36, Latina)

> *"I knew him less than two months when I got pregnant. We were on and off the entire pregnancy, we were violent, there was a lot of DV. I was young, just ghetto. Me and my sons father lived together for a year, there was DV, I was either gonna kill him or he was gonna kill me. It was a full year. It was just downhill, he was very, he was little boy, we both were broken. It wasn't until that relationship ended that I was able to really think about going back to school. It was too much going on for me to be able to focus on grades, papers and everything else. It really got in the way of me bettering myself."* (Angela, 45, Black)

Diane shared that the relationship with the father of her child was positive until she refused to marry him. Her decision to focus on an education and attaining a college degree resulted in the relationship coming to a halt. After this decision, the father of her child became unsupportive and unavailable, which resulted in some difficult experiences for her.

> *"He asked me to marry him. And I knew that if I married him at that point I would not finish school, I would never go back to school, I would end up in the projects and I was just didn't want that for my child. After I said no he started treating me really bad. He started saying the baby wasn't his, just ridiculous, he was mean and horrible and he*

stayed that way. He hardly paid child support, was hardly in her life. We weren't together after that. He was done. I told him that I would marry him after I graduated from college but he wasn't trying to hear that. And come to find out later on that he was saying that he hoped the baby would keep me from going to college. And you see, I wasn't going to let that happen. And I didn't." (Diane, 44, Black)

Catherine shared that she experienced a lack of support from her son's father and this resulted in her managing the responsibilities of parenting without his assistance.

"My son's father never supported him. Even to this date, even through the first few years he was never around. I would leave, cause I was at school, we ran into each other one time, he saw the baby and showed up everyday for like a week and then disappeared again. And then a couple of years later, the same thing. So he wasn't consistently inconsistent until maybe he was in first grade but that was more of a "I'll see him on the weekends" kind of situation. So that's was that but financially he has never contributed or helped in any other way. I knew that I would never count on him and I did everything on my own. I was 18 and having to manage being a young mother, having all these responsibilities on top of all the feelings that came with juggling all of this. It was a lot." (Catherine, 35, Latina)

As the data in this segment illustrates, the lack of support from the father of the child, in addition to troubled relationships with them, was a significant obstacle in the life of the teen mother. While some of the participants of this study named the father of their child as a valuable resource, others noted the relationships as an obstacle that was endured during the course of their lives as young mothers attempting to go to college and earn a college degree.

Lack of support by professionals

Women in this study described poor treatment by professional staff in different settings. Some reported poor treatment by social workers in agencies that were designed to provide support. A number of participants were often left confused after the experiences in these offices. They shared feeling as if they were being treated in a condescending manner and being looked down upon. Others experienced inferior treatment by nurses and doctors in community clinics that were specifically designed to provide treatment to this special population.

Pamela shared her experience related to her first encounter with a social worker at a welfare office as follows:

> *'I remember the first time I went to the welfare office and I remember the worker was so rude to me, she asked me how many people I slept with, she even asked me do I even know who the father is, and I'm sitting there being young 16, having to try to answer that, and for some reason I felt the energy, I didn't know it was energy then, but I kept thinking, "what did I do to her?" It's like she didn't like me. I was so humiliated with the questions she was asking me. And um, I just found myself crying so much."* (Pamela, 48, Black)

Rosario experienced a similar encounter at the community clinic.

> *"I remember going to a prenatal visit, going to the health clinic to get prenatal care, a free clinic and I remember one day a nurse or doctor checking me and I wasn't used to the exams , like you feel violated as it is so I was feeling very hesitant and afraid and I remember I never forgot this. The nurse, she said to me, "You weren't afraid to open your legs then, don't be afraid now." Now remember I was 13, and to be treated in this way, it was an instant disappointment. I never expected that. I was a kid. Why would they treat a young girl like this?" That was such a slap in the face, I felt so degraded and humiliated."*(Rosario, 47, Black)

Juliette recalls her experiences with the social service system; one that she felt was designed to provide services and support to those in need. Her experience was detailed as contradictory to her assumptions. Her contact with these professionals augmented her already existing challenges.

> *"I had to turn to social services in order to leave the abusive relationship that I was in. That office was, like, the worst, like…I don't understand, like, what kind of training and I know not all social workers are like that, but the amount of stress and bullying that happened in the social services office, it…it...if you don't have thick skin, it can really make you…push you toward decisions that are bad for you, because you don't want to deal with that. I mean, there were days that I didn't want to deal with it. I would rather go hungry than have to grovel at these women's feet. That was humiliating. The workers were horrible and made it feel as though I was reaching into their purses. They were very shady and I was in a very, at that point, fragile state. Mentally, emotionally, physically; like, I was just strained, but I had to do what I had to do."* (Juliette, 36, Latina)

The data illustrates the multiple ways in which lack of support by professional staff impacted the lives of the participants through their trajectories. Attempting to navigate adult systems without the support from the professionals who they expected would provide support was difficult for these participants. These negative encounters added an unnecessary layer of challenges for these young mothers.

Stigmatized as teen parent

The lack of support and negative encounters with professionals and other individuals came as a result of stigma. Numerous participants experienced the stigma associated with becoming a teen mother. Stigma was experienced in the church, in their communities, within the family and in the school setting. The feelings associated with feeling stigmatized were named as a major challenge to tackle while simultaneously attending to parenting responsibilities and earning an education.

Iris recalls feeling stigmatized once the church learned of her pregnancy. She and her family were active participants and she expressed feeling shamed and embarrassed.

> *"I remember the very first time I went to church and word was starting to get out that I was pregnant, I had like a normal seat that I used to go to and they asked me if I was going to sit in the normal seat and I said no. I'm usually not an emotional person but that day I just like broke out crying. There were all the stares and the whispers. And people making negative comments, like this is not something that you should be happy about, all these things. I grew up in the church so there was a lot of shame just because of the way I was raised; to have a child out of marriage was looked down on."* (Iris, 29, Black)

Pamela's experiences detail a feeling of stigmatization through her teenage years and into her adult life. She shared that she often talks about her successes and accomplishments to avoid feeling the stigma and instant stereotypes that are attached to teenage mothers. As a result, there is an attached component of shame and embarrassment related to the ways in which she coped with this challenge.

"I would be embarrassed saying that I had a child at 18. Because I was afraid people would judge me. Because that was what happened to me my whole life after that. Regardless of your education, regardless of any accolades. I remember being in the Air force and my daughter and they thought that was my little sister. And it was hard to have to explain. And it is uncomfortable, because people have these preconceived notions, they think your are lose, they think you are easy, and I remember dealing with a lot of that and always talking about my accomplishments first and then about my kids. And I had to apologize for that because I spent most of my days embarrassed being a teenage mother, not of her but of me. I remember I'd lead the conversation with my accomplishments first. I've never shared this with anyone and I hope it makes sense." (Pamela, 48, Black)

Isabel recalls being viewed differently by family members after her teenage pregnancy. She described having to prove herself and her worth as a young mother to avoid being labeled and stigmatized. In addition, some of her family relationships were temporarily impacted by the teenage pregnancy. The feelings associated with being labeled and stereotyped served as a challenge during the earlier years of parenting and being a college student.

"The pregnancy sparked a lot of conversations around extended family members. Some didn't want their daughters around me cause they thought that I was going to influence their decision to have sex or be involved in sex. It just sparked a lot of gossip, like how could she do that to her mother. I would always defend myself though, like this was my decision and my consequences to live with. And it's so funny because now they look to me for advice for their younger daughters. They look at me as a role model. But back then, not so much. That was hard because they talked a lot and never gave me credit for all that I was doing. Going to school while having a baby wasn't easy, but they never spoke about the good, only about the bad." (Isabel, 28, Latina)

Although being stigmatized did not interfere with their ability to obtain a college degree, it presented these participants with feelings and experiences that were challenging to navigate. The data in this segment illustrates the myriad of ways in which being stigmatized affected the participants through their parenting and academic journeys.

Lack of mental health treatment

Of the 15 participants, 13 experienced psychological distress as a result of a pregnancy in their adolescent years. Of these, only one received mental health counseling during her

adolescent years. The multiple stressors associated with becoming responsible for another person at a young age in addition to learning this new role were numerous. Their mental health was negatively impacted in several ways. A number of the women reported experiencing depressive and anxiety related symptoms, feelings of low self worth, an inability to express emotions, internalized negative feelings, negative coping strategies and passive suicidal ideation. Suppressed feelings and emotions were described by a few of the participants. These unaddressed feelings and emotions impacted their emotional lives into adulthood.

Pamela recalls feeling ashamed and crying daily. She experienced shame and humiliation from the family and teachers in school, which greatly affected her mental health. Her experience is as follows:

> *"My mental health was affected and I was more concerned with failing. I'll never forget when I went to school that fall and some of the teachers would tell me that I would never amount to anything. I had one teacher lean into my ear and tell me, "I knew you weren't shit." She used those words. I remember going to the bathroom and just sitting in the stall and crying my heart out. It affected my mental health and I think it does for a lot of us, it follows us into adulthood. These feelings of humiliation and embarrassment they still exist so it would be nice to work through them. And I recognize and cognizant that they exist. And I think that's important. I know that now but back then it was hard. My mental health was not recognized. My mother was angry with me, my father was as well. My sisters told me they were embarrassed of me. I had a sister that called me a statistic. I mean so yeah, it was very humiliating.*" (Pamela, 48, Black)

Diane shared that she was aware her mental health was being affected, however, she did not seek the support of mental health providers as she was unaware of any resources available to her.

> *"When I was away from the baby I was not feeling right. Once the baby came to live with me, that first year was good. But then I had this really horrible bout of depression. I also had post partum depression, I hid it well though. But then it happened again while in college and I wasn't sure if I should be there, I was even feeling like I should be hospitalized. So I would have to say that my emotional and psychological state was not in a good place. I ignored it and didn't want to deal with it. I spoke to my friend and she*

would help, but that was it. I didn't know of anything else to do or anyone to talk to." (Diane, 44, Black)

In her narrative, Iris expressed feelings of shame associated with becoming a teenage parent. These feelings affected her thoughts related to having a baby and becoming a mother at an early age.

"I was just dealing so much with the embarrassment and the shame and I was just like at that time I was travelling back home a lot to go to the doctors. So I was going back home a lot and it just felt like every time I went back home the reality was setting in. I'm really about to have this baby, I'm not married, I still need to finish school, it was overwhelming because there were so many things that I had to do. And I had to make sure that this baby was ok. I didn't feel connected to the baby during the pregnancy, I just wasn't happy. Especially towards the end. I remember just being ashamed, everything at home and then coming to school. I just think that it definitely triggered the response in me like I hope something happens to this baby so that I then don't become a teen parent and can continue with my life. I didn't know where to put these feelings, I internalized some of those feelings, they were just there. It never even dawned on me to get counseling, I just went through it." (Iris, 29, Black)

Catherine shared feelings of isolation and loneliness during the time of her pregnancy. She expressed being in denial and she coped with these feelings by suppressing them.

"I shut down. I went into denial and survival mode. I didn't want anyone to treat me differently at school. So at the time there was a pattern of administration that if they found out you were pregnant they would send you to an alternative school. It was my senior year. I was on honor roll and wasn't going to get kicked out to go to an alternative school. And I didn't want people to think that I wasn't going to go to college, that I was going to fail. So in my mind I was being like this doesn't exist. I was going to class every day. I was doing my exams; I was working, still doing my extracurricular activities like nothing. I was going to do finish school no matter what; I just wasn't talking about it. It was there but I didn't acknowledge it. I was in complete denial. My friends, a lot of people stopped talking to me. It was just a real lonely time, it was very lonely. My whole thing was to not think about it, I can't have feelings because feelings distract you, I have a job to do and I was going to do it. So I didn't really deal with any emotions. But they were there, very much present I just didn't have anyone to speak to, so I kept it to myself." (Catherine, 35, Latina)

In their narratives, Jada and Chantel share that the responsibilities of parenting as a young mother while pursuing academic goals forced them to put their emotional needs, and that of their children, aside in order to manage their life responsibilities. Important milestones in the lives of the their children were missed. Both acknowledge that having to tend to these responsibilities prevented them from effectively managing the feelings and emotions related to the drastic life change. In both of their narratives, they detail a lack of mental health resources available to assist them with these demands.

> *"You know, everything was always moving, and I got used to living life in that in that way. I feel like I am always going. But I had to. I had responsibilities and I had to finish school. I never allowed myself to feel these feelings. It was scary, it was depressing and lonely. I cried a lot. But I never spoke to anyone about these feelings because I felt no one would understand and like, how dare you have feelings, you did this to yourself. It was a lot. Doing so much for others, that you forget to do for yourself. But no one talks about that, not one really thinks about the teen's changes and how this is affecting her. These things can follow you into adulthood. But no one ever asked if I would like to talk to someone."* (Jada, 32, Latina)

> *"I was completely depressed. I felt like my life had gone down a rabbit hole. Like it spiraled downward. I was emotional wreck. Physically going through the changes but also emotionally. And just not dealing with that because I simply could not afford a break down. Things were hectic, I was always on the run. Trying to go to school, trying to go to work. It was a constant marathon for me at that time. I think I was running around so much and my schedule was crazy, constantly running around. The whole thing was like a big blur to me. Like I was so focused and in that marathon, like hustling kind of place I feel like I blocked a lot of it. When I look back at it, it's not a good memory. I don't even think that I have thought about it until now. Honestly, I think I didn't think about it because it was such an unpleasant time. I think I suppressed a lot of if because it was a painful time. And I went through that by myself, never spoke to anyone about my feelings and never even knew what a counselor or social worker could do for me. Looking back at that, I feel that could have helped me.*" (Chantel, 31, Latina)

The data in this segment illustrates the shared experiences among the participants related to the lack of mental health treatment for the teenage mother. Their mental health needs were

disregarded and not acknowledged by their families, professionals or school staff and minimal

emotional support was provided. As a result, their emotional and mental health needs during this

crucial time in their lives went unaddressed. The lack of mental health treatment for these young

mothers served as a challenge in addition to the aforementioned roadblocks and obstacles.

Negative influences in the community

Several participants experienced challenges and obstacles in the form of negative

influences in their communities in which they resided. As a result of growing up in poor

neighborhoods, the young mothers were not exposed to positive role models who could mirror

academic success. Teenage pregnancy was not uncommon in some of the inner city

neighborhoods and obtaining a college education following a teenage pregnancy was not part of

the community norms. In addition, a lack of positive resources within these communities created

further obstacles for the young mothers to navigate these difficult experiences.

Angela describes her experience as follows:

"The funny thing about getting pregnant is that it was normal. Living in that neighborhood, everyone was pregnant. I remember in high school this lady came to give us a talk about abstinence. I couldn't understand why she was talking to us about that when half of my friends were having abortions. Sex was normal to us. We were all having sex, we would brag about sex. So this lady was talking about not having sex. Abstinence was not even on our agenda. It was normal for us. We were already having sex and we weren't going to stop. I was raised in the ghetto, everyone around her had the same mindset that sex was normal at 13 at 14, it's like now that I think about it, it makes me sick to my stomach, but back then there was a sense of normalcy. Having a baby was just part of the community and just a normal thing. Like, if she had a baby when she was 14 so me being pregnant at 17 was not a huge deal. Like even my mother, in her mind, I don't think that it crossed her mind to think "ok, my daughter has scholarships lined up to go to college. "Just dysfunction all around. Going to school was not something that people did. I remember my high school graduation. I was on the stage crying because I knew I made a choice that I was going to have to deal with by myself for the rest of my life. Like I told you, my girlfriends thought they were getting married to these men. That

community culture was so crazy that they were used to girls getting pregnant in the 6th grade." (Angela, 45, Black)

In her recollection, Roxanne shares the lack of positive role models to model their behaviors after. Resources in the low income community in which she resided were unavailable. Social workers, who at times are able to connect teenage mothers to resources in the community, were not trusted. Negative community norms were reinforced, which led to a continuation of unfavorable patterns among the young women in these neighborhoods.

> *"Having a baby that young was not out of the ordinary in my neighborhood. You would always see little girls pushing carriages so for one more to have one wasn't a big deal. And you know, the community didn't offer any help because all you saw was drug dealers, prostitutes. Those were our role models. There was no help and even when you have positive plans for yourself, it's like, where do I even turn when all that is around me was negative. On top of that, social workers weren't welcomed in the community. So whenever we saw one, we associated it with being a child protection worker that was there to take a kid away. There was just nothing positive being put out there for mothers to get help. So sometimes you just begin to think to yourself like maybe this is just the way your life is, because anything outside of that seems like something you will never be able to do. Like going to college. That was not normal in our 'hood."*(Roxanne, 33, Latina)

The available data in this section revealed the manner in which the teenage mother's aspirations to attend school while caring for a young child was impacted by negative community influences and a lack of influential role models. The data illustrates the conflict that these young women faced while residing in neighborhoods where teenage pregnancy and parenting was the community norm and academic achievement was insignificant.

Unprepared for parenting responsibility

A sub-theme that emerged out of the data was the unpreparedness for parenting responsibility by the young mother. Fourteen of the 15 participants in this study did not plan their teenage pregnancy. As a result, their lives changed drastically. For the participant that planned the pregnancy, life was also impacted despite the pregnancy being planned and

welcomed by the teenage mother and her partner. Many of the participants expressed an uncertainty about their new role and their ability to fulfill it effectively.

Angela experienced a myriad of difficulties during her pregnancy and during the process of labor. She shared that parenting a child with developmental disabilities was an added stressor that no one ever considers, particularly at a young age.

"You have to understand that I had a child with a learning disability, I wasn't ready for that. The responsibility, I knew my life as a child was over. Being a teenage mother. Not only don't teenager mothers think about that, I didn't think about dying in childbirth or my baby, and what if your child isn't physically healthy or mentally healthy and you're a kid. That responsibility of raising my son, has to this day, because even though he's an adult he's still my son. So as a kid being told that your kid doesn't learn like everyone else, and I am a kid with a kid. That's something that teen moms need to be told, the what ifs. No one told me. I tell everyone about my story. They need to know the what ifs. They need to be prepared. No plans, nothing happens, no prevention, no talks about longevity, for later on in our lives. How can one think about going to school when I had all of this on my plate? I just wasn't ready for any of it. My life changed." (Angela, 45, Black)

Rebecca's narrative includes becoming aware that life would change for her. Some of her career goals were placed on hold due to becoming a teenage mother.

"Of course you think that your life is over, your dreams and hopes are over. Of course I did have to report to the military and of course they had to disqualify me because of the pregnancy. By the time I graduated from high school I was 8 months at the time. I couldn't go in so I was devastated by that. It was lot of life altering things happening at that time I was living with my grandparents, didn't have a baby shower, the baby didn't have his own room , most of the things I had were used. I had to work, just everything. Just totally changed my life and I was not prepared for the change and the added responsibility." (Rebecca, 46, Black)

Roxanne and the father of the child planned their teenage pregnancy. However, she described a lack of preparation for the ways in which her life was going to change. She shared that having a child for her meant having someone to love. However, the responsibilities of parenting a baby while being a teenage mother presented her with challenges that she was unprepared to manage. Financial constraints were an added pressure and these led to high levels

of stress. Roxanne shared that these circumstances led her to engage in drug use and prostitution, while continuing to manage the unforeseen parenting demands and responsibilities.

> *"I planned this pregnancy with him, believe it or not. At the age of sixteen because that's when we first got together. Um,I wanted to have a baby. God knows why (laughs). I don't know. I just wanted to have a baby, I wanted to have something to love, someone to love me. I was happy. I don't know, I had no way-my mind wasn't thinking about how I was going to take care of a baby. I don't know. It was just pure joy for me. We had a lot of problems and eventually we weren't together. He was just there financially. But it wasn't enough. So I ended up um, I was very depressed, still not being treated for that, um, at that point. So I ended up falling into, beginning to use drugs. Heavily. I used um, cocaine. That led into a whole other lifestyle. Um, its very hard for me to say this but its real. I ended up stripping, prostituting, I did what I had to do to survive and for my habit. I had to make sure my kids had everything I needed. I always made sure that my children had what they needed and what they wanted. Through all of that mess, they were always my main focus. I wasn't prepared for all that came with being a mother, especially being so young and with all the other problems. It was just a lot, it was embarrassing, but I just did not know any better. No one tells you how hard this is going to be and you're left to deal with it by yourself, not ready."* (Roxanne, 33, Latina)

The data in this section illustrates the lived experiences by the participants related to a lack of preparation for the responsibilities and demands of parenting. The lives of the participants were changed in different ways. Prioritizing education in the midst of these challenging situations presented as a difficult task.

Educational barriers

Among the numerous challenges and obstacles present in the lives of these teenage mothers, educational barriers were an added roadblock. Numerous challenges, including a lack of housing and childcare for young mothers, failure to advertise existing child care programs on campus and negative attitudes from staff members towards the teenage mother, presented the young mother with additional barriers to overcome. These barriers threatened to hinder the young mother's academic progress and at times, complicated their educational process. The

following are excerpts that illustrate the ways in which they were presented with educational

barriers while making the attempt to achieve academically:

> *"In college, especially with child care and trying to balance, teen parents are considered nontraditional students. Housing and childcare are challenges, things that people overlook, obviously the day care situation but then the childcare if you have a baby and you want to go to college you can't stay on campus so you have to live off campus and it becomes a problem."* (Catherine, 35, Latina)

> *"The high school I went to had a maternity clinic on campus, I did not utilize the clinic because I didn't trust anyone because they were so negative towards me and many of the pregnant teens. I would rather go deep into the hood and get my services there. The school clinic had a large population of pregnant teens, so what they basically did was ok so now you can enroll into the night program, now you can do your GED. They had these assumptions that since we are now going to be mothers we can't possibly want to finish high school. It was the assumption that we weren't gonna make it. I remember there was one lady, I was huge, I was so big, and I gained 53 lbs. I remember one time I got on the elevator, because the school allowed us if we were pregnant, and one teacher told me excuse me, this is for teachers. And I said to her yeah but you know that they make exceptions for pregnant students. And she was like, "I don't know where you got that from." With so much attitude. I'm in an elevator with a bunch of teachers and she was trying to play me and embarrass me. They were supposed to be supportive and encouraging, but they were the opposite. And then in college, I found out that they had a free day care on campus in the dorms. So there are institutions that have it, there just not talking about it. They are not. And even like that, who uses it? Faculty uses it, staff. But why aren't these services being promoted? It would really assist the young mother.* (Jada, Latina, 32)

> *"The teachers in the high school were so negative. There was one that told me I was a thug and I would always be a thug and that I wouldn't amount to sh*t. My spirits were low and I felt like I kept getting kicked, in the one place where you would think they would support you. And she was just like "typical, I knew you weren't gonna amount to s**t and you probably won't. Can you imagine the impact she would have made at that time had her words been inspiring and positive? But instead it was on the other end of the spectrum.*" (Pamela, 48, Black)

The data in this segment revealed the educational barriers that were experienced by a

number of the participants. These came in the form of unavailable child care on college campus,

a lack of resources in the academic setting to facilitate educational success and teachers that

provided little support to the young mother. These roadblocks presented the teenage mother with additional adversities to survive and overcome in the midst of their pursuit of a college degree.

This chapter provided for the reader verbatim quotes by the participants to convey their messages related to the promotive factors that facilitated their ability to attain a college degree while attending to parenting responsibilities, the balancing of these responsibilities and the challenges and obstacles associated with being a teenage mother and going to school.

Intrinsic qualities and characteristics that were innately part of the young mother's personality assisted her in pushing forward. Their strong academic inclination prior to becoming a teenage mother served as a valuable asset that contributed towards a positive academic trajectory. The desire to prove people that doubted their ability to succeed wrong, as well as the strong desire to steer away from becoming a perceived negative statistic propelled them into academic success were additional assets that aided in their ability to attain a college degree.

The resources available to these young mothers were also crucial to their success. Although the assets, those intrinsic qualities of the young mother, served as useful, it was the utilization of available resources that fostered their ability to go to college and attain undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The importance of mentors of the same racial or cultural background was a crucial component for these participants. As Black and Latina women, they experienced either perceived or direct stigmatization as a result of being a teenage mother of color. A number of the participants expressed that they did not feel that they would have achieved academic success had it not been for the mentoring received by professionals and staff members of ethnically diverse racial groups. While some of the participants lacked these supports and positive role models in

their families and communities, it was through their involvement with these mentors that they began to develop academic dreams and aspirations. These mentors were able to look past the label of "teenage mother" and motivated these young women to purse and achieve, regardless of this new life event. The relationships with these mentors of similar racial backgrounds also served to buffer against the lack of mental health treatment available to these young women. In these relationships, they were able to receive the support and guidance that they were in dire need of. These mentors served as motivators, positive reinforcers and validated the experiences of the teenage mother.

The availability of social supports was an important source of networking for these young mothers. Sororities on college campuses, support from church members and coworkers, involvement in the United States military and help from the father of the children benefitted the young mother on her path to educational attainment. In learning to balance the associated responsibilities of teenage parenting and the academic pursuit, these social supports played a major role in helping them overcome challenges and obstacles. Through the use of these social supports, they felt less isolated, formed a network of friends and women in similar situations and were able to learn to rely on others for help. The father of the child as a form of support was greatly beneficial for many of the participants. With this support in place, many of the participants worried less about childcare responsibilities and financial responsibilities as the father of the child offered support in this area. Many of the fathers sacrificed their academic futures to allow for the teenage mother to pursue her education. This facilitated the ability to attain undergraduate and graduate degrees for many.

Family influence and support proved to be an additional and most crucial form of support for the teenage mother. With the availability of child care by the teens' parent and extended

family members, many of the participants were able to attend classes and work to support their children. In instances when a troubled relationship with the father of the child or being unprepared for parenting responsibilities presented as challenges, it was the family support that aided them in achieving educational goals. A number of the participants were able to exit relationships that were abusive as a result of having family supports in place.

Financial supports aided in contributing to the teenage mother's income. In the absence of financial resources, the teenage mother faced the risk of having to abandon her academic trajectory in order to obtain full time work to support her child. With the availability of cash assistance from government programs, WIC and Medicaid benefits and loans and tuition assistance programs in college, the young mother was able to better provide for her child. Although many of them worked full time and part time jobs, the supplemental forms of financial support assisted them in this area.

The community resources available to the participants of this study fostered their ability to overcome some of the presenting challenges, particularly for those women that came from communities where positive resources were limited. The presence of a domestic violence shelter in the community assisted several participants with building networks of woman, being connected to other resources and indirectly building these womens' self esteem, which would eventually influence their decisions to leave their abusive relationships. The involvement in these community programs also exposed these women to the importance of education as a vehicle out of their negative circumstances. For many of the participants, their desires to achieve academically were strengthened due to involvement in these programs.

Lastly, the educational supports in both the high school and college setting were a major contribution to the academic success and college degree attainment for these young mothers. For

those participants where there were supports in the school setting, the ability to obtain an education and attain a college degree was a positive experience. Two of the participants attended a school for teenage mothers. The involvement in these programs geared specifically towards the teenage mother allowed them the opportunity to stay on track academically. For a number of the participants, the educational opportunities offered in the United States Armed Forces awarded them with the opportunity to attend college at no cost while earning a steady income. This resource allowed for the teenage mother to focus on attaining an education, with less worry pertaining to financial related problems.

This chapter describes the balancing work and the overcoming of the many obstacles and challenges associated with the teenage pregnancies of the 15 participants of this study. The selected excerpts provided a glimpse into the complex and sometimes complicated life trajectories of these women. Their unique experiences provided a snapshot of the many ways in which they navigate and manage their lives as teenage mothers and students. The available assets and resources made possible the educational attainment of these young mothers from the time they became teenage mothers and into their adult lives. These promotive factors facilitated educational attainment in the form of undergraduate and graduate degrees for the teenage mother.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment among former Black and Latina teenage mothers. Additionally, the study sought to explore how these women were able to effectively manage parenting responsibilities and overcome the many challenges and obstacles that are associated with a teenage pregnancy while pursuing academic goals. Of young mothers who have children in their teenage years, only two percent go on to attain a college degree (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). Black and Latina teenagers have the highest percentages of teenage pregnancy rates compared to non-Hispanic white teens (Mollborn, 2017) and those rates are higher than other racial and ethnic groups (CDC, 2016). Given these outcomes, this study sought to explore the factors that made it possible for this segment of the teen mother population to attain college degrees after a teenage pregnancy. The narratives of the nine Black and six Latina women revealed unique circumstances. These very personal stories, which many of the participants had not shared until their participation in this research study, are filled struggle and challenge, but also with accomplishments despite difficult circumstances. The data illustrates common themes that provide insight and an understanding of their lived experiences as teenage mothers in pursuit of educational achievement. The interviews elicited accounts of their experiences on how they were able to attain academic success in the form of undergraduate and graduate degrees.

In conducting this qualitative research study, the themes that emerged from the participant interviews included 1) the assets and resources available to assist the participants in

their academic journeys, 2) the balancing of responsibilities of parenting and the academic

pursuit and 3) the challenges and obstacles while being a teenage mother and going to school.

Promotive Factors: Assets and Resources

This study found that there were several promotive factors that made it possible for them

to attain college degrees in the midst of juggling parenting responsibilities and overcoming the

many challenges and obstacles encountered along their paths.

The findings suggest that with the availability of assets and resources for the teenage

mother in place, regardless of the balancing of responsibilities and the challenges and

roadblocks, educational attainment is possible. The participants of this research study identified

several intrinsic factors, assets, which motivated them to complete a college degree. The external

factors, the available resources, enabled them to act upon their desires and motivation to enroll in

college and ultimately attain a college degree. For the participants that proceeded with graduate

education after the attainment of an undergraduate degree, it was these same identified assets and

resources that propelled them into continuing their academic endeavors.

The findings of this research study are consistent with previous research done on teenage

pregnancy and educational attainment, particularly the importance of available resources for the

teenage mother. In a seven-year follow-up investigation of women who were pregnant as

teenagers, Turner et al. (2000) identified that differences in social support and in personal

resources or attributes played a key factor in influencing the psychological condition or

adaptation of young mothers. Several personal attributes were identified as the assets that

assisted the participants of this study to attend college and attain college degrees. Many of the

women had strong academic inclinations before the pregnancy and they attributed their ability to

continue on the academic path regardless of the teenage pregnancy to this particular asset. Nearly all of the participants identified a strong determination to be more than a negative statistic and a desire to prove people wrong. All of the participants experienced the feeling of being judged or looked down upon by family and church members, friends and professional staff. These experiences appeared to fuel the desire to prove that they would not become a negative statistic. They were determined to prove to those people that doubted their capabilities wrong. Previous research (SmithBattle, 2005b) concluded that becoming a teenage mother provided the adolescent with a renewed interest in developing and attaining academic goals. Becoming a mother provided them with the motivation to seek out educational opportunities.

At the same time, a heavy emphasis was placed on the availability of external resources. The resources available varied among the participants. These included mentoring relationships with mentors of the same racial or cultural background, social supports, family influence and support, financial & community resources and educational supports.

For several of the participants, having a mentor of the same racial or ethnic background served as a motivation to succeed academically. For those participants that lacked family support, it was these mentors in the high school and college communities that provided the emotional support and positive reinforcement necessary to continue their schooling. Several of the participants shared narratives of perceived negative labeling by White teachers and professionals. They shared the notion that their racial differences and a lack of understanding of their lived experience as a pregnant and parenting teen influenced the manner in which they treated the teenager. Participants that attended predominantly White institutions felt out of place and uncomfortable. Mentoring relationships with supportive adults of the same racial, ethnic or cultural background provided these women with encouragement, empowering words and a belief

in the ability to succeed and achieve their goals. For those participants that came from impoverished neighborhoods and lacked positive role models in the community, having a mentor that provided a mirror for academic and career possibilities proved to be life changing. While surrounded with a lack of positive role models and little contact with two parent families, the career and educational aspirations of children growing in these conditions is hindered (Wodtke, 2013). Mentors compensated for what was missing in the participants home life, communities and personal relationships.

Most of the participants had connections to social supports in church, through college campus organizations, peers and coworkers. When social supports were lacking, the teenage mother faced a difficult time with preparing for exams and felt alone and isolated in her experience as a young mother. For others, having these available social supports provided them with a new and positive outlook for their lives. Participants that were in abusive and troubled relationships with the father of their child were able to find connections in these supports and ultimately made the decisions to leave these relationships.

Many of the participants reported family influence and support as a major resource. The ability to depend on their mothers, siblings and extended family members for childcare made it possible for some to attend college out of state and attend evening classes. For the participants that did not have the support of their families, the challenges were quite pronounced. They were forced to navigate adult systems on their own with very little knowledge or assistance from the adults in their lives. Additionally, they remained in abusive relationships and endured the struggles associated with these relationships as a result of a lack of support from the family. For the women who were able to end these violent and abusive relationships, it was the support of a family member that facilitated this transition.

The availability of financial resources was central in the teenage mother's ability to stay on course academically. The participants of this study received financial support in the form of government aid, WIC, financial aid grants and full or part time jobs. The father of the children was of financial support for some of the teenage mothers. For those teenage mothers who were not eligible to receive government benefits, they were forced to work two and sometimes three jobs to make financial ends meet. In those instances, they reported feeling tired and as a result settled for average grades, just enough to pass their college courses. Having to work multiple jobs placed an enormous responsibility on the teenage mother, one that placed in jeopardy her ability to finish college courses and attain credits towards the college degree. While none of the participants stopped the academic pursuit due to financial constraints, there were instances where they feared they would not be able to continue as a result.

Community resources provided the participants of this study an opportunity to build on their networks of support. A number of participants were connected to domestic violence shelters, which provided them with support groups where women came together to discuss and process their shared experience with violent and troubled relationships. They found camaraderie in each other, swapped baby clothes and helped each other with childcare. Other community programs provided the teenage mother with access to educational opportunities. As a result of their involvement in these programs, they began to ponder the possibility of attaining a college degree. Exposure to knowledge and connection to resources in these community programs opened a window of opportunity for several of the participants.

With the proper educational supports in place, this life changing event served to motivate the teenage mother to perform well academically, as she became aware that her future and that of her child would depend on the level of education attained (Mangino, 2008). Several of the

participants transferred to high schools for teenage mothers after they became pregnant. In these programs, several systems were in place to assist the young mother with daycare, medical services and transportation to and from school. A number of participants were able to attain childcare on college campus and this served as a valuable resource that eliminated the worry of finding someone trustworthy of caring for their child. Support groups for young mothers in college were also a valued form of educational support. The staff members who facilitated these workshops provided encouragement and support to the young mothers. A positive relationship with faculty and supportive staff on college campuses proved to be an essential component towards academic success.

Balancing Parenting Responsibilities and the Academic Pursuit

The data in this research study revealed an interesting component of the balancing of responsibilities as a teenage mother while pursuing academic dreams and aspirations. The available literature on dating relationships among pregnant and parenting teenagers places emphasis on the risk factors for violence in dating relationships among this population (Newman & Campbell, 2011; Diaz-Olvarietta et. al, 2007; Harned, 2002). Information on healthy dating practices among this population is rare. Participants of this research study shared their experiences with dating and finding suitable partners. A number of the participants made conscious decisions to refrain from dating as they felt that it would interfere with the ability to focus on their education and could possibly distract them from achieving their educational goals. Additionally, dating was perceived as a potential roadblock that would only add to already existing barriers and challenges. Furthermore, making decisions related to introducing potential partners to their children was similarly perceived as an unnecessary problem to add to their lives. Decisions around dating took on a new meaning for these teenage mothers. Thoughts on how

dating could interfere with their educational goals and their role as a mother impacted their decisions. For several of the participants in this study, this became a new juggling act.

As a result of the overwhelming demands connected to parenting responsibilities and life as a student, a number of the participants of this study shared feelings of guilt. This guilt stemmed from missing important milestones in their children's lives. Because such a strong emphasis was placed on the importance of attaining a college degree in order to be able to secure a stable future for herself and her children, several participants experienced strong emotions related to being unable to witness their child's first steps or say their first words. Many of the participants felt that they did not have the opportunity to enjoy their child because of the many responsibilities and balancing it all. They shared thoughts of time moving quickly while they managed the balancing act of being a teenage parent and the academic journey.

Challenges and Obstacles While Being a Teenage Mother and Going to School

The challenges and obstacles that the participants of this study encountered while in pursuit of a college degree manifested themselves in different ways. Although the participants were able to attain their undergraduate and graduate degrees, the path towards attaining educational success was not a smooth one for most of the former teenage mothers.

A troubled relationship with the father of the child was a presented obstacle for many of the participants. Campbell & Newman (2011) found that adolescents lack the communication skills that are necessary to resolve conflict that can arise in intimate relationships. The lack of appropriate negotiating and communication skills can result in attempts to exert control and force as a means to resolving problems (Newman & Campbell, 2011). While some of the participants had the emotional and financial support from the father of the child, others lacked the support from them. These relationships were defined as "broken, dysfunctional, toxic, violent and

abusive" by the participants that identified this challenge. Managing these relationships while simultaneously attending college was difficult. One of the participants shared her experience related to an incident between her and the father of her child. The night before an important exam, she was involved in a domestic incident that resulted in a black eye and bruising. Fortunately, she had the support of her professor who was aware of her situation at home. These troubled relationships have the potential of derailing the young mother from her academic trajectory. Fortunately, there were an adequate amount of resources in place for them to continue on route to degree attainment despite this challenge.

A number of the participants in this study experienced lack of support from professionals and stigma as a teenage parent. Professionals who were in the position to help and encourage these young women many times treated them poorly. Professionals who come into contact with these young mothers are, at times, the only source of support that the teenager can turn to. When they fail to do so, the teenage mother is left feeling shamed, embarrassed and lonely. One participant shared that school was her place of refuge from a troubled home environment. When she disclosed her teenage pregnancy, she felt the shift in the relationship dynamic between her and those teachers with whom she had a positive relationship. Many of the participants noted that they kept their pregnancies a secret for as long as possible due to the fear of being judged by teachers and other staff. When teenage and young mothers remain under the radar, it makes it difficult for school staff and administrators to address the needs of this specific population. Social workers and health care workers were also identified as professionals that treated the teenage mother in a way that affected them emotionally. Participants shared feeling betrayed by a system that is in place to help, not shame them. As a result, these young women avoided dealing with social service agencies and found support in other resources.

The need for mental health treatment was great among the participants of this study. Nearly all of the participants of this study felt that they were emotionally and mentally affected by the teenage pregnancy. Research by Mollborn and Morningstar (2009) affirms that the increase in stress that accompanies the life change from teenager to mother and caregiver has consequences on their mental health. The participants shared that many times they "stuffed" their feelings, did not deal with their emotions because they did not have time for emotions, and some experienced passive thoughts of suicide. A surprising finding was that none of the participants were connected to mental health treatment during this period of transition from teenage to teenage mother. The mental health related problems associated with teen pregnancy may go unaddressed either as a result of embarrassment, lack of knowledge of available resources, or lack of support to seek services. Additionally, many of the participants shared that adults in their lives made assumptions about their emotional well being based on their observations of the teen mother managing her parenting and educational responsibilities. As a result, the mental health needs of these teen mothers were unaddressed. The unaddressed mental health needs can persist throughout the lifespan of the teenage mother and can affect the child. If the young mother is depressed, it is possible that she will provide less social support to her child which can increase the children's risk of developing mental health problems. (Hodgkinson et al., 2014).

Negative influences in the community provided an additional layer of challenges for some of the participants. Continued exposure to negative surroundings such as poor neighborhoods, negative school environments and community violence can likely diminish academic aspirations and the perceived costs of adolescent parenthood may decrease (Wodkte, 2013). For some of the participants, there was difficulty with living in neighborhoods where teenage pregnancy was a normal occurrence. Their academic dreams did not match those of the

other young girls who were parenting teenagers. Many of their peers who were teenage parents had multiple children and had not graduated from high school. Negative community norms were supported and the teenage mother's academic pursuits many times went unnoticed.

Being unprepared for the drastic life change as a result of a teenage pregnancy presented as a challenge for some of the participants of this study. These young women lacked the knowledge that could assist them in becoming prepared for the parenting role. Making education a priority was a challenge in these instances. In addition to being unprepared for the life change, some of the participants were faced with problems that were unforeseen, such as learning to care for a child born with a developmental disability, placing their dreams of a military career on hold and engaging in prostitution as a result of financial constraints. The availability of family, community and social supports allowed the teenage mother to rise above these serious challenges and provided her with the ability to continue her education.

Educational barriers were another set of challenges and obstacles identified by the teenage mother. In addition to other significant roadblocks, the lack of childcare on college campuses, unsupportive staff and the lack awareness of any systems in place for teenage and young mothers in schools were significant for the young mother. Many of the participants feared being stigmatized or labeled and kept their pregnancy a secret for as long as possible. As a result, school administrators and staff were unaware that some of their students were parents. This invisibility of teenage parents often produces negative results such as inappropriate interventions to address their unique needs, a lack of advocacy for teenage parents, and insensitivity on the part of the educational system to help parenting teens balance their education and their responsibilities as parents (Duncan, 2007). It is important that schools expand their efforts to identify and serve teen mothers in their school communities and should improve the quality of

the educational opportunities available to teenage parents. The gap between the young mothers'

academic aspirations and the support they receive in school suggests that educators are missing

an opportunity to facilitate teenage mothers' school progress and their long-term educational

attainment (Smith-Battle, 2007).

Implications for Social Work Practice

The findings from this study provide a number of important implications for social work

practice. These finding can help social workers and mental health providers with an

understanding of the experiences of teenage mothers. With a clearer understanding of the

complexities involved in being a teenage mother while in pursuit of academic goals and

aspirations, social workers are in an important position to assist this population in several ways.

The findings of this research study suggest that there is a critical need for strategies to be

implemented to reduce stigma, increase awareness of symptoms and treatment and improve

training for more culturally competent mental health professionals.

Although teenage pregnancies have shown a decline in the last decade, it continues to be

a problem among young Black and Latinas, especially in inner cities. It remains a societal

concern as a teenage pregnancy can affect the young woman's ability to continue her education.

Teenage pregnancies are associated with educational underachievement, poverty and dependence

on the welfare system over the years. As a result of the sudden change in her role from teenager

to teenage mother, the young woman will experience challenges that she may not be

developmentally ready to face. Participants of this study shared that being faced with parenting

responsibilities at an early age was something that they were not ready to manage. In their role,

social workers are able to provide psycho-education to the teenage mother on the changes that

she will face from an emotional and mental health perspective. Social workers can work with

available family members to provide information on the stages of development and expand on the stage of development for the teenager. In this way, the family members can be better informed which can increase their ability to be more understanding of the teenage mother. With this knowledge, they can interact with the teenage mother in ways that are less punitive.

Teenage mothers have been found to be twice as likely as adult mothers to experience depression, which places them at risk for increased interpersonal struggles, and increases their chance of abusing or neglecting their children (Muzik et al., 2015). Data suggests that the prevalence of depressive symptoms in pregnant adolescents can be as high as 59% and that depression in adolescent mothers is associated with negative parenting behaviors (Lesser et al., 1998). An overwhelming majority of the participants in this study were found to be experiencing depressive symptoms as a result of becoming a mother in her teenage years. The unexpected change in lifestyle, coupled with feelings of guilt and shame and lack of support from the adults in their lives left the teenage mother feeling isolated, unsupported and in some instances, contemplating ending their lives.

Social workers can play an important role in the lives of pregnant teens. The feelings of the teenager need to be carefully assessed as these emotions have been known to continue well into adulthood (Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009). Participants of this research study expressed that the ways in which they navigate life as an adult is strongly impacted by becoming a mother at a young age. They shared feelings of "always being on the run", "not being able to slow down" and "never really looking at myself." This was a common occurrence among the participants. As a result of feeling ashamed in her teenage years, a number of participants explained that as adults, they tend to lead conversations with their accomplishments first and talk about their lives as a parent second. In their roles as mental health providers, social workers are

in the position to be able to assist women who experienced a teenage pregnancy and come into treatment at a later point in their lives. Helping them become aware of the ways in which the teenage pregnancy affected their views of themselves at an early age can assist them in understanding the ways in which they relate to others as adults or how their adult lives have been shaped by this early experience.

Social workers have the ability to conduct workshops and group sessions for pregnant teenagers and parenting teenagers on healthy relationships to prevent the incidents of abuse and violence in their romantic relationships. Strategies to deter partner violence can be developed. A social worker can work with the teenage mother and father to explore the aggression and issues with control in the relationships. Role playing can be used as a strategy in addition to providing a space for the adolescents to self disclose their own experiences (Campbell & Newman, 2011).

Social workers can assist with addressing depressive symptoms that may arise in addition to connecting the young mother to resources in her community. In addition, there may be family conflict that arises from the sudden and unexpected pregnancy. Social workers can work with the family as a unit to address these changes and assist with developing solutions to the problems faced. Additionally, they can work individually with the young mother and assist her in developing problem solving and communication skills that will improve overall family functioning.

In their role as case managers, social workers are in the position to make referrals to agencies that provide services that can serve to aid the teenage mothers. These referrals can range from prenatal, parenting, and childbirth classes to fatherhood services, school based groups and emergency shelter (Robin, 2010).

Of the 15 participants in this research study, only one received counseling. However, she located this service on her own with the assistance of a friend in the church she attended weekly. The remaining participants were not aware of mental health treatment or the ways in which it could have positively impacted them at such a crucial time in their lives. It is important for social workers in these roles to remain cognizant that although referrals to the aforementioned programs are vital, the teenage mother's mental health needs are great at that point in their lives and should be addressed. Becoming a teenage parent causes role changes and transitions the adolescent may not be mentally equipped to manage (Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009). A number of the participants noted that if they had someone to talk to about their feelings, fears and uncertainties, the experience could have been a less challenging one. Referrals to mental health providers for these young mothers are crucial and can have a positive impact.

With the help of social workers and other professionals involved in their lives, the teenage mother can face challenges with support. This support will assist them with the tools necessary to strive academically and provide for their children. By building on their strengths, social workers are able to aid teenage mothers and motivate and inspire them as needed. By utilizing a strengths based perspective, social workers can also build on the already existing, intrinsic qualities of the young mother and aid her in utilizing these strengths in her new role as a mother. A number of the participants in this study addressed the lack of available support services by social workers in addition to lack of awareness of mental health treatment geared towards this population. Goals in working with teenage mothers will address the many challenges and coping strategies can be implemented to reduce the stress associated with becoming a teenage mother and the many added responsibilities that arise. Social workers can work with teenage mothers and their families to assist in eliminating or reducing the number of

obstacles and roadblocks that they may encounter. Social workers can foster relationship-building skills in treatment when working with these vulnerable young girls and their families. Family therapy can be used as a way to a way to engage the entire family in the process of mitigating risk and exploring protective factors that may be welcomed by the entire family.

In addition, social workers can provide psychoeducation on safe sex practices and consequences related to unsafe practices in an effort to prevent recurring pregnancies that may interfere with educational goals. Teenage pregnancy offers an opportunity for social workers to support the emotional development of teenage mothers as they grow into their parental roles. A number of the participants in this study reported that they were not ready for the many responsibilities that arose as a result of becoming a teenage parent. In this supportive role, social workers are in a position to provide the young mother with the necessary resources that will foster success among this population.

When working with young mothers, the social worker may also assess their individual values about and attitudes toward pregnancy and parenthood within the context of the family and the community in which they live. These values may be explored and connections can be made related to how these values may have hindered or fostered their desire to work on academic goals.

Social workers can serve as mentors and a source of guidance for teenage mothers. Mentoring relationships with non-parental adults are understood to protect against risk by reducing isolation, and providing warmth, acceptance, and motivation to succeed, which in turn help young women to reduce depression and problem behaviors, and strive toward the future (Greenberger, Chen, & Beam, 1998). A number of participants in this study shared that having mentors of their same racial background served as a motivating force towards achieving

academic success. Being exposed to successful men and women of color offered the young

mother the opportunity to view herself as someone who was capable of reaching academic

heights, despite the challenges.

As a result of becoming a young parent and tending to a baby's needs, the young parent

may put her individual needs aside and not recognize that they may be experiencing depressive

symptoms that require attention. Social workers that come in contact with teenage mothers have

the ability to develop support groups for these young mothers, in an effort to raise awareness and

lessen any stigma that they may be experiencing as a result of being a young mother. Many

postpartum adolescents believe that they live "publicly examined lives" (Hanna, 2001). That is,

they experience stigma from strangers, acquaintances, friends, and family due to early

childbearing (Hanna, 2001). Having support groups as an option can provide them with the

opportunity to meet others in similar circumstances, build on their confidence and stimulate them

to pursue education.

Interventions grounded in risk and resilience can concurrently enhance participants'

social support networks while decreasing risks (e.g., social isolation, lack of knowledge about

child development, school drop-out, and multiple life stressors), and are designed to promote

competence and adaptive functioning in different domains, as well as reduce problem behaviors

(Waller et al., 1999).

Of the participants who were involved in a school for teenage mothers, the common

factor noted was that the focus of these programs was mainly to teach effective parenting and to

ensure that they would be able to finish high school. However, the focus on continuing education

was minimal. In these situations, social workers can be of impact by assessing the teen mother's

future goals and connecting her to programs and resources that will facilitate her ability to enroll

in college after a teenage birth. Assisting the teenage mother with navigating higher education systems can serve to be beneficial and can facilitate the pathway towards educational attainment in the form of college degrees.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this research study shed light on the lived experiences of a segment of the population who many times go unnoticed. The participants of this research study were eager to share their stories with the hopes of shedding light on a topic that is not commonly discussed. For many, participation in this study was the first time they shared their experience with this life-changing event. The rich data obtained in this research study provides an opportunity for exploration of future research in the area of teenage pregnancy and educational attainment. On the basis of these findings, there are considerable areas for future research.

The first recommendation for future research is to examine the lives and academic trajectories of young men who became teenage fathers. A number of the participants in this study shared that the ability to continue their schooling could be attributed to the sacrifices that the young fathers made on their own education. A few of the teenage fathers abandoned their academic goals to pursue full time employment in order to financially support the teenage mother and their offspring. Others returned to school years later to attain the GED but little is known on their attainment of college degrees. The literature in this area and with this population is limited. A study of this kind may inform professionals that come in contact with this underrepresented population. In conducting research in this area and learning their experiences, assets can be reinforced and resources can be made available to directly influence the young fathers. With these resources in place, the lives of their children have the potential of being positively impacted.

A second recommendation for future research is to examine the lives of the offspring of teenage mothers and their academic experiences and successes. A number of the participants of this research study shared that they were not immediately available to meet their child's emotional needs due to her responsibilities and pursuing her education. A research study of this kind can shed light into the emotional experiences of the offspring of teenage mothers. The findings of a research study examining that population can shed light on the similarities and differences between their experiences as the child of a teenage parent and determine whether they were impacted by experiencing their mothers as a young mother. In addition, it can inform current teenage parents and offspring of teenage mothers of the assets and resources that were used to achieve academic success.

A final recommendation for future research is specifically centered on the mental health of teenage mothers and those that experienced a teenage birth. With the overwhelming majority of participants in this study lacking mental health treatment during a transitional point in their lives, it is important to explore the factors that prevented teenage mothers from seeking and obtaining mental health treatment.

Limitations

Although this research study provided vast and valuable information on the experiences of Black and Latina women who were once teenage mothers, there are certain limitations to this study.

This study consists of a sample size of 15 participants. The number is small and limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population.

The age group of the women in this research study was restricted. In order to be included in this study, the participant had to be between the ages of 28 and 48. With the exclusion of women under the age of 28 and over the age of 48, the experiences of that age group are unknown and can vary from those included in this research study.

This research study did not include Black and Latina women who are currently teenage mothers. The youngest participant of this research study was 28 and her teenage pregnancy was experienced was ten years ago. There is a possibility that programs and resources may be available today that were not available for the participants of this research study. With the many technological advances in the last ten years, teenage mothers now have the option of attending classes online, an option that was not immediately available for the youngest participant. The experiences in attaining a college degree while facing responsibilities and challenges associated with being a teenage mother can vary greatly among Black and Latina women who are currently teenage mothers.

This study focused solely on the experience of Black and Latina women who were once teenage mothers and were able to attain a college degree. It excluded women of other race categories such as White/Caucasian, Asian and Native American women. The experience of teenage mothers pertaining to those racial groups may have varied based on the racial and/or ethnic identities.

The participants of this research study resided in the Northeastern part of the United States. Experiences of teenage mothers across the United States may differ from those residing in the Northeast. Availability of programs for teenage mothers varies from state to state. As a result, teenage mothers in other states may have access to additional resources that could further impact the ability to attain a college degree.

Finally, while being a former Latina teenage mother may have provided the researcher with a unique understanding of the participant's lived experiences, there is the possibility that there may have been some bias when interpreting responses. As mentioned in the methods section, several methods were consistently utilized through the course of the interviewing process and in the analysis of the data to ensure trustworthiness and rigor of the study. However, researcher bias cannot be excluded as a limitation to the study.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the promotive factors that facilitated educational attainment for Black and Latina teenage mothers despite the associated challenges and obstacles associated with pregnancy and parenting in the teenage years. The exploration gave voice to their experiences with becoming a teenage parent and continuing to pursue academic goals in the midst of balancing parenting and academic tasks. Interviewees provided detailed narratives of their experiences from the time they learned of the pregnancy until the present day as adult women. The participants shared the assets and resources that made it possible for them to continue to seek educational opportunities and attain college degrees. Several themes and related subthemes emerged from the participant narratives. In addition to assets (intrinsic qualities) and resources (external resources), the theme of balancing responsibilities and the academic pursuit as well as the challenges and obstacles while being a teenage mother and going to school emerged from the participant interviews. These findings provide a glimpse into the experiences of teenage mothers and the difficulties that they face in reaching academic heights. Furthermore, these findings provide information for social work professionals and implications for social work practice.

The participants of this study came from varied backgrounds and their experiences were unique. However, their drive and motivation to succeed academically despite the challenges and obstacles they faced was admirable and empowering. Through their life trajectories, they faced societal stigma, educational barriers, unmet emotional needs, lack of adequate resources, troubled relationships with the father of their children and a lack of support from professionals. With such challenges and obstacles in place, the participants occasionally doubted their ability to overcome the hardships they faced. For many, however, these challenges and obstacles fueled their energy to continue to push against negative societal expectations of them and overcome the odds. Their determination allowed them to emerge stronger and continue to push towards attaining a college degree. Giving these former teenage mothers the opportunity to have their voices and experiences shared can aid future generations of teenage mothers and their offspring. It is important for teenage mothers to understand that a teenage pregnancy does not mean their life is over. While this drastic life change will inevitably shape the course of her life, the findings of this research study demonstrate that educational attainment is possible with the appropriate assets and resources in place. Although there continues to be a societal stigma against teenage mothers, it is through these shared, raw narratives, that others experiencing a similar situation can find the hope and courage necessary to succeed and improve the circumstances and outcomes for themselves and their children.

Appendix A: IRB Approval

University of Pennsylvania
Office of Regulatory Affairs
3624 Market St., Suite 301 S
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6006
Ph: 215-573-2540/ Fax: 215-573-9438
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
(Federalwide Assurance # 00004028)

01-Jun-2017

Joretha Bourjolly
jerri@upenn.edu
Attn: Judith Gil
judithgi@sp2.upenn.edu

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	: JORETHA BOURJOLLY
TITLE	: More than a Statistic: Examining Promotive Factors that Facilitate Educational Attainment in the Form of College Degrees among Former Black and Latina Teenage Mothers
SPONSORING AGENCY	: NO SPONSOR NUMBER
PROTOCOL #	: 827605
REVIEW BOARD	: IRB #8

Dear Dr. Bourjolly:

The above referenced protocol and was reviewed and approved using the expedited procedure set forth in 45 CFR 46.110, category 6,7, on 31-May-2017. This study will be due for continuing review on or before 30-May-2018.

Approval by the IRB does not necessarily constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of a human subject research study. Principal investigators are responsible for assuring final approval from other applicable school, department, center or institute review committee(s) or boards has been obtained. If any of these committees require changes to the IRB-approved protocol and informed consent/assent document(s), the changes must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to beginning the research study.

If this protocol involves cancer research with human subjects, biospecimens, or data, you may not begin the research until you have obtained approval or proof of exemption from the Cancer Center's Clinical Trials Review and Monitoring Committee.

The documents submitted in the application noted below were approved:
-HS ERA Initial Review Submission, Confirmation code: cdjhbead, Submitted: 05/26/2017

When enrolling subjects at a site covered by the University of Pennsylvania's IRB, a copy of the IRB approved informed consent form with the IRB approved from/to stamp must be used unless a waiver of written documentation of consent has been granted.

If you have any questions about the information in this letter, please contact the IRB administrative staff. Contact information is available at our website: http://www.upenn.edu/IRB/directory.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

**Heather
Emery**

IRB Administrator

Digitally signed by
Heather Emery
Date: 2017.06.01 13:26:47
-04'00'

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

More than a Statistic: Examining promotive factors that facilitate educational attainment in the form of college degrees among former Black and Latina teenage mothers.

Researcher: Judith Gil, LCSW; Doctoral Student; University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice; 3701 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: 347-822-8191; Email: Judith.gil@gmail.com

Who is Included?
Women who self- identify as Black or Latina, are between the ages of 28 and 48, had a child between the ages of 13 and 19 and have completed an undergraduate college degree (Bachelor's degree) or completed a graduate or professional degree (Masters or Doctorate).

Why is the research taking place?
The goal of this research project is to explore factors that led to your ability to achieve academic success while being a teenage mother.

What are the possible risks or harms if I take part?

The risks of participating are minimal. The ways that confidentiality will be protected have already been described. In the unlikely event that you find that what you discussed in the interview is upsetting to you after the interview is over, please be in touch with me. I will provide you with some names and numbers of individuals or agencies that can provide further assistance.

What are the possible benefits?
Although being interviewed will not be of direct benefit to you, it is also possible that having a chance to share your story will be an interesting and possibly a rewarding experience. In addition, your participation in this study will help in furthering knowledge in the field of social work. Your responses may provide information for service providers as to how to better service this vulnerable population and assist those working with them to foster academic success.

Furthermore, by sharing your personal story related to being a teenage mother who was able to attain academic success, you may be serving to inspire young teenage mothers that may be experiencing a similar life story as yours.

What are my choices if I don't take part?
Your participation in this study is voluntary. Although I would like you to answer as many questions as you can, you have the right to not respond to any of the questions. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without any risk to you.

Who would see study information about me?
All precautions will be taken to protect your privacy. All information you report to me is confidential. All identifying data will be stored on the computer with password protected and a file cabinet securely locked. Pseudonyms will be used to replace your names for confidentiality purposes and all tape recording gadgets will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation project. Each research participant will be assigned a code number and pseudonym. All information you report will not to be discussed with others.

Would I be paid or compensated for my time?
 I will be responsible for compensating each subject that participated in the research interview. The compensation will be $10 in the form of a gift card.

Will the study cost me anything? No.

Appendix C: Informed Consent

More than a Statistic: Examining promotive factors that facilitate educational attainment in the form of college degrees among former Black and Latina teenage mothers.

<u>**Introduction and Purpose of Study**</u>

I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Social Work program at the University of Pennsylvania School of Policy and Practice. This interview will be part of my research for my doctoral dissertation. If you should have any questions about participation in this interview, please let me know immediately. The goal of this research project is to explore factors that led to your ability to achieve academic success while being a teenage mother.

<u>**What is involved?**</u>

The interview will last between 45 to 60 minutes. I will make an audio recording of the interview and may take written notes. Questions about your early experiences with becoming a teenage mother and the manner in which you were able to achieve academic success, despite the challenges of becoming a young parent, will be asked. Factors that led to achieving success academically will be explored.

<u>**Confidentiality:**</u>

The information that is shared will be kept strictly confidential. I will not share information about the participation of a subject with anyone. I will never use a participant's name, other personal identifying information or information about where participants live or work in my write-up of the interviews. I am the only person who will be able to listen to the audiotapes, which contain the interviews.

During the process in which I will work on this project, the audio tapes which contain the interview, the transcripts of the interviews and the password protected laptop in which I work from, will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Once I have transcribed the audiotape into text, I will destroy the audio tape. When I analyze the transcript from the interview, I will remove anything that might serve to identify a participant, including geographic locations and names of particular individuals you may have mentioned in the recording. Any documents with a participant name on it, which includes this signed consent form will be maintained in another locked file cabinet which will be separate from the transcript text of your interview and the password protected laptop. Once this process is completed I will destroy all of the consent forms and audio cassette tapes.

Risks of participating: The risks of participating are minimal. The ways that confidentiality will be protected have already been described. In the unlikely event that you find that what you discussed in the interview is upsetting to you after the interview is over, please be in touch with me. I will provide you with some names and numbers of individuals or agencies that can provide further assistance.

Benefits of participating:

Although being interviewed will not be of direct benefit to you, it is also possible that having a chance to share your story will be an interesting and possibly a rewarding experience. In addition, your participation in this study will help in furthering knowledge in the field of social work. Your responses may provide information for service providers as to how to better service this vulnerable population and assist those working with them to foster academic success.

Furthermore, by sharing your personal story related to being a teenage mother who was able to attain academic success, you may be serving to inspire young teenage mothers that may be experiencing a similar life story as yours.

Payment

If you decide to participate you will be given a $10 gift card when the interview is completed. You will also be reimbursed for any money you spend to travel to the interview site.

If you have questions about the project after the interview is over, please feel free to contact me:

Judith Gil, LCSW-R

347-822-8191

judithgi@sp2.upenn.edu

If after talking with me you still have concerns, you can contact the faculty member who is supervising this work:

Joretha Bourjolly, PhD., Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

School of Social Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania 3701

Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6214, (215) 898-5524

Email: jerri@sp2.upenn.edu

If a member of the research team cannot be reached or you want to talk with someone other than those working on the study, you may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any question, concern or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling (215) 898-2614.

Your participation is completely voluntary:

You do not have to participate in this project. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate. No one, other than me, will know if you have participated in this project.

If you do decide to be interviewed today, you can stop the interview at any time. You can also refuse to answer any questions that you don't want to answer.

Appendix D: Face Sheet and Instrument

Face-Sheet Data

I will solicit the demographic information from each subject and explain the categories and information using common language in layperson terms.

Face Sheet Questions

• Race

• Gender

• Number of Children

• Current Age

• Relationship Status

• Age of Birth of First Child

• Highest Level of Education Completed

In Depth Questions

A-Initial Reaction to Pregnancy

1. Tell me about the first time you learned you were pregnant.

2. Was this a planned pregnancy?

3. What were some of the initial thoughts, feelings and reactions associated with the early pregnancy?

4. How would you say the pregnancy affected your emotional and psychological well-being? How was your mental health affected by learning of the pregnancy?

5.   What meaning did this new life event have for you?

6.   Who did you speak with soon after you learned you were pregnant?

7.   With whom did you live at that time?

8.   How did you get along with your baby's father? How long were you together after the birth of the baby?

9.   How was the baby's father of support to you during the time that you learned of the pregnancy and throughout? What about afterwards?

10.   What kind of relationship did you have with your child's father?

11.   Did you have any friends who are supportive and helpful to you?

12.   How did you manage their reactions?

13.   How did you manage the transition from being a teenager to being a teenage mother?

14.   What were some of the immediate changes associated with the transition?

15.   How was your immediate family affected by the transition of you as a teenager to that of a teenage mother?

16.   Were family dynamics affected at all by the change? If so, how?

17.   What about the individual dynamics between you and your parents? Dynamics between you and any siblings?

18.   How were family routines impacted by the teenage pregnancy and the birth of the baby?

19.   Was your role in the family impacted by the change in being a teenage daughter to becoming a teenage mother?

B-Decision to Maintain Pregnancy and Continue Education

1.   How did you decide that you were going to continue with your pregnancy?

2. Was there a time where you experienced difficulty in deciding whether to continue the pregnancy?

3. Was there ever a time where you considered not keeping the baby? If so, what changed your mind?

4. How did you decide that you were going to continue with your education and go to college?

5. What were some of the attributing factors to continuing your education and going to college?

6. Was there a time where you experienced difficulty in deciding whether to continue your schooling?

7. What were your academic aspirations before the pregnancy?

8. How was your desire to continue your education impacted by becoming a mother?

9. What supports did you have in place that assisted with being able to continue your education?

10. In what form was this support provided? Emotional? Financial? Connections to resources? Other forms of support?

11. Were there agencies available in your community to assist you with your financial, child care and/ or vocational needs? If yes, how did they help?

12. Was there anyone in the school community, for example, teachers or school counselors, who provided support? If so, how did they help?

13. Were there any school staff who were against or interfered with you remaining in the school as a result of the pregnancy? If yes, what did they do and what was this experience like? What did you do in response?

14. Were you aware of any systems in place in your high school for teenage mothers? If yes, what were they?

15. Were you involved in any activities in school or in the community, for example, clubs, sports, parenting programs? If yes, were you able to remain involved in these activities? How?

16. Talk about the times, if any, when you felt you were not going to be able to continue with school. And what changed your mind.

17. If you needed help with childcare, information on parenting, or had a problem such as an emergency with your baby, who did you turn to? What kind and how much help could you expect from them?

18. Did you ever feel stigmatized as a result of being a teenage mother? That is, did you ever feel that people looked at you differently or thought of you as deviant or someone with no morals or values due to the decision to move forward with the pregnancy? If so, how did you manage these feelings?

19. What obstacles, hardships or struggles, if any, did you face while managing the responsibilities of parenting as well as attending school?

20. If you had such obstacles, how did you deal with these roadblocks and constraints?

C-Life Trajectory Experiences

1. As you look back at your experience, which events related to your pregnancy stand out the most to you?

2. Looking back at your experience, which events related to your pursuit of education stand out the most to you?

3. What about the effect of your pregnancy on the family? there anything that stands out to you as you look back at that experience?

4. How did this experience change you? Did it serve as a turning point experience for you?

5. Was your sense of purpose enhanced by becoming a teenage mother? Is yes, how?

6. If you could do it over again, is there anything you would change about your experience? Why?

7. Tell me about the strengths you discovered or developed through your experiences as a teenage mother and into your adult years.

D- Debriefing Questions

1. After reflecting on your experience, is there something that you would like to add for me to better understand your journey as a teenage mother and student?

2. What advice would you give to girls who are currently juggling parenting responsibilities while trying to remain in school?

3. Is there any particular advice that you would give to parents of teenage mothers and professionals working with teenage mothers who are managing both of these responsibilities?

Appendix E: Participant Profile for 15 Participants

Pseudonym	Current Age	Age at Birth of First Child	Race	Highest Level of Education Completed
Angela	45	18	Black	Bachelors Degree
Carol	29	18	Black	Masters Degree (currently in doctoral program)
Catherine	35	18	Latina	Masters Degree
Chantel	31	18	Latina	Bachelors Degree
Diane	44	18	Black	Doctoral Degree
Iris	29	19	Black	Masters Degree
Isabel	28	18	Latina	Bachelors Degree
Jada	32	17	Latina	Bachelors Degree
Juliette	36	19	Latina	Masters Degree (currently in doctoral program)
Maria	33	17	Black	Masters Degree (currently in doctoral program)
Pamela	48	17	Black	Doctoral Degree
Rebecca	46	18	Black	Doctoral Degree
Rosario	47	13	Black	Doctoral Degree

| Roxanne | 33 | 17 | Latina | Bachelors Degree |
| Sarah | 36 | 19 | Black | Doctoral Degree |

Table 1

Characteristics of Interviewees (N=15)	
Characteristics	Numbers/Frequencies
Age	
Range	28-48
Mean	34.8
Racial Identification	
Black	9
Latina	6
Age at Birth of First Child	
13	1
17	4
18	7
19	3
Highest Level of Education Completed	
Bachelors Degree	5
Masters Degree	5

Doctorate Degree	5
Decade of Birth of First Child	
2000s	10
1990s	3
1980s	2

REFERENCES

Adams, G., Adams-Taylor, S., & Pittman, K. (1989). Adolescent pregnancy and

parenthood: A review of the problems, solutions, and resources. *Family Relations,*

38(2), 223-229.

Alldred, P., & David, M. (2010). 'What's important at the end of the day?' Young mothers'

values and policy presumptions. In S. Duncan, R. Edwards & C. Alexander (Eds.),

Teenage parenthood: What's the problem? (pp.24–46). London.

Aparicio, E.,Pecukonis,E.V., Zhou,K.(2014). Sociocultural factors of teenage pregnancy in

Latino communities: Preparing social workers for culturally responsive practice. *Health*

Social Work , *39* (4), 238-243.

Aston, N. & Upchurch, D. (1994). Forming a family, leaving school early and earning a GED: A

racial and cohort comparison. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 56,* (3), 759-770.

Barber, J. & East, P. (2014). High educational aspirations among pregnant

adolescents are related to pregnancy unwantedness and subsequent parenting stress and

inadequacy. *Journal of Marriage and Family,76*, 652–664.

Barr, A.B. & Simons, R.L. (2012). College aspirations and expectations among new African-

American mothers in late adolescence. *Gender and Education, 24,*(7), 745–763.

Benitez, T. (2017). *The untold stories of former teen mothers who have achieved a master's*

degree or higher (Order No. 10281170). Available from ProQuest Dissertations &

Theses Global. (1899911350).

Brubacker, S.J., & Wright, C. (2006). Identity transformation and family caregiving: Narratives of African American teenage mothers. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 68,* 1214-1228.

Bonell C., Allen E., Strange V., Oakley, A., Copas, A., Johnson, A., & Stephenson, J.(2006) Influence of family type and parenting behaviors on teenage sexual behavior and conceptions. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health,* 60, 502-506.

Bolton, M., & Fitzpatrick, R. (1994). Quality in qualitative research. *Critical Public Health, 5*(3), 19–26.

Bouris, A., Guilamo-Ramos, V., Cherry, K., Dittus, P., Michael, S., & Gloppen, K. (2012). Preventing rapid repeat births among Latina adolescents: The role of parents. American *Journal of Public Health, 102*(10), 1842–1847.

Brindis, C. (1993). Antecedents and consequences: the need for diverse strategies in adolescent pregnancy prevention. *The Journal of School Health,63,* (1), 33-37.

Brosh, J., Weigel, D. & Evans, W. (2007). Pregnant and parenting adolescents' perception of sources and supports in relation to educational goals. *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal, 24,* 565- 578.

Bunting, L. & McAuley, C.(2004). Research Review: Teenage pregnancy and motherhood: The contribution of support. *Child and Family Social Work , 9* (2), 167-181.

Caldwell, C. & Antonucci, T. (1999) Multi-generational mother –daughter relationships: Support and wellbeing. *The Gerontologist, 39,* 341-357.

Camarena, P., Minor, K., Melmer T & Ferrie C.(1998). The nature and support of adolescent mothers' life aspirations. *Family Relations, 47* (2), 129-137.

Cance, J. D., Ennett, S. T., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., Foshee, V. A., & Talley, A. E. (2013). Perceived pubertal timing and recent substance use among adolescents: A longitudinal perspective: Perceived pubertal timing and substance use. *Addiction, 108*(10), 1845–1854.

Cavanagh S. (1997) Content analysis: concepts, methods and applications. *Nurse Researcher, 4*, 5–16.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Unintended Pregnancy statistics. US Department of Health and Human Services.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Unintended Pregnancy statistics. US Department of Health and Human Services.

Chevalier, A. and Viitanen, T.K. (2003), 'The Long-run labor market consequences of teenage motherhood in Britain. *Journal of Population Economics, 16*(2), 323-343.

Child Trends. (2008). Facts at a glance. Retrieved February 2017, from http://www. childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_01_01_FG_Edition.pdf.

Child Trends. (2010). Facts at a glance. Retrieved April 017, from https://www. childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/child_trends-2010_01_22_FS_diplomaattainment.pdf

Clark, J. (2015). Its not all doom and gloom for teenage mothers-exploring the factors that contribute to positive outcomes. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 8,* 25-42.

Clemmens, D. (2001). The relationship between social support and adolescent mothers'

    interactions with their infants: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology, &*

    Neonatal Nursing, 30, 410-420.

Cohen, M. (1998). Post-secondary education under welfare reform. *Welfare Information Network*

    Issue Notes, 2(8), 43-61.

Corcoran, J. (1998). Consequences of adolescent pregnancy/parenting: A review of the

    literature. *Social Work in Health Care, 27,* 49-67.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five

    approaches. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods

    approaches (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Deardorff, J., Gonzales, N. A., Christopher, F. S., Roosa, M. W., & Millsap, R. E. (2005). Early

    puberty and adolescent pregnancy: The influence of alcohol use. *Pediatrics, 116*(6),

    1451–1456.

Diaz, C.J., & Fiel, J.E. (2016). The effect(s) of teen pregnancy: Reconciling theory, methods, and

    findings. *Demography, 53,* 85-116.

Dogan-Ates, A., & Carrion-Basham, C.Y. (2007). Teenage pregnancy among Latinas:

    Examining risk and protective factors. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 29* (4),

    554-569.

Domenico, D.M. & Jones, K.H. (2007). Adolescent pregnancy in America: Causes and

    responses. *Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 30,* (1), 4-12.

Driscoll, A.K., Biggs, M.A., Brindis, C.D., Yankah, E. (2001).Adolescent Latino Reproductive

    Health: A review of literature. Hispanic Journal of the Behavioral Sciences, 2001 October

    23. (Retrieved from letsgetreal.org/pdfs/voices.pdf.2003).

Duncan, S. (2007). What's the problem with teenage parents? And what's the problem with

    policy? *Critical Social Policy, 27*, 307– 334.

East, P.L. & Chien, N.C. (2013). Stress in Latino families following an adolescent's

    childbearing: Effects on family relationships and siblings. *Journal of Family Psychology,*

    27(2), 183-193.

East, P.L., Slonim, A., Horn, E.J., & Reyes, B.T. (2011). Effects of adolescent childbearing on

    Latino siblings: Changes in family dynamics and feelings toward the teen mother.

    Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences 33, (4), 540-557.

Eaton, D. K., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., et al. (2005). Youth risk behavior surveillance—United

    States. *Journal of School Health, 76*, 353–372.

Edin, K. & Kafalas, M. (2005). Promises I can keep: Why poor women put motherhood before

    marriage. Berkeley: University of California.

Elo S. & Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced*

    Nursing, 62,(1), 107–115.

Erdmans, Mary Patrice, and Black, Timothy. On Becoming a Teen Mom: Life before

Pregnancy (1). Berkeley, US: University of California Press, 2015.

Farber, N. (2014). The not-so-good news about teenage pregnancy. *Society, 51*, 282–287.

Farber, N. (2016). Special issue: Adolescent pregnancy: Past, present and future trends

and issues. *Societies, 6* (4). 32-37.

Fedorowicz, A.R., Hellerstedt, W.L., Schreiner, P.J., & Bolland, J.M. (2014). Associations of

adolescent hopelessness and self worth with pregnancy attempts and pregnancy desire.

American Journal of Public Health, 104, 133-140.

Ferguson, D. & Woodward, L. (2000). Teenage pregnancy and female educational

underachievement a prospective study of a New Zealand birth cohort. *Journal of*

Marriage and the Family. 62, 147-161.

Ferre, Z., Gerstenbluth, M., Rossi, M., Triunfo, P. (2013). The impact of teenage childrearing on

educational outcomes. *The Journal of Developing Areas. 47*(2), 160-173.

Finer, L., & Henshaw, S. (2006). Disparities in the rates of unintended pregnancies

in the United States, 1994 and 2001. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive*

Health, 38, 90-96.

Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R. K., & Turner, H. (2007). Polyvictimization and trauma in a

national longitudinal cohort. *Development and Psychopathology, 19*, 149–166

Fraser, M. W., Kirby, L. D., & Smokowski, P. R. (2004). Risk and resilience in

childhood. *Social Work Research, 52,* 13–66.

Friedman, P. (1999). Post-secondary education options for low-income adults. *Welfare*

Information Network Issue Notes, 3(12), 58.

Furstenberg, F., Brooks-Gunn, J., Morgan, P. (1987). Adolescent mothers and their children later in life. *Family Planning Perspectives, 19*(4), 142-151.

Furstenberg, F. (2003). Teenage childbearing as a public issue and private concern. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*, 23-39.

Garmezy, N. (1991). Stress-resistant children: The search for protective factors. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. 4,* 213-233.

Get real about teen pregnancy campaign. Voices of California: a multicultural perspective on teen pregnancy; 2003. Retrieved from http://www.letsgetreal.org/pdfs/ Voices.pdf.

Gerbic P. & Stacey E. (2005) A purposive approach to content analysis: designing analytical frameworks. *Internet and Higher Education 8*, 45–59.

Gibson,J.W., & Kempf,J. (1990). Attitudinal predictors of sexual activity in Hispanic adolescent families. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 5*, 414-430.

Gordon, R., Chase-Landsdale,P.L., Matjasko, J.L., Brooks-Gunn, J. (1997). Young mothers living with grandmothers and living apart: How neighborhood and household contexts relate to multigenerational coresidence in African American families. *Applied Developmental Science, 1*(2), 89-106.

Guijarro, S., Narajo, J., Padilla, M., Gutierrez, R. Lammers, C. & Blum, R. (2001). Family risk factors associated with adolescent pregnancy: study of a group of adolescent girls and their families in Ecuador. *Journal for Adolescent Health, 25*(2), 166-172.

Guilamo-Ramos,V., Dittus,P., Jaccard,J., Goldberg,V., Casillas,E., & Bouris, A. (2006). The content and process of mother-adolescent communication about sex in Latino families. *Social Work Research, 30,* (3). 169-181

Graham, H. & McDermott E. (2005). Qualitative research and the evidence and the evidence base of policy: Insights from studies of teenage mothers in the UK. *Journal of Social Policy, 35,*(1), 21-27.

Greenberger, E., Chen, C., & Beam, M. R. (1998). The role of "very important" nonparental adults in adolescent development. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 27,* 321–343.

Grindstaff, C.F, Phillips, N. & Turner R.J.(1990) Social support and outcome in teenage pregnancy. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 31*, (1), 43-57.

Guzmán, B.L. & Dello Stritto, M.E. (2012). The role of socio-psychological determinants in the sexual behaviors of Latina early adolescents. *Sex Roles*, *66*, 776-780.

Hanna, B. (2001). Negotiating motherhood: The struggles of teenage mothers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 34,* 456-464.

Harding, D.J. (2003). Counterfactual models of neighborhood effects: The effect of neighborhood poverty on dropping out and teenage pregnancy. *American Journal of Sociology, 109,* 676-719.

Hendrick, C.E., Cance, J.D., & Maslowsky, J. (2015). Peer and individual risk factors in adolescence explaining the relationship between girls pubertal timing and teenage childbearing. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 45*, (3), 916-927.

Henry, D.A. & Milstein, M.M. (2004). Promoting resiliency in youth, educators and communities. New York: Information Age.

Hill R. B. (1998). Understanding Black family functioning: A holistic perspective. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29*, 15-25.

Hofferth, S.L., Reid L., Mott, F. (2001). The effects of early childbearing on schooling over time. *Family Planning Perspectives, 33*(6), 259-267.

Hoffman, S. (1998). Teenage childbearing is not so bad after all…or is it? A review of the new literature. *Family Planning Perspectives, 30*(5). 47-59.

Hoffman, S. (2006). By the numbers: The public costs of teen childbearing. Retrieved September 25, 2012 from http:// www.thenationalcampaign.org/ costs/pdf/report/BTN_ National_Report. pdf.

Hoffman, S. (2015) Teenage childbearing and economics: A short history of a 25-year research love affair. *Societies, 5,* 646-663.

Horwitz, S., Kleman, L, Kuo, S., and Jekel, M. (1991). School-age Mothers: Predictors on long-term educational and economic outcomes. *Pediatrics, 87*(6), 862-868.

Hoskins, D. & Simons, L. (2015). Predicting the risk of pregnancy among African American youth: Testing a social contextual model. *Journal of Child & Family Studies, 24* (4) 1163-1174.

Hotz, J., McElroy, S. & Sanders, S. (2005).Teenage childbearing and its life cycle consequences: Exploiting a natural experiment. The Journal of Human Resources, 40(3), 683-715.

Hovell, M., Sipan, C., Blumberg, E., Atkins, C., Hofstetter, C. R., & Kreitner, S. (1994). Family influences on Latino and Anglo adolescents' sexual behavior. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56*, 973-992.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*, 1277-1288.

Hudson F. & Ineichen B. (1991) Taking it Lying Down. Sexuality and Teenage Motherhood. Macmillan Education Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London, pp. 225

Jacobs, J. & Mollborn, S. (2012). Early motherhood and the disruption in significant attachments: Autonomy and reconnection as a response to separation and loss among African American and Latina teen mothers. *Gender & Society, 26,*(6), 922-944.

Jessor, R. (1991). Risk behavior in adolescence: A psychosocial framework for understanding and action. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 12,* 597-605.

Julian, T., McKenry, P., & McKelvey, M. (1994). Cultural variations in parenting: Perceptions of Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American Parents. *Family Relations, 43*(1), 30-37.

Kalb, G., Le, T., & Leung, F. (2015). Outcomes for teenage mothers in the first years after birth. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics, 18*(3), 255-279.

Kaplan, E. (1996). Black teenage mothers and their mothers: The impact of adolescent childbearing on daughter's relations with mothers. *Social Problem, 43*(4), 427-443.

Kaplan, E. (1997). Women's perceptions of the adolescent experience. *Adolescence, 32* (127), 715-734.

Karenga M. (Ed.). (2007). The Nguzo Saba and the Black family: Principles and practices of well-being and flourishing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kearney, M.S. & Levine, P.B. (2012). Why is the teen birth rate in the United States so high and why does it matter? *The Journal of Economic Perspectives, 26* (2), 141-166.

Kendall, C., Afable-Munsuz, A., Speizer, E., Avery, A., Schmidt, N., & Santelli, J. (2005). Understanding pregnancy in a population of inner-city women in New Orleans—results of qualitative research. *Social Science and Medicine, 60*, 297-311.

Klepinger, D., Lundberg, S. & Plotnick, R. (1995). Adolescent fertility and the educational attainment of young women. *Family Planning Perspectives, 27*, 23–28.

Klepinger, D., Lundberg, S. & Plotnick, R. (1999). How does adolescent fertility affect the

    human capital and wages of young women? *Journal of Human Resources. 34*(3), 421-

    448.

Koniak-Griffin, D., Walker, D., & deTraversay, J. (1996). Predictors of depression symptoms in

    pregnant adolescents. *Journal of Perinatology, 16*, 69-76.

Kost K., Henshaw S. (2012). U.S. teenage pregnancies, births and abortions, 2008: National

    trends by age, race and ethnicity, 2012. Retrieved from

    http://alanguttmacherinstitute.org/pubs/USTPtrends08.pdf.

Krefting, L. (1990). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The

    Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45(3),* 214-222.

Kulkami, S., Shanti, I., Kennedy, A. & Lewis, C.M. (2010). Using a risk and resilience

    framework and feminist theory to guide social work intervention with adolescent

    mothers. *Families in Society, 91*(3), 217-224.

Leishman, J. (2007). Pre-teen and Teenage Pregnancy: A 21st century reality (1).

    Cumbria, GB: M&K Publishing, 2007.

Lesser, J., Anderson, N., & Koniak-Griffin, D. (1998). "Sometimes you don't feel ready

    to be an adult or a mom:" The experience of adolescent pregnancy. Journal of *Child and

    Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing, 11*, (1), 7-16.

Lesser, J. and Escoto-Lloyd, S. (1999) Health-related problems in a vulnerable

    population: Pregnant teens and adolescent mothers. *Nursing Clinics of North America

    34*(2): 289– 299.

Levine, D. and Painter, G. (2003), 'The schooling costs of teenage out-of- wedlock

childbearing: Analysis with a within-school propensity score matching estimator'. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *85*(4), 884-900.

Lincoln, Y.S & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Logsdon, M.C. (2004) Depression in adolescent girls: Screening and intervention strategies for primary care providers. *Journal of American Medical Women's Association 59.* 101– 106.

Logsdon, M.C. & Koniak-Griffin, D. (2005).Social support in postpartum adolescents: Guidelines for nursing assessments and interventions. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 34,* (6), 761-768.

Luker, K. (1996). Dubious Conceptions: The politics of teenage pregnancy. London: Harvard University Press

Luttrell, W. (2003). Pregnant bodies, fertile minds: Gender, race, and the schooling of pregnant teens. New York: Routledge.

Macleod, C. (2002). Economic security and the social science literature on teenage pregnancy in South Africa. *Gender and Society, 16,* (5), 647-664.

Maness, B. Buhi, E., Daley, E.M., Baldwin, J.A., & Kromrey, J.D. (2016). Social determinants of health and adolescent pregnancy: An analysis from the national longitudinal study of adolescent to adult health. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 58,* 636-643.

Manlove, J., Mariner, C., & Papillo, A. R. (2000). Subsequent fertility among teen mothers: Longitudinal analyses of recent national data. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62,* 430-448.

Markstrom, C. A., Marshall, S. K., Tryon, R. J. (2000). Resiliency, social support, and coping in

  rural low-income Appalachian adolescents from two racial groups. *Journal of*

  Adolescence, 23, 693-703.

Martin, J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Osterman, M.J.K., Driscoll, A.K., & Mathews, T.J. (2015). Births:

 Final Data for 2015. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 66*(1), 1-70. Retrieved

from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_01.pdf.

Masten, A. S., & Powell, J. L. (2003). A resilience framework for research, policy, and practice.

  Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of child adversities (pp. 1–25).

  New York: Cambridge University Press.

Masten, A. S., Cutuli, J. J., Herbers, J. E., & Reed, J. M.-G. (2007). Resilience in development.

  The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology. 23(1), 117-131.

McAdoo H., Younge S. (2009). Black families. Handbook of African American Psychology (pp.

  103-115).). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Meade, C. S., Kershaw, T. S., & Ickovics, J. R. (2008). The intergenerational cycle of teenage

  motherhood: An ecological approach. *Health Psychology, 27*(4), 419–429.

Merrick, E. (1995). Adolescent childbearing as career choice. Perspective from an ecological

  context. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 73*(3), 228-303.

Miller, B.C, Benson, B., & Galbraith, K. (2001). Family relationships and adolescent pregnancy

  risk: A research synthesis. *Developmental Review, 2,* 1-38.

Miller, B.C.,Bayley, B.K., Christensen, M., Leavitt, S.C., & Coyl, D.D. (2003). Adolescent

  pregnancy and childbearing. In G.R. Adams & M.D. Berzonski (Eds). *Blackwell*

  handbook of adolescence (pp. 415-449). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Minnis,A., Marchi, K., Ralph,L., Biggs, A., Combellick,S., Arons,A., Brindis, C. & Braverman,
P. (2013). Limited socioeconomic opportunities and Latina childbearing: A qualitative
study of family and structural factors affecting future expectations. *Journal of Immigrant
Minority Health, 15,* 334-340.

Mollborn, S. (2007). Making the best of a bad situation: Material resources and teenage
parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family. 69,* (1), 92-104.

Mollborn, S. & Morningstar, E. (2009). Investigating the relationship between teenage
childbearing and psychological distress using the longitudinal evidence. *Journal of
Health & Social Behavior, 50, (*3), 310-326.

Mollborn, S. (2010). Predictors and consequences of adolescents' norms against teenage
pregnancy. *The Sociological Quarterly, 5,* (2), 303-328.

Mollborn, S. & Dennis, J. (2011). Investigating the life situations and development of
teenage mothers' children: Evidence from the ECLS-B. *Journal of Family Issues, 32*, 3-
30.

Mollborn, S. & Jacobs, J. (2012). "We'll figure a way": Teenage mothers' experiences in
shifting social and economic contexts. *Qualitative Sociology, 35*,(1), 23-46.

Mollborn, S. (2017). Teen mothers today What we know and how it matters. *Child Development
Perspectives, 11(1),* 63-69.

Molina, R.C, Gonzalez-Roca.C, Sandoval, J. & Araya,E. (2010). Family planning and adolescent
pregnancy. *Best Practice and Research Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology, 24*(2), 209-
220.

Muzik, M., Rosalind, K., Alfafara, E., Jonika, J. & Waddell, R. (2015). Teenage mothers of black and minority ethnic origin want access to a range of mental and physical health support: a participatory research approach. *Journal of Health Expectations, 19*. 403–415.

Namkee, A. (1994). Teenage childbearing and high school completion: accounting for individual heterogeneity. *Family Planning Perspectives, 26*(1), 17-22.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2012). The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002-2006 [Data File]. The National Center for Educational Statistics. Available from http://nces.ed.gov/edat/.

National Conference of State Legislatures. (2013). Postcard: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates. Available from http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx#1.

Panova, O.V., Kulikov, A.M., Berchtold, A., & J.C. Suris, (2016). Factors associated with unwanted pregnancy among adolescents in Russia. *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology, 29,* (1), 18-21.

Perper,K. & Manlove J. (2009). Estimated percentages of females who will become teen mothers: Differences across states. http://www.childtrends.org. Accessed October 26, 2015.

Pfitzner M. A., Hoff C., McElligott K. Predictors of repeat pregnancy in a program for pregnant teens. *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology* , *16,* (2), (77-81).

Pollock, E.D., Kazman, J.B. & Deuster, P. (2015). Family functioning and stress in African American families: A strength-based approach. *Journal of Black Psychology, 41,* (2), 144-169.

Rehm, T.M. (2006). Studying resilience in college women who experienced a teenage

pregnancy. Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and Theses. (AAT 143985).

Rich, L. & Kim, B. (1999). Patterns of later life education among teenage mothers. *Gender and Society, 13*(6), 798-817.

Rich-Edwards, J. W., Kleinman, K., Abrams, A., Harlow, B. L., McLaughlin, T. J., Joffe, H., & Gillman, M. W. (2006). Sociodemographic predictors of antenatal and postpartum depressive symptoms among women in a medical group practice. *Journal of Epidemiol Community Health, 60*(3), 221-227.

Rocca, C. (2010). Pregnancy intentions and teenage pregnancy among Latinas: A mediation analysis. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 42*(3), 186-196.

Rolfe, A. (2008). 'You've got to grow up when you have a kid': Marginalized young women's accounts of motherhood. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 18*(1): 299-314.

Romero, A.J., Robinson, T.N., Haydel, K.F., Mendoza, F., & Killen, J.D. (2004).

Associations among familism, language preference, and education in Mexican American mothers and their children. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, 25,* 34-40.

Romo, L. F., Lefkowitz, E. S., Sigman, M., & Au,T. K. (2002). A longitudinal study of maternal messages about dating and sexuality and their influence on Latino adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 31*, 59-69.

Rosell, R. (2010). Young, pregnant, and underinsured: Growing demand calls for cost-effective collaboration between health and social workers. *Health & Social Work*, *35,* (2), 155-158.

Rosengard, C., Phipps, M., Adler, N., & Ellen, J. (2004). Adolescent pregnancy intentions and

    pregnancy outcomes: a longitudinal examination, *Journal of Adolescent*

    Health, 2004, 35(6), 453–461.

Rosengard C., Pollock L., Weitzen S., Meers A., Phipps M.G. (2006). Concepts of the

    advantages and disadvantages of teenage childbearing among pregnant adolescents: A

    qualitative analysis. *Pediatrics, 118*(2), 503-520.

Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to

    psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 147*, 598-611.

Seamark, C.J. & Lings, P. (2004). Positive experiences of teenage motherhood. *British Journal*

    of General Practice, 54(508). 813-818.

Scott-Jones, D. & Turner, S. (1990). The impact of adolescent childbearing on educational

    attainment and income of black females. *Youth and Society, 22*(1), 35-48.

Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects.

    Education for Information, 22, 63-75.

Small, S.A., & Luster, T. (1994) Adolescent sexual activity: An ecological , risk factor approach.

    Journal of Marriage and Family, 56, 180-192.

Smith, S. (2006). Encouraging the use of reflexivity in the writing up of qualitative research.

    International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation, 13(5), 209-217.

SmithBattle, L. (2000). The vulnerabilities of teenage mothers: challenging prevailing

    assumptions. *Advances in Nursing, 23*(1) pp.29-40.

SmithBattle, L. (2005a). Family legacies in shaping teen mothers' caregiving practices over 12

    years. *West J Nurs Res. 27*, 831-850.

SmithBattle, L. (2005b). Teenage mothers at age 30. *Western Journal of Nursing Research 27,*(7), 831 – 850.

SmithBattle, L. (2007)"I Wanna Have a Good Future": Teen mothers' rise in educational aspirations, competing demands, and limited school support. *Youth & Society. 38*, 348-371.

Solivan, A.E., Wallace,M.E., Kaplan, K.C.,& Harville, E.W. (2015). Use of a resiliency framework to examine pregnancy and birth outcomes among adolescents: A qualitative study. *Families, Systems, & Health*, *33*, (4), 349–355.

Sosulski, M.R., Cunningham, A., Sellers, SL., (2006). Fostering Hope: A narrative case analysis of one teenage mother's pursuit of a college education. *Journal of Women & Social Work, 21*(3), 320-335.

Stange, K. (2011). A longitudinal analysis of the relationship between fertility timing and schooling. *Demography, 48,* 931-956.

Staples, L. (1997). An overview of race and marital status. In McAdoo, H.P. (Ed.) Black families (3rd ed., pp. 269-273).

Strunk, J.A. (2008). The effect of school based health clinics on teenage pregnancy and parenting outcomes: An integrated literature review. *The Journal of School Nursing, 24,* 13-20.

Taylor, R. J., Chatters, L. M., Tucker, M. B., & Lewis, E. (1990). Developments in research on Black families: A decade review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52,*993-1014.

Townshend, J. M., Kambouropoulos, N., Griffin, A., Hunt, F. J., & Milani, R. M. (2014).

Binge drinking, reflection impulsivity, and unplanned sexual behavior: Impaired decision-making in young social drinkers. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, 38*(4), 1143–1150.

Turner, R.J., Sorenson, A.M. and Turner, J.B. (2000) Social contingencies in mental health: A seven year follow up study of teenage mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(3): 777– 791.

Udry, J. R. (1979). Age at menarche, at first intercourse, and at first pregnancy. *Journal of Biosocial Science, 11,* 433–441.

Ungar, M. (2004). A constructionist discourse on resilience: Multiple contexts, multiple realities among at-risk children and youth. *Youth & Society, 35,* 341– 365.

Velez-Pestrana, M.C., Gonzalez-Rodriguez, R.A., Borges-Hernandez, A. (2005). Family functioning and early onset of sexual intercourse in Latino adolescents. *Adolescence, 40* (160), 778-790.

Wakschlag, L.S.; Chase-Lansdale, P.L.; Brooks-Gunn, J. (2006). Not Just "Ghosts in the nursery": Contemporaneous intergenerational relationships and parenting in young African-American families. *Child Development., 67,* 2131–2147.

Waller, M. A., Brown, B., & Whittle, B. (1999). Mentoring as a bridge to positive outcomes for teen mothers and their children. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 16,* 467–480.

Watson, L.L. ,Vogel L.R. & Wubenna, Z. (2017). Educational resilience in teenage mothers. *Cogent Education, 4,* 3-22.

Wiggins, M., Oakley, M., Austerberry, H., Clemens, F., & Elbourne, D. (2005). Teenage parenthood and social exclusion: A multi-method study: Summary of report findings. London: Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Wodtke, G.T. (2013). During and timing of exposure to neighborhood poverty and the risk of adolescent parenthood. *Demography, 50,* 1765-1788.

Woodward, L., Fergusson, D.M., & Horwood, L.J. (2001). Risk factors and life processes associated with teenage pregnancy: Results of a prospective study from birth to 20 years. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63,* 1170-1184.

Yardley, E. (2008). Teenage mothers' experiences of stigma. *Journal of Youth Studies, 11,(6),* 671-684.

Zimmerman, Mark. (2013). Resiliency theory: A strengths based approach to research and practice for adolescent health. *Health & Education Behavior. 40*(4), 381-383.

Zito, R. (2013). Family structure history and teenage cohabitation: Instability, socioeconomic disadvantage, or transmission. *Journal of Family Issues, 36*(3), 299-325.