

2017

The Educational Aspirations of Barbadian Adolescent Mothers and Their Perceptions of Support

Kathy-Ann Bellamy
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Kathy-Ann, Michelle Bellamy

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Ruth Crocker, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Barbara Chappell, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Georita Frierson, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2017

Abstract

The Educational Aspirations of Barbadian Adolescent Mothers and Their Perceptions of
Support

by

Kathy-Ann, Michelle Bellamy

MSC, University of the West Indies, 2008

BA, University of the West Indies, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

Walden University

February, 2017

Abstract

Adolescent girls often face barriers to fulfill their educational aspirations after childbearing. Unfulfilled goals tend to be associated with low educational attainment and other adverse outcomes for the young mothers, their children, and society. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Barbadian young women who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school. The goal was to understand their perceptions of support for their educational aspirations by their peers and significant others. Social constructionism was the conceptual framework. Moustakas' transcendental method guided data collection and analysis. Data were collected by conducting in-depth, semistructured interviews with 8 Barbadian women who bore children in their teen years and who struggled to complete formal high school. Rich descriptions emerged from the essence of their experiences and provided insight into the academic and emotional needs of school-age mothers. The analysis revealed that they experienced challenges balancing motherhood and being a student, stigma, hopelessness, and determination to reach their aspirations. They also experienced support by their friends, school personnel, and their families but they experienced little support from the fathers of their children. This study has implications that could affect positive social change by informing educators and families of the importance of meeting the unique needs of this vulnerable group. Educational leaders and policymakers could use these findings to guide programs aimed at empowering pregnant or parenting girls to achieve educational success and long-term socioeconomic wellbeing.

The Educational Aspirations of Barbadian Adolescent Mothers and Their Perceptions of

Support

by

Kathy-Ann, Michelle Bellamy

MSC, University of the West Indies, 2008

BA, University of the West Indies, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

Walden University

February, 2017

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful family, for whom this journey at Walden would not have been possible without their love, understanding and support, to Robin Downes and Dr. Jennifer Crichlow who supported and encouraged me throughout this journey, and to the young women who shared their time and personal experiences to and make this possible.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Dr. Ruth Crocker, my scholarly mentor and chairperson, who provided valuable insight, guidance, and encouragement while challenging me to always strive for excellence in academic writing. It was a blessing to have her as a chair. My scholarly writing has been significantly enhanced as a result of her guidance. I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Chappell, my second committee member. Her wisdom, support, and thought-provoking comments also helped me to complete this study.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Study	2
Problem Statement	6
Rationale for the Study	8
Purpose.....	10
Nature of the Study	11
Research Questions	12
Significance.....	12
Definitions of Terms.....	13
Assumptions.....	14
Scope and Delimitations	14
Conceptual Framework.....	16
Summary.....	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
Introduction.....	18
Literature Search Strategy.....	19
Conceptual Framework.....	20
Adolescent Development	22

Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenthood: A Statistical Analysis	23
Adolescent Birth Rates: American Context	24
Adolescent Birth Rates: Caribbean Context	25
Adolescent Mothers and Educational Attainments	29
Past Research	31
Current Research.....	33
Adolescent Childbearing and Socioeconomic Outcomes	42
Early Childbearing and Motivation towards Socioeconomic well-being	45
Prefertility Socioeconomic Circumstances	46
Cost to Society	48
Children of Teen Mothers	49
Support Systems for Adolescent Mothers.....	51
Family Support.....	52
Friend and Father Support	54
School-related supports.....	57
Community and Government Support	60
Review of Literature Related to Methodology	62
Quantitative Research	63
Qualitative Research	65
Conclusion	67
Summary and Transition.....	68
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	70

Introduction.....	70
Research Questions.....	70
Research Design and Rationale	71
Qualitative Research.....	73
Research Methodology	77
Population and Sample	77
Sample Size.....	79
Measures for Ethical Protections	80
Role of the Researcher	81
Data Collection Procedures.....	82
Data Analysis	85
Validity and Trustworthiness.....	85
Dissemination of Findings.....	86
Summary.....	86
Chapter 4: Results.....	88
Introduction.....	88
Research Setting.....	89
Participants Demographics	90
Data Collection and Management.....	94
Bracketing.....	94
Data Analysis	95
Themes Identified	96

Theme 1: A Challenge Coping With the Demands of Motherhood and School	98
Theme 2: Determination	102
Theme 3: Children motivated them to accomplish their aspirations	104
Theme 4: Support by friends.....	106
Theme 5: Varied support by significant other	109
Theme 6: Varied support by family	113
Theme 7: Lots of support by school personnel.....	114
Composite Description.....	117
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	121
Summary	122
Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations.....	123
Introduction.....	123
Interpretation of the Findings.....	124
Theme 1: A Challenges Coping with the Demands of Motherhood School.....	124
Theme 2: Determination	126
Theme 3: Children Motivation them to Accomplish their Aspirations	127
Theme 4: Support by Friends.....	128
Theme 5: Varied Support by Significant other	130
Theme 6: Varied Support by Family	132
Theme 7: Support by School Personnel.....	133
Implications for Social Change and Practice	135

Limitations	137
Future Research	138
Conclusion	139
References	141
Appendix A: Consent Form	155
Appendix B: Interview Guide	159
Appendix C: Phone Script	162
Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation from a Community Partner	163
Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer	164
Appendix F: List of Significant Statements	165

