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Comparing Motivation and Ambition Between Adolescent Mothers and Child-Free Women

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Abstract

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MS, Human Services Administration, Walden University, 2020

MBA, Strategic Resource Management, Walden University, 2009

BA, Mass Communications and English, Knoxville College, 1995

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Abstract

Recent studies have concluded that adolescent pregnancy and subsequent motherhood can contribute to mental health stressors, acting as potential barriers to ambition and motivation. Researchers have explored motivation and ambition; however, there is little or no research comparing motivation and ambition between adolescent mothers and child-free women. The purpose of this casual-comparative study was to compare motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers, age 18-24, and women of the same age range who are child-free. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory as the theoretical lens, and the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory and Aspirations Index, were used as data collection instruments. Recruitment strategies included posting on social media platforms, holding informational sessions, using Survey Monkey's Participant Pool and Walden's Participant Pool. While 250 responses were initially targeted, data collection was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and only 58 participants responded, resulting in 17 usable responses after data cleaning. Nonparametric statistical tests, including the Kruskal-Wallis H test and the Mann-Whitney U test, were used to analyze the data. While the final sample was too small to produce generalizable results, the study's findings suggest that further research should be conducted into whether child-free women have higher motivation than mothering women in several domains, and whether child-free women have higher ambition than mothering women. Mothering and child-free women, aged 18 to 24, may benefit from the results of this study in that understanding differences in motivation and ambition among different groups of women can be used in the development of women's educational programs, advocacy efforts, and legislative policies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Adolescent mothers experience more social, economic, and psychological disadvantages compared to young women have not given birth (Assini-Meytin, 2015; Kiani et al., 2019). Adolescent pregnancy is recognized as a public health concern that has diverse consequences for individuals, families, and society (Kiani et al., 2019; Krugu et al., 2016). Adolescent women who have given birth face social exclusion predicated on social identity, gender, and socioeconomic status (Ellis-Sloan, 2013; Erfina et al., 2019). With limited literature focusing on the successful headship role of adolescent mothers beyond the topics of their resilience, poverty, strength, and mental health associated with teen pregnancy and adolescent motherhood, comparing motivation levels and ambition values between two groups may inform policies and practices better to support adolescent mothers as they develop into their positions as heads of household. This research includes knowledge and information for helping professionals to develop leadership development, mentoring, and coaching programs which create leadership opportunities for impoverished and vulnerable groups. The study's findings may also increase visibility by providing adolescent mothers and women a voice within society. Furthermore, study findings may dispel adverse societal perceptions that young women are unmotivated and demonstrate low ambition after giving birth.

This study involved comparing motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers and child-free women. Study results may be used to dispel misnomers, stereotypes, and adverse societal perceptions concerning motherhood involving increased poverty, poor parenting and coping skills, increased high school

dropout and unemployment rates, and overall lower quality of life (QoL). Additionally, results may include valuable insights about adolescent and adult motivation, ambition, emerging adulthood, adolescent motherhood, teen motherhood, women's empowerment, QoL for women, and adolescent maternal development. Answers to research questions may be useful for helping professionals who can develop and implement QoL services, mentoring and educational programs, advocacy and legislative policies, and legislation geared specifically toward adolescent mothers and young women. Furthermore, results may be used to determine whether motivation levels and ambition values can be changed or remain the same after motherhood. Lastly, study results could be used to address psychosocial and socioemotional needs and support required by mothers to maintain healthy wellbeing and improve overall QoL for adolescent mothers during adolescence.

One positive social change implication of this study is that findings may improve QoL and wellbeing for a vulnerable population through the development of women's empowerment, mentoring, educational, and service delivery programs that include basic life as well as life management skills. Women's empowerment programs are needed for both mothering and child-free women. As young mothers and young women become emerging adults, human services organizations should be developing training and life management programs which empower young women to continue their personal development as well as spiritual, creative, social, educational, and vocational pursuits after giving birth.

Developing life skills allows socially vulnerable individuals to cope with their environment by making responsible decisions, having a better understanding of their

values, improving communication, and getting along with others, and they are personal characteristics and capabilities that increase chances of success and wellbeing (Boyd et al., 1992; Hermens et al., 2017; Singla et al., 2020; Super et al., 2017). Life management skills are focused on planning for the future; these planning skills are as pertinent to adolescent mothers as they are to older adults (Prenda & Lachman, 2001; Singla et al., 2020). Adolescent mothers benefit from these skills by creating action plans and moving forward into their future selves, despite socioeconomic barriers. Emphasizing life management skills may transform adolescent mothers into productive and successful nontraditional leaders and positive contributors in their communities, as well as empower them in terms of greater self-efficacy (Dart, 2004; Schmid et al., 2011; Teasdale, 2012).

Experiences involving teen pregnancy and subsequent motherhood are opportunities for transformation, self-development, and personal growth (Efina et al., 2019; Ricks, 2016). For many young mothers, they develop a sense of stability, identity, purpose, and responsibility (Efina et al., 2019; Watts et al., 2015). The concepts of social relatedness, autonomy, and competence are also crucial when it comes to motivation and engagement. Creating a supportive and nonjudgmental environment is another positive social change implication for human services organizations and practitioners. By understanding and identifying what motivates their clients, human services practitioners, helping professionals, and thought leaders can develop prevention, intervention, and remediation programs tailored to needs and interest of their clients, thus increasing likelihood of positive outcomes which supports client autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Human services organizations may design and implement human services programs which emphasize leadership development, mentoring, and personal coaching that is geared specifically toward adolescent mothers. Practitioners could coach adolescent mothers to help achieve desired goal aspirations, motivate them to use positive coping strategies to manage mental health stressors which often lead to depressive symptoms, introduce positive parenting strategies which contribute to strengthening family structures, and empower adolescent mothers and young women in terms of self-efficacy and setting goals for their future selves.

Human services is an interdisciplinary field of study which involves prevention, intervention, and problem remediation. The discipline is committed to improving overall QoL of serviced populations. These efforts may improve QoL for adolescent mothers and decrease pregnancy recidivism and high school dropout rates, as well as poverty caused by unemployment and underemployment (National Organization of Human Services, 2019). Additional social change implications include designing and implementing programs and policies which emphasize leadership development, mentoring, and personal coaching opportunities.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction to the study as well as the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. Chapter 2 includes literature search strategies, theoretical foundation, and a literature review related to key variables. Chapter 3 includes the methodology. Within Chapter 3, the research design and

rationale, population, sampling frame and procedures, procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, instrumentation and operationalization constructs, threats to validity, and ethical procedures are described. Chapter 4 includes explanations of data collection, analysis, and results. Chapter 5 includes interpretations of findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Study findings have significant social implications which could impact QoL of individuals and communities. By understanding psychosocial needs and challenges faced by these groups, practitioners and policymakers can develop targeted approaches to support them. For practitioners, addressing psychosocial needs of mothering women between 18 and 24 is critical to their overall mental, emotional, and aspirational wellbeing. Mothering at a young age often disrupts educational pursuits and impacts social interactions with peers and partners (Kiani et al., 2019; Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). Moreover, due to interruption of adolescent development and acceleration of adult maternal development, emotional maturation and executive functioning are delayed, which impacts quality of parenting.

Background

Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by significant biological and psychosocial transitions (Siegel & Brandon, 2013). Adolescent mothers face dual challenges; they are asked to accomplish tasks that are crucial for their wellbeing and navigate challenges of motherhood as well (LePlatte et al., 2012). For socially disadvantaged adolescents, early parenting is a significant life event that perpetuates life trajectories (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015). When compared to their nonparenting peers

who come from similar backgrounds, they have fewer opportunities and greater stress, and face barriers over their lives that contribute to high levels of financial instability (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015; Watts et al., 2015).

Within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, unintended teen pregnancy rates are still above the national average, although there has been a decline in pregnancy rates nationally (Hamilton & Ventura, 2013). The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2016) discovered employment and future earnings are negatively impacted by adolescent motherhood. Although self-improvement, inner strengths, and resilience may develop from challenging experiences involved with adolescent motherhood, mental health stressors and strain are also barriers which negatively affect ambition values and motivation levels, an indirect effect of challenges and new responsibilities of motherhood (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2015). Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school or attend college (Ellis & Sloan, 2013). QoL refers to individual perceptions of wellbeing in various life domains. Pires et al. (2013) concluded as adolescent girls transition into motherhood, they tend to suffer severe depressive symptoms, which impact their QoL. Adolescent mothers have specific needs for help to successfully navigate the combined demands of adolescent development and their roles as new parents (DeVito, 2010).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Adolescent mothers face a complex set of challenges that require attention in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. Poor QoL is a subjective outcome of pregnancy, and pregnant adolescent women may experience cognitive maladjustments as

they transition to motherhood. To successfully navigate demands of adolescent development and parenthood, adolescent mothers have specific needs for help (DeVito, 2010). These needs include primary care to address mental strains and stressors that can lead to misaligned neurological and emotional regulation problems (Smith Battle & Freed, 2016; Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). Adolescent motherhood also impacts emotion regulation, which can lead to intensified fear, sadness, and anger, as well as exacerbated depressive symptoms and mental stressors (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2015). Additionally, due to an immature brain cortex, adolescent mothers may experience poorer executive functioning and severe depressive symptoms (Chico et al., 2014; Ernst, 2015). It is crucial to support adolescent mothers in terms of addressing these mental health challenges and building resilience to promote their wellbeing.

Parenting Styles

Emotional immaturity, depressive symptoms, and poor executive functioning faced by adolescent mothers are often reflected in their parenting styles. Parenting style is defined as behaviors, attitudes, and values that parents have which determine how they act with their children (Trishala & Kiran, 2015). As teen mothers move toward adulthood, emotional maturity evolves, and responsive parenting allows adolescent mothers to adopt parenting styles which may alleviate mental health stressors which negatively impact how parents relate to their children.

Educational and Occupational Aspirations

Adolescents with higher aspirations levels have better mental wellbeing scores. Frostick et al. (2016) investigated factors which influence educational and occupational

aspirations among adolescents from deprived areas of London and indicated adolescent females reported higher educational aspirations than males, but not occupational aspirations. White British students reported lower educational and occupational aspirations compared to other ethnic groups and Black African children reported the highest educational aspirations. Perceived parental support for education had the largest positive association with aspirations and mental wellbeing in contrast to negative perceptions of school and school peer environment (Frostick et al., 2016). Phipps et al. (2011) determined pregnant adolescents, presenting for their first prenatal visit, prior to becoming pregnant, had career aspirations which required college education and reported they had plans to pursue those aspirations after the birth of their baby. Salmela-Aro et al., (2010) reviewed Towards Working Life, an intervention program that increased the number of education-related personal goals and internal motivation for adolescents and determined group intervention programs help adolescents form ideas and plans about their future career goals and promoted positive motivation involving the future.

Motivation and Ambition

Motivation levels and ambition values of adolescent mothers during motherhood, in comparison with their non-mother teen peers, have not been studied. Intrinsic motivation involves behaviors which are performed due to the satisfaction one feels when accomplishing something (Cokely, 2000; Steg et al., 2015). Ernst (2014) posited motivation, emotion, and regulation are closely related and interdependent. When applied to adolescent behavior, behavioral responses to incentivize inform the triadic model: reward-related/motivated behavior, passive exposure tasks, reward tasks, and reward

decision making tasks. Ernst (2014) determined adolescents are more motivated to achieve rewards than adults, and adults seek more control than motivation when compared to adolescents.

For many child-free women, they experience emotional safety, support, trust and connections with family, friends, and healthcare providers, and develop self-confidence which evolves from opportunities to develop their life goals. As a result of trust, and support, child-free women are strongly motivated to remain free from pregnancy (Jenkins et al., 2017). For many non-mother teen women, there is no perceived value in teen pregnancy and subsequent motherhood (Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). They perceive adolescent motherhood will impede their social interactions with peers and partners and disrupt educational pursuits (Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). Non-mother teen girls who reside in poor and underserved neighborhoods are viewed positively by society due to avoiding teen pregnancy (Jenkins et al., 2017). Additionally, many non-mother teens perceive teen motherhood as a hindrance to future aspirations (Childs et al., 2015; Erfina et al., 2019). The right time for pregnancy is during the mid 20s after postsecondary education, marriage, or when financial stability is achieved (Tinago et al., 2017).

There is a gap in literature involving comparing motivation levels and ambition between teen mothers and non-mother or child-free women. Huang et al. (2014) compared teen mothers and child-free teen girls in terms of psychoemotional aspects of adolescent motherhood as well as the influence of parenting stress and perceived social support on maternal depression 6 months after birth and the impact on infant development 1 year later. Higher levels of maternal stress were associated with

developmental delays in infants at 1 year. Among ethnic/minority adolescent mothers, lack of perceived social support and increased parenting stress contributed to negative impacts on infant development.

Figueiredo et al. (2007) determined adolescent Portuguese mothers presented more depressive systems during pregnancy and postpartum compared to adult Portuguese mothers. Brummelman et al. (2012) concluded when parents see their children as part of themselves, they desire their children to fulfill their unfulfilled ambitions. According to Walker and Holtfreter (2016), during youth, delinquency is influenced indirectly by stressful life events; anger and frustration produce emotional reactions which increase the likelihood of criminal responses. Stressful events or strains manifest in three forms: actual or anticipated failure of a valued goal, removal of positively valued stimuli, and presentation of toxic stressors (noxious stimuli) which contribute to delinquent behaviors in youth and indirectly influence life events. Disruption of educational pursuits and lack of or decrease in social interactions with peers and partners are strains which result from removal of positive stimuli. For adolescent mothers, childbearing is a major strain that goes beyond childbirth and involves motherhood responsibilities, economic, mental, social challenges, and neurological delay during the adolescent development process.

East and Barber (2014) confirmed high educational aspirations among pregnant Latina adolescents were related to greater unwantedness of the pregnancy which subsequently led to feelings of trapped by parenting and inadequate mothering, one-year post-partum. Atkinson and Peden-McAlpine (2014) found women were more likely to have children as teenagers than men by age 32, compared to nonmothering teen girls,

teen mothers are more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty, and depend on welfare (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine, 2014). Never-pregnant adolescents between 11 and 14 believed they would be adversely impacted if teen pregnancy happened (Childs et al., 2015).

There is a gap in literature when comparing adolescent mothers and non-mothering women. I have been unable to identify any literature which explicitly compares intrinsic motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers and child-free women. This study may advance scientific knowledge and add to literature on youth and ambition, intrinsic motivations in youth, emerging adulthood, maternal adolescent development, and adolescent motherhood. Consequently, findings from this study may be used to inform helping professionals, human services professionals, and social workers involving psychosocial needs of adolescent mothers.

Problem Statement

Adolescent mothers experience more social, economic, and psychological disadvantages than nonmothering young women (Assini-Meytin, 2015; Ellis-Sloan, 2013; Erfina et al., 2019). Eighty-two percent of adolescent pregnancies are unplanned, and 25% end in abortion (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2023; Kost & Henshaw, 2013). In 2020, just over 158,000 babies were born to women between 15 and 19. Pregnant or parenting adolescents face three basic psychological problems: unsupportive life circumstances, high-risk behaviors, and limited understanding of pregnancy, parenting, child health, and development (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine, 2014; Laurenzi et al., 2020). They also underuse resources that could help them achieve

self-efficacy (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine, 2014). Adolescents with uncertain or misaligned occupational aspirations are more likely to remain unemployed, uneducated, and untrained (Wuermli et al., 2021; Yates et al., 2011). The societal problem addressed in this study is adverse societal perceptions of adolescent women who are demotivated and lack ambition after giving birth and subsequent motherhood. There is a gap in literature involving comparing adolescent mothers and child-free women. There is limited or no identifiable research that compares motivation levels and ambition values between teen mothers and child-free women.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this casual-comparative study is to compare motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers (ages 18-24), and women within the same age range who are child-free. I compare the independent variable, whether or not each participant gave birth, with the following confounding variables: age, ethnicity, education level, and relationship status. The study needs to be conducted to increase knowledge and add to existing literature about self-determination, adolescent parenthood, youth development, adolescent maternity development, intrinsic motivation, and youth ambition and goal aspirations. Determining whether motivation and ambition changes in women after giving birth may be used to develop coaching action plans for improving QoL of adolescent mothers, promoting decreased pregnancy recidivism, high school dropout, and poverty rates caused by unemployment and underemployment (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine, 2014; Yates et al., 2011).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study involved exploring the following research questions:

RQ1: How do motivation levels compare between child-free women and women with children?

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation in terms of motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_a1: There a statistically significant correlation in terms of motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

RQ2: How do aspiration values compare between child-free women and women with children?

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation in terms of aspiration values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_a1: There is a statistically significant correlation in terms of aspiration values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

Theoretical Framework

The self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan was used for this study. Individuals are motivated when three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2011). I used the self-determination theory to analyze and interpret the variables to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between the two groups' motivation and ambition. In the study, by Watts et al., (2015), adolescent mothers felt motherhood involved connecting to their parents and

partners; it comes with elevated responsibility, purpose, and social recognition. Psychological needs involving satisfaction, competence, relatedness, and autonomy may be jeopardized by adolescent motherhood. Never-pregnant adolescent women perceive adolescent pregnancy and subsequent motherhood leads to putting personal, educational, and financial goals on hold. The self-determination theory is used for understanding how autonomous individuals are able to determine their own ways of living without being alienated from communities (Kuzucu & Simsek, 2013). Childs et al., (2015) found nonmothering adolescents see adolescent motherhood as a hindrance to future aspirations. The self-determination theory was used to understand motivation levels and ambition values in adolescent mothers and never-pregnant adolescents. Furthermore, the self-determination theory is useful in determining which variables are influenced by and explain challenges associated with the phenomenon.

Nature of the Study

To address the gap in research, I used a causal-comparative design. The causal-comparative research design is used when the independent variable has already been decided and is not able to be manipulated (Brewer & Kuban, 2012). Causal-comparative research designs involve finding relationships between independent and dependent variables after an action or event already occurred. In causal-comparative research, there are two or more groups and one independent variable; each group share similar characteristics such as age and education levels, but to varying degrees. A quasi-experimental research design is useful when comparing groups. However, the groups were not created through random assignment but were chosen to have characteristics and

similarities such as age, ethnicity, relationship status and education level, to the treatment group (Shaddish et al., 2002; Trochim, 2006The dependent variables motivation and ambition were measured as well as ethnicity, relationship status, and education levels. The independent variables in the study were whether or not participants had given birth. Participants were analyzed according to ethnicity, relationship status, and education. Primary sources of data were collected from SurveyMonkey. Additionally, frequent survey response rates help ensure results are representative of the sample (Fincham, 2008). An a priori power analysis was used to determine a minimum of 210 participants were needed to run my analysis.

Data were analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis H test and Mann-Whitney U test. Nonparametric tests are useful when there is a small sample size. The Mann-Whitney U test is a nonparametric test that is used when comparing mean rank scores of two groups. The Mann-Whitney U test includes the Wilcoxon sum rank, which ranks data to compare two groups and test whether they come from the same population (Laerd, n.d.).

The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed (Laerd, n.d.). It is used to draw different conclusions about data, depending on assumptions made about data distribution. The Mann-Whitney U test is an alternative to the independent t-test (Laerd, n.d.). The Kruskal-Wallis H test is also a nonparametric test and is considered the alternative to a one-way ANOVA. Both the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests are rank-based tests which are useful when determining if there are statistically significant effects of two or more groups of

independents variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. Using an ordinal scale, two groups were measured in terms of ethnicity, relationship status, and education in order to ensure they were as similar as possible. In order to successfully analyze data using the Kruskal-Wallis H and the Mann-Whitney U tests. To meet the necessary conditions for the analysis, four assumptions should be satisfied: first, the measurement of the dependent variables, motivation and ambition, should be done on an ordinal scale. Second, the independent variables should comprise two or more categorical groups. Third, there should be independence of observation between the two groups. Additionally, the distribution of the population should not follow a normal distribution, and the variances should not be equally distributed. The Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests share the first three assumptions for nonparametric statistics. However, the fourth assumption for the Mann-Whitney U test is that the distribution of scores for both groups of independent variables will have the same shape or a different shape. The fourth assumption for the Kruskal-Wallis H test is to determine whether the distributions in each group have the same shape.

Intrinsic motivation and ambition were measured using the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Scale and Aspiration Index Scale. The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory is used for experiments involving intrinsic motivation and self-regulation; it is used to assess participants' interest/enjoyment, perceived pressure, perceived choice, competence, effort, and value while performing a given activity. The Aspiration Index Scale is used to assess people's aspirations. Having strong aspirations for extrinsic outcomes such as wealth, fame, and image was negatively associated with

mental health indicators, whereas placing more importance on intrinsic aspirations, personal growth, relationships, and community contribution, was positively associated with mental health (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). A web survey was distributed to participants via SurveyMonkey.

Definitions

Concise definitions of terms are as follows:

Independent variable. Have given birth or have not given birth are the independent variables. Given birth is defined as a biological process by which a female brings forth offspring from her body while have not given birth refers to a biological process by which a female has not brought forth offspring from her body.

Dependent variable. The dependent variables in the study are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic ambition. Motivation within this study refers to intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation. Motivation is the study of the processes which cause animals and humans to exhibit varying sets of behavior at different times (Pawlik & Rosenzweig, 2000). For the purpose of this study, motivation is interchangeably used with intrinsic motivation, which is defined as a free choice behavior and self-reported interest (Deci et al., 1999). Deci, Kostner, and Ryan (1999) state intrinsic motivation energizes and sustains activities through the satisfaction of volition (autonomy) and free choice with the expectations of no external rewards.

Ambition. Ambition, for the purpose of the study, reflects on general well-being and socio-emotional acceptance instead of the general reflections of position and wealth

(Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). It is the persistent and generalized striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).

Aspirations: Expectations or goals comprised of intentions, attitudes, or strong desires for achievements or objects of desire (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006). Active aspirations are defined as a set of goals or a goal which a person is consciously and deliberately working (Reeves & Network, 2014). Ambition and active aspirations are used interchangeably within the study.

Child Free: Females who are child-free choose not to biologically have children for a variety of reasons involving education, socioeconomic status, and medical reasons.

Non-mother/Non-mothering/Never pregnant: Female who has never been pregnant (Frost & Holt, 2014).

Child Free. Child-free or non-mothering is defined as females who choose not to biologically have children for a variety of reasons including education, socio-economic status, medical reasons, or choice.

Intrinsic Motivation: Study of processes which cause animals and humans to exhibit varying sets of behavior at different times (Pawlik & Rosenzweig, 2000). For the purpose of this study, motivation is interchangeably used with intrinsic motivation. Deci et al. (1999) stated intrinsic motivation energizes and sustains activities through satisfaction of volition (autonomy) and free choice with expectations of no external rewards.

Quality of Life (QoL): QoL refers to objective or subjective perceptions of wellbeing. Furthermore, QoL refers not only to social and emotional wellbeing, but also personal

development and purposeful activity (Karimi & Brazier, 2016). QoL is associated with personal development and purposeful activity based on personal values.

Assumptions

Assumptions are aspects of the study that are believed but cannot be demonstrated to be true. Assumptions are guesses about nature which need to be tested (Jasso, 2004). Acknowledging assumptions is necessary to ensure transparency and plausibility (Shaddish et al., 2007). I assumed the intended sample size was sufficient for generalizability. I also assumed participants were literate and able to read requests for participation and informed consent forms before beginning survey questionnaires. I assumed survey questions were designed so responses were clear and concise and required no additional clarification beyond initial instructions. Additionally, I assumed responses were truthful and unbiased. I assumed the self-determination theory was adequate to address motivations child-free women have for not becoming teen mothers.

Scope and Delimitations

Quasi-experimental research designs may lead to threats to internal validity. Internal validity refers to differences in variables as measured at a particular time and setting, as well as kinds of units sampled in the study (Cook et al., 2007). Comparing motivation and ambition between two groups may lead to threats to internal validity which may impact results. Threats to validity are issues which can call into doubt results of a study or conclusions drawn from results (Carver et al., 2004).

Threats to internal validity include ambiguous temporal precedence because there are two dependent variables, motivation, and ambition and one independent variable:

whether participants have given birth or not given birth. The study may not be able to determine whether giving birth is the cause or the effect on the dependent variables.

My target population were biological females in the U.S. who were between 18 and 24 years. Excluded from the study were girls between 13 and 17 or were illiterate or unable to read or write. Also, excluded from the study were males, or males who self-identify as female or transgender.

To ensure homogeneity, adolescent women were as similar as possible. The two groups: adolescent women who have given birth and those who have not given birth were measured in terms of relationship status, ethnicity, and education using the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Scale and Aspiration Index Scale.

Limitations

All studies have limitations. Understanding limitations is important for placing research findings in context, interpreting validity of the scientific work, and adding credibility to published research. The study may have limitations because there is limited data or no research which compares adolescent mothers and child-free nonmothering peers. Despite my best efforts, I was unable to collect enough data to be able to secure valid results from data analysis. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings.

While threats to internal validity compromise confidence that a relationship exists between independent and dependent variables, threats involving external validity compromise whether study results are generalizable to other groups. External validity

refers to how characteristics of any type of study design can influence and limit generalizability of research findings (Lavrakas, 2008).

Because of the potentially sensitive nature of survey questions, participants may have been uncomfortable answering these questions. Self-reported data from adolescents and young adults is limited in that it was not independently verified. This threat was minimized by clearly stating the purpose of the research study, assigning numbers to identify participants instead of names, and receiving electronic consent forms from participants.

Other limitations involved lack of access to organizations and participants due to social distancing, school closures, and other COVID-19-related restrictions and closures. Inadequate sampling and low survey returns are examples of threats to external validity and can lead to methodological limitations. Financial and human resources availability can limit the participant pool and availability to participate in the study (Strand, 1987).

Finally, generalizability of results, another threat to external validity, could be limited because I only studied adolescent mothers and child-free women between 18 and 24d. Furthermore, the study may not be generalizable outside of the U.S. Despite methodological, practical, and researcher limitations, there are opportunities for future research. There is a need for additional research outside of the U.S. to survey other parenting and nonparenting groups such as fathers and child-free teen boys.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to compare whether giving birth or not giving birth contributes to significant changes in terms of intrinsic motivation levels and ambition between adolescent women who have given birth and those who have not given birth.

A study comparing ambition and motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free or non-mothering women may dispel or confirm stereotypes that single and adolescent mothers are unmotivated while at the same time providing valuable insights involving intrinsic motivation and ambition during adolescent motherhood. Furthermore, this study may provide human service organizations and helping professionals with a strong understanding of psychosocial and socioemotional needs of adolescent mothers. Understanding motivation and ambition among young women who have given birth as well as those who are child-free is crucial because it allows helping professionals to be creative, set goals, increase personal interest, make plans, and develop talent. Furthermore, understanding motivation leads to valuable insights about human nature. Motivation explains why goals are set, why one strives for achievement and power, why there are emotions like fear, anger, and compassion (Hagger et al., 2014). For helping professionals identifying and understanding motivation may allow them to engage with individuals with an understanding that an individual's autonomous behaviors: choice, personal endorsement, interest, and satisfaction, are likely to be consistent with the continuation of empowering behaviors. Through the interviewing process, practitioners must also recognize social relatedness as a key psychological mechanism impacting motivation and engagement. Therefore, they must co-create action plans informed by

their clients' autonomous behaviors. This may be useful for understanding willingness or unwillingness to make or refrain from making changes which may improve or impact their future selves and QoL (Dart, 2004; Schmid et al., 2011; Teasdale, 2012).

As a theory of self-regulation, human service providers may use the results to influence client's behavior change (Sohl et al., 2016). Women experience the most powerful social and institutional discrimination during their twenties and early thirties, after they have left the educational system and start pursuing their ambitions (Fels, 2004). Human services organizations can have an impact on women's lives by providing them with tools and resources they need to achieve their goals and manage their lives. By empowering women, practitioners may improve their self-esteem, confidence, and decision-making abilities, which can lead to greater success in terms of their personal and professional lives. Human services professionals who actively develop action plans with their mothering and child-free women clients may help them set and achieve their goals. Results may be used to inform family stabilization intervention practices, women's mental health issues, adolescent development, women's empowerment, emerging adulthood and maternal aging programs and services. Women seek to be viewed as competent to make self-governing decisions, both personally and professionally (Ely et al., 2011). In addition, such programs and services can also help to address social inequalities and promote gender equity.

Autonomy is defined as the right to self-government. Human services professionals should offer an appreciation of clients' personal values and lifestyles (NOHS, 2023). When working with human services organizations and professionals,

young women should be empowered to select intervention, prevention, and remediation programs for their overall wellbeing. Results may be used to further develop these action plans to improve their QoL. To ensure success of service delivery programs, it is important human services practitioners engage with women and understand their needs and perspectives (NOHS, 2023). By involving women in the design and implementation of these service delivery programs, they can be tailored to meet their unique needs and preferences.

Relatedness is the state of being or feeling connected. Human services professionals must work with consumers and families to use community resources, specialized assistance, and natural support to promote wellbeing, empowerment, and community membership (NOHS, 2023). Overall, study results may be used to develop human services delivery programs which empower women to achieve their future educational goals, promote community relatedness, and strengthen autonomy, which contributes to QoL. Furthermore, study results may also be used to support legislative policies and promote advocacy efforts which support and benefit adolescent women and mothers. Finally, results may be helpful in terms of understanding how self-determination influences personal aspirations of adolescent women leading to increases in personal goal attainment, self-efficacy, and enhanced wellbeing. Study results may be used to enhance health and wellbeing of adolescent mothers and child-free women the U.S. and abroad.

Summary

The intent of this study is to address psychosocial needs involving societal and relational support that women, between the age of 18 and 24, in order to maintain or

improve their motivation levels and ambition values after adolescent childbirth. Comparing adolescent mothers with nonmothering/child-free women helps in terms of identifying factors that impact motivation and ambition. My goal was to understand differences, if any, in terms of motivation and ambition between these two groups, which could potentially lead to development of action plans that help young women capitalize on their competence, autonomy, and relatedness to achieve personal goals.

This research has the potential to make a significant contribution to literature on adolescent mothers, motivation, and ambition. By filling gaps in knowledge and providing new insights, the study can help inform development of effective mentoring and empowerment programs that support adolescent mothers in terms of achieving their goals and reaching their full potential. People are deemed unmotivated when they fail to exert effort and do not live up to their potential (Pawlik & Rosenzweig, 2000Ultimately this research could help change societal perceptions of adolescent mothers and child-free women and contribute to their overall wellbeing and success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by significant biological and psychosocial transitions (Siegel & Brandon, 2013). Adolescent mothers face dual challenges: They are asked to accomplish tasks that are crucial for their wellbeing and navigate challenges of motherhood (LePlatte et al., 2012). There are three stages of adolescent maternal development: initial adolescent maternal development, intermediate adolescent maternal development, and adolescent maternal development. The initial stage of adolescent maternal development involves recognizing presence of high-risk behaviors, lack of awareness of resources, and lack of maternal self-sufficiency. During this stage, parenting and pregnant adolescents engage in high-risk behaviors and lack awareness and certainty about their life choices.

The second stage of adolescent maternal development sees a reduction in high-risk behaviors and increased awareness of resources and maternal self-sufficiency (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine, 2014). During the final stage of adolescent maternal development, pregnant and parenting adolescents abstain from high-risk behaviors and seek and use available resources and demonstrate self-sufficiency and self-reliance. It is during this phase that goals change and goal selectivity increases (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014). During the final stage of adolescent maternal development, adolescents think about their future and begin to make conscious choices about their education, employment, choice of life partner, and family planning (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine, 2014).

For socially disadvantaged adolescents who become teen parents, early parenting is a significant major life event (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015). Black women in particular are more likely than any other racial group to raise children alone (Elliot et al., 2015). When compared to their nonparenting peers who come from similar backgrounds, they have even less opportunities, greater stress, and face barriers which make it difficult to achieve socioeconomic success, in addition to high levels of financial instability (Assini-Meytin & Green, 2015; Watts et al., 2015). Hence, when compared to adult parents, teen parents have more negative perceptions of the impact of pregnancy due to developmental challenges involving adolescents transitioning into motherhood, which impacts their QoL (Piers et al., 2013). QoL refers to individual perception of one's wellbeing. For pregnant adolescent women, it is considered a subjective outcome to pregnancy, their transition to motherhood and predictor of cognitive maladjustment. Pregnant adolescent women are considered a risk group in terms of depression-related symptoms, adverse parenting styles, and poor QoL (Atkinson & Peden-McAlpine,2014; Piers et al., 2013).

Experiences involving adolescent pregnancy and adolescent motherhood can lead to opportunities for transformation, self-development, and personal growth (Ricks, 2016). For many young mothers, they develop a sense of stability, identity, purpose, and responsibility (Watts et al., 2015). My study involved comparing motivation and ambition between adolescent mothers and child-free women and was framed using the self-determination theory. Self-improvement, inner strengths, and resilience develop from challenging experiences involving adolescent pregnancy and motherhood. Mental health

stressors and strain are also potential barriers to ambition and motivation, an indirect effect of challenges and new responsibilities of motherhood.

Literature Search Strategy

This study involved using various search strategies and key word searches to find existing research and identify gaps in literature. Google Scholar was used with the Walden University Library. I used the following databases: ProQuest, Thoreau, Academic Search Complete, Child Stats, Child Trends database ERIC, SAGE Journals, SAGE Encyclopedia, Science Direct, and PsychNet Direct.

Key words or terms used in the literature search were: *adolescent mothers, teen mothers, teen pregnancy, motivation, ambition, non-mother adolescents, adolescent mothering, unmarried, never married, never wed, mothers, low income teen mothers, self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation, non-mother and motivation levels, disempowerment of women in urban settings, pregnancy unwantedness and motivation, parenting adolescents and ambition, parenting teens and motivation, adolescent mothers and long term aspirations, adolescents, pregnancy and mental health, adolescent maternal development, low income, single mothers, educational and career aspirations in teen/adolescents, quality of life for teen mothers, autonomy in teen mothers, self-sufficiency in teen mothers, teen/youth goal attainment, teen/youth career attainment, teen/youth educational attainment, adolescent mothers' goal attainment, consequences of teen motherhood on ambition, education, employment, challenges of adolescent motherhood, adolescent motivated behavior, teen/adolescent goal attainment, future expectations of teen mothers, adolescent or teen women*, and *child-free women*.

A review of seminal and peer-reviewed began in 2012; however, an updated literature review to replace seminal and outdated sources was conducted in 2018. The updated literature review included key sources discussing the topics of adolescent development, adolescent mothers and mothering, resilience, QoL, and psychosocial implications of pregnancy and parenting for teen and non-teen mothers. However, there was a gap in literature comparing adolescent mothers and child-free women and motivation and ambition. Research which compared teen mothers and non-mother/child-free young women was limited in its scope. Literature concerning adolescent development, adolescent maternal development, emotional maturity, and emotional intelligence in teens and adolescents was addressed.

Theoretical Foundation

The self-determination theory by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan was used to frame research study. Individuals are motivated when three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are met (Deci & Ryan, 2011). They possess an innate ability to be self-motivated, contingent upon support, social conditions, and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2011). Ntoumanis et al. (2009) stated self-determination is a multidimensional perspective which incorporates three facets: intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation. Intrinsic motivation involves satisfying psychological needs that are relevant to relationships, autonomy, self-acceptance, relatedness, competence, and sense of community or health (Tabernero & Hernandez, 2011). Self-determination is a continuum of intrinsic motivation which involves enjoyment, learning, and task accomplishment. The theory is useful for examining individual life goals or aspirations

(Deci & Ryan, 2008). The self-determination theory involves types of motivation as predictors of performance, relational, and wellbeing outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

The self-determination theory has been used to explain and examine goal achievement in sports, within the classroom setting, and the attainment of educational and employment pursuits. It has been used to explain work motivation, academic performance, goal achievement, and well-being (Ciani et al., 2011; Ntoumanis et al., 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Ciani, Sheldon, Hilpert, and Easter (2010) used the Self-Determination Theory to understand why students enter classes with specific achievement goals and how the achievement profiles change over time. The authors (2010) compared the Achievement Goal and Self Determination theories and how they related to internal motivation, known as perceived locus of causality (PLOC) and external motivation, known as external PLOC. Motivation can range from fully internal to partially internalized; and, fully external to fully externalized (Ciani et al., 2010). Using the PATH analysis model, the study sampled 184 pre-service teachers who were participating in a required class. Data was collected at three different points during the semester: three months prior; the results determined students' autonomy and relatedness need satisfaction predicted their self-motivation within the class setting. The results also found when the needs of autonomy and relatedness were not satisfied, their self-motivated approach to mastering goals declined over the semester. The results are relevant to my study because it supports the hypothesis when basic psychological needs are supported, self-motivation may increase in adolescents. When students understand the importance of a class or goal on their future, or are just interested in fun, they are more

likely to adopt learning goals and are less likely to appear competent or incompetent (Ciani et al., 2011).

Vansteenkiste, et al., (2006) examined academic motivation in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic goal content and how students hold on to personal goals opposed to the extrinsic goal expectations held within the academic environment (school). The study looked at autonomous motivation which involves choice and volition opposed to controlled motivation which involves being pressured or coerced. The authors hypothesized goal-content manipulation and the quality of learning within the goal was framed would contribute to the prediction of learning, performance, and persistence. The results of the study determined goal framing leads to higher quality learning than extrinsic goal framing. The study determined the impact of goal framing should not depend on the goal itself; instead, on the learner's goal orientation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). The findings from this study are relevant to my study because to enhance learner's motivation for learning, they must understand the usefulness, relevance, or meaning of the materials being presented. With respect to adolescent mothers and non-mothering young women, the subject matter may not be of interest unless it can directly benefit them. Self-determination, according to Deci and Ryan (2011) is innate and the behaviors associated with self-determination allow individuals to behave in effective and healthy ways (Feske et al., 2001). Comparing motivation levels and ambition values between child-free women and adolescent mothers explores whether intrinsic motivation and ambition values increase, decrease, or remain the same after giving birth.

The Self-Determination Theory is the most influential framework for understanding how autonomous individuals are able to determine their own way of living without being alienated from the community (Kuzucu & Simsek, 2013). Autonomy and relatedness are fundamental needs which are affected by parental support and are subsequently linked to psychological distress in teen mothers and non-mothers (Inguglia et al., 2014). Autonomy refers to a sense of volition, self-organizing behavior, while relatedness refers to more than relationship. It is defined as a feeling of connectedness to others and to be loved and cared for (Inguglia et al., 2014). Inguglia, Ingoglia, LaCoco, and LoCricchio (2014) investigated autonomy and relatedness during adolescence and emerging adulthood. The authors hypothesized perceived parental support for autonomy and relatedness would be positively related to each other, and psychological distress would negatively affect autonomy, relatedness, and age. Teen mothers feel motherhood is a connection to their parents and partner; it comes with elevated responsibility, and purpose, and social recognition (Watts et al., 2015).

Competency, the ability to do something successfully, is essential to the success of adolescent mothers. According to Leung and Shek (2016), psycho-social competencies extend further than resilience, it also includes spirituality and future orientation for single mother-led families. Their research examined single mothers experiencing economic disadvantages in Hong Kong. The study hypothesized dutifulness and respect for parents mediated the influence of family functioning on adolescent psychosocial competence. Using a cross-sectional survey and purposive sampling of a total 432 single mothers between 10-17 years old, the results determined for teen mothers, dutifulness and respect

influence the family function. For teen single mothers, family cohesion and positive communication contributes to positive adolescent development. However, poverty and loss contributed negatively to family functioning, adolescent development, and adverse parenting behavior.

As a lens, the self-determination theory helps to understand or explain the phenomenon behind motivation levels and ambition values in adolescent mothers and non-mother women. The theory has been utilized to explain sports motivation and goal attainment. In the context of sports, the coaching behavior is what closely aligns with the research study comparing teen mothers and non-mothers' motivation and ambition. The Self-Determination Theory explains individual behavior and their motivation toward achieving goals.

In the context of sports and exercise, self-determination theory is used to explain well-being and behavioral outcomes related to sports and physical activity (Gunnell et al., 2014). Gunnell et al. (2014) measured changes in physical activity and motivation levels and psychological needs satisfaction among 203 adults, between the ages of 17-65 years old. The authors hypothesized increases in autonomous motivation positively predicts changes in psychological needs satisfaction and fulfilling psychological needs increase well-being and physical activity. The study's results revealed changes in competence satisfaction facilitated a relationship between autonomous motivation and physical activity.

The self-determination theory has also been used to assess academic motivation. Cokley (2000) compared construct validity of the Academic Motivation Scale to self-

determination theory. The results determined of the three types of motivation, amotivation, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and identified regulations are positively correlated with each other. Ricard and Pelletier (2016) also found when basic psychological needs are satisfied, behaviors will be carried out for self-determined reasons. When an individual understands what the goal is; subsequently, accomplishes the goal, and simultaneously, experiences the stimulation, the self-determination continuum continues.

The self-determination theory was useful in determining which variables are influenced by and explain challenges associated with the phenomenon. The theory suggests adolescent mothers will have higher motivation when basic psychological needs are met. When psychological needs have not been satisfied, ambition, whether educational, academic, career, or goal achievement, will be lower because intrinsic motivation is tied to self-efficacy. Self -efficacy judgments affect the goals people set for themselves and their reactions to levels of performance are achieved in different contexts (Tabernero & Hernandez, 2011).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Situational factors such as environmental conditions, familial, and social support, or lack thereof, can affect motivation, ambition, and goal achievement in a situation which influences decision-making (Steig et al., 2015). Fear, reward, incentives, and goal achievement may also have a residual impact on motivation levels and ambition in teen mothers and non-mothers. Therefore, in addition to researching the independent variable,

have given birth, or have not given birth and the dependent variables, motivation, and ambition.

Adolescent Maternal Development, Teen Mothers, and Teen Mothering

According to Assini Meytin and Green (2015), women experience more consequences of teen parenting than men over the life course because of their greater role in childrearing. As such, Watts, et al., (2015) purport for African Australian teen mothers, strong social support contributes to feelings of acceptance and optimism, negating the negative and depressive symptoms often perceived by teen mothers as described by Pires, et al., (2013). The qualitative study by Watts, et al., (2015) was framed in the Intersectionality Theory and considers the multiple dimensions within which teenagers exist: age, gender, developmental stage, ethnicity, migration experience, and socioeconomic status. The theory argues to understand the world of minority women, it is essential to move beyond gender and race because these factors do not present a complete picture of the individual experiences or fully answer questions about the women's existence. The phenomenological study used in-depth interviews as the primary source of data collection and sixteen participants were of varying African descent and ethnicity, had migrated to Australia under the Australian Humanitarian scheme as refugees, and had experienced teenage pregnancy or early motherhood. The participants' ages ranged from 17-30 years old. Purposive sampling was used, and interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. NVivo software was used for thematic analysis in conjunction with manual coding for data analysis purposes.

Their findings confirm Assini-Meytin and Green's (2015) assertions - motherhood brings increased responsibilities, but the study added motherhood brought about increased social recognition and a sense of purpose for young mothers. Becoming a mother affirmed maturity; it was perceived as a connection and avenue for partners which their parents would not normally accept. For African Australian teen mothers, motherhood offered autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study provides insight into teen African-Australian mothers and their perspectives into motherhood at a young age. The qualitative study provides a voice to adolescent mothers. It also demonstrates teen pregnancy is not always associated with negative perceptions or feelings. The study confirms the resilience of teen mothers despite additional developmental and personal challenges, such as migration, they may face during pregnancy. The Intersectionality Theory supported the experiences of the young mothers beyond gender and race; it framed the study in the context of familial environment, socioeconomic status, migration experience, educational background and social networks which shapes how teen women transition into adulthood and emergence into motherhood. The study focuses on young mothers' experiences and their social networks and the impact on their psyche concerning motherhood. Moreover, the study provides insight into how positive life experiences and social support advance the strengths and resilience of teen mothers despite negative perceptions, expectations, and societal barriers.

Assini-Meytin and Green (2015) hypothesized teen parenting perpetuates early disadvantages by adding responsibilities associated with child rearing along with limited financial and social support. They also purported compared to non-teen parents from

similar backgrounds, teen parents achieve lower education, lower income, and have poorer employment outcomes over the long term. The longitudinal study was over the course of thirty-five years, and was based on the Woodlawn Study, a study from an African American cohort in a disadvantaged community in Chicago. Data was collected at four time points: age six, adolescence, young adulthood, and midlife. There were 1,050 individuals who participated in the study; four hundred thirty-one completed adult assessments, two hundred eighteen participants completed young adulthood assessments, and one hundred and one completed midlife assessments.

The Teacher's Observation of Classroom Adaptation Scale measured aggressive behaviors and underachievement. Using the Propensity score model to test and analyze causal effects, it observed background characteristics to determine the association between teen parenting and adult socioeconomic status, educational outcomes, economic outcomes, and gestation age. The results determined women were more likely to have a child as a teenager than men. The study's findings also determined by age thirty-two, compared to non-teen mothers, teen mothers are more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty, and depend on welfare. Additionally, female participants were more likely to have resided in a female headed household and have a mother who was also a teen parent. For teen fathers, at age thirty-two, they are more likely than non-teen fathers to be unemployed. The results also determined by age forty-two, the effects of teen parenting for women remain statistically significant for education and income while there is no association between teen parenting and outcomes for men at age forty-two.

The study provides significant support for comparing the socioeconomic hardships for parenting teens compared to non-parenting teens. However, the generalization of results to the present context is limited due to changes in societal standards, gender roles, and expectations over the course of thirty-five-year study. Additionally, because of the specified geographical location and the use of a community cohort, the findings may not be generalizable. The study is important because of the longevity of the study and the comparison between teen mothers and fathers and teen non-mothers and fathers over the life course. It is also relevant to my study because the findings demonstrate parental and partner support of teen parents help to buffer negative effects of teen parenthood.

Elliott et al. (2015) analyzed low-income, Black single mothers accounts of mothering. The qualitative study focused on societal contradictions between the ideology of intensive mothering and the structural conditions and inequalities which shape mothering for women between the ages of 35 and 52. Using sixteen in-depth interviews with low income, single mothers who identify as Black or African American, with at least one teenage child; and, having been a parent for at least three years prior to the interview, the case study design aimed to give a voice to the parenting beliefs, experiences, and practices of this vulnerable population. The study suggests low-income Black mothers embrace and perform intensive mothering in the absence of social support and at the expense of their own personal and emotional wellbeing. Intensive mothering, which has typically referred to White, middle-class mothers, posits good mothers should be first and foremost caregivers, investing time, money, energy, and emotional labor in raising

children. However, research has shown Black mothers' efforts to protect and empower their children are heightened as children transition into adolescence (Elliott et al., 2015).

Elliot et al. (2015) found Black single mothers' perceptions of intensive mothering emphasizes the role of sacrifice, self-reliance, and protection of their children, at the expense of their own wellbeing. The study determined intensive mothering is not exclusive to White, middle-class mothers. In fact, mothering values and beliefs were echoed across the class spectrum (Lamar et al., 2019; Elliot et al., 2015). The expectation of society is that good mothers put their children's needs first, protect, and provide the best for their children and teach them how to be responsible and self-reliant adults (Lamar et al., 2019). However, for low income, Black single mothers, barriers make it difficult to demonstrate to society they are good mothers. The intensive mothering structure used by them is predicated on the resources made available to them. Intensive mothering for single, low-income Black mothers, involves teaching their children to fight off negative societal expectations, humiliations, poverty, racism, and sexism. Not only are mothers faced with putting their own pursuits on hold, but they must also curtail their social and romantic lives as their children grow into adolescence. Additionally, the findings demonstrate mothers are ultimately blamed for any problems their children encounter. The study's findings are relevant to my study on motivation and ambition levels between adolescent mothers and non-mothers because it demonstrates for Black, low-income mothers, mothers' aspirations are placed on hold to ensure the safety and security of the children. It demonstrates as mothers develop parenting skills, they are motivated to become a successful parent, often forsaking their own emotional and

physical wellbeing, ambitions, or goals to become positive caregivers and raise their children. The research added a voice to a vulnerable population whose identity is temporarily linked to the success or failure of their child.

Chico et al. (2014) posited teen mothers tend to interact with infants differently than adult mothers. The authors believe maternal responsiveness is related to other behavior symptoms such as impulsivity, focus, and responsiveness, the result of an immature prefrontal cortex. They hypothesized teen mothers perform poorly on executive function and these deficits will be related to the quality of parenting. The research study sought to determine whether there are differences in performance on executive functions between teens and adult mothers and whether they have different mothering behaviors. Bridgett et al., (2017) confirmed maternal executive functioning influences maternal parenting behaviors. Executive function develops between childhood and early adolescence; it refers to attention span, working memory capacity, response inhibition, and a shift from concrete to abstract thinking. For adolescents, the executive function is underdeveloped resulting in a level of immaturity and impulsivity.

The results determined teen mothers are less sensitive than adult mothers and perform more poorly than adults on tasks of cognitive flexible. The results determined teen mothers are challenged in their executive functioning and motherhood does not enhance performance. In teens, mothering behavior is related to attention measures while in adults the results also supported the hypothesis that parenting is associated with deficits in executive functioning in both teens and adults. There is a difference in cognitive flexibility in teens and working spatial memory in adult mothers. For teen and

adult mothers, age contributed to the levels of maternal sensitivity and responsiveness to their infant children. The results of this study also demonstrated teen motherhood does not automatically incur the executive functioning process adult mothers have garnered. The results determined additional support is needed to ensure teen mothers can develop and acquire executive functions necessary to successfully parent and develop into motherhood: speaking to their children, self-control in relation to parenting and self-discipline, which equates to cognitive flexibility.

Understanding the basic social psychological problems and processes of adolescent mothers is critical to enhancing their care and contributing to positive adolescent maternal pregnancy outcomes for the population. Atkinson and Peden-McAlphine (2014) and explored challenges, problems, and needs specific to pregnant and parenting adolescents in state public health home nurse visiting programs. Framed in Adolescent Maternal Development Theory, the study uses thirty public health nurses who care for adolescent mothers and participate in a public health home visiting program to answer the following questions: what are the unique challenges, problems, and needs of pregnant and parenting adolescent mothers in state home visiting programs and what is the process by which the challenges, problems, and needs of pregnant and parenting adolescents are resolved in the nurse home visiting program?

The qualitative study used purposeful sampling of thirty of the state's eighty-six counties which provide public health nurses to the state home vising program. Each nurse submitted two to three stories, by email or by telephone interview, during 2002 and 2009: a total of sixty-four stories. Data was analyzed using a four stage ATLASTi software

analysis which coded key points: income, social support, and father involvement. At each stage, the data was re-coded and grouped specifically to include unsupportive life circumstances and high-risk behaviors. In the final stage, the open codes formed a substantive theory which included basic psychological processes and problems faced by adolescent mothers. Although the results of the study were incomplete, data emerged which confirmed basic psychological problems faced by pregnant or parenting adolescents: (a) unsupportive life circumstances and high-risk behaviors, (b) limited understanding of pregnancy, parenting, and child health and development, and (c) limited awareness of how to access and utilize resources to achieve self-sufficiency were not being met. Common themes emerged from the descriptive stories, such as lack of support, lack of involvement from father, and exposure to domestic violence arose from the results. Participating nurses also described the adolescents as having an immature understanding of parenting, pregnancy, and child health and recognized three stages of adolescent maternal development: incomplete, intermediate, and advanced maternal development. Furthermore, pregnant and parenting adolescents lacked awareness of how to access and use resources which would increase their self-sufficiency. The behaviors and attitudes toward adolescent pregnancy and parenting described by the study's findings suggest incomplete and at-risk adolescent maternal development and a continuum of interventions and support needed. Limitations to the study include transferability. Because it does not include a comparison group, there is no way to differentiate between the pregnancy and parenting adolescents.

Non-Mothering Teens and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents

The review of literature has determined there are negative and positive perceptions of teen pregnancy and teen motherhood. The findings from existing literature has also determined teen mothers incur undue stress and challenges which impact their health and health related quality of life. Compared to teen mothers, teen non-mothers have different perspectives concerning teen motherhood and teen pregnancy. Childs, Knight, and White (2015) aimed to illumine the social context of how never-pregnant adolescent girls formed their opinions about adolescent pregnancy and how they make decisions regarding sexual activity.

The research sampled sixty-four African American girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen years old and used descriptive inquiry to explore the perceived risks and benefits to becoming pregnant during adolescence. Because of the sensitive nature of the sexual behavior questionnaire, and the age of the participants, answers were sealed. Demographic factors were obtained: age, grade level, socioeconomic status, household, number of siblings, birth order, and number of sexual partners. Semi-structured interviews focused on beliefs about adolescent pregnancy, perception of life changes from becoming pregnant during adolescence, and perception of parents' reactions to adolescent pregnancy. The interviews were guided by Sexual Decision-Making frame derived from the Cognitive Motivational Relational Theory (CMR). The CMR Theory posits individuals enter a situation with a goal relevant to the situation. Additionally, the Cognitive Mediation Model of Women's Sexual Decision Model also guided the research. It asserts decisions regarding sex is mediated by a series of primary and

secondary reviews which focus on situational factors and mental processes which take place before and during the sexual encounter. Furthermore, the data collection consisted of focus groups which help to expand on emerging themes from the individual interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, analyzed for content and emerging themes, categorized and coded. Five themes emerged from the data: misconceptions about pregnancy prevention, the girls' beliefs about the impact of pregnancy on their life, educational goals, parents, and peer relationships.

No participant in the study had ever been pregnant or given birth, yet the participants believed becoming pregnant as a teenager would impact their lives. The perceptions of disappointment and embarrassment to family and limited and negative social engagement with peers emerged as collective themes among the participants. The results determined participants believed if they became adolescent parents, educational endeavors and sports activities would cease. Based on the findings, never-pregnant adolescents perceived there were no benefits to adolescent pregnancy and motherhood. The age of the participants is important because it helps to define an applicable age for educating adolescents on safe sexual behaviors and developing pregnancy interventions and prevention programs. Because the participants' ages were specified within the study criteria, the findings cannot be generalized to older adolescents which limits the results. Nonetheless, the study confirms misnomers surrounding teen pregnancy contribute to negative feelings and perceptions about familial and social acceptance and support. The findings are also important because they corroborate similar findings on adolescents' perception of pregnancy and motherhood. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate a

consensus of thought among adolescents concerning perceptions or beliefs that adolescent pregnancy and subsequent motherhood. Negative perceptions may contribute to emotional struggles of adolescents and contribute to psychological stressors such as anxiety, embarrassment, familial and social isolation.

Similarly, teen mothers and non-mothering teens each garner a sense of purpose. Purpose provides individuals with goals and aspirations for the future is linked to their present life (Liang et al., 2017). For teen mothers, relatedness, competency, and autonomy are critical to being a successful parent and function in their role as head of household. For their non-mothering peers, relatedness, competency, and autonomy are as important. For teen mothers, motherhood is often considered a rite of passage and non-mothering teens see adolescent pregnancy and motherhood as a hindrance to life goals (Childs et al., 2015; Oz & Fine, 1988).

For adolescent mothers and non-mother teens, the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs is crucial to their adolescent development and emerging adulthood (Gunnell et al., 2014). For teen mothers, the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs tends to be more pertinent than their non-mothering peers because of pending motherhood, the altered trajectory of childhood development and the acceleration of adolescent motherhood (Gunnell et al., 2014). Psychosocial vulnerabilities faced by teen mothers include the lack of social support, adverse environmental and social conditions, the lack of adolescent emotional maturation and intelligence. Never-pregnant adolescent girls perceive teen pregnancy and subsequent motherhood puts personal, educational, and financial goals on hold. Non-mother teens see teen motherhood as a hindrance to future

aspirations (Childs et al., 2015). Ambition and aspirations are often deferred, postponed, or abandoned after adolescent pregnancy and childbirth (Childs et al., 2015). Purpose is two-fold and was defined as others oriented (OO) or self-oriented (SO). Other-oriented purpose intention is to contribute to the world beyond self; while the intention of self-oriented purpose to primarily benefit oneself; with little or no regard beyond the world (Liang et al., 2017). The findings from Liang et al., (2017) suggest that adolescents from affluent backgrounds are more likely to develop other oriented purposes, which involve a focusing on a world beyond themselves. The findings determined positive and engaged parent-adolescent relations cultivated youth purpose, encouraged independent thinking and self-determination, as well as other-oriented purposes. The research confirms socioeconomic status impacts purpose as well as parental-adolescent relationships. Young women with less conflicted or stressful relationships are more likely to have others-oriented purpose. This research suggests parenting relationships may be associated with purpose. How adolescents are cared for by their parents will ultimately develop into how adolescents will develop a sense of purpose which cares for others. This finding highlights the importance of fostering positive parent-adolescent relationships across all socioeconomic backgrounds to encourage the development of prosocial behaviors and a sense of purpose focused on contributing to the greater good.

Emotional Maturity, Emotional Regulation, and Adolescents

Zimmerman and Iwanski (2014) examined age differences in seven emotion regulation strategies from early adolescence to middle adulthood for three emotions: sadness, fear, and anger. Emotion regulation includes all processes involving changing

current, anticipated, or remembered emotional states. It refers to the intensity, quality, duration, and recovery speed of the emotion. Emotion regulation strategies are important because during adolescence and emerging adulthood, there is an increase in recognizing and understanding one's own and other's feelings. Understanding one's own feelings and perceptions increases insight into their emotion related behaviors and measuring emotion regulation aids in developing problem-solving skills, independent of emotion. Zimmerman and Iwanski (2014) hypothesized there would be an increase in social support in emerging adulthood as social relationships stabilize. Additionally, the study's results were expected to show an increase in passivity and avoidance in emerging adulthood. The authors also hypothesized developmental patterns during adolescence and adulthood would be different in emotion-specific manner, similar to life-span developmental stages of psychology.

The sample consisted of 1,305 healthy German, mainly Caucasian low risk participants, fifty-two percent were females. The sample was divided into nine age specific groups with a two-year difference between all age groups during adolescence: ages 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22, 25, 29, and 50 years old. The participants were recruited from schools, universities, recreational facilities, and companies in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. The quantitative research measured emotion regulation with the Negative Emotion Regulation Inventory (NERI), a self-reported questionnaire which assesses emotional experiences and emotion regulation in specified situations which induce fear, anger, and sadness. The NERI instrument measured seven different emotion regulation

strategies: adaptive emotion regulation, social support seeking, avoidance regulation, expressive suppression, dysfunctional rumination, and dysregulation.

Using an age-group and gender MANOVA, the results revealed emotion ratings showed when the participants presented with situations associated with negative emotions: fear, anger, and sadness, the intended emotion was rated significantly higher than all other emotions. For the male participants, sadness and fear rated significantly lower in sadness and fear situations when compared to female participants. However, there were no significant gender differences in reported anger intensity for the presented anger situations.

Within the seven emotion regulation strategies, adaptive regulation, social support seeking, dysfunctional rumination and dysregulation were positively associated with emotion intensity for fear, anger, and sadness. Passivity, on the other hand was significantly negatively associated with sadness and suppression was correlated with fear intensity, and positively with anger intensity (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014). Avoidance, passivity, and suppression appeared to emerge more in emerging adulthood than in adolescence. Social support seeking appears to decline until middle adulthood comparable to middle adolescence, while dysfunctional rumination is reported more in early adolescents than emerging adults. The results reflect age differences in emotion regulation and emotionality.

This study is important to my research because it identifies how age-specific emotion and emotion regulation strategies surrounding fear, sadness, and anger, impact emotional and psychological development. It shows how the maturation as individuals

transition from adolescence to adulthood. For teen mothers, understanding their feelings and perceptions increases insight into their emotions and perceptions. As teen mothers psychologically develop beyond adolescence into emerging adults, emotion regulation contributes to increased emotional maturity.

Emotional maturity (EM) is the ability to integrate multiple emotional perspectives to form flexible and separate varying representations of oneself, others, and situations. It is characterized by five principles: (a) Every negative emotion a person experiences is a childhood emotion overlaid on a current person, circumstance, place, event or object; (b) emotionally many adults are three to five-year-old children in adult bodies; (c) no one can make you feel a way you do not want to feel; (d) an adult was emotionally mature and childlike or immature and childish; and (e) mindfulness, focus, and presence are keys to emotional maturity (Trishala & Kiran, 2015). Trishala and Kiran (2015) aimed to assess the emotional maturity of adolescents and to determine whether there is a relationship between EM and perceived parenting styles among adolescents. Similar to the research of Atkinson and Peden-McAlpine (2014), they also hypothesized adolescents have varying levels of emotional maturity and there is no relationship between emotional maturity and perceived parenting styles among adolescents. Parenting style is defined as behaviors, attitudes, and values parents use to determine how they interact with their children (Trishala & Kiran, 2015). There are four types of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent, and neglectful; and two dimensions of parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness.

The quantitative study's sample size included thirty adolescent males and thirty female adolescent participants, between the ages of thirteen and nineteen years old. The Perceived Parenting Style Inventory II and Emotional Maturity Scale were used to measure the results. The instruments were administered as a group test on a self-reporting scale using Pearson correlation and t-test to analyze the data and determine statistical correlation. The results determined there are no gender differences on emotional maturity; however, adolescence differs in the Perceived Parenting Styles Inventory. There is a significant relationship emotional maturity and a responsive parenting style. There was also a significant relationship between EM and autonomous parenting. There is no significant relationship between EM and a demanding parenting style with a 0.01 confidence interval.

The results of the study are pertinent to my research because emotional maturity (EM) plays a significant role in how teen parents will relate to their children and how their parenting styles will impact those relationships. Demanding parenting styles do not have an impact on emotional maturity; however, responsive and autonomy parenting styles have a positive relationship on perceived parenting styles and the development of emotional maturity among adolescents. Understanding proactive parenting styles such as responsive or autonomy, for teen mothers will allow them to develop or adopt an appropriate parenting style for their children; thus, contributing to mitigating mental health related stressors which may impact how parents relate to their children.

Mental Health and Adolescent Mothers

Pregnant adolescents have increased risks for adverse parenting outcomes such as cognitive and behavioral difficulties in children (Chico et al., 2014; Siegel & Brandon, 2014). Along with added responsibilities of motherhood, adolescent mothers experience neurobiological and psychosocial challenges. They are vulnerable to psychological distress, which tends to be overlooked (Smith Battle & Freed, 2016). As such, their research addressed vulnerabilities related to distress and how to protect teen mother' mental health. Their work adds to the study by Frostick, Phillips, Renton, and Moore (2016), which determined familial and social support are essential to reducing mental health related stressors and Elliott, Powell, and Brenton (2015) who determined adolescent mothers aspire to be good parents. Smith Battle and Freed (2016) agreed family and partner support, positive childhood experiences, and mother' aspirations to improve their lives are considered protective factors. These factors contribute to the strength and resilience exhibited by teen mothers and teen mothers can be successfully nurtured after experiencing a trauma. In the same way Chico, Gonzalez, Ali, Steiner, and Fleming (2014) found mothering offers identity, Smith Battle and Freed (2016) also discovered for teens, mothering gave them an identity and sense of purpose.

Teen mothers rarely address ongoing stress and limited support, which tends to hamper their aspirations to be good mothers. They are fearful of seeking treatment for mental health conditions; they fear the stigma of mental illness and lack of time for self-care. Smith Battle and Freed (2016) determined adolescents' experiences with their own parents, self-belief, and socioeconomic status are associated with perinatal depression.

Yet, there are many psychosocial factors associated with depression during pregnancy and the postpartum period, including self-efficacy, body satisfaction, and personal childhood experiences.

The results of the research determined up to three years after childbirth, depressive symptoms accounted for a significant variance in childhood behavior between the ages of two and three years old. Therefore, the relevance of the study demonstrates the need for mental health programs designed for specifically adolescent parents. For those in the nursing or helping profession, adequately addressing the psychosocial needs of teen mothers which differ from those of adult mothers, is critical to the teen's success in the mothering role. The research by Smith Battle and Freed (2016) informs the practice of nursing and healthcare, specifically in pediatric and adolescent medicine. Traditional mental health care tends to be ineffective for teen mothers who refuse to acknowledge treatment is needed, quietly deal with stress and trauma and subsequently, suffer in silence. Untreated negative experiences further perpetuate the vulnerabilities of these developing teen mothers.

Walker and Holtfreter (2016) add to literature on adolescent motherhood and mental health by framing the research in the General Strain Theory (GST) which theorizes delinquency is influenced indirectly by stressful life events. Anger and frustration produce emotional reactions which increase the likelihood of a criminal response. Stressful events, referred to as strains, manifest in three forms: actual or anticipated failure of a valued goal; the removal of positively valued stimuli; and the presentation of toxic stressors (noxious stimuli). (Holtfreter, 2016; Smith Battle & Freed,

2014). The disruption of educational pursuits and the lack of or decrease in social interaction with peers and partners are the strains which are consistent with the removal of positive stimuli. For adolescent mothers, childbearing is a major strain which goes beyond childbirth and incorporates motherhood responsibilities, economic, mental, social challenges, and neurological delay into the adolescent development process.

As for strains which manifest as an actual or anticipated failure of a valued goal, education aspirations become limited and tend to dissipate over time. GST leads to negative emotionality which impacts their decision-making skills (Ernst, 2014). Emotionality impacts decision-making and exacerbates depressive symptoms. Walker and Holtfreter (2016) sought to answer whether stressful life events are associated with maladaptive coping skills and whether negative emotions facilitate the relationship between teen motherhood and delinquency. Using data from the second wave of the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health), the cross-sectional research study sampled seventh through 12th graders randomly selected from 80 high and 52 middle schools across the United States between 1994 and 1995. Schools were stratified by ethnicity, region of country, urban city, school size, and school type. The final sample consisted of 6,628 female participants. The age of the participants was between 11 and 21 years old with an average median age of 15.6 years old; fifty-eight percent White and 41.6% racial and ethnic minorities. The study compared two groups: adult mothers less than 17 years old, and adult mothers 18 years and older and non-mother participants. It measured involvement in delinquent behavior using a self-report four-point scale. Adolescent motherhood was coded as a variable, using two self-report

questions. Depression was defined as negative emotionality and measured using the CES-D scale. Self-esteem and social support was measured using an adapted Perrone Scale and Rosenberg's 6 item scale. STATA 13 were used to analyze the data.

The results confirmed, as previously found, depression is related to delinquency. However, the relationship between motherhood and depression are not significant at the bivariate level. The findings also confirmed a correlation between lower levels of self-esteem and delinquency and confirmed individuals with low self-control are at an increased risk for engaging in problem behaviors. Moreover, the study confirmed that although depression did not mediate a relationship between adolescent motherhood and delinquency, it increased the probability of delinquency only when negative emotionality is present. Finally, the study determined that those with higher levels of social support are less likely to display delinquent behaviors.

The results are important because the relationship between adolescent motherhood and depression, and its role as a mediator of depression, debunks the General Stain Theory that delinquency is influenced by strains that are high magnitude, clustered, recent, of long duration, perceived as unjust, and caused by or associated with low social control (Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). The results find that low self-control, low self-esteem, and depression are significant risk factors that increase delinquency. However, adolescent motherhood reduced delinquency because there is no time for it with increased maternal responsibilities. The study's limitations include the fact that depression and delinquency were framed under the construct of the General Strain Theory and measured at the same time which limits causal inference. As such, there may be additional

unmeasured factors which impact the results. These limitations allow for additional research opportunities using unmeasured stressors or maladaptive coping skills and further consideration of male adolescent parents.

Motivation

Motivation determines the energy that fuels behavior and is measured by the amount of effort an individual is willing to exert to attain their goals. Emotion is defined as the subjective state that influence an individual's actions. Regulation refers to the control of motivation and emotion. When applied to adolescent behavior, the triad model provides a basis for studying adolescent behavioral responses: impulsivity, risk seeking, social reorientation, and emotional intensity. Intrinsic motivation is used to describe behavior performed for the satisfaction one fees when accomplishing something (Cokely, 2000; Steg et al., 2016).

Ernst (2014) referred to the approach model which is related to the reward; the avoidance model which refers to the emotion related neural system and the control model which refers to regulatory processes of neural (brain) functions. Each model is associated with task structures that relate to motivated behavior: passive receipt of reward/punishment, performance of a task to receive an award; and task of decision making among options with different rewards. The results of the study determined that age influences the dopamine reaction to reward stimulus and is greater in adolescents than in adults. However, adults react stronger to appetitive or bodily needs functions than adolescents in lieu of positive rewards. However, in response to negative stimuli, adolescents show less dopamine reaction than adults. In tasks, cue -related rewards,

adolescents activate less striatal dopamine than adults; but during the performance preparation, they activate more than adults. Finally, in decision making tasks which involved risk, adults activated greater striatal dopamine than adults and less striatal activation during social decisions than adolescents. The research findings are important because understanding neural models help to determine motivated behaviors for adolescents. It supports research on immature brain cortex functioning and helps to understand the developmental challenges faced by adolescents and exacerbated by the stressors of pregnancy and subsequent motherhood. When applied to adolescent behavior, the triadic model serves as a basis for studying typical adolescent behavioral responses.

Ambition/Goals/Aspirations

Intrinsic goals, within the frame of self-determination theory, are community oriented or person centric. They include community contribution, personal growth, and affiliation unlike extrinsic goals which focus on fame, financial success, and physical appearance (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Frostick, et al.,2016) investigated factors thought to influence educational and occupational aspirations in adolescents from deprived areas of London. Their research sought to determine whether factors such as psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and social support impacted their educational and occupational aspirations. The study's sample population consisted of 1,214 adolescents from forty low socioeconomic environments, referred to as the Lower Super Output area (LSOA) around London, England and attended sixty-eight different UK state schools. The sample was comprised of 49.5% males and 50% females from diverse backgrounds: white British (22%); Black African (21%), Black Caribbean (9%),

Other/Indian/Pakistani/Asian (24%), Mixed ethnicity (9%) and other (15%); between the ages of 11-16 years old. The researchers hypothesized that aspirations across the entire sample would be high but there would be a variation according to ethnicity, gender, and school age. Additionally, the researchers hypothesized that levels of educational and occupational aspirations would differ between ethnic groups; that adolescent girls would demonstrate higher educational aspirations and lower occupational aspirations; and positive perceptions of school would be associated with higher aspirations within the school environment. The study hypothesized that a positive sense of acceptance among peers will be associated with an increase in academic and occupational aspirations.

Using a community engagement model, a baseline adolescent survey from the Well London Project, which was administered between January 2008 and July 2009 as part of the longitudinal Well London Project, which originally administered between October 2007 and March 2011. All participants resided in one of the forty LSOA and were recruited and surveyed through local secondary schools. Schools were targeted based on having ten or more students who resided in the LSOA. There were thirty-eight community schools, twelve academies, seventeen faith-based schools and one free school included in the LSOA. The average mean number of students per LSOA was 30.4. Self-reported surveys and questionnaires were distributed along with a parental consent and outcomes were measured between school educational aspirations, higher educational aspirations, and occupational aspirations. The following instruments were used: Family Affluence scale (FAS), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), Psychological Well-Being Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Satisfaction with

Life Scale. Each instrument's internal consistency reliability score had a Cronbach's Alpha between 0.74 and 0.91. Occupational aspirations were measured using the Resnick School Connectedness Scale and its internal reliability score is 0.84.

The results of the quantitative study indicated that females reported higher educational aspirations than males but not in occupational aspirations. White British students reported lower educational and occupational aspirations than other ethnic groups. Black African children reported the highest educational aspirations. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that perceived parental support for education had the largest positive association with aspirations and mental wellbeing was positively associated with the three aspiration outcomes. Adolescents with higher aspirations also have better mental well-being scores. Adolescents not only have high educational aspirations but also have high aspirations for their future employment.

The research is important to my research because it contributed to literature on adolescent aspirations. Furthermore, the diverse data sample and multiple domains of functioning and aspirations measured helps to generalize the findings to varying ethnicities. The study supports previous research that more needs to be done to improve outcomes for adolescents from disadvantaged populations and that raising aspirations increase social mobility. Limitations to this study include interventions should be at a community level instead of

individual levels to foster high achievement among students within the school community.

East and Barber (2014) added to literature on adolescents and educational aspirations; however, their research focused on pregnant adolescents, whether high educational aspirations are related to pregnancy unwantedness and whether pregnancy unwantedness leads to parenting stress and inadequacies. The study is framed in Maternal Identity Development Theory, Role Conflict Theory, and Childbearing Motivation Theory. Rubin's (1984) Maternal Identity Development Theory posits that if roles are not relinquished from one's own self-definition, a healthy maternal identity is not achieved and prenatal attachment to the unborn child is compromised (East & Barber, 2014). It theorized that young pregnant women with strong educational ambition have difficulty adopting the maternal role and are in greater need of support and counsel in their parental adjustment than young women who have less educational motivation. Biddle's (1979) Role Conflict Theory states that conflict arises when two or more sets of role expectations occur simultaneously causing role ambiguity which then morphs into role dissatisfaction, poor performance and, psychological distress. Miller's (1994) Childbearing Motivation Theory postulates that pre-conception motivation factors affect the emotional response to pregnancy and subsequent attachment to the child.

The study examined links among pregnant adolescents' educational motivations and the unwantedness of the pregnancy at three separate points: time one (during third trimester), time two which is six months post-partum, at which time their parenting stress levels will be examined, and time three, one-year post-partum, and the quality of

parenting will be reviewed. The study hypothesizes that higher educational aspirations among pregnant adolescents will be related to strong unwantedness of the pregnancy. Additionally, the study hypothesized that strong pregnancy unwantedness will be related to parenting stress and two aspects of parenting stress: perceived parenting inadequacies in the mothering role and a parenting disconnectedness.

The sample consisted of one hundred unmarried first time pregnant Mexican American Latina adolescents, between 18-24 years old. The median age of the participants was 17.3 years old. The longitudinal data was compiled between 2003-2015 and participants were recruited from highs schools, WIC programs centers, and community clinics throughout southern California. There was a ninety-seven percent study participation rate and the average median income was $18,525 for a six-person household. The methodology included short interviews and self-administered questionnaires and participants were paid $20 at each time. Data analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Path Model with Mplus 6.0: chi squared, comparative fit index and root mean-square of approximation model indices. Outcomes were measured over educational aspirations, pregnancy unwantedness, and trapped by parenting. The Parenting Daily Hassles Index, by Cmic and Greenberg (1990), was used to measure perceived parenting inadequacies.

The results of the study indicate that strong educational ambitions among adolescents have the potential to contribute to girl's adaptation to parenting. The study results confirm that high educational aspirations among pregnant Latina adolescents were related to greater unwantedness of the pregnancy which subsequently led to feelings of

trapped by parenting and inadequate mothering one-year post-partum. The study indicates that strong pre-pregnancy educational aspirations contribute to teen girls' adaptation to parenting. And it demonstrates that young mothers feel trapped and resentful of the interruption in their educational aspirations due to pregnancy and subsequent mothering. Thus, they perceived that childbearing had stunted their life options.

The study is essential to my research because the study focuses on consequences of high educational aspirations for pregnant adolescents and their adjustment or maladjustment to teen parenting and mothering. The results also suggest that women who have strong educational ambition would benefit from additional consideration and support during pregnancy and throughout the early years of parenting. Teen mothers and non-mothers seek purpose and quality of life which is linked to their overall health and well-being. For teen mothers and non-mothers, mental stressors, family support, emotional maturity are still psychological transitions from childhood to adulthood despite pending motherhood. Both pregnant teens and never pregnant teens are seeking purpose and quality of life, intrinsically motivated by fear of failure, goal achievement, rewards, or incentives.

According to Pires et al. (2013), QoL refers to a person's wellbeing in terms of physical, social, and psychological life domains. Understanding the life domains which contribute to QoL is a valuable outcome evaluation of adolescents' adjustment to pregnancy and their transition into motherhood. Pires et al. (2013) examined the indirect effect of the perceive impact of pregnancy on QoL through the lens of severe depression

symptoms. In the same way that Chico, Gonzalez, Ali, Steiner, and Fleming (2014) and Ernst (2015) determined adolescents experience poorer executive functioning due to immature brain cortex, the study surmises that depressive symptoms have been associated with poor functioning. Additionally, the study also explored whether adolescent satisfaction with support from their mothers or partners acted as a buffer on the indirect effect. Pires et al., hypothesized that adolescents' perception that their pregnancy negatively impacted their lives and predicted lower QoL during pregnancy by increasing their depressive symptoms. The indirect effect buffered their satisfaction with their social support.

The cross-sectional study was part of a larger project called the Adolescent Pregnancy in Portugal: etiology, reproductive decision, and adjustment research project. The sample consisted of three hundred and ninety-five pregnant adolescents between the ages of twelve and nineteen years old and was collected between May 2008 and May 2012 at forty-two Portuguese health service centers. Pearson's correlations were performed to test the association between study variables and QoL. The scores were measured using the Edinburg Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) which showed good internal consistency at Cronbach's alpha 0.85 and test-retest score of 0.75. QoL was measured by the Portuguese index of quality-of-life scale. Mothers and partners were tested as links between the perceived impact of pregnancy and depressive symptoms and quality of life. Pearson's correlations showed that QoL was negatively associated with depressive symptoms in non-European pregnancy complications, and pregnancy

intentions and positively associated with support from partner, mother, and the perceived impact of pregnancy.

The results of the study also determined that there was a significant indirect effect of the perceived impact of pregnancy on QoL with those exhibiting depressive symptoms. When no depressive symptoms were present, there was no significant direct effect if the perceived impact of pregnancy on QoL. Additionally, support from partners and mothers were significant moderators of the indirect effect of the perceived impact of pregnancy on QoL in those with depressive symptoms. For the control variables, ethnicity influenced QoL in the moderating role of mother and partner. The role of support from mothers had a significant effect on depressive symptoms and QoL while support from partners did not have a significant direct effect on QoL but significantly predicted depression-related symptoms. The study adds to research on depression and adolescent motherhood. Limitations to the longitudinal study is that the cross-sectional design does not allow for causal inferences; the study variables may affect the depressive symptoms which in turn impact negative perceptions of pregnancy. The findings are significant because it adds to existing research which determines the importance of social support for reducing and preventing depressive symptoms and improving QoL for adolescent mothers.

Summary

Navigating adolescence and preparing for adolescent motherhood contributes to mental health-related issues which impact parenting and developmental functioning of adolescents. Teen mothers are at risk for posttraumatic stress disorder due to their

exposure to relational violence, mental strains, and social isolation (Hodgkinson et al., 2014; Walker & Holtfreter, 2016) They often lack financial, familial, emotional, and social support, as well as resources that enable them to be successful. Higher education aspirations tend to diminish, and parenting stresses are exacerbated. Adolescence continues even when adolescent girls become pregnant and transition into motherhood.

Adolescent mothers experience mental health related strains and stressors that must be met to prevent misaligned and misdiagnosed neurological and emotional regulation problems which impact self-control, self-esteem, and self-care (Smith Battle & Freed, 2016; Walker and Holtfreter, 2016). Emotional regulation and maturity are impacted by adolescent motherhood, and maladaptive parenting styles are created (Trishala & Kiran, 2015; Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014). Increases in mental health stressors and strains inhibit educational and athletic aspirations further isolates mothering teens from their families, partners, and society (Siegel and Brandon, 2014; Smith Battle and Freed (2015; Walker and Holtfreter, 2016; Watts et al., 2015). With adolescent motherhood comes intensive mothering, resilience, sense of purpose, and a culmination of inner strengths (Elliot et al., 2015). Regardless of ethnicity or race, perseverance and resilience of teen mothers increases and develops as they emotionally mature and transition into adulthood (Watts et al., 2015). However, environmental, and social barriers impede their adolescent maternal development (Atkinson & Peden-McAlphine, 2014; Watts et al., 2015). Moreover, teen mothers develop parenting styles which are intensive or maladaptive, contingent on their level of EM (Trishala & Kiran, 2015).

For adolescent mothers, aspirations may temporarily cease, and prior delinquent behavior decreases while their non-mothering peers lack knowledge surrounding the ramifications of increased sexual activity and adversities of teen motherhood, which go beyond the cessation of aspirations, educational opportunities, and social support. According to the study by Childs et al., (2015), non-mothering adolescent girls, ages 14-16 years old, are seemingly unaware of the mental stressors such as depression, familial and social isolation, and education cessation which may impede intrinsic motivation and ambition (Childs et al, 2015). For some non-parenting or never pregnant adolescent women, motherhood is viewed as a disappointment or embarrassment to their family and friends; they are ostracized for their decision making (Childs et al., 2015; Ernst, 2014). Teen mothers must quickly develop emotional maturity (EM), which most non-mothering teens will not experience until adulthood. Therefore, social, and parental support is key to increasing intrinsic motivation in adolescence after motherhood.

In addition to support, teen mothers require specialized primary healthcare beyond pregnancy and through the first 3 to 5 years after giving birth which involves addressing emotional, neurological, and physical needs (Smith Battle & Freed, 2016; Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). Pires, et al., 2013) found that from the onset of pregnancy up to three years post-partum, many teens exhibit depressive symptoms. There is a significant impact on teen pregnancy and motherhood and when there are no depressive symptoms and positive social support, there is no direct effect on QoL. Depression, delinquency, and lack of social, financial, and emotional support and proper healthcare perpetuate adverse developmental and behavioral changes which are not entirely

maladaptive. Motherhood impacts QoL for adolescent mothers. For some teen mothers, despite social and environmental barriers, pregnancy and motherhood creates a sense of purpose and motivates them to continue with their aspirations, not for themselves but their children. Riddled with new parenting responsibilities, lingering educational and social aspirations, teen motherhood is self-sacrificing (Elliott et al., 2015). It is a turning point that alters a woman's identity and life-course (Smith Battle & Freed, 2014). One practical application of the study is that it adds to scholarly research on adolescent and single motherhood, adult maternal development, adolescent motherhood and self-identity, teen mothering, intrinsic motivation and ambition in youth, psychological development of women and adolescent women, teens, personal and life coaching in youth, women and young adults, and the self-determination theory.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of the causal-comparative study was to compare motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers between 18 and 24 and young women of the same age who are child-free. I compared giving birth or not giving birth with the confounding variables of age, ethnicity, race, education level, and relationship status. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, population, sampling and sampling procedures, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, instrumentation, operationalization of constructs, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. I compare ambition values and motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free young women.

Research Design and Rationale

To address the gap in research, I used a retrospective causal-comparative design. A causal-comparative approach is useful when comparing groups and when the independent variable has already been decided and is not capable of being manipulated (Brewer & Kuban, 2012). Causal-comparative research involves finding relationships between independent and dependent variables after an action or event already occurred. In causal-comparative research, there are two or more groups and one independent variable; each group share similar characteristics but to varying degrees (Brewer & Kuban, 2012; Shaddish et al., 2002; Trochim, 2006). In this study, adolescent mothers and child free women were measured in terms of age, ethnicity, relationship status, and educational levels. The independent variable is having given birth or have not given birth. Primary sources of data were collected using SurveyMonkey. The causal-comparative

design was chosen because it attempts to determine cause-effect, involves comparison, is cost-effective, and less time-consuming approach for quantitative research. Having multiple sites with participants who share similar grouping characteristics increases generalizability. Additionally, high survey response rates help ensure results are representative of the sample (Fincham, 2008).

Methodology

The study involved exploring the following research questions:

RQ1: How do motivation levels compare between child-free women and women with children?

H_0: The null hypothesis is there is no statistically significant correlation in motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_1: The alternative hypothesis is there is a statistically significant correlation in motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

RQ2: How do ambition values compare between child-free women and women with children?

H_0: The null hypothesis is there is no statistically significant correlation in ambition values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_1: The alternative hypothesis is there is a statistically significant correlation in ambition values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

Dependent variables were motivation and ambition values; covariables were ethnicity, relationship status, and education. Variables were measured using the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory and Aspiration Index Scale. Kruskal-Wallis

and Mann-Whitney U nonparametric tests were used to measure mean rank and scores to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Population

The target population for my research was women in the U.S who were biologically female and between 18 to 24 years old. According to the U.S. DHHS (2014), there are 42 million adolescents in the U.S., of which 49% percent or 20,580,000 million are female. As of the 2018 census, there are 10.22 million females between 10 and 14, and 10.32 million females between 18 and 21 years old (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Excluded from the study were adolescent girls, 17 years old and younger. Also excluded from the study were males or males who self-identify as female or transgender. Females who were illiterate or unable to read or write were also excluded from the study. Therefore, the target population for my study was literate women between 18 and 24 in the U.S.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Sampling Strategy The sampling strategy that I used to answer research questions was nonprobability sampling. The nonprobability sampling technique is useful in quantitative research when the sample is chosen via nonrandom methods. Additionally, nonprobability sampling is less expensive than probability sampling and is able to be implemented quickly (Etikan, 2016). I used purposive snowball sampling. The purposive sampling method involves selecting a target population on the basis of the purpose of the study and inclusion and exclusion criteria (Daniel, 2012). Snowball sampling starts with a small group of participants who then use their networks to identify and recruit additional

participants who meet research criteria. The goal of snowball sampling is to include a sample that is more representative of a specific population or subgroup.

The objective of the study was to compare whether there were any changes in terms of motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers and child-free women. I compared whether adolescent mothers had higher or lower intrinsic motivation compared to child-free young women, and whether child-free women had higher or lower ambition levels compared to adolescent mothers.

Sampling Frame

All participants were literate, biological females who were between 18 and 24 and lived in the U.S. One group of participants were either single, never married, married, or widowed women who have given birth to at least one live child. The other group consisted of single, never married, married, divorced, or widowed women who were child-free. Exclusion criteria is also a set of predesigned characteristics which are used to identify subjects who will not be included in the study or who may have to withdraw or choose to opt out of the research study (Salkind, 2010). Excluded from the study was teenage girls, 17 and younger, women 18-24 years old who are illiterate/unable to read or write, and females who gender-identify as male. Also, excluded from the study was males, or males who gender-identify as a female.

Justification for Effect Size, Alpha Level, and Power Level

For non-probability sampling of all women in the United States between 18 and 21 years old, online software, G*power was used to determine the sample size. The goal of a design study is a power level of at least 80% to be statistically significant (Hedberg,

2018). In order to determine the target sample size, a power level of 95 (β= 0.95) and standard 5 significance level (α = 0.05) were used. Using G*Power, it was determined for a two tailed, independent t-test with a confidence level or effect size of 0.50 will calculate the sample size. The results of the power analysis are provided as Appendix A. The effect size is used to describe the magnitude of a treatment effect (Salkind, 2007). For a medium size design study, a 95% confidence level, an alpha level of 0.05, there is a one in twenty probability of a type I error. The results of the power analysis yield a sample size of 105 for Group A and 105 for Group B; a total of 210 study participants.

In an effort to ensure the necessary sample size yield, snowball sampling is used and is useful for hard-to-reach populations. Snowball sampling is a sampling method in which one interviewee gives the researcher the name of at least one more potential interviewee (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Kircherr & Charles, 2018). It combines chain referral sampling with a recruitment process based on social networks allow the calculation of probabilities (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Despite best efforts, the researcher was unable to collect enough data to secure valid results from the data analysis. There was too little data to secure valid results from the analysis. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment Procedures

Participants for the study were recruited through the Survey Monkey audience. 125 complete survey responses were required from adolescent mothers and 125 complete

survey responses are required from child-free women. Two hundred and fifty survey responses were needed for the research study, although based on the G*Power analysis, only 210 responses are needed. Then using research specific, Survey Monkey audience targeted women between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who are adolescent mothers or are child-free. who meet the following criteria: biological females, between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. A series of screening questions were included to ensure homogeneity: Are you at least 18 years old? What is your age? How many children do you have under the age of 17 years old? Do you reside in the United States? What is your race? What is your ethnicity? What is your household make-up: single, or unmarried, married or partnered, divorced, widowed, living with parents, single, living with children?

In an effort to broaden access to my target population, the researcher utilized a variety of recruitment strategies. Due to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher electronically created research posters or advertisement using Canva to be disseminated electronically as a recruitment method on online social networking sites (see Appendix G). In the late summer and winter of 2021-2022, data was collected across all available social media platforms: Instagram, Twitter, Linked In, Facebook, and Facebook Groups: Facebook, Facebook Groups, Twitter, Linked In, and Instagram to increase recruitment and participation. Weblinks were sent to family and friends via text messaging and email. I applied to conduct research through the local school district and was denied on December 4, 2021. I recruited participants through various local, state, and nationwide non-profit organizations human services agencies, childcare facilities, local and national

youth leadership and mentoring programs which provided direct services to young adults, parenting mothers, and pre and post pregnancy support services, two national, digital magazines, local and state human and social services agencies, and a local mega church. I hosted online Zoom informationals, partnered with online mentoring groups to host Instagram live to increase opportunities recruitment. Additionally, I recruited participants through Walden's Participant Pool to increase availability and access to potential participants. Initially, the targeted age group of participants was 18-21 years old but due to low response rates in early winter, I re-applied to Walden's IRB to expand the age group to the age of 24 years old and was approved. After posting the virtual study participant flyers for six months and eight days, the Survey Monkey web link to the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Survey and the Aspirations Index Survey survey questionnaires was closed on February 12, 2022.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is the process by which research participants gain an understanding of the procedures, risks and benefits associated with their voluntary part in the study (Loach, 2011). When addressing informed consent, it is essential the five elements of informed consent must be addressed: 1) disclosure 2) comprehension 3) voluntary decision 4) competence and 5) consent or approval to participate (Salkind, 2007). In order to ensure that the participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained, they were informed electronically in writing that all information and data collected would be kept confidential (HHS, 2010). The researcher assured the participants that their responses would be anonymous and securely stored on a password-

encrypted laptop computer or tablet. The participants, aged 18-24 years old, were required to indicate their consent to participate by clicking a button or typing a response after reading the consent information. Only after providing their consent were the participants directed to the survey questionnaires. They could not view the questionnaires until consent was obtained. The participants were asked to complete an anonymous, web-based survey by answering each question openly and honestly. They were prompted to choose their responses from an ordinal scale ranging from not at all (1) to very (7) for each question (see Appendix J). This method of data collection allowed for the efficient and secure gathering of information from the participants while preserving their anonymity and ensuring their responses accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives.

Data Collection

Data was collected by two self-reporting survey instruments: The Aspirations Index Survey (see Appendix B) and the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey (See Appendix C). The Aspiration Index scale focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations; it focuses on seven categories of aspirations or life goals and measures ambition. The Aspirations Index instrument describes thirty-two (32) life goals. These life goals describe what individuals hope to accomplish over the course of their lives. There are three questions per goal to answer: how important is the goal to you? How likely will you attain this goal in your future? And how much have you already achieved this goal? The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory instrument also unpublished, reliable, and valid, describes five intrinsic motivation subscales: interest

and enjoyment; perceived choice; perceived competence; perceived pressure/tension; and relatedness. Permission to use these unpublished, reliable, and valid instruments was granted by the developers for academic and non-commercial research purposes (Self-Determination Theory, 2019) (see Appendix D). The instruments were combined, and demographic information was included, and participants were asked to complete the combined 50-question survey (see Appendix H).

Since data was collected anonymously through the Survey Monkey, it would have been difficult to follow-up on survey responses. Because the data collected had no personally identifiable information, the researcher conducted a pre-test on Survey Monkey to ensure all mobile platforms and personal computer platforms (e.g., Android, Apple, Windows, IOS) were accessible to participants. The survey was written clearly, and questions/statements were asked in a clear and concise manner in Survey Monkey. It took about 20-25 minutes to complete the 50-question, combined survey Intrinsic Motivation and the Aspirations surveys. Participants were instructed each question required an answer. Each questionnaires utilized a one to seven (1-7), not likely at all, moderately, or very likely, ordinal scale response options.

Data collection was electronically and anonymously. The survey was sent through the web-based tool Survey Monkey. The web-based survey was open for six months and eight days, from August 4, 2021, through February 12, 2022, and was accessible by mobile device or personal computer. The survey captured 62 responses and only 59 of the responses are included in the results.

Unfortunately, the data collection process encountered multiple recruitment challenges. Prior to closing the survey, the researcher submitted to Walden's IRB to increase the participant age, from 18-21 to 18-24 years old to expand potential participant pool. The researcher also applied for and received permission to participate in Walden University's Participant pool. However, the researcher was unsuccessful in recruiting the 210 participants needed to ensure generalizability. Additionally, Covid-19 pandemic restrictions such as limited face to face interactions with individuals or social services organizations, childcare facilities, churches, and schools contributed to the survey being closed before sufficient data was captured. Recruitment was conducted primarily online.

Exiting the Study

Informed consent was explained electronically using Survey Monkey. The researcher explained the purpose and objective of the research. The study was being conducted to compare motivation levels and ambition values between two groups: adolescent mothers and child-free women. The goal of the study is to add to existing research on adolescent motherhood, young women, intrinsic motivation, and ambition in young women. In addition to the informed consent, eligible participants electronically received via email or web link instructions on how to cease participation. Participants could leave the study by closing out their internet browser, any time prior to submitting the 50-question survey. They were also informed only fully completed surveys were to be used for data analysis.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The study utilized two instruments to measure ambition and motivation between adolescent mothers and child-free women: The Aspirations Index Survey and The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey.

Aspirations Index Survey

The unpublished Aspiration Index focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations; it focuses on seven categories of aspirations or life goals and measures ambition. The 7-item scale has been used to measure intrinsic and extrinsic goals, life, financial goals, emotional and financial well-being. Extrinsic aspirations are wealth, fame, and image while intrinsic aspirations include meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions. Good health, also included on the Aspirations Index survey, is categorized as neither intrinsic nor extrinsic.

Kasser and Ryan (1993) determined extrinsic outcomes were negatively associated with mental health indicators, whereas intrinsic aspirations were found to be positively associated with mental health indicators. The authors developed two methods for assessing goals, guiding principles including family, money, and broader social values. They also developed specific aspirations measure which involves rating aspirations on two dimensions: personal importance and the likelihood they will be realized. The study determined correlations among the four dimensions of aspiration: self-acceptance, affiliation, community feelings, and financial success. Financial success correlates positively with affiliation (r=.21, $p<.05$) and non-significantly with self-acceptance (r=-22, $p<.05$). Correlations among the importance of self-acceptance,

affiliation, and community feelings were significant and positive (*rs* ranging from .43 and .59). For the chances dimension, significant and positive correlations range between .23 and .57, except between financial success and community feeling (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Correlations computed among the aspirational variables for the two dimensions: personal importance and the likelihood they will be realized, determined the importance of financial success was positively correlated with affiliation (r=.22, p<.01) but not significantly related to the other emails. Correlations among the importance scores for the other three domains were significantly positive (*rs* ranging between .28 and .60). For chances dimension, all correlations were significantly positive (*rs* ranging between .23 and .52) except between financial success and community feeling (r=.08).

The Aspirations Index survey has also been used to measure career aspirations across cultures. Kim, O'Brien, and Kim (2015) translated and measured career aspirations for Korean women. Their study assessed achievement, leadership, and education aspirations and how to translate a measure for use in another culture (Kim et al., 2015). It replicated the three-factor solution, achievement, leadership, and education, found in samples of American graduate and undergraduate women (Gregor & O'Brien, 2016). The measures for the study reflected .76 for achievement, .83 for leadership and .78 for educational aspirations.

The Aspiration Index has also been used to measure well-being and personality. Chan and Joseph (2000) found that greater extraversion and lower importance of financial success is associated with higher scores on happiness, self-actualization, and self-esteem. Their results validate the construct validity of the instrument and are

consistent with previous findings. When used to evaluate life goals, the Aspiration Index was used to describe the cross-cultural adaptation of the instrument. Nunez-Rodriguez, Souza, and Kollar (2016) investigated the psychometric properties, internal consistency, factor structure, and measurement invariance across socioeconomic groups and the dimensionality of the instrument in the Brazilian context of the Aspiration Index survey.

The results of their study showed a reliability using Cronbach's alpha for each of the subscales ranging from .57 to .94 which is consistent with Kim, O'Brien, and Kim (2015). Therefore, the test-retest and internal consistency of the instrument supports the reliability of the measure. The test-retest of the Aspirations Index survey is evident in the survey's ability to be translatable to other cultures without impacting the internal and external validity. Construct validity is the extent to which the tests measure what the construct intended to measure (Grimm & Widaman, 2012).

Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey

The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey is intended to measure the subjective experiences of people related to targeted activity. The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey (Deci & Ryan, 2019) is also referred as the Post Experimental Attitude Questionnaire (Ryan,1982), the Intrinsic Motivation Survey (Mcauley & Duncan, 1989), and the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Survey. The unpublished instrument assesses participants' interest/enjoyment, perceive competence, effort, value/usefulness, felt pressure and tension, and perceived choice while performing a given activity. The given activity for this study is the independent variable, have given birth or have not given birth. However, the interest/enjoyment

subscale is considered the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation (Self-Determination, 2019). Therefore, the researcher used interest and enjoyment as the self-report measure. Perceived choice and perceived competence are theorized to be positive predictors of both self-report and behavioral measures of intrinsic motivation. Pressure/tension is theorized to be a negative predictor of intrinsic motivation. The value/usefulness subscale is used in internalization studies (Self-Determination, 2019). The Post Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey measures the dependent variable, motivation. The instrument has been used to measure various activities including competitive sports, employment, academics, and self-efficacy. Therefore, the test-retest and internal consistency of the instrument supports the reliability of the measure. The researcher chooses to use the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey to measure interest/enjoyment, competence, relatedness, and autonomy for the purposes of the research.

Operationalization

The operational definition of the independent variable is as follow: have given birth or have not given birth (child-free). This study uses one independent variable, birth status, have given birth or not given birth. The values of this dichotomous variable are defined as follows: a biological process by which a female brings forth offspring from her body. The operational definition of have not given birth refers to a biological process by which a female has not brought forth offspring from her body. Child-free or non-mother is defined as females who choose to not biologically have children for a variety of

reasons including education, socio-economic status or medicinal reasons, or choice, for example.

This study uses two dependent variables: motivation and aspiration (ambition). The value of these variables is defined as motivation within this study refers to intrinsic motivation. Motivation is the study of the processes which cause animals and humans to exhibit varying sets of behavior at different time (Pawlik & Rosenzweig, 2000). For the purpose of this study, motivation was interchangeably used with intrinsic motivation, which is defined as a free choice behavior and self-reported interest (Deci et al., 1999). Deci et al. (1999) stated intrinsic motivation energizes and sustains activities through the satisfaction of volition (autonomy) and free choice with the expectations of no external rewards. Aspirations are expectations or goals comprised of intentions, attitudes or a strong desire for high achievement or an object of desire (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006). Active aspirations are defined as a set or goal or a goal which a person is consciously and deliberately working (Reeves & Network, 2014). Ambition, for the purpose of the study, reflects on general well-being and socio-emotional acceptance instead of the general reflections of position and wealth (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). It is the persistent and generalized striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Ambition and active aspirations were used interchangeably within the study.

The dependent variable, intrinsic motivation, was be measured using the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Survey. To score this instrument, the participants must indicate, not at all true, somewhat true, or very true, using an ordinal scale of one through

seven. The researcher must first reverse score the items for which an (R) is shown after them. To do that, the researcher subtracted the item response from 8, and used the resulting number as the item score. Then, calculated subscale scores by averaging across all the items on the subscale. The subscale scores are then used in the analyses of relevant questions. It has four subscales: interest/enjoyment, perceived choice, perceived competence, and pressure/tension. The interest/enjoyment subscale is considered the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation; perceived choice and perceived competence are theorized to be positive predictors of both self-report and behavioral measures of intrinsic motivation.

For the other dependent variable, aspiration, Aspirations Index Survey was used. There are seven categories of aspirations or life goals with five specific goals within each category. Participants must indicate whether rate the questions using an ordinal scale of one through seven: not at all, moderately, very true. The participants were asked to read a number of life goals, presented one at a time. They were asked three questions about each goal. (a) How important is this goal to you? (b) How likely is it you will attain this goal in your future? and (c) How much have you already achieved this goal thus far? To score this scale, I must first calculate three subscale scores for each of the several aspiration categories: the importance score; the likelihood score; and the attainment score. To do this, average the items responses in that subscale.

Table 1

Aspirations Index

Wealth	importance	1, 22, 43, 64, 85
	likelihood	2, 23, 44, 65, 86

	attainment	3, 34, 45, 66, 87
Fame	importance	7, 28, 49, 70, 91
	likelihood	8, 29, 50, 71, 92
	attainment	9, 30, 51, 72, 93
Image	importance	13, 34, 55, 76, 97
	likelihood	14, 35, 56, 77, 98
	attainment	15, 36, 57, 78, 99
Personal growth	importance	4, 25, 46, 67, 88
	likelihood	5, 26, 47, 68, 89
	attainment	6, 27, 48, 69, 90
Relationships	importance	10, 31, 52, 73, 94
	likelihood	11, 32, 53, 74, 95
	attainment	12, 33, 54, 75, 96
Community	importance	16, 37, 58, 79, 100
	likelihood	17, 38, 59, 80, 101
	attainment	18, 39, 60, 81, 102

Only six of the seven aspiration categories were used, health, will not be used for the study. An extrinsic aspiration score is calculated by averaging the subscale scores for the three extrinsic aspirations and an intrinsic aspiration score is calculated by averaging the subscale scores for the three intrinsic aspirations.

Data Analysis Plan

The independent variable being studied is, have given birth or have not given birth and the dependent variables are motivation and ambition values; the covariables include age, ethnicity, the software used for analyses was IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics, a computer-based data management and inferential statistical analysis program and Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (Salkind, 2010). Data was

analyzed using the nonparametric tests: Kruskal-Wallis H test and the Mann-Whitney U test. Because of the small sample size, the advantages of nonparametric tests are: they may be the only alternative when sample sizes are very small, unless the population distribution is eastly known; they make fewer assumptions about the data; and, nonparametric tests are useful in analyzing data rank or categorize, and they often have simpler computations and interpretations than parametric tests (Henderson et al., 2007).

The Kruskal Wallis H test uses the ranks of the data to compare two or more groups and test whether they come from the same population. It is an alternative to the one-way ANOVA. It was used to test for differences in distribution. The Kruskal–Wallis H test is useful when you have one nominal variable and one ranked variable. It tests whether the mean ranks are the same in all the groups (McDonald, n.d.). The Mann-Whitney U test is another nonparametric test used when comparing the mean rank scores of two groups. The Mann-Whitney, also known as the Wilcoxon sum rank, uses the ranks of the data to compare two groups and test whether they come from the same population (Laerd, n.d.). Using an ordinal scale for each nonparametric test, from not at all true, somewhat true, and very true on the Aspirations survey, participants assessed their interest and enjoyment, perceived competence, effort, value and usefulness, felt pressure and tension, and perceived choice on an ordinal scale of one to seven while participants assessed long term goals and aspirations on the motivation survey, also using an ordinal scale, from one to seven which assessed importance, likelihood, and attainment of goals.

Data Analysis

In order to successfully analyze the data using the Kruskal-Wallis H test and the Mann Whitney U test, four assumptions must be met: the dependent variables, motivation and ambition, should be measured ordinal scale; the independent variable, have given birth or have not given birth, should consist of two categorical, matched pairs: adolescent mothers and child-free women; there were no significant outliers; and, the distribution of the differences in the dependent variable between the two related groups should be approximately normally distributed. The fourth assumption differs between the Kruskal-Wallis H test and the Mann Whitney U test, when analyzing data with Mann Whitney test, you must determine whether the distribution of scores for both groups of independent (Laerd Statistics, n.d.; Salkind, 2007). The study is comparing the mean rank scores of the aspirations and motivation variable between two groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the mean ranks of the two groups.

The data cleaning process involved reviewing data to identify inconsistencies. The first step in data cleaning was to analyze the data, detecting errors and inconsistencies which require attention (Wiles, 2018). Although there was no personally identifiable information, the researcher re-reviewed the data, and skip errors and created variable names, variable labels, and value labels, and removed unnecessary variables and re-coded necessary variables.

I used SPSS to determine the source and reference codes and to map the code to standard codes. I began the analysis process by deduplicating the records. Deduplication requires sorting the data and scanning for multiple rows with the same data. Additionally,

the data was reviewed for illegal values or outliers such as age, birthdate, which fall outside of the accepted range for the data. The researcher also reviewed for missing data and excluded it from analysis for the Mann-Whitney test, thee subscales were calculated from each of the seven aspirations categories: the importance score, the likelihood score and the attainment score. For the Mann-Whitney test, the study used the motivation variables interest/enjoyment, pressure/tension, perceived choice, value usefulness, and relatedness. Items were reverse scored and subscales were calculated by average across all of the items on the subscale using SPSS. Finally, the data cleaning process will standardize the data. Standardizing the data encompassed updating the reference data to a uniform format.

I screened the raw data case-wise and variable-wise for redundancies, correct labelling, identifying information and inconsistencies. I investigated whether any participant started the questionnaire more than once, which may create a duplicate in the dataset. Additionally, data were screened to remove any test cases and incomplete surveys. I removed any incomplete cases, any redundant values, such as headers and texts, stored within the dataset.

Using created variable names, variable labels and value labels, the researcher re-checked to ensure every variable and value label aligned with the collected data to ensure accuracy in analysis. For the nonparametric tests, the researcher, ensured the groupings and labels matched and were clear, concise, and as identical, as possible, deleting any redundant variables. The researcher also looked for recoding issues. Survey Monkey is the survey software was used to conduct the surveys. If necessary, the researcher

transformed the variables from the original raw data file, if the answer labels from the scales are not aligned. The researcher paid close attention to the value labels.

Additionally, the data was screened to include paradata, such as length of time needed to take the questionnaire and the time of date the study was taken. Permission from the developers to use the instruments The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey and the Aspirations Index Survey instruments were granted for academic and non-commercial research.

Threats to Validity

External Threats to Validity

While threats to internal validity compromise our confidence a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables, threats of external validity compromise our confidence the study's results are generalizable to other groups. External validity requires the relationship between the IV and DV identified in one environment, setting or time hold up, in comparable settings (Kessler, 2015). It also refers to the characteristics of any type of research study design can influence and limit the generalizability of the research findings (Lavrakas, 2008).

Data sufficiency was an external threat to validity. The study did not achieve the required number of participants in order to collect enough data to be able to secure valid, statistically significant results from the data analysis. Because of monotony or boredom of the survey questions, participants may not have fully answered or completed the 50-question survey. Low participation rates are common issues when recruiting online, contributing factors include post-pandemic restrictions on in-person meetings time

constraints, Zoom fatigue, or low interest in the study. To address these limitations, further analysis is needed with a larger sample size to ensure generalizability and validity of the findings. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings. To address these limitations, further analysis is needed with a larger sample size to ensure generalizability and validity of the findings.

Since the research only studied young mothers and child-free women between the ages of 18-24 years old in the United States, the study may not be generalizable outside of the United States. Additionally, the limited scope of the study in terms of the participant population (young mothers and child-free women between the ages of 18-24 years old in the United States) also raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings to other populations or contexts. Future research may address these limitations by expanding the participant population to include other groups such as fathers and child-free adolescent boys and young men, as well as conducting studies in other countries to explore cross-cultural differences in motivation and ambition.

Internal Threats to Validity

Adolescent mothers experience more social, economic, and psychological disadvantages than adolescent girls who have not given birth (Assini-Meytin, 2015). Additionally, women who have given birth during adolescence are viewed as contributors to the poverty epidemic and are subjected to social exclusion predicated on social identity, gender, and socioeconomic status (Ellis-Sloan,2013). Quasi-experimental research designs may be subjected to threats to internal validity. Threats to validity are

issues can call into doubt the results of a study or the conclusions drawn from the results (Carver et al., 2004). Internal threats to validity include ambiguous temporal precedence because there are two dependent variables, motivation, and ambition and one independent variable: have given birth or not given birth (child-free) is being studied. The study may not be able to determine whether giving birth is the cause or the effect on the dependent variables. Selection bias was also a threat because although groups are homogeneous, there may be differences unknown prior to the study.

Threats to Construct Validity

Construct validity is never finished because researchers and practitioners devise new ways to use test scores (Grimm & Widaman, 2012). The reliability of both the Aspirations Index Survey and the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey has been deemed reliable for over thirty years. Both instruments are widely used and have been mathematically proven to be reliable and measures what the constructs are intended to measure (Utvaer et al., 2014).

Ethical Procedures

Treatment of Human Participants

Agreements to gain access to participants were included in the IRB application. There are seven principles for judging the ethical treatment of human subjects: the research must have a social value; maintain scientific validity; have fair subject selection; favorable risk-benefit ratio; be independently reviewed; obtain informed consent from participants; and demonstrate and maintain respect for the enrolled subject (NIH, n.d.). Walden University requires all student researchers complete the CITI Program for

Human Subjects Protection Training. Walden University requires all student researchers adhere to the university's ethical standards. As such, the Institutional Review Board is responsible for ensuring all Walden University research complies with the university's standards as well as the US federal regulations (Walden, 2020). The only categories of research that do not need to be submitted for IRB approval are literature reviews, hypothetical research designs, and faculty projects that are completely independent of Walden resources, participants, and funding. IRB approval for course-based research projects should be obtained by the faculty member who designs the course. Approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted on August 5, 2021, approval number # 08-04-21-077186.

Ethical Concerns Related to Recruitment

The research study did not focus on one ethnic group. To protect the participants, the recruitment process was discreet, respectful of variability in ethnic/racial definitions, and not involve potentially stigmatizing labels, stereotypes, or experiences. The researcher emailed the IRB to determine if there were any concerns related to the ethical concerns involving the recruitment of a vulnerable population or their parents. The researcher submitted an updated IRB, Form A, based on the updated ages, 18-24 instead of 18-21 years old, as previously submitted.

Although there is minimal risk to the welfare and safety of the participants, the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory questionnaire may raise sensitive issues and generate minimal psychological stress for participants. However, the researcher has provided free support resources are available for study participants (see Appendix F).

Being in this study may benefit young women and adolescent mothers by allowing them a voice which may counteract adverse societal perceptions, contribute to the advancement of human service industry, allows them to do something interesting, exercise their autonomy and take an active and advocacy role in society. There is no cost to participate in the study. Because the survey is web-based, participants may access the survey instruments, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, from a mobile device or PC. The results may be used to develop programs and services which decrease mental health related stressors, increase career and job preparedness and readiness in young women, improve QoL for adolescent mothers and empower young women.

Ethical Concerns Related to Data Collection

The highest ethical standards were upheld when collecting data. Any investigative process relating to people's lives, especially their feelings and emotions, has the potential to cause harm or distress, so questions and statements need to be designed carefully (Kellett, 2005). Ethical concerns related to data collection include confidentiality and consent. The legal age to consent, in the United States, to research treatment is 18 years. By accessing the survey, participants agreed to participate in the study, they are competent and understand the purpose and goal of the study, and the data collection process. Participants 18 years old and older were also consenting to the data collection process, which includes demographic information such as education level, relationship status, and ethnicity.

Treatment of Data

Data was collected anonymously and kept strictly confidential. The researcher promises all responses were confidential, and the collected responses are kept on a password encrypted and secure laptop computer or tablet. All printed documents are secured in a locked drawer or file cabinet within the office of the researcher's home residence, with only the researcher having access to the living space, filing cabinet and dual lock key. Data collected online is kept in a secure file or folder encrypted with passwords, with only the researcher with access to the computer or tablet and 16-digit alphanumeric password key. Any identifiable information, such as name, if collected, was kept separate from the collected data (Shin & Lim, 2018). For the web-based surveys, the researcher explained online surveys require informed consent. The participants were not able to view or access the surveys until consent is obtained. Participants used single sign on to access the survey through Survey Monkey. If the participant does not consent to participate, Survey Monkey automatically directed them to the end of the questionnaire. Raw data will be kept for a minimum of five years after study completion in paper or electronic form.

Data Security and Storage

All respondents' information is securely stored in data centers that adhere to security and technical best practices provided by Survey Monkey. Collected data was transmitted over a secure HTTPS connection, and user logins are protected via TLS. Data at rest is encrypted using industry standard encryption algorithms and strength. Any time

you log in from a new device or browser, the participant was required to complete account verification.

To complete account verification, participants were given the following instructions:

1. After entering the username and password, click Send code.
2. Go to the account email inbox and open the verification email with the subject, "New Login Alert," sent from SurveyMonkey.
3. Copy and paste Verification code in SurveyMonkey.
4. Create a unique Device nickname to describe the device or browser.
5. If there are already two verified devices, remove one to continue. The removed device is automatically logged out—the next time it is used, the account verification must be completed again.

After data were collected, I implemented the following data protection methods, a portable hard drive(media) is being used to store data records and are being password protected in a secure, locked filing cabinet within the researchers' office. Protect passwords were created to gain access to the data records. Passwords are at least 16 alpha-numeric digits long and are being kept confidentially. They will never be shared. Each person accessing the data will have a unique password identifier to access the data records. Access was granted to Dissertation Chair, Dr. Andrew Carpenter, Content Expert, Dr. Virginia Smith, and URR, Dr. Tina Jaeckle. Group Lists are being kept up to date by granting access privileges to each of the research project's electronic folders. Defunct users were removed, and access was revoked when individuals were no longer

part of the group. A password was provided to the individuals who have been granted access to the study. University supported Google Drive or Microsoft One Drive was also used to securely transfer files to individuals who have been granted access. Data will be destroyed five years after the study is complete. All paper and electronic files on memory drives, PCs, laptops will be permanently destroyed.

Summary

This causal-comparative study involved comparing intrinsic motivation levels and ambition values between adolescent mothers and child-free women. Participants were biological females, with and without children, between 18 and 24. Data was collected by administering one anonymous, web-based survey using SurveyMonkey which included the Aspirations Index and Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory surveys. Demographic information included age, ethnicity, relationship status, and education. There was no personally identifiable information that was collected. Participants were able to access the online survey from a mobile device or personal computer. The informed consent form was included on the SurveyMonkey survey. I used the Kruskal Wallis H Test and Mann-Whitney U test to compare adolescent mothers and child-free women.

I was required to protect participants. The recruitment process was discreet, respectful of variability in terms of ethnic and racial definitions, and did not involve potentially stigmatizing labels, stereotypes, or experiences. When recruiting participants, I used a detailed script that was written in clear and plain language. Walden University requires all student researchers to adhere to the university's ethical standards. As such,

the IRB is responsible for ensuring all Walden University research complies with university standards as well as U.S. federal regulations There were no incentives for participating in the study. Although there were minimal risks in terms of welfare and safety of participants, the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory questionnaire may have raised sensitive issues which could have generated psychological stress for participants. However, I provided free support resources for participants. I ensured all responses were confidential, and collected responses are kept on a password encrypted and secure laptop computer or tablet. I am the only person with access to the computer or tablet and 16-digit alphanumeric password key. Any identifiable information, such as names were kept separate from collected data. I explained online surveys require informed consent.

In the late summer and winter of 2021-2022, data were collected using the following social media platforms: Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Links were sent to family and friends via texts and emails. I applied to conduct research through the local school district and was denied on December 4, 2021. I recruited participants through various local, state, and nationwide nonprofit organizations human services agencies, childcare facilities, mentoring programs which provided direct services to young adults and parenting mothers as well as pre and post pregnancy support services, two national digital magazines, local and state human and social services agencies, and a local megachurch. I hosted two online Zoom informationals and partnered with online mentoring groups to host Instagram Live groups to increase opportunities for recruitment.

Additionally, I recruited participants through Walden's participant pool to increase availability and access to potential participants.

Initially, the targeted age group of participants was 18 to 21, but due to low response rates during early winter, I reapplied to Walden's IRB to expand the age group to 18 to 24 and was approved. There was a total of 62 participants with 59 completed surveys. Despite best efforts, I was unable to collect enough data for valid results from data analysis. Consequently, data sufficiency was a limitation of the study. There was too little data to secure valid results from analysis. With a smaller sample size, data can be subject to biases and may not adequately represent the population. Additional research is needed with more participants to ensure validity and generalizability of results.

Low participation rates are common for online surveys (Wu et al., 2022). For the study, post pandemic restrictions on in-person meetings, time constraints, Zoom fatigue, and lack of interest in the study impacted recruitment and collection efforts. To improve data collection efforts, I used a variety of recruitment strategies. Despite these efforts, I was still unable to recruit enough participants. The study's small sample size may limit generalizability of findings. Researchers should consider addressing these limitations by either extending the data collection period, expanding recruitment strategies, or revising study inclusion criteria to attract a larger pool of potential participants.

Additional research is needed with more participants to ensure validity of results. However, I did demonstrate proficiency in terms of using SPSS to analyze data using the Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U tests to analyze variables. Both tests were used to provid mean rank score, and when necessary, *p*-values. Despite limitations, my use of

statistical tests and analysis demonstrates my commitment to sound research practices and rigor. Further research with a larger sample size is needed to draw definitive conclusions about aspirations and motivation scores among adolescent mothers and child-free women.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 includes results of data analysis. The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to compare motivation levels and ambition values between mothering and child-free women between 18 and 24. I compared whether participants gave birth with the confounding variables of ethnicity, education level, and relationship status. The study needed to be conducted to increase knowledge and add to existing literature about self-determination, teen parenthood, adolescent motherhood, youth development and adolescent maternal development, intrinsic motivation, youth ambition, and goal aspirations. Determining whether motivation and ambition changes or remains unchanged in young women after giving birth may be used to implement human services and women's empowerment programs, advocate and promote legislative policies for improving QoL and wellbeing for adolescent mothers which can decrease pregnancy recidivism rates, high school dropout rates, and poverty due to unemployment and underemployment. Chapter 4 includes the time frame for data collection, recruitment and response rates, baseline descriptive and demographic characteristics, sample population, descriptive statistics, statistical assumptions, and statistical tests of hypotheses.

Data Collection

Data were collected from young women through social media, friends, and family using snowball sampling between August 4, 2021, and February 12, 2022. A total of 62 participants agreed to participate in the study. Four participants were eliminated as they failed to complete surveys. The remaining 58 participants were included in the study. Recruiting participants and data collection was difficult during this time because it

occurred as participants were suffering from virtual burnout. Recruitment was conducted primarily through email and text messaging, online through Zoom information sessions, social media groups, and professional networking as well as positing of recruitment posters in two national digital magazine platforms for 85 days. Additionally, I also canvassed neighborhood educational and childcare facilities. Due to pandemic restrictions, however, access to in-person meetings with potential participants was limited or not allowed at all. Chapter 3 includes recruitment and collection procedures.

Normality Testing

Missing values and outliers can sometimes occur during the data collection process. This can lead to smaller sample sizes, which can compromise reliability of results. This study had a small sample size and involved using two nonparametric tests: the Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H Tests, which are used to analyze smaller sample sizes. The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed. The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a rank-based nonparametric test which is used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups. The Mann-Whitney U involves using ranks of data to compare two groups and test whether they come from the same population or not. Any missing values detected in the study were not included in statistical analyses. There were no outliers.

I faced several challenges in terms of recruiting enough participants within the designated timeframe. These included tCOVID-19 pandemic restrictions that limited face-to-face interactions. I relied on online recruitment strategies, which may have

limited the pool of potential participants. I attempted to expand the participant pool by submitting a request to the IRB to increase the age range of participants from 18-21 to 18-24. However, even with this change, I was only able to capture information from 58 participants, which falls far short of the required 210 participants. To increase data collection efforts, I used a variety of recruitment strategies, including contacting youth and women's mentoring groups, publishing the survey in national digital magazines, and applying for permission to participate in Walden University's participant pool. Despite these efforts, I was still unable to recruit enough participants. It is important to note the study's small sample size may limit generalizability of findings. Researchers should consider addressing these limitations by either extending the data collection period, expanding recruitment strategies, or revising inclusion criteria to attract a larger pool of potential participants.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants provided information regarding demographic characteristics. Responses to these questions were summarized using frequency distribution. There were 58 participants who completed the full survey. Ages of participants ranged from 18 to 24. Of those who completed the survey, 100% (N = 58) were biologically female. Thirty-eight participants (61.3%) were Black or African American, 15 (24.2%) identified as White or Caucasian, and nine (14.5%) did not provide race/ethnicity data or had missing data. Ten participants (16.1%) had at least one child under 18, old and 48 participants (77.4%) had no children, with a mean of 1.8 *(SD* = 0.38). Six percent or four participants did not provide data. Forty-eight participants (77%) classified their relationship status as

single, never married, divorced, separated, while 10 participants (16.1%) classified their relationship status as married, widowed, partnered, or in a civil union, with a mean of 1.2 (*SD* = 0.38). Four participants (6.5%) were missing relationship data. Seven participants (11.3%) reported achieving a high school diploma. 21 participants (34%) have some college while 22 participants (35.5%) were college graduates, with a mean of 3.3 (*SD* = 0.70). Twelve participants (19.4%) were missing education data. Missing data were not analyzed or included in findings.

Table 1

Participant Validation: Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

Are You a Biological Parent of a Child 17 or Younger?		
N	Valid	58
	Missing	4

Table 2

Data Validation: Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

Are You a Biological Parent of a Child 17 or Younger?	N	%
Yes	10	16.1
No	48	77.4
Missing System	4	6.5

Table 3

Descriptive Frequencies: Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Are You a Biological Parent	58	1.00	2.00	1.8276	.38104
Race Ethnicity	53	1.00	2.00	1.2830	.45478
Relationship Status	58	1.00	2.00	1.172	.38104
Education	50	2.00	4.00	3.3000	.70711
Valid N	47				

Data Cleanup/Reverse Scores

The following Motivation self-reports were reversed scored: Interest Enjoyment subscale, questions 3 and 4; Perceived Competence subscale, questions number 13; Effort Importance subscale, questions 15 and 18; Perceived Choice subscale, questions, 20-23, 25; Relatedness subscale, questions, 33-34, 37-38. The Pressure Tension subscale was not used in the study. The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a rank-based nonparametric test which was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. (SAGE Research Methods, 2011).

Six subscales (Interest and Enjoyment, Perceived Competence, Effort and Importance, Perceived Choice, Value and Usefulness, and Relatedness) on the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) were measured and their mean ranking was determined. The IMI was used to assess the participant's subjective experience related to their education. The respondents were asked to indicate how motivated they were to carry out pursuing

their education, not at all true, somewhat true, or very true. The Interest and Enjoyment subscale is considered the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation.

Table 4

Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Subscales

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Are You a Biological Parent?	58	1.00	2.00	1.8276	.38104
INTEREST_ENJOYMENT	17	13.00	49.00	34.2941	12.24114
PERCEIVED_COMP	17	16.00	42.00	33.7059	8.52764
EFFORT_IMPORTANCE	17	19.00	35.00	29.1176	5.17062
PERCEIVED_CHOICE	17	12.00	41.00	29.8235	7.86794
VALUE_USEFULLNESS	17	26.00	49.00	41.7647	9.05904
RELATEDNESS	17	37.00	50.00	43.8235	3.86062

Statistical Assumptions of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test

In order to run a Kruskal-Wallis H test, the following four assumptions were tested and met. The first three assumptions relate to the quantitative research design, while the fourth assumption reflects the nature of the data (Laerd Statistics, 2023):
The dependent variables are measured on an ordinal level. The IMI Likert scale measured variables from one to seven, not at all, somewhat true or very true. Participants were asked to self-score on the dependent variables of interest and enjoyment of pursuing an education, perceived competence, effort and importance, perceived choice, value and

usefulness, relatedness, in addition to the dependent variables of education (high school graduate, some college, and college graduate); ethnicity (Black and White), and household status (single or married/Partnered). The independent variables consisted of two or more categorical independent groups: women with children and child-free women.

There is an independence of observation among the two groups, child-free women, and mothering women. Each participant group member is independent and there is no shared relation between the two groups. Using the new SPSS procedure, the distribution scores for each group of the independent variables are positive. Although the sample size was insufficient, there was no statistically significant difference in the medians of two groups in the study. Upon visual inspection, the shape of the H test was similar, although there was a low number of survey participants.

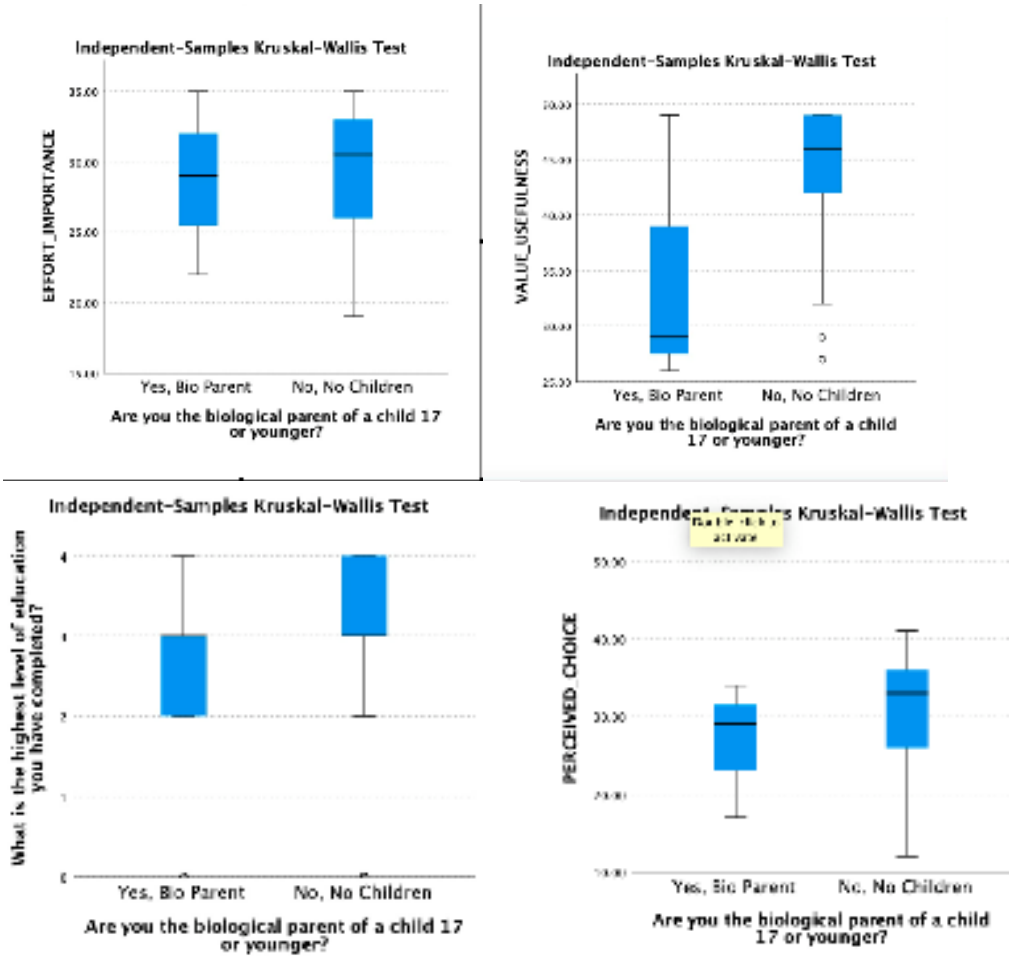
Table 5

Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test Assumption Summary

Total N	17
Test Statistic	.322 [a,b]
Degrees of Freedom	1
Asymptotic Sig (2-sided test)	.570

a. The test statistic is adjusted for ties
b. Multiple comparisons are not performed because there are less than three test field.

Figure 1: Kruskal-Wallis H Test



Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

The two research questions were analyzed using inferential statistical analyses. The criterion alpha level of .05 was used to for analyses indicating the 95% confidence ordinal as used for normal distribution. Due to lower-than-expected participation rates and insufficient sample sizes, the *p* statistical power needed to ensure statistically significance was 105 for each independent variable. Despite these limitations the data was still analyzed for the purpose of fulfilling Walden's PhD requirements. Despite best efforts, the researcher was unable to collect enough data to be able to secure valid results from the data analysis. Consequently, data sufficiency was a limitation of the study. As a result of data sufficiency, there was too little data to secure valid results from the analysis and with a smaller sample size, the data is subject to biases or does not adequately represent the population.

The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How do motivation levels compare between child-free women and women with children?

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation in terms of motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_a1: There a statistically significant correlation in terms of motivation levels between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

RQ2: How do aspiration values compare between child-free women and women with children?

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation in terms of aspiration values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_a1: There is a statistically significant correlation in terms of aspiration values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test, rank-based nonparametric test, was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. The asymptotic *p*-value is considered good enough when there are five or more cases (e.g., participants) per group of the independent variable (Laerd Statistics, 2023). It is possible for an exact statistical significance level to be calculated, but this is not an option in the legacy nonparametric procedure in SPSS Statistics. The Kruskal-Wallis H test requires data measured on only an ordinal scale and assumes only continuous distributions (Laerd Statistics, n.d.).

Distributions of IMI_ INTEREST_ENJOYMENT scores were similar for women with children and women without children as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median IMI scores were statistically significantly different between groups $x^2 = .322$, $p = .570$. It is important to note, the analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to insufficient data. The distributions of IMI_ PERCEIVED CHOICE scores were aalso similar for women with children and women without children, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median IMI scores were not statistically significantly different between groups, $x^2 = .400$, $p = .53$. The distributions of IMI_ PERCEIVED COMPETENCE scores were similar for women with children and women without

children, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median IMI scores were statistically significantly different between groups, $x^2 = 1.443$, $p = .230$. However, the analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to insufficient data.

The distribution of IMI_RELATEDNESS scores between the two groups, women with children and women without children, was grouped by education level: HS diploma, some college, and college graduate and distributions of IMI scores were similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median IMI scores were statistically significantly different between groups, $x^2 = .20$, $p = .66$. However, the analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to insufficient data.

The distribution of IMI_EFFORT IMPORTANCE scores between two groups of participants, with and without children, and distributions of IMI scores were similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median IMI scores were statistically significantly different between groups, $x^2 = .016$, $p = .899$. However, the analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to insufficient data.

The IMI_VALUE USEFULNESS scores between the two groups, women with children and women without children, were similar for all groups as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Median IMI scores were statistically significantly different between groups, $x^2 = 1.24$, $p = .266$. However, analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to insufficient data.

Table 6

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. a, b	Decision
1	The distribution of INTEREST_ENJOYMENT is the same across categories of are you a biological parent	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.570	Retain the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of PERCEIVED_COMP is the same across categories of are you a biological parent	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.230	Retain the null hypothesis
3	The distribution of EFFORT_IMPORTANCE is the same across categories of are you a biological parent	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.899	Retain the null hypothesis
4	The distribution of PERCEIVED_CHOICE is the same across categories of are you a biological parent	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.527	Retain the null hypothesis
5	The distribution of VALUE_USEFULLNESS is the same across categories of are you a biological parent	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.266	Retain the null hypothesis
6	The distribution of RELATEDNESS is the same across categories of are you a biological parent	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.657	Retain the null hypothesis

a. The significance level is .050.
b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

Child-free women ranked higher on perceived competence than women with children with the highest mean and standard deviation (N=17), (M=9.68, Rank I), as shown in the Table 7. This is followed by value and usefulness (M=9.61, Rank II), perceived choice (M=9.36, Rank III), interest and enjoyment (M=9.32, Rank IV); effort and importance (Mean=9. 07, Rank V), and relatedness (M=8.75, Rank VI). Interest and enjoyment is considered the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation. The groups do

not differ in terms of their summed ranked scores (Frey, 2016). Women with children ranked highest on relatedness (M=10.17, Rank I). Overall, the data suggests participants ranked perceived competence, value and usefulness, and personal choice as the first three important factors. However, analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to insufficient data.

Table 7

Kruskal-Wallis Test Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

	INTEREST_ ENJOY	PERCEIVED_ COMP	EFFORT_ IMPORTANCE	PERCEIVED_ CHOICE	VALUE_ USEFULLNESS	RELATEDNESS
KW H	.322	1.443	.016	.400	1.239	.197
Df	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.570	.230	.899	.527	.266	.657

Table 8

Intrinsic Motivation Levels Between Child-Free Women and Women with Children

	Are You a Biological Parent?	N	Mean Rank
INTEREST_ENJOYMENT	Yes	3	7.50
	No	14	9.32
	Total	17	
PERCEIVED_COMP	Yes	3	5.83
	No	14	9.86
	Total	17	
EFFORT_IMPORTANCE	Yes	3	8.67
	No	14	9.07
	Total	17	
PERCEIVED_CHOICE	Yes	3	7.33
	No	14	9.36
	Total	17	
VALUE_USEFULLNESS	Yes	3	6.17
	No	14	9.61
	Total	17	
RELATEDNESS	Yes	3	10.17
	No	14	8.75
	Total	17	

Table 9

Mean Rank Intrinsic Motivation Levels by Level of Education

	What is the Highest Level of Education You Have Completed	N	Mean Rank
INTEREST_ENJOYMENT	HS Graduate	3	9.50
	Some College	10	9.85
	College Graduate	4	6.50
	Total	17	
PERCEIVED_COMP	HS Graduate	3	12.83
	Some College	10	8.50
	College Graduate	4	7.38
	Total	17	
EFFORT_IMPORTANCE	HS Graduate	3	8.83
	Some College	10	9.90
	College Graduate	4	6.88
	Total	17	
PERCEIVED_CHOICE	HS Graduate	3	11.17
	Some College	10	8.75
	College Graduate	4	8.00
	Total	17	
VALUE_USEFULLNESS	HS Graduate	3	10.00
	Some College	10	8.45
	College Graduate	4	9.63
	Total	17	
RELATEDNESS	HS Graduate	3	9.83
	Some College	10	9.75
	College Graduate	4	6.50
	Total	17	

The mean rank scores of the IMI were not statistically significantly different between child-free women and mothering women in the categories of interest and enjoyment, perceived competence, effort and importance, perceived choice, value and usefulness, and relatedness. Although perceived competence ranked the highest, interest and enjoyment is considered the measure of self-report of intrinsic motivation. Perceived choice and perceived competence are positive predictors of behaviors. The dependent variables of education, ethnicity, and relationship were ranked using the Kruskal-Wallis H test. For the purposes of the study, data analysis concluded the value and usefulness of education mean rank score is Rank I Education Rank I (M=49.00, p=.851). Women with high school diplomas (N=3) ranked education and relatedness higher than women with some college (N=10) relationship (M=46.00, p=.535). White women ranked ethnicity (M=46.50, p=.739). Rank II education, (M=44.50, p=.522) and ethnicity (M=44.0, p=.575).

Despite best efforts, the researcher was unable to secure enough data to be able to secure valid results from the data analysis. The study did not achieve the required number of participants which affected the reliability and generalizability of the findings. If there had been sufficient data, it may have been demonstrated that child-free women have higher motivation levels than women with children in several domains, including perceived competence, value and usefulness, perceived choice, interest and enjoyment, effort and importance, and relatedness. With a smaller sample size, the data may be subject to biases or does not adequately represent the population. Further analysis is needed with the required number of participants.

Aspirations Index Survey

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the data. The Mann-Whitney, also known as the Wilcoxon rank sum test, is also a nonparametric test. The test differs from the Kruskal-Wallis H test because the latter can accommodate two or more independent groups. The Mann-Whitney U test analyzed the Aspirations Index Survey. Participants self-rated how important, how likely, and how much they already achieved their goal of pursuing their education. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to provide insights regarding RQ2.

RQ2: How do aspiration values compare between child-free women and women with children?

H_0: The null hypothesis is there is no statistically significant correlation in aspiration values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

H_1: The alternative hypothesis is there is a statistically significant correlation in aspiration values between adolescent mothers and child-free women.

Statistical Assumptions of the Mann-Whitney U Test

In order to run a Mann-Whitney U test, the following four assumptions were tested and met (Laerd, 2023). The first three assumptions relate to the quantitative research design, while the fourth assumption reflects the nature of the data:

The dependent variables are measured on an ordinal level. The IMI Likert scale measured variables from one to seven, not at all, somewhat true, and very true.

The independent variable consisted of two or more categorical independent groups: education (high school graduate, some college, and college graduate); ethnicity (Black and White), and household status (Single or Married/Partnered). There is an independence of observation among the two groups, child-free women, and mothering women. Using the SPSS legacy procedure, the distribution scores for each group of the independent variable are positive and have the same shape.

Descriptive Statistics: Aspirations Index Survey

There were 58 participants who completed both surveys. However, twenty-two participants completed the Aspirations Index Survey which measures people's aspirations. There are seven categories of aspiration which include extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. There are two types of aspirations being assessed: intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations. The intrinsic aspirations are meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions and the extrinsic aspirations are fame, wealth, and image. Participants rated: the importance to themselves of each aspiration; their beliefs about the likelihood of attaining each; and the degree to which they have already attained each. Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed. The asymptotic *p*-value was used because N=22 and the approximate asymptotic value is a good enough approximation to the real *p* value when both groups have more than 20 cases.

Table 10

Data Validation – Intrinsic Motivation Inventory Survey

Are You a Biological Parent of a Child 17 or Younger?			
	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Yes	4	6.88	27.50
No	18	12.53	225.50
Total	22		

	Included		Cases Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
INTEREST_ENJOYMENT	17	26.6	47	73.4	64	100.0
PERCEIVED_COMP	17	26.6	47	73.4	64	100.0
EFFORT_IMPORTANCE	17	26.6	47	73.4	64	100.0
PERCEIVED_CHOICE	17	26.6	47	73.4	64	100.0
VALUE_USEFULLNESS	17	26.6	47	73.4	64	100.0
RELATEDNESS	17	26.6	47	73.4	64	100.0

Table 11

Descriptive Frequencies Aspirations Index Survey

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Wealth_Importance	22	25.5455	6.74521	6.00	33.00
Wealth_Likelihood	22	25.0909	7.53348	6.00	35.00
Wealth_Attainment	22	17.5909	7.22205	5.00	33.00
Fame_Importance	22	14.5909	7.77456	5.00	35.00
Fame_Likelihood	22	16.9545	7.56859	5.00	31.00
Fame_Attainment	22	14.1364	7.41488	5.00	33.00
Image_Importance	22	18.5000	7.83044	6.00	30.00
Image_Likelihood	22	22.2727	8.34601	8.00	35.00
Image_Attainment	22	1.8276	7.35612	6.00	35.00
Are you a biological parent	58	1.8276	.38104	1.00	2.00

Extrinsic Aspirations

Mann-Whitney U test, also known as the Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test, was run to determine if there were differences in the extrinsic aspiration score between women with children and child-free women (N=22). Distributions of the aspirations scores for mothering women and child-free were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Using SPSS, the legacy version of the Mann-Whitney U test, the median rank scores indicate WEALTH importance, likelihood, and attainment was higher for women without children

compared to women with children. Median extrinsic aspiration score for WEALTH importance, likelihood, and attainment determined there were statistically significantly differences between women without children compared to women with children. For the category of WEALTH importance (U=13.5, Z=-1.923, p=.054) was not statistically significantly different; WEALTH likelihood (U=10.50, Z= -21.81, *p*=.029) and attainment (U=10.00, Z=-2.217, *p*=.027), results were statistically significant. For the women in the study, the results of the importance (U=15.00, Z= -1.792, *p*=.073) and attainment of FAME (U=19.00, Z=-1.450, *p*=.147) were not statistically significantly different when compared to women without children. However, FAME likelihood (U=12.00, Z= -2.046, *p*=.042) was statistically significantly different between women without children and those with children. As a result of data sufficiency problem, data analysis and results must not be considered conclusive, reliable, or valid—additional research and analysis is needed with the required number of participants.

Table 12

Extrinsic Aspirations of Child-Free Women and Mothering Women

	Are You a Biological Parent		
Median	Yes	No	Total
Wealth_Importance	21.0000	29.5000	27.5000
Wealth_Likelihood	15.5000	29.0000	27.5000
Wealth_Attainment	10.5000	20.0000	18.5000
Fame_Importance	8.0000	7.5000	7.0000
Fame_Likelihood	7.5000	17.5000	16.5000
Fame_Attainment	7.0000	13.5000	12.5000
Image_Importance	10.0000	21.0000	17.0000
Image_Likelihood	8.5000	27.0000	24.0000
Image_Attainment	8.5000	23.0000	21.5000

Intrinsic Aspirations

The Mann-Whitney U test was also run to determine if there were differences in the intrinsic aspiration scores between women with children and child-free women (N=22). Distributions of the aspirations scores for mothering women and child-free were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Mann-Whitney U test results indicated, RELATIONSHIP importance (MDN=11.72, U=32.0, Z=-.345, *p*=.730), and HEALTH importance (MDN=12.47, U= 18.50, Z= -1.504, *p*=.133) is a not statistically significant difference between child-free women and women with children. If the study had

collected sufficient data, the results would lead us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups with respect to importance of relationships and health. Furthermore, likelihood of child-free women's PERSONAL GROWTH (MDN=12.47 U=18.50,Z=-1.500, *p*=.134), RELATIONSHIPS (MDN=12.61, U=16.0 , Z=-1.709, *p*=.087), and HEALTH (MDN=12.61, U=16.0, Z=-1.711, *p*=.087) are not statistically significantly different compared to those with children. If the study had collected sufficient data, these results would lead us to retain the null hypothesis and conclude there is no difference between women with children compared to women with respect to Aspirations likelihood of personal growth, relationships, and health.

For child-free women, RELATIONSHIP attainment (MDN=12.11, U=47.0, Z= -.939. *p*=.348), COMMUNITY (MDN=12.08, U= 25.50, Z=-.895, *p*=.371) and HEALTH attainment (MDN=12.25, U=22.50, Z=-1.154, *p*=.248) are not statistically significantly different compared to women with children. If the study had collected sufficient data, these results would lead us to retain the null hypothesis conclude there is no statistically significant difference in relationship, community, and health attainment aspirations between child-free and mothering women. Conversely, the importance of PERSONAL GROWTH (MDN=15.50, U=20.00, Z=-1.584, *p*=.113) and COMMUNITY (MDN=13.75, U=27.00, Z=-.773, *p*=.439) are ranked higher for women with children than women without children. If the study had collected sufficient data, these results would lead us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is a significant statistical

difference between personal growth and health aspirations between mothering women and child-free women.

Table 13

Intrinsic Aspirations of Child-Free Women and Mothering Women

	Are You a Biological Parent		
Median	Yes	No	Total
PersonalGrowth_Importance	35.0000	35.0000	35.0000
PersonalGrowth_Likelihood	25.5000	32.5000	32.0000
PersonalGrowth_Attainment	17.5000	26.5000	24.5000
Relationships_Importance	32.5000	33.5000	33.0000
Relationships_Likelihood	25.5000	31.0000	30.0000
Relationships_Attainment	18.5000	24.0000	22.0000
Community_Importance	34.0000	31.5000	32.5000
Community_Likelihood	21.5000	28.5000	26.5000
Community_Attainment	16.0000	21.0000	19.5000
Health_Importance	29.0000	32.0000	32.0000
Health_Likelihood	22.5000	32.0000	27.0000
Health_Attainment	18.0000	21.0000	21.000

Table 14

Intrinsic Aspirations Mean Ranks

	Are You a Biological Parent	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks
Relationships_Likelihood	Yes	4	6.50	26.00
	No	18	12.61	227.00
	Total	22		
Relationships_Attainment	Yes	4	8.75	35.00
	No	18	12.11	218.00
	Total	22		
Community_Importance	Yes	4	13.75	55.00
	No	18	11.00	198.00
	Total	22		
Community_Likelihood	Yes	4	8.50	34.00
	No	18	12.17	219.00
	Total	22		
Community_Attainment	Yes	4	8.88	35.50
	No	18	12.08	217.50
	Total	22		
Health_Importance	Yes	4	7.13	28.50
	No	18	12.47	224.50
	Total	22		
Health_Likelihood	Yes	4	6.50	26.00
	No	18	12.61	227.00
	Total	22		
Health_Attainment	Yes	4	8.13	32.50

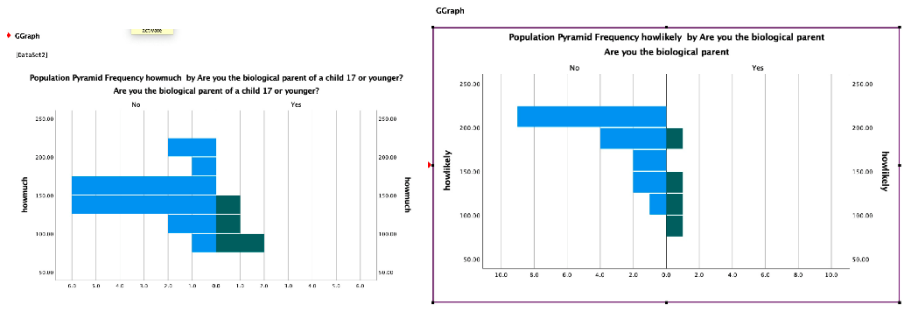
Table 15

Man-Whitney U Test Statistics

	HOWIMP	HOWLIKELY	HOWMUCH
Mann-Whitney U	18.000	9.000	11.500
Wilcoxon W	28.000	19.000	21.500
Z	-1.535	-2.300	-2.086
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.125	.021	.037

Figure 1

Mann-Whitney U Test



Summary

A Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to compare aspiration values: wealth, fame, image, personal growth, relationships, community, and health between women with children and those without children. Because analyses of the Mann-Whitney U test are conducted using ranked scores, distributions for the two populations do not have to be normally distributed. However, distributions should be continuous and have identical forms. According to the mean rank scores, child-free women rank higher in importance,

likelihood, and attainment of aspirations except the importance of community. There was, however, a significant statistical difference in Image importance between child-free women and adolescent mothers. Adolescent mothers, in comparison to child-free women, rank higher on the importance of community. For the purposes of completing this dissertation, I ran analyses to demonstrate proficiency and mastery of data analytical techniques. There was insufficient data to definitively conclude mean rank scores are higher among child-free women compared to mothering women. Conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered tentative, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings. Additional analysis is needed with more of participants to ensure generalizability.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was also conducted to evaluate differences in terms of motivation levels between women with children and child-free women. Child-free women ranked higher on perceived competence than women with children with the highest means and standard deviations (N = 17), (M = 9.68, Rank I). This is followed by value and usefulness (M = 9.61, Rank II), perceived choice (M = 9.36, Rank III), interest and enjoyment (M = 9.32, Rank IV), effort and importance (M = 9. 07, Rank V), and relatedness (M = 8.75, Rank VI). Interest and enjoyment are considered means of measuring intrinsic motivation. Analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to the data sufficiency problem. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered tentative, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings. Additional analysis is needed with more of participants to ensure generalizability.

There were also no statistically significant differences in terms of IMI scores between groups. Distributions of IMI scores was similar for both groups, which suggests there may not be meaningful differences. Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting these findings. Further research with a larger sample size is necessary to draw more reliable conclusions.

The Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests are nonparametric tests which do not assume normality of data. Instead, they are based on ranking and ordering data. Results of these tests indicate distributions of ambition/aspiration and motivation scores are continuous and have identical forms. Overall, data suggests there may be some differences in terms of motivation levels between child-free women and women with children, but more data is needed to draw statistically significant conclusions. There is a lack of statistically significant results due to the data sufficiency problem. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis are tentative, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

A causal-comparative research design was conducted to compare women who have given birth with those who have not given birth. Causal-comparative research involves relationships between independent and dependent variables after an event has already occurred. I measured ambition and motivation between two groups. Data were collected online using SurveyMonkey. The two groups were asked to answer 50 questions from the Aspirations Index Survey and Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory.

Data sufficiency was a limitation of the study. For the study, post pandemic restrictions on in-person meetings, time constraints, Zoom fatigue, and lack of interest in the study impacted recruitment efforts, resulting in too little data to secure valid results from analyses. Despite my best efforts, I was unable to collect enough data. Due to the smaller sample size, data are subject to biases and may not adequately represent the population.

Interpretation of Findings

Motivation Survey Findings

The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory was administered, and 22 participants completed the survey. The instrument is used to measure participants' interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, value/usefulness, and relatedness when performing a given task. I ran Kruskal-Wallis analyses to demonstrate proficiency and mastery of data analytical techniques that were required to run planned analyses. It is important to note analyses lacked statistically significant results due to the data

sufficiency problem. Therefore, analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further analysis with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings.

Interest and enjoyment are considered the self-report of intrinsic motivation. Child-free women ranked highest on perceived competence with the highest means and standard deviations (N = 17, M = 9.68, rank I). This is followed by value and usefulness (M = 9.61, rank II), perceived choice (M = 9.36, rank III), interest and enjoyment (M = 9.32, rank IV), effort and importance (M = 9. 07, rank V), and relatedness (M = 8.75, rank VI). Women with children ranked highest on relatedness (M = 10.17, rank I).

Despite my best efforts, there was too little data to secure valid results from analyses. Perceived choice and competence are positive predictors of intrinsic motivation, while pressure and tension are negative predictors of intrinsic motivation. More data collection is needed from members of this population so that valid analyses can be run. Additional research with a larger sample size is necessary to draw more reliable conclusions.

Aspirations Index Survey Findings

A Mann-Whitney U test was run to demonstrate mastering of nonparametric testing via SPSS. I measured strengths of intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations: how important, how likely, and how much a goal or aspiration had been attained or will be attained. Mean rank scores were higher for women without children in the areas of wealth, fame, and image importance. Women without children ranked higher in the areas of personal growth, relationships, and health. However, in the area of community importance, women with children ranked higher than child-free women. Although there

was not enough data to generate valid results based on available data, the mean ranked score for women with children was 13.75 compared to 11.00 for child-free women. Community importance was the only aspiration where mothering women ranked higher than child-free women. Due to limited data, I was unable to conclusively support the claim that there were no statistically significant differences in terms of aspirations scores between adolescent mothers and child-free women. However, distributions of aspirations scores were similar for both groups, which suggests there may not be meaningful differences. Further research with larger sample sizes and more robust statistical analyses is needed to draw more definitive conclusions about differences in aspirations scores between these two groups.

For women in the study, results suggest wealth, fame, and image are ranked higher by child-free women, and relationships, personal growth, and health were also ranked higher by child-free women. However, for women with children, community was ranked higher than child-free women, but more research is needed to confirm these findings. In this study, there were no differences between women with and without children with respect to intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations. Further research with a larger sample size is necessary to draw conclusions.

The findings on motivation align with the self-determination theory, as they address the fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness for both groups. Autonomy is linked to the perception of choice, while competence is connected to effort, importance, perceived competence, value, usefulness, and health. Furthermore, relatedness is associated with a sense of community and interpersonal

connections. In terms of ambition values, wealth, fame, and image are connected to autonomy, while competence is linked to personal growth and health. Lastly, relatedness is associated with social connectedness. Despite inconclusive results, the findings may be useful.

Limitations of the Study

Understanding limitations is important for placing research findings in context, interpreting validity of scientific work, and adding credibility to conclusions of published research (Ioannis, 2007). The study has limitations based on the causal-comparative research design because there is limited data which compares adolescent mothers and child-free nonmothering peers. In addition to research design imitations, data sufficiency was also a limitation of the study. I did not achieve the required number of participants, which affected reliability and generalizability of findings. For the study, post pandemic restrictions on in-person meetings, time constraints, Zoom fatigue, and lack of interest in the study impacted recruitment efforts, resulting in too little data to secure valid results from analyses.

To improve data collection efforts, I used a variety of recruitment strategies, including contacting youth and women's mentoring groups, local health and human services offices, and the local school district via email, and by phone, created a Facebook group for research purposes, and joined seven Facebook groups specifically for mothering and parenting women. I contacted the local school district and applied to conduct research and submitted the application to the IRB. The application was denied on December 16, 2021. I also emailed and phoned local community colleges and

universities, local megachurches, local panhellenic organizations, and service organizations for young women, published the survey in national digital magazines, and applied for permission to participate in Walden University's participant pool. I also hosted two Zoom informationals that were promoted through professional networking sites and participated in ask and answer IG live sessions.

Despite my best efforts, I was unable to collect enough data to be able to secure valid results from the data analysis. With a smaller sample size, the data is subject to biases or adequately represent the population. Finally, it may be difficult to understand the context of the phenomenon due to the limited sample size. It is important to note the analysis cannot present statistically significant results due to the data sufficiency problem. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings.

Internal Threats to Validity

Internal threats to validity include ambiguous temporal precedence because there are two dependent variables, motivation, and ambition and one independent variable: have given birth or not given birth (child-free) is being studied. The study may not be able to determine whether giving birth is the cause or the effect on the dependent variables. Selection bias was also a threat because although groups are homogeneous, there may be differences unknown prior to the study.

External Threats to Validity

Non-response effects may also be a threat to external validity. Because of monotony or boredom of the survey questions, participants may not have fully answered or completed the 50-question survey. Data sufficiency was an external threat to validity. The study did not achieve the required number of participants in order to collect enough data to be able to secure valid, statistically significant results from the data analysis. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings. Low participation rates are common issues when recruiting online, contributing factors include post-pandemic restrictions on in-person meetings time constraints, Zoom fatigue, or low interest in the study. To address these limitations, further analysis is needed with a larger sample size to ensure generalizability and validity of the findings.

Since the research only studied young mothers and child-free women between the ages of 18-24 years old in the United States, the study may not be generalizable outside of the United States. Additionally, the limited scope of the study in terms of the participant population (young mothers and child-free women between the ages of 18-24 years old in the United States) also raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings to other populations or contexts. Future research may address these limitations by expanding the participant population to include other groups such as fathers and child-free adolescent boys and young men, as well as conducting studies in other countries to explore cross-cultural differences in motivation and ambition.

It is important to acknowledge limitations and opportunities for future research to improve the external validity of the study's findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of motivation and ambition across diverse populations and contexts. Despite practical and researcher limitations, there are opportunities for future research. Limitations highlight the need to conduct additional research outside of the United States to survey other parenting and non-parenting groups such as fathers and child-free, adolescent men.

Reliability and Validity of Instruments

The Aspiration Index has shown good internal consistency reliability, with alpha coefficients ranging from .72 to .89. Test-retest reliability has also been shown to be good, with correlations ranging from .69 to .80 (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Research has revealed having strong relative aspirations for extrinsic outcomes was negatively associated with mental health indicators, whereas, placing more importance on intrinsic aspirations were found to be positively associated with mental health indicators (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; 1996). The Aspiration Index has also demonstrated construct validity; it has been found to correlate with other measures of well-being and mental health. The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory has shown good internal consistency reliability, with alpha coefficients ranging from .60 to .90. Test-retest reliability has also been shown to be good, with correlations should be over .70 (Monteiro et al.,2015). The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory has demonstrated good construct validity, as it has been found to predict task performance and other measures of motivation and engagement.

Recommendations For Further Research

Conducting research which compares motivation and ambition between mothering young women and child-free women offers human and social services practitioners, programs to introduce and develop services which contribute to quality of life and well-being for both groups. Further investigation is recommended due to data sufficiency which impacts the generalizability of the findings. Despite the researcher's best efforts, the study was unable to collect enough data to be able to secure valid results from the data analysis. There was too little data to secure valid results from the analysis. And, with a smaller sample size, the data is subject to biases or does not adequately represent the population. However, the results are consistent with the literature review of adolescent maternal development, non-mothering women and emotional maturity, quality of life-mental health, well-being of adolescent mothers, motivation, and ambition in women.

Adolescent maternal motherhood asserts motherhood brings increased responsibilities, recognition, and sense of purpose for young mothers (Assini-Meyers & Green, 2015). Mothering increases their sense of purpose and need for social connection (relatedness) in young mothers. For childfree women, becoming pregnant and subsequently a young mother, would hinder their educational aspirations, goal achievement, relationships with family and peers, and have a negative impact on their autonomy (Childs et al., 2015). For adolescent mothers and non-mothering women, the satisfaction of the three basic psychological need of relatedness, competence, and

autonomy are crucial to their adolescent development and emerging adulthood (Gunnell et al., 2014).

The study was inexpensive to conduct; information was gathered quickly, was conveniently accessible, and distributed via social media through snowball sampling. Although the results are quantifiable, the study is not generalizable due to the small sample size. Despite the researcher's best efforts, the study was unable to collect enough data to be able to secure valid results from the data analysis. For the purposes of completing this dissertation, I ran my analyses to demonstrate my proficiency and mastery of the data analytical techniques required to run the study's planned analyses. Through statistical analysis, objective results were obtained, and valuable insights were derived from the data which can be used to conduct a broader survey in an effort to generalize the results. Furthermore, numerical data allows the researcher to explore and measure trends and differences between two groups. Based on the strengths and limitations of the current study, and the literature reviewed on this topic, here are some recommendations for further research and to overcome the data sufficiency problems of the current study:

1. Develop data collection strategies to collect sufficient data from members of this population so valid analyses can be run.
2. Future studies can replicate the current study with a larger sample size to improve external validity and generalizability of the findings.
3. Researchers can use a mixed-methods approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the

phenomenon. Qualitative data can help capture the complexity of human experiences and provide context for the quantitative findings.

4. Future studies can aim to recruit a more diverse and representative sample to improve external validity and reduce selection bias.
5. To reduce participant fatigue and burnout, future studies can vary the methods of data collection, such as using different survey formats (e.g., online, in-person, phone), or using different types of data (e.g., behavioral, physiological).
6. Researchers can use engaging and thought-provoking survey questions to maintain participant engagement and reduce survey fatigue. This can be achieved by using creative and innovative methods such as gamification, humor, and storytelling.
7. Future studies can investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the phenomenon under study. This can include exploring the impact of pandemic-related stressors, such as work from home and virtual learning, on motivation and ambition.

Implications for Practice

Human services is considered the helping profession. Helping professionals provide high quality care and support to those who seek social and human services. Understanding motivation and ambition is critical to the profession because motivation is linked to job, career, and personal satisfaction. Women have greater opportunities for forming and pursuing their own goals more than any time in history (Fels, 2004). Fels (2004) also posits they experience the most powerful social and institutional

discrimination during their twenties and thirties after they leave the educational system and start pursuing their ambition.

Poorly motivated individuals can have a negative impact on mental health. Furthermore, understanding motivation provides valuable insight into human nature. Motivation explains why goals are set, why one strives for achievement and power, why we experience emotions like fear, anger, and compassion. For helping professionals-human services practitioners, advocates, researchers and thought leaders, understanding motivation may allow them to engage with individuals with a strong understanding an individual sense of choice, personal endorsement, interest and satisfaction are likely to persist with the behavior (Hagger et al, 2014). Furthermore, social relatedness is a key psychological mechanism impacting motivation and engagement. Launching human services programs and services which focus on increasing motivation, women's empowerment, goal achievement, and life management skills is essential to being perceived as competent, related, and autonomous.

Women's empowerment programs are needed for both mothering and child-free women. As young mothers and young women become emerging adults, human services organizations should be developing training and life management programs which empower young women to continue their personal development, spiritual, creative, and social, educational, and vocational pursuits after giving birth. Life management skills are focused on planning for the future; these planning skills are as pertinent to teen mothers, as they are to emerging and older adults (Prenda & Lachman, 2001). The concepts of social relatedness, autonomy, and competence are also crucial when it comes to

motivation and engagement. By creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment, human services practitioners can help individuals feel more comfortable, improve their lives, and motivate them to pursue and achieve their goals. By understanding what motivates their clients, human services practitioners and thought leaders can create interventions which are tailored to the needs and interest of their clients, thus increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

If there had been sufficient data collected, the study's findings may have significant social implications which could impact the quality of life of individuals and communities. For example, the study's findings may be used to inform the development of interventions and policies aimed at improving the well-being of young mothers and other vulnerable populations. By understanding the psychosocial needs and challenges faced by these groups, practitioners and policymakers can develop targeted approaches to support them. For practitioners, addressing the psychosocial needs of mothering women, between 18-24 years old, is critical to their overall well-being, mentally, emotionally, and aspirationally. Mothering at a young age, often, disrupts educational pursuits, impacts social interaction with peers and partners (Walker & Holtfreter, 2016). Moreover, due to the interruption of adolescent development and the acceleration of adult maternal development, emotional maturation and executive functioning is delayed which impacts the quality of parenting.

Human services practitioners could also be useful in developing curricula for training health professionals on identifying and addressing the risks associated with climate change for vulnerable individuals and individuals with the intent to become

pregnant (White House Blueprint for Addressing Maternal Health, 2022). Finally, human services may appraise community-based programs which specifically address life skills, pregnancy intervention and prevention to ensure they are meeting the needs of its clients. Life skills or soft skills refer to a set of personal characteristics and capabilities which are thought to increase chances of success and wellbeing in life (Shek et al., 2021; Steptoe & Wardle, 2017). Women's empowerment programs are also needed for both mothering and child-free women. As young mothers and young women become emerging adults, human services organizations should be offering training and life management programs which empower young women to continue their educational and vocational pursuits after giving birth. By offering training and life management programs, organizations can empower women to become more competent, related, and autonomous individuals. These programs can help women develop the skills and confidence they need to pursue their goals and improve their lives. Life management skills also referred to as subjective well-being (SWB) strategies are focused on planning for the future-strategically and intentionally regulating their lives. These planning skills are as pertinent to teen mothers, as they are to emerging and older adults (Prenda & Lachman, 2001; Shirzadifard et al., 2020).

Finally, human services organizations should assist in data collection and quantifying data to reduce women's health disparities. According to the White House Blueprint for Addressing Maternal Health (2022), data is routinely collected for the provision of care for women, however, data often lags and is infrequently combined for program evaluation and research. Human services organizations can design and enhance

performance metrics which measure and quantify health disparities, housing and food insecurities data, and promote maternal health equity at point of service which impact young mothers.

Theoretical Implications

The Self-Determination Theory is a theoretical construct which posits there are three basic psychological needs that drive human behavior: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the need to feel in control over one's actions and decisions, competence refers to the need to feel capable and effective in one's action, and relatedness refers to the need to feel connected with others. The Self-Determination Theory strongly correlates one's internal motivation with the satisfaction of three psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Moore et al., 2020). By comparing motivation or ambition between young mothers and child-free mothers, ages 18-24 years old, after giving birth and subsequent motherhood, the researcher sought to gain insight into whether adolescent motherhood affected or did not affect motivation levels and aspirations. However, the findings are inconclusive due to the sample size; therefore, the study is unable to definitively determine whether there is a correlation between mothering young women and child-free women. The independent variables - have given birth or have not given birth, whereas the dependent variables are age, ethnicity, household status, and education level. Viewed through the lens of the Self-Determination Theory, the study asks the following questions: RQ1: How do motivation levels compare between child-free women and women with children? RQ2: How do aspirations values compare between child-free women and women with children?

The dependent variables were measured by two instruments: the Aspirations Index (AI) survey (1996) and the Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Survey (1982). The AI is a self-report measure of personal aspirations, which assesses individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations. The aspirations questionnaire refers to people's life goals: intrinsic motivation (meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions) and extrinsic aspirations (wealth, fame, and image). The questionnaire measured the dependent variables: how important is this to you? how likely is it that it will happen in the future? And how much have you already attained?

The Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (PEIMI) is a self-report measure which assesses intrinsic motivation and other forms of motivation in the context of an experimental task. The Intrinsic Motivation questionnaire assesses participants' subjective experiences related to pursuing education. The interest/enjoyment subscale is considered the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation. Perceived choice and perceived competence are theorized to be positive predictors of both self-report and behavioral measures of intrinsic motivation. Pressure/tension is theorized to be a negative predictor of intrinsic motivation. The instrument measured the following dependent variables: interest and enjoyment, perceived competence, effort/importance, pressure and tension, and perceived choice.

For example, if mothers have lower motivation levels than child-free women, this may suggest the demands of motherhood may interfere with their ability to feel in control over their actions and decisions, which is a key component of autonomy. If the results of the study suggest motivation levels are higher or lower in women with children, this may

have important implications for how human services professionals approach interventions with this population. For example, interventions which focus on increasing a mother's sense of control over her actions and decisions may be particularly effective in increasing motivation levels. On the other hand, if the results suggest aspiration values are higher in child-free women, this may suggest interventions with mothers should focus on helping them balance their intrinsic aspirations (such as personal growth and meaningful relationships) with the demands of motherhood. By understanding what motivates their clients, helping professionals can create interventions which are customized to the individual's needs and interests, increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Empirical Implications

If the results of the study suggest motivation levels are higher in women with children, this may have important implications for how professionals approach interventions with this population. Intervention and empowerment programs with young women may need to focus on promoting intrinsic aspirations and suppressing extrinsic aspirations. Additionally, if the study finds certain demographic factors (such as age, ethnicity, household status, and education level) are significantly related to motivation levels and aspirations values, this may inform interventions which are tailored to specific subgroups of young mothers. For example, if the study finds younger mothers have lower motivation levels than older mothers, interventions may need to focus on providing additional support and resources for younger mothers to help them feel more in control and competent in their parenting roles and long-term aspirations.

Conclusion

By comparing motivation or ambition between young mothers and child-free women, ages 18-24 years old, after giving birth and subsequent motherhood, the researcher sought to gain insight into whether adolescent motherhood affected or did not affect motivation levels and aspirations. Analysis was conducted to demonstrate my proficiency and mastery of the two psychometric tests. Despite the researcher's best efforts, the study was unable to collect enough data required to be able to secure valid results from the data analysis. Due to data sufficiency problems, there was not enough data collected to present the findings as reliable, valid, or generalizable. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be considered inconclusive, and further research with sufficient data is needed to confirm these findings. Additional analysis is needed with the required number of participants to ensure generalizability.

The study does not determine whether there is relationship between motivation levels and ambition after giving birth or not giving birth in young women. It is important to understand the specific ways in which the needs of mothering and child-free women are individually expressed and prioritized. However, three basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness must be met to make good leader.

Autonomy refers to the need for individuals to have control over their own lives and choices which can involve making decisions and taking actions that align with one's own values and goals, as well as having a sense of agency and self-determination. In the context of mothering and child-free women, autonomy may involve having access to resources and support which enables them to make decisions about their own lives and

bodies, such as access to reproductive healthcare and the ability to choose whether or not to have children. Competence refers to the need for individuals to feel capable and effective in their actions and pursuits. This can involve developing skills and abilities, setting, and achieving goals, and receiving recognition and feedback for one's efforts. In the context of mothering and child-free women, competence may involve having access to education and training opportunities, as well as empowerment support and recognition for their contributions to their families, communities, and society.

Relatedness refers to the need for individuals to feel connected and valued by others, and to have a sense of belonging and social support. This can involve forming meaningful relationships and connections with others, as well as experiencing empathy, understanding, and acceptance. In the context of mothering and child-free women, relatedness may involve having access to supportive relationships and networks, as well as opportunities to connect with others who share similar experiences and interests. For human services and human services practitioners, it is essential to consider the unique experiences of adolescent mothers and how their needs differ from child-free women to create effective and client-centric interventions. A client centric approach empowers clients to work with practitioners to understand their own risks and options to take an active role in their own decisions (Ellis, 2023). As head of households, mothering adolescent women become leaders. Situational leadership is defined as the willingness and ability to assume responsibility for the task at hand (Fisher, 2009). The study provides insight to both research questions concerning aspirations and motivation in

relation to the literature on emotional maturity, mental health, adolescent mothering, teen mothering, motivation, ambition, child-free and non-mothering young women.

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be inferred that if there had been enough data collected, the findings might have indicated that there is no statistically significant difference in motivation levels between adolescent mothers and women without children. Similarly, it might have shown that there is no statistically significant difference in ambition values and motivation levels between women without children and adolescent mothers. The study sheds light on various aspects related to aspirations, such as intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations and motivation, the importance of aspirations, the likelihood of achieving them, and the extent to which they have already been fulfilled. These factors are particularly relevant for women between the ages of 18 and 24. Furthermore, the results could have indicated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly influence the levels of interest and enjoyment among adolescent women. It could have also revealed that motivation plays a role in perceived choice, perceived competence, value and usefulness, effort, and importance, as well as the sense of belonging to the community, peers, and society.

Although the results cannot be generalized due to insufficient data, the analysis provides valuable insights into the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and aspirations of 18–24-year-old women. It suggests that these women aspire to be seen by society as autonomous, connected, and competent. Despite the differing factor of motherhood, both groups actively seek social connections, relatedness, a sense of community, and a purpose in life.

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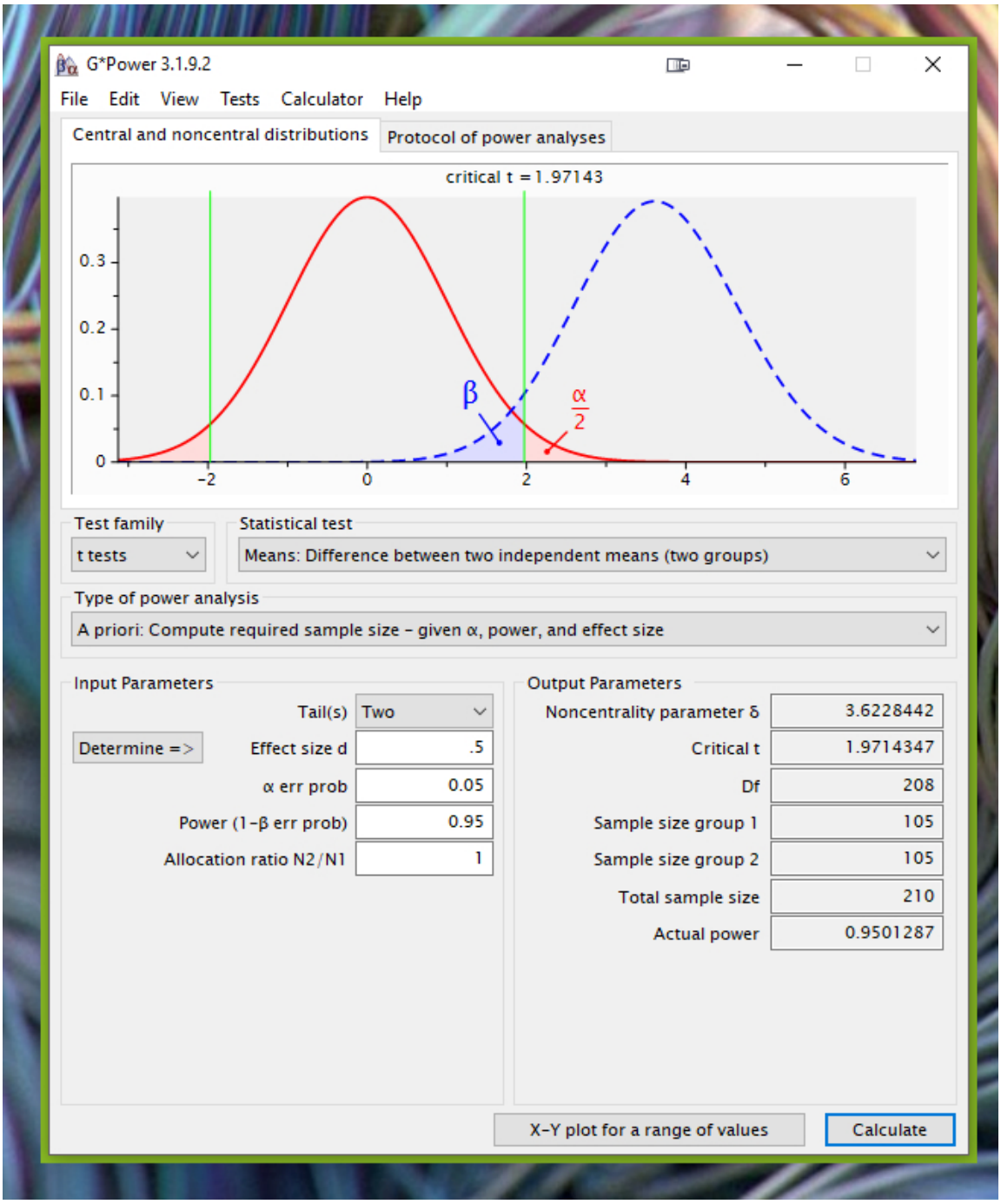
Appendix A: G*Power



Appendix B: Aspirations Index Survey

Everyone has long-term goals or aspirations. These are the things that individuals hope to accomplish over the course of their lives. In this section, you will find a number of life goals, presented one at a time, and we ask you three questions about each goal. (a) How important is this goal to you? (b) How likely is it that you will attain this goal in your future? and (c) How much have you already achieved this goal thus far? Please use the following scale in answering each of the three questions about each life goal.

! ! not at all! ! moderately very

! ! 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Life-goal: To be a very wealthy person.

1. How important is this to you?
2. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
3. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To grow and learn new things.

4. How important is this to you?
5. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
6. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have my name known by many people.

7. How important is this to you?
8. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
9. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have good friends that I can count on.

10. How important is this to you?
11. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
12. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To successfully hide the signs of aging.

13. How important is this to you?
14. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
15. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To work for the betterment of society.

16. How important is this to you?
17. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
18. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To be physically healthy.

19. How important is this to you?
20. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
21. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have many expensive possessions.

22. How important is this to you?
23. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
24. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: At the end of my life, to be able to look back on my life as meaningful and complete.
25. How important is this to you?
26. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
27. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To be admired by many people.
28. How important is this to you?
29. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
30. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To share my life with someone I love.
31. How important is this to you?
32. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
33. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To have people comment often about how attractive I look.
34. How important is this to you?
35. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
36. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To assist people who need it, asking nothing in return.
37. How important is this to you?
38. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
39. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To feel good about my level of physical fitness.
40. How important is this to you?
41. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
42. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To be financially successful.
43. How important is this to you?
44. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
45. How much is this satisfied currently?
Life-goal: To choose what I do, instead of being pushed along by life.
46. How important is this to you?
47. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
48. How much is this satisfied currently?
Life-goal: To be famous.
49. How important is this to you?
50. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
51. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To have committed, intimate relationships.
52. How important is this to you?
53. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
54. How much have you already attained this goal?
Life-goal: To keep up with fashions in hair and clothing.
55. How important is this to you?

56. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
57. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To work to make the world a better place.

58. How important is this to you?
59. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
60. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To keep myself healthy and well.

61. How important is this to you?
62. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
63. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To be rich.

64. How important is this to you?
65. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
66. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To know and accept who I really am.

67. How important is this to you?
68. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
69. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have my name appear frequently in the media.

70. How important is this to you?
71. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
72. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To feel that there are people who really love me, and whom I love.

73. How important is this to you?
74. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
75. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To achieve the "look" I've been after.

76. How important is this to you?
77. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
78. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To help others improve their lives.

79. How important is this to you?
80. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
81. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To be relatively free from sickness.

82. How important is this to you?
83. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
84. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have enough money to buy everything I want.

85. How important is this to you?
86. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
87. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To gain increasing insight into why I do the things I do.

88. How important is this to you?
89. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
90. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To be admired by lots of different people.

91. How important is this to you?
92. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
93. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have deep enduring relationships.

94. How important is this to you?
95. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
96. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have an image that others find appealing.

97. How important is this to you?
98. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
99. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To help people in need.

100. How important is this to you?
101. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
102. How much have you already attained this goal?

Life-goal: To have a physically healthy lifestyle.

103. How important is this to you?
104. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
105. How much have you already attained this goal?

Appendix C: Post Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

(Below are listed all 45 items that can be used depending on which are needed.)
For each of the following statements, please indicate how true it is for you, using the following scale:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
*not at all true *somewhat true* very true

***Interest/Enjoyment**

I enjoyed pursuing my education very much
Pursuing my education was fun to do.
I thought this was pursuing my education. (R)
Pursuing my education did not hold my attention at all. (R)
I would describe pursuing my education as very interesting.
I thought pursuing my education was quite enjoyable.
While I was doing pursuing my education, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.

***Perceived Competence**

I think I am pretty good at pursuing my education.
I think I did pretty well at pursuing my education, compared to other students.
After working at pursuing my education for a while, I felt pretty competent.
I am satisfied with my performance at this task.
I was pretty skilled at pursuing my education.
Pursuing my education was an activity that I couldn't do very well. (R)

Effort/Importance

I put a lot of effort into pursuing my education.
I didn't try very hard to do well at pursuing my education. (R)
I tried very hard on pursuing my education.
It was important to me to do well at pursuing my education.
I didn't put much energy into pursuing my education. (R)

Pressure/Tension

I did not feel nervous at all while pursuing my education (R)
I felt very tense while doing pursuing my education.
I was very relaxed in pursuing my education. (R)
I was very relaxed in not pursuing my education.
I was anxious while working on pursuing my education.
I felt pressured while pursuing my education.
I felt pressured while not pursuing my education.

****Perceived Choice***

I believe I had some choice about doing pursuing my education.
I felt like it was not my own choice to pursuing my education. (R)
I did not really have a choice about pursuing my education. (R)
I felt like I had to pursue my education. (R)
I did pursue my education because I had no choice. (R)
I did pursue my education because I wanted to.

I pursued my education because I had to. (R)

Value/Usefulness

I believe pursuing my education could be of some value to me.
I think that pursuing my education is useful for achieving my goals
I think pursuing my education is important to do because it can _____
I would be willing to pursue my education again because it has some value to me.
I think pursuing my education could help me to _____
I believe pursuing my education could be beneficial to me.
I think that pursuing my education is an important activity.

***Relatedness**

I felt really distant to women pursuing their education. (R)
I really doubt that women pursuing their education and I would ever be friends. (R)
I felt like I could really trust women pursuing their education.
I'd like a chance to interact with women pursuing their education more often.
I'd really prefer not to interact with women pursuing their education in the future. (R)
I don't feel like I could really trust women pursuing their education. (R)
It is likely that women pursuing their education and I could become friends if we interacted a lot.
I feel close to women pursuing their education.

Constructing the IMI for your study. First, decide which of the variables (factors) you want to use, based on what theoretical questions you are addressing. Then, use the items from those factors, randomly ordered. If you use the value/usefulness items, you will need to complete the three items as appropriate. In other words, if you were studying whether the person believes an activity is useful for improving concentration, or becoming a better basketball player, or whatever, then fill in the blanks with that information. If you do not want to refer to a particular outcome, then just truncate the items with its being useful, helpful, or important.

Scoring information for the IMI. To score this instrument, you must first reverse score the items for which an (R) is shown after them. To do that, subtract the item response from 8, and use the resulting number as the item score. Then, calculate subscale scores by averaging across all the items on that subscale. The subscale scores are then used in the analyses of relevant questions.

The following is a 22-item version of the scale that has been used in some lab studies on intrinsic motivation. It has four subscales: interest/enjoyment, perceived choice, perceived competence, and pressure/tension. The interest/enjoyment subscale is considered the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation; perceived choice and perceived competence are theorized to be positive predictors of both self-report and behavioral measures of intrinsic motivation. Pressure tension is theorized to be a negative predictor of intrinsic motivation. Scoring information is presented after the questionnaire itself.

TASK EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

For each of the following statements, please indicate how true it is for you, using the following scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all true *Somewhat true *Very true

1. While I was working on the task, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.
2. I did not feel at all nervous about doing the task.
3. I felt that it was my choice to do the task.
4. I think I am pretty good at this task.
5. I found the task very interesting.
6. I felt tense while doing the task.
7. I think I did pretty well at giving birth, compared to other students.
8. Doing the task was fun.
9. I felt relaxed while doing the task.
10. I enjoyed doing the task very much.
11. I didn't really have a choice about doing the task.
12. I am satisfied with my performance at this task.
13. I was anxious while doing the task.
14. I thought the task was very boring.
15. I felt like I was doing what I wanted to do while I was working on the task.
16. I felt pretty skilled at this task.
17. I thought the task was very interesting.
18. I felt pressured while doing the task.
19. I felt like I had to do the task.
20. I would describe the task as very enjoyable.
21. I did the task because I had no choice.
22. After working at this task for a while, I felt pretty competent.

Scoring information. Begin by reverse scoring items # 2, 9, 11, 14, 19, 21. In other words, subtract the item response from 8, and use the result as the item score for that item. This way, a higher score will indicate more of the concept described in the subscale name. Thus, a higher score on pressure/tension means the person felt more pressured and tense; a higher score on perceived competence means the person felt more competent; and so on. Then calculate subscale scores by averaging the items scores for the items on each subscale. They are as follows. The (R) after an item number is just a reminder that the item score is the reverse of the participants response on that item.

Interest/enjoyment: 1, 5, 8, 10, 14(R), 17, 20

Perceived competence: 4, 7, 12, 16, 22

Perceived choice: 3, 11(R), 15, 19(R), 21(R)

Pressure/tension: 2(R), 6, 9(R), 13, 18

The subscale scores can then be used as dependent variables, predictors, or mediators, depending on the research questions being addressed.

Appendix D: Permission from Developer

Please note all questionnaires on this web site, developed for research on self-determination theory, are copyrighted. You are welcome to use the instruments for academic (non-commercial) research projects. However, you may not use any of them for any commercial purposes without written permission to do so from the Center for Self-Determination Theory (2021), https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/questionnaires/. To inquire about a commercial request, please email: shannon@selfdetermationtheory.org

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Are you able to read, write and understand English?
Yes
No

What is your gender?
Female
Male
Other (specify)

What is your age?
Under 18
18 -24
25-30
31-40
41+

Which ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)
American Indian or Alaskan Native
Asian / Pacific Islander
Black or African-American
Hispanic
White / Caucasian
Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
GED
Graduated
One year of college
Two years of college
Three years of college
Four years of college

In what country do you currently reside?
United States
Other (please specify)

Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?
Married
Widowed
Divorced
Separated

In a domestic partnership or civil union
Single, but cohabiting with a significant other.
Single, never married.

Are you a biological parent of a child 17 or younger?
Yes
No

Appendix F: Free Support Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness
NAMI
https://nami.org/Home

REAL
https://www.join-real.com/real-to-the-people

The STEVE FUND
https://www.stevefund.org/crisistextline/

SAMHSA
https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Appendix G: Sample of Social Networking Recruitment Flyers

Appendix H: Modified Aspiration Survey

Not at all 2 3 Somewhat Likely 5 6 Very

1. Life-goal: To be a very wealthy person.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
2. **Life-goal: To grow and learn new things.**
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
3. **Life-goal: To have my name known by many people**.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
4. **Life-goal: To have good friends that I can count on.**
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
5. Life-goal: To successfully hide the signs of aging.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
6. Life-goal: To work for the betterment of society.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
7. Life-goal: To be physically healthy.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
8. Life-goal: To have many expensive possessions.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
9. Life-goal: At the end of my life, to be able to look back on my life as meaningful and complete.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
10. Life-goal: To be admired by many people.

How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

11. Life-goal: To share my life with someone I love.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

12. Life-goal: To have people comment often about how attractive I look.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

13. Life-goal: To assist people who need it, asking nothing in return.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

14. Life-goal: To feel good about my level of physical fitness.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

15. Life-goal: To be financially successful.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much is this satisfied currently?

16. Life-goal: To choose what I do, instead of being pushed along by life.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much is this satisfied currently?

17. Life-goal: To be famous.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

18. Life-goal: To have committed, intimate relationships.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

19. Life-goal: To keep up with fashions in hair and clothing.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

20. Life-goal: To work to make the world a better place.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?

21. Life-goal: To keep myself healthy and well.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
22. Life-goal: To be rich.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
23. Life-goal: To know and accept who I really am.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
24. Life-goal: To have my name appear frequently in the media.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
25. Life-goal: To feel that there are people who really love me, and whom I love.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
26. Life-goal: To achieve the "look" I've been after.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
27. Life-goal: To help others improve their lives.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
28. Life-goal: To be relatively free from sickness.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
29. Life-goal: To have enough money to buy everything I want.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
30. Life-goal: To gain increasing insight into why I do the things I do.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?
How much have you already attained this goal?
31. Life-goal: To be admired by lots of different people.
How important is this to you?
How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

How much have you already attained this goal?

32. Life-goal: To have deep enduring relationships.

How important is this to you?

How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

How much have you already attained this goal?

33. Life-goal: To have an image that others find appealing.

How important is this to you?

How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

How much have you already attained this goal?

34. Life-goal: To help people in need.

How important is this to you?

How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

How much have you already attained this goal?

36. Life-goal: To have a physically healthy lifestyle.

How important is this to you?

How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

How much have you already attained this goal?