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants Demographics 98

 2. Participants Demographics: Educational aspirations before and after pregnancy
 99

 3. Participants Demographics: Highest Educational Level completed.....100

List of Figures

Figure 1. Experiences of support for the adolescent mothers' aspirations142

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Like their peers elsewhere in the world, Barbadian adolescent girls' educational aspirations often go unfulfilled after motherhood (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2003). Globally, girls between the ages of 13 and 19 years who bear children are considered to be at high risk of dropping out of school (Bar & Simons, 2012). The effect of early pregnancy and parenting on the adolescent mothers' educational attainment tends to be negative and often leads to significant social and economic problems for the young mothers and their offspring (Brosh, Weigel, & Evans, 2007; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Melhado, 2007). Further, women who parented as teens tend to be vulnerable to additional births, exploitation, and poverty (Boden, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2008; Rumley, 2010; Turner, 2011). They are also likely to rely on welfare and public health services, becoming a burden on the society and state (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Rico, 2011).

There has been a general decline in global birth rates for girls less than 18 years of age; however, adolescents' fertility rates remain relatively high in the Caribbean (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2013; World Fertility Report, 2013). Based on the State of the World Population Report (2013), fertility rates in the Caribbean among girls aged 15-19 years old range from 26 to 97 per 1,000 teenagers. Overall, in the region, 76 of every 1,000 girls and women aged between 15 and 19 years gave birth, rates exceed only by Africa (103 per 1,000) and considerably higher than the average for less developed countries (57 per 1,000) (UNFPA, 2013). In Barbados, the adolescent fertility

rate (birth per 1000 girls and women ages 15-19) is 42 (UNFPA, 2013). Teen birth rates in Barbados and the Caribbean region are high and are of major concern as school-age mothers in the region often fail to complete their secondary education and to fulfill their academic aspirations. The terms adolescent mothers, teen mothers, teenage mothers, and school-age mothers are used throughout the literature to refer to mothers who gave birth in their teen years. Thus, the terms have been used synonymously throughout this dissertation.

Background of the Study

The State of World Population 2013, a report by UNFPA highlighted the high rates of teen pregnancies in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and called on the governments of these countries to help girls reach their potential through education (UNFPA, 2013). The report suggested that 20,000 girls under the age of 18 became mothers each day in the Caribbean and other developing countries. It also stated that of the 7.3 million annual births to girls under 18 years old, 2 million (27.4 percent) were to girls 14 years of age or younger (UNFPA, 2013). This is usually a crucial period to attend school (UNFPA, 2013). It further recommended that governments focus on changing the attitudes in society so that girls are encouraged to remain in school, child marriage is banned, girls have access to sexual and reproductive health, and young mothers have better support mechanisms (UNFPA, 2013).

Although these statistics indicate the magnitude of teen births in LAC, the number of adolescent mothers who graduate from high school in Barbados is unknown. Additionally, there is little empirical data to indicate whether the risk for truncated

educational attainment is greater for the younger adolescent mother (between the ages of 13-14 years) versus the older adolescent mother (between the ages 15-19 years). Based on statistics of the entire Caribbean region, only 50% of teen parents graduate from secondary school (UNICEF, 2013). Moreover, the high dropout rate among pregnant and parenting adolescents in Barbados is a grave problem (UNICEF, 2013) as teen mothers are at a greater risk than older mothers of experiencing social and economic challenges throughout their lifetime (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008; Smith-Battle, 2012).

Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which all the Caribbean Governments have ratified, asserts that every child has the right to an education. Article 1 of the UNCRC defines a child as “...every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (UNCRC, 1989, p.1). Article 28 also states that it is the State’s duty to make education accessible to all children (UNCRC, 1989). The Education Act of Barbados (1997) also mandates compulsory education for all individuals between the ages of 5 and 16 years. In Jamaica, the recent Policy on the Re-Integration of Adolescent Mothers Into the Formal Education System of 2013 allows school-aged mothers to continue their schooling both during and after child birth (UNFPA, 2013). Jamaica has led the way in support of school-age mothers attending school while pregnant. In the other territories of the region, school-based assistance for pregnant girls is limited. However, governments in these territories have sought to develop special education programs to assist teen mothers after they have given birth (UNICEF, 2003).

The facilitation of educational experiences during pregnancy is also crucial. The pregnant learner whose high school program is disrupted loses valuable learning time and is more likely to attain less schooling than her nonpregnant female peers. On the other hand, providing the opportunity for the pregnant student to remain in school may increase the amount of education attained and reduce the likelihood of further socioeconomic problems for the teen mother and her child and society.

Though legislation in the Caribbean establishes equal educational opportunities for adolescent mothers, their educational goals often go unfulfilled after childbearing. With the exception of Jamaica, there is no clear policy framework that encourages teen mothers to remain in school. When girls become pregnant they are asked to leave school or are barred from finishing their secondary education. This demonstrates nonoccurrence between the law and what occurs in practice in the secondary school system of the Caribbean.

School-age mothers grapple with numerous challenges to graduate from high school. Many principals, teachers, and parents expressed that allowing them to return to the classroom may negatively influence the other girls (UNICEF, 2003). They believe that the teen mother's return would give the school a bad image in the public. Moreover, when parenting teens were interviewed, they disclosed that lack of support from the baby's father and their friends was an additional challenge encountered while trying to complete secondary school (UNICEF, 2003).

Even when granted the opportunity after giving birth to complete their schooling, many lack the impetus to reenroll and continue their high school education. In a UNICEF

document, a child protection officer observed that there were principals throughout the Caribbean who were violating the law by disrupting the education of pregnant and parenting teens by forbidding them to return to school after pregnancy while teen fathers were allowed to complete their schooling (UNICEF, 2003). A senior social worker in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) also stated that “the actions and attitudes of persons critical to the girls’ return to school after the birth of their babies, makes the situation uncomfortable for the young mother to do so” (UNICEF, 2003, p.3). In Jamaica, before the legislation in 2013 to ensure teen mothers’ reintegration in the formal education system, teen mothers were expelled from school for concern that they would negatively influence their peers (UNFPA, 2013; Wilson-Mitchell, Bennett, & Stennett, 2014). Even when opportunities exist to fulfill their academic goals, many lack the necessary support of the school system. Though the law mandates equal education for teen mothers, many of them are discouraged by the attitudes and lack of support of school administration.

Barbadian adolescent mothers face two outcomes: reentry or expulsion due to school policies, each with dire negative implications. Permitting the teen father to continue his education while the teen mother is asked to leave until the baby is born is discriminatory. Allowing the teen mother to return after having the child conforms to the girl’s right to equal educational opportunities. However, being in school without vital resources and supports may not be sufficient to drive the young mother to achieve her aspirations. The parenting student may still experience problems coping with academic tasks if assistance with childcare such as daycare and transportation are not provided.

The challenges that teen mothers encounter in their quest to complete high school are not unique to the Caribbean. Disruption of school as a result of pregnancy is a global phenomenon that affects both developed and developing countries (UNFPA, 2013). Teen mothers in western Pennsylvania stated that the lack of transportation between their homes, daycare and the school was one reason teen mothers dropped out of school (Mangino, 2008). Pregnant and parenting mothers at an alternative high school in northern Nevada ranked support for childcare as most important support for their educational goals (Brosh et al., 2007). School-age, South African mothers who lack support with childcare were more likely to withdrawn from school (Grant & Hallam, 2008). Counseling, health care, health and childcare education will also be essential to help the mothering teen cope with the difficulties of being a parenting student. As there is a dearth of research on the educational needs of teen mothers worldwide, an understanding of the mother who parented as a teenager while aspiring to complete her secondary education will provide valuable insight to inform programs aimed at enabling adolescent mothers to complete their secondary education, avoid repeated teen pregnancy and become self-sufficient.

Problem Statement

Globally, when school-age girls become pregnant, a major issue is the fate of the prospective mother and her education. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy [NCPTUP], 2010), in the United States, motherhood is a leading cause of school dropout among teenage girls. Only 51% of girls who gave birth between the ages of 18 and 19 years graduated from high school compared to 89% of girls who postponed childbearing, while, only 38% teen mothers under the age of 18

years graduated with a high school diploma (Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010). Boden, Fergusson, and Horwood (2008) in a study of women in New Zealand found that early childbearing tended to lead to low educational attainment. Researchers suggested that 21-25- year-old women who became parents as teenagers experienced low rates of attaining college and university degrees (Boden et al., 2008).

Furthermore, truncated secondary schooling tends to result in adverse outcomes for young mothers, their offspring, and society. Mothers who parented as teens are more likely to be paid lower rates, experience poverty, or become dependent on welfare. (Brosh et al, 2007; Driscoll, 2014; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003, Kirby et al., 2001; Lee, 2010; Taylor, 2009). Their children are more likely to be developmentally disadvantaged (Perper et al., 2010), of poor health, and victims of abuse or neglect (Branson et al., 2013; CDC, 2009). Additionally, tax payers finance federal resources necessary to support the young woman and her child at a high cost (Hoffman, 2006; Westman, 2009).

During adolescence, girls begin to set educational and career goals. However, when they become pregnant these goals have to be adjusted to include caring for their child. Life aspirations usually become more complicated as they have to take on multiple roles of adolescent, parent, and learner simultaneously (Hallman, 2007). Navigating the development tasks of puberty, coping with the demands of parenting, and attending school tends to be overwhelming and often leads to lack of self-efficacy to fulfill academic aspirations (Hofferth et al., 2001).

Further, during adolescence, same age friends are a major source of social support for teenagers (Bandura, 1994; Berk, 2007). Despite the established association between

peer influence and academic success (Kiran-Esen, 2012) there is limited research focused on the support of friends and significant others for the teen mothers' educational aspirations. However, numerous studies have been conducted on the support of the family, school, and community for the adolescent mother's educational attainment. There is a gap in the literature concerning the perceptions of teen mothers in regards to the support of friends and significant others for their educational aspirations. Awareness of the lived experiences of mothers who parented as teens and their perceptions of how friends and partners motivated or discouraged their educational goals is crucial for determining what is needed to help teen mothers achieve their educational aspirations and successfully complete high school.

Rationale for the Study

After becoming pregnant, adolescent mothers often encounter barriers in the pursuit of their educational goals (Bar & Simon, 2012). Adolescent girls are faced with defining themselves, forming intimate relationships, setting educational and career goals, and asserting their autonomy (Berk, 2007). Becoming a mother during this phase of development can complicate the girl's life plans especially if she has not yet established a clear sense of self and a direction for her life concerning educational and career goals. Overwhelmed by the additional rapid changes associated with having and caring for a baby, the girl may become frustrated and discouraged regarding her educational aspirations and career goals. Discrimination and stigmatization of being a teen parent, isolation and criticism from peers, and the lack of support can intensify her feelings of low self-efficacy to complete high school (Brosh et al., 2007; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003).

Alternately, she may have a renewed drive and determination to graduate from high school, continue to college, and accomplish her career plans (Smith-Battle, 2007).

There is little emphasis in the literature on the subjective experiences of teen mothers regarding their high school experiences. On the other hand, many researchers have examined the association between early parenting and educational achievement with resulting numerical data on the quantity of schooling attainment (Barr & Simons, 2012; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Cook-Klye, 2014; Grant & Hallman, 2008, Rico 2011; Rumley, 2010; VanDenBerg, 2012). Parenting adolescents have diverse perceptions and multiple realities of their educational experiences that may not be efficiently captured using a quantitative approach. Few researchers explored the barriers that get in the way of teen mothers fulfilling their educational aspirations (Rumley, 2010). Cook-Kyle (2014) suggested that additional research be done to understand how motivation and teenage motherhood impacts academic goals. This study was proposed to fill this gap.

Many researchers investigated the significance of support networks for the teen mother's educational attainment (Byham-Urquhart, 2014; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Mangino, 2008; Rico, 2011; Stroble, 2013; Turner, 2011). Some focused on a specific factor or on a combination of factors associated with the adolescent mother's educational attainment such as: personal, school, family, or community. During adolescence, teens tend to rely more on same age peers for social and moral support (Berk, 2007; Erikson, 1968; Halpern-Felsher, 2009). However, there appeared to be a void in the literature that explored the perception of teen mothers regarding the support or lack thereof for their academic goals by her friends and significant others. Furthermore, when family supports

were examined in the literature, the teen's family of origin was primarily addressed; rather than her new (or additional) family with significant other or friends. This study proposed to fill this gap.

Additionally, the body of research on the phenomenon was primarily conducted in the United States among populations of American adolescents. The Barbadian teen mother's secondary educational experience may be better understood by research conducted within the cultural context of Barbados. This study was needed in order to capture the essence of the parenting teen's educational experience in relation to the support by friends and significant others. Now that this meaning has been ascertained, practices and policies can be enhanced or developed to help teen mothers to complete their high school education and provide better lives for themselves and their children.

Purpose

The purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study was to: (a) explore the lived experiences of Barbadian young mothers (ages 20-25 years) who parented as adolescents and who struggled to fulfill their high school aspirations, and (b) to investigate their perceptions of support by peers and significant others (partner or father of the child) for their educational aspirations. Frequently, school-age mothers do not fulfill their secondary educational goals after motherhood. Many of them do not reach their full potential because they do not receive the support they need to cope with the challenges of parenting and schooling. Providing the forum for young mothers to voice their perspectives of how friends and significant others helped or hindered their

educational aspirations yielded insight as to what is needed to enable adolescent mothers to complete their educational goals.

Nature of the Study

This study employed the phenomenological research approach because it examined the essence of meaning for individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Crewsell, 2013). Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenology framed the data collection and analysis. This methodology provided an in-depth and rich understanding of the adolescent mother's perception of peer and partner support for her educational aspirations. The use of retrospective interviews allowed the researcher to explore how teen mothers perceive support for their education goals during pregnancy and after becoming a mother. Moreover, phenomenology is concerned with collection and analysis of data drawn from the experiences and perspectives of participants. Semistructured, face-to-face interviews conducted in the participant's natural setting also provided a rich description of phenomenon. There is a more detailed discussion of the nature of the study in Chapter 3.

Various age cohorts of teen mothers have been investigated in the literature concerning their educational experiences. For example, Turner (2011) explored the experiences of teen mothers between the ages of 22-64 years, Cook-Kyle (2014) investigated mothers 20-31 years of age who parented as teens and Rumley (2010) examined teen mothers ages 18-24 years. A sample of 20-25 year-old mothers was selected because this age cohort is nearer to the age when the various events of pregnancy and motherhood may have occurred. The memories of these mothers were likely to be

clearer and the information provided more precise than if more time had passed. The passage of time may have made the experiences of the mothers less salient. Moreover, individuals may have lost touch with supportive peers or life events may have taken them in another direction. These factors could have impacted their memories of events and the quality of the data.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences regarding the educational aspirations of Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school?

RQ2: How do Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school perceive support or lack of support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others?

Significance

This research is significant because it provides insight that could potentially guide programs aimed at breaking the cycle of low academic achievement and poverty by helping the parenting adolescent remain in or return to school to fulfill her educational goals. Educators, guidance counselors, and others who work with this population may use this information in their practice. This knowledge could make them more aware and sensitive to the struggles and unique needs of teenage mothers. Practitioners and policy makers may use this data received from mothers who struggled to accomplish their aspirations to improve the educational outcomes of this at-risk population. When the

educational outcomes of teen mothers are enhanced it is likely that dependence on the state for welfare and other public services will be reduced (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003).

Although there is an abundance of literature on the educational attainment of teen mothers; there is a dearth of research regarding whether and how peers, partners, or the father of the child supported or encouraged their educational aspirations. This study adds to the body of literature concerning the support, or lack thereof, for the educational aspirations of teen parents by describing the phenomenon from the subjective perspective of the Barbadian adolescent. Moreover, interventions aimed at enabling Caribbean young mothers to succeed academically, avoid additional teen pregnancies, and enhance their career opportunities might benefit substantially from this study, thus facilitating positive social change.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined based on how they are used in this study:

Adolescence: a developmental transition between childhood and adulthood that begins around age 10 years and ends at about 19 years (Halpern-Felsher, 2009).

Adolescent mothers: adolescent mothers (teen mothers, teenage mothers; school-age mothers) are young women, age 19 years and older, who gave birth to a child while in high school and who had primary responsibilities for childcare while in school. They were within the ages of 13 and 19 years when they became mothers.

Educational aspirations: the teen mother's desire to achieve long-term academic goals such as high school graduation or acquiring a college degree (Smith-Battle, 2007).

Peers: refers to someone around the same age as the adolescent mother.

Secondary school: refers to the school that provides secondary education between the ages of 11 and 19 years after primary school and before higher education. The term will be used synonymously with the term high school.

Significant other: refers to someone who has a romantic relationship with the adolescent mother such as a boyfriend, husband, partner, or the father of the child.

Teenage pregnancy: pregnancy by a girl or woman, age of 13 to 19 years (UNICEF, 2008). It is used to refer to girls who are not yet legally adults. For the purpose of this study, teenage pregnancy was used synonymously with adolescent pregnancy and teen pregnancy.

Assumptions

An assumption is something that is accepted as unavoidable in the research. For this study, the interview questions were derived from the literature on teen mothers' educational attainment. Therefore, I assumed that these questions are valid and relevant to the study. It is also assumed that the participants provided accurate information about how peers and significant others encouraged or discouraged their educational aspirations. Qualitative research is inductive in nature and facilitates open-ended questioning (Patton, 2013). Therefore, it is assumed that the use of this paradigm provided a rich description of the participants lived experiences so others may apply the results to inform policy for assisting young mothers to complete high school.

Scope and Delimitations

A delimitation of the research refers to a factor that restricts the scope of the research. For this study, only individuals who fit the criteria: females aged 20 to 25 years

who parented in their teens and struggled to fulfill their educational aspirations while in formal high school were included in the study. Women who had a miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth only but no live birth were excluded. As girls and women tend to be primarily responsible for childcare, the perceptions of fathers who parented as adolescents were excluded. Although participants could have been from any nation in the world, the sample was delimited to Barbadian mothers.

The literature on the support of the family, community, and school for the teen mother's educational attainment is extensive. However, the scope of this study was focused on the void in the literature pertaining to the support of friends and significant others for the educational aspirations of young mothers. Additionally, I limited the focus on the perception of peers and significant others because adolescent girls are more likely to turn to same age peers when making life decisions (Erikson, 1968). This study did not include the other influences on the educational experiences of teen mothers such as the school and the community nor did it explore the views of friends and partners. The purpose was to ascertain the essences of the lived experiences women who parented in their teens concerning the support or lack of support for their educational goals. This study was bounded fundamentally by its purpose and the research problem.

Conceptual Framework

For this dissertation, social constructionism was used as an interpretive framework. Social constructivism is a worldview commonly applied to qualitative research. This perspective holds that individuals construct their reality based on their social setting. They form subjective meaning of experiences based on their interaction with others and on historical and cultural norms (Creswell, 2013). This philosophy was used as a guide to explore the adolescent mother's perspective on the phenomenon of aspiring to complete her education while parenting. In this study, social constructionism provided a frame of reference for interpretation and analysis of data. I endeavoured to make sense of the participants' responses based on their backgrounds. Questions were open-ended so that participants felt free to describe their experiences and perceptions and to construct the meaning of the situation. Applying the framework also helped me to acknowledge that my background could also influence the interpretation of the study. Social constructionism is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the Barbadian, Caribbean, and global context of teen pregnancy, a statement of the problem, the rationale, purpose, and nature of the study. Research questions, the significance of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and the conceptual framework are also presented. The following section, Chapter 2, includes the review of the literature which provided the background and context of the research problem and established the significance of the study. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology, population, sample, ethical

procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, and validity and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 contains the results of the study and Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the findings, implications for social change and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a comprehensive description of the lived experiences of Barbadian women who parented as adolescents while aspiring to graduate from high school. The focus was on understanding the young women's perception of support for their educational aspirations by friends and significant others. Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood is a major global challenge preventing girls from achieving academically; thus, this literature review encompasses studies from various countries and cultures. The selected scholarly works addresses the following: conceptual framework, adolescent development, adolescent pregnancy and parenthood, adolescent birth rates, and the educational attainment among adolescent mothers. I also discuss other socioeconomic outcomes of early childbearing, the support networks of mothering teens and the research methods used in this body of literature.

Failure to complete a high school or college education can result in significant social, psychological, and economic problems for young mothers and their children (Brosh et al., 2007; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Hofferth, Reid, & Mott, 2001; Melhado, 2007). Even when opportunities and resources are provided for teen mothers to complete their secondary education, many of them lack the motivation to pursue and accomplish their educational aspirations. An understanding of the experiences of teen mothers who struggled to complete their formal secondary education may provide insight that can potentially guide programs aimed at breaking the cycle of low academic achievement and poverty by helping teen mothers continue school or reenter to fulfill

their educational goals. I review the literature in light of its contributions to understanding the lived experiences of women who parented as adolescents while striving to achieve a high school diploma but did not achieve that goal during formal high school.

Literature Search Strategy

This literature search included scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and books from different libraries. A comprehensive search of multiple databases was conducted that included EBSCO Host, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Databases, PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX, Sage Publications, and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). The following search terms were used alone or in combination: *adolescent pregnancy, teen parenting, teenage motherhood, early childbearing, teenage childbearing, adolescent mothers' education and educational attainment.*

This review of the literature is centered on research relevant to this study, published within the past 10 years. A synthesis and analysis of these works provides an overview of the consequences of early parenthood on the lives of young women. Older scholarly works dated from 1968 were included to provide a theoretical perspective of adolescence and the historical context of the phenomenon of teen mothers' educational experiences. Publications from international and government agencies such as United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (NCPTUP); and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are also

included for the most recent statistics on the educational attainment and fertility rates of adolescents.

Conceptual Framework

Social constructionism has its origins in sociology and is related to the posts modern era in qualitative research (Andrews, 2012). The philosophy was first purported by Berger and Luckman (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Creswell, 2013). Kenneth Gergen has been credited as the pioneer proponent on the psychological aspect of social constructionism. He has published several writings on the topic that include: *The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology* (1985), *Realities and Relationships* (1994) and *Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge* (1994). The major assumptions of social constructivists are that knowledge and truth is determined by an individual's subjective interpretation of reality and that phenomenon only has meaning within the context in which it is studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Hence, constructionists focus on the process of interaction among individuals and on the context in which individuals live and work (Creswell, 2013). Based on this worldview, I sought to understand the phenomenon of the human experience of support for educational aspirations while parenting by exploring the teen mothers' experiences and interaction within their worlds.

Social constructionists are also concerned with diverse understandings and multiple realities as reported by participants (Gergen, 1994; Patton, 2015). Therefore, different perspectives were accepted and consistency of findings was a minor goal. I listened to the participants' view points and made sense of their responses based on their

historical and social backgrounds. I also acknowledged that each adolescent mother brought her own assumptions, beliefs, and point of views to the interview. This uniqueness is demonstrated through the use of different quotes from participants. Once the essence of their experiences was captured from the data, I inductively developed a pattern of meaning and theory (Creswell, 2013).

According to social constructionism, culture influences how we perceive and feel things. It also defines our view of the world (Patton, 2015). Thus, I focused on social construction rather than objective reality. The focal point during data analysis was not the investigator's interpretation (Patton, 2015). It was on the diverse realities constructed by those who were teen mothers.

Social constructionism asserts that things do not and cannot have essence because they are defined interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships. A group of people can assign essence to a phenomenon and do so regularly, but essence does not then reside in the phenomenon but rather in the group that constructs and designates the phenomenon's essence. (Patton, 2015, p.121)

Furthermore, constructionist researchers acknowledge that their own backgrounds influence their interpretation of data (Patton, 2015). Hence, in Chapter 4, I disclosed my personal biases and explained how they might have impacted the study.

Interpretation of teen mothers' experiences provided rich and in-depth insight of their thoughts and feelings regarding the support given by friends and significant others for their educational aspirations. Applying the social constructionism framework was

appropriate to uncover the nuances that determined the teen mothers' motivation or lack of motivation to complete high school.

Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a developmental transition between childhood and adulthood when young people physically and sexually mature (Berk, 2007). In this proposal, it refers to the period of human development which starts around age 10 and ends at about age 19. It is also a time of rapid cognitive, social, and emotional change (Berk, 2007; Halpern-Felsher, 2009). These changes result in the growth of physical characteristics related to sexual functioning, the enhanced ability to think logically, a heightened desire for autonomy and independence, and an increased interest in peer association (Berk, 2007; Halpern-Felsher, 2009).

Typically, (dependent on the culture) at this stage, boys and girls are given the opportunities to make choices regarding friendships, education, career, and dating (Halpern-Felsher, 2009). Papalia, Olds, and Feldman (2001) reiterated that girls are afforded opportunities for growth in areas including self-autonomy, self-esteem, and intimacy. Engaging in independent decision making, experiencing the resulting consequences, and learning from the outcomes is another vital task at this time (Halpern-Felsher, 2009). The girl who transitions to adolescence and motherhood simultaneously may encounter more profound psychological and social challenges (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003).

Classic theorists, like Erikson (1968), contended that adolescents grapple with several tasks during this period. Erikson explained that in the fifth stage of his

psychosocial theory, *identity versus identity confusion*, the adolescent seeks to develop a coherent sense of self and a valued role in society (Erikson, 1968). The major task confronting the adolescent is to develop and clarify his or her identity. Another key developmental task is making educational and vocational choices (Erikson, 1968). Adolescents must decide whether to further their education, seek employment, or quit school. Other issues confronting teens are widening peer affiliations, sexual contacts and roles, values, and whether to remain in their parents' home or move away from adult control (Erikson, 1968). Though Erikson's theory did not address the parenting adolescent specifically, it demonstrates how striving to attain an education while being a mother can be an overwhelming undertaking "Pregnancy before a girl is physically, developmentally and socially ready jeopardizes her right to a safe, successful transition into adulthood" (UNFPA, 2015, p.3). When a school-age girl becomes pregnant, she is plunged into adulthood and has to deal with both student and adult responsibilities. After pregnancy, the girl's quest to complete high school may become complicated as she now has to cope with the multiple responsibilities of each role. Additionally, she has to make several fundamental life decisions which will affect her future. As a result, her motivation to accomplish her secondary educational goals may wane or increase.

Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenthood: A Statistical Analysis

Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood is a social phenomenon affecting both developed and developing countries (UNFPA, 2012). According to the World Health Organization [WHO], 2011) annually about 16 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 and two million girls under the age of 15 become pregnant worldwide (WHO, 2011).

Regardless to the region of the world teen pregnancy occurs, it undermines a girl's educational progress and life goals. Early pregnancy threatens her health, educational and career prospects, making the young mother and her family vulnerable to poverty and reliance on government assistance.

Adolescent Birth Rates: American Context

Birth rates among teen women are on the decline in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2013), teen pregnancies declined steadily from 1991-2005. However, these rates increased by 5% between 2005 and 2007 in 26 states from all regions of the country (CDC, 2013). Statistics also show an estimated 273,105 babies were born to teenagers aged 15 to 19 years in the United States (CDC, 2013). This translates to a live birth rate of 26.5 per 1,000 girls and women in this age cohort and represents a decline of 10% from 2012. For the 15 to 17 years of age cohort, birth rates dropped by 13% and for the 18 to 19 years of age cohort rates dropped by 8% (CDC, 2013).

Consistent with these findings are those by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (2014) that also demonstrates that fewer teens are becoming pregnant since the escalation in the 1990s. In 2010, an estimated 625,000 women under the age of 20 became pregnant. There were 614,000 pregnancies among teens aged 15-19 and 11,000 among girls aged 14 and younger (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014). This translates to 57.4 pregnancies per 1,000 teenagers or about 6% of teenagers being pregnant in 2010. However, among the 18 to 19 age cohort, the pregnancy rate was 96.2 and among the 15 to 17 age cohort, it was 30.1 (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014). These figures demonstrate a significant

decline in teen pregnancy for both the 15 to 17 and 18 to 19 year-old cohorts (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014).

Though the figures on pregnancy rates in the United States have declined over the years for women under the age of 20 years, they are still high and a cause for concern as this age cohort represents the developmental life phase for setting educational and career goals (Erikson, 1968). It is also a crucial time when girls are usually aspiring to graduate from high school. High school completion is a vital prerequisite to further education and participation in the labor force. Moreover, possessing a high school diploma makes an individual more employable (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003). When school-age girls become pregnant their education is interrupted. This interruption equates to truncated schooling which is a huge social problem that may increase their vulnerability to low educational attainment, unemployment, and underemployment.

Adolescent Birth Rates: Caribbean Context

In spite of the widely quoted decline of global birth rates for girls less than 20 years of age (National Center for Health Statistics, 2012); adolescents' fertility rates remain fairly high in the Caribbean area (UNFPA, 2013). Overall in the region, 76 of every 1,000 females aged between 15 and 19 gave birth. These rates are notably higher than the average for less developed regions (57 per 1,000) (UNFPA, 2013). Dominica Republic has the highest fertility rate in the Caribbean, 98 per 1,000 teenage girls. Guyana has the second highest with a birth rate of 97 per 1,000 and Belize has the third highest of 90 per 1,000. These are followed by Jamaica with a birth rate of 72 per 1,000 women and St. Vincent and the Grenadines with a birth rate of 70 per 1,000. Barbados

has the lowest fertility rate in the Caribbean, 42 per 1,000 (UNFPA, 2013). Overall, the teen birth rates in the region are quite high and cause for concern because many of these countries lack the adequate supports for school-age mothers to attain their high school education.

Secondary education in Barbados. In Barbados, a high school education (usually referred to as a secondary school education) is free and is provided for children between the ages of 11 and 16 years or 11 and 19 years. Legislation in Barbados makes the provision of secondary education compulsory to the age of 16 but students have the option to continue until the age of 19 (The Laws of Barbados, 1982). Unlike in the United States, there is no high school diploma awarded upon completion of a secondary or high school education. Instead, students who successfully complete the five or eight years of secondary school are awarded the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) also called Ordinary Level (O-Level) certificate or the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) certificate also called Advance Level (A-Level) qualifications (Caribbean Examinations Council[CXC], 2016).

Typically, after a course of five years of secondary school, at about the age of 15 or 16, students take CSEC examinations in four or more subjects (CXC, 2016). The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examination boards conduct these examinations. Completion of the O-Level examinations marks the conclusion of standard secondary schooling and merits the student's graduation. However, students may choose to continue their secondary studies after completing CSEC and beyond the age 16. After that, they may write the CAPE also set by CXC at ages 17 or 19. Those who desire to sit for the

CAPE usually possess CSEC certification (CXC, 2016). The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations certificate comprise of two units done over the period of two years. The successful completion of CAPE also merits high school graduation. The completion of any of these examinations earns the student graduation from high school. Therefore, a student may graduate at age 16 or 19 from formal secondary school determined by whether he or she chooses to end their secondary schooling after the completion of CSEC or continue to pursue CAPE. The CSEC qualifications are generally intended for employment and a requisite to enroll in CAPE. The CAPE certification serves as a qualification for entrance to tertiary education (CXC, 2016). Both levels of certification may be considered as equivalent to the high school diploma in the USA.

High school attainment. Despite the numerous studies that suggest adolescent pregnancy to be a major impediment to secondary school completion, there are no statistics to support the numbers of teen mothers who graduate, dropout or reenroll after childbearing from schools in Barbados. However, according to UNICEF (2013) 50% of teen parents graduate from secondary school in the entire Caribbean region.

Though it is mandatory for all children in the Caribbean to receive schooling, pregnant girls are usually denied reentry to the classroom (UNFPA, 2013). However, in recent times, Governments of the Caribbean have been collaborating with UNFPA to implement programs to help pregnant and parenting girls continue their education and fulfill their potential (UNFPA, 2013). Jamaica has led the way in these efforts with the implementation of the Policy on the Re-Integration of Adolescent Mothers Into the Formal Education System. This policy launched by Women's Centre of Jamaica

Foundation (WCJF) and the Ministry of Education and supported by UNFPA aims to ensure that adolescent mothers are reintegrated into the formal education system and that they receive at least a basic secondary education (UNFPA, 2013). The WCJF has been instrumental in providing programs throughout the island that cater to the overall needs of teen mothers. In addition to education, childcare, and counseling are provided (Wilson-Mitchell et al., 2014). The governments in the other territories of the region have been exploring this model with plans to create similar programs to assist their mothering girls. For example, Grenada has established a model based on the WCJF program to offer social and educational support to teenage mothers (UNFPA, 2013)

The work of WCJF, the approval of the Policy on the Re-Integration of Adolescent Mothers Into the Formal Education System and the interest shown by other countries to formulate similar policies and programs for the continuation of school-age mothers' education suggest that the attitude of Caribbean societies towards pregnant girls is changing. It also demonstrates that Governments acknowledge the importance of the young mothers' educational attainment. Employing the model of the WCJF and collaborating with other international helping agencies such as UNFPA; the other territories are likely to enact similar policy frameworks in the near future for the educational attainment of pregnant girls. Empirical works such as this one may help to inform such efforts.

Special school-based programs for teen mothers like the WCJF encourage girls to complete their high school education. A historical cohort study examined the effects of the WCJF program on the educational attainment of its participants between 1995 and

1998. Participants between the ages of 15 and 20 who had had their first child in 1994 when they were between the ages of 11 and 16 were surveyed. Findings indicated that WCJF participants were significantly more likely than nonparticipants to finish high school. Thirty-two percent (28 of 87) had graduated from high school versus 20 percent (35 of 173) of nonparticipants (McNeil, 1992). These findings suggest that programs created to meet the needs of this vulnerable population encourage teen mothers to strive to achieve their academic goals.

Adolescent Mothers and Educational Attainments

Beyond the Caribbean, teen pregnancy is one of the major hindrances to the educational attainment of adolescent girls (UNFPA, 2013). Education plays a fundamental role in building a strong economy and is necessary for the social, political and economic growth of a country (World Bank, 2011). It enhances the quality of the lives of citizens by providing opportunities for academic and skill development (World Bank, 2011). Therefore, when girls are denied access to education, they may lack sufficient skills for employment; depriving the nation of a valuable labor force. On the other hand, when girls are granted opportunities for good quality education they may make a greater contribution to the job market; enhancing the social, political and economic prospects of a nation.

Globally, a large body of research suggest that early childbearing leads to the disruption of a girls' progress through school especially at the secondary level (Byham-Urquhart, 2014; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Driscoll, 2014; Golshirazi, 2013; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Hofferth et al., 2001; Mangino, 2008; Saunder, Smith, & Zhang, 2007).

Adolescent mothers are less likely than their nonparenting counterparts to graduate high school (Ashcraft, Fernández-Val, & Lang, 2013; Barr & Simon, 2012; Berthelon & Kruger, 2014; Hofferth et al., 2001; Hofferth & Moore, 1979; Kane, Morgan, Harris & Guilkey, 2013; Mollborn 2007; National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy [NCPTUP], 2012; Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010; Sanders et al., 2007). An analysis of multiple studies from around the globe suggests that teen mothers experience an estimated range of 0.15 to 2.6 fewer years schooling than their nonparenting peers (Kane et al., 2013). Early childbearing retards the educational progress of young women. After childbearing, the girl's role of a student is extended to include that of a parent. Unlike her friends who do not have children, she has the added responsibility of managing time for study and childcare. Without the social supports to assist with these duties, she may become overwhelmed with the added expectations and may lose motivation to remain in school.

Findings of national survey data in the U.S. suggest that only 51% of girls who gave birth between the ages of 18 and 19 graduated from high school compared to 89% of girls who postponed childbearing (Perper et al., 2010). Only 38% teen mothers under the age of 18 graduated with a high school diploma (Perper et al., 2010). These statistics are a significant cause for concern given the detrimental outcomes for the teen mother, her offspring, and tax payers (Hoffman, 2006; Westerman, 2009). This data indicates that girls who become pregnant in secondary school are vulnerable to low levels of educational attainment and or school termination. An understanding of their educational

experiences from their view point may be valuable for programs geared toward reducing the numbers of mothering teens who failed to complete their secondary schooling.

There seems to be unanimity that teen pregnancy and parenthood interferes with the completion of high school and secondary education (Ardington, Menendez & Mutevedzi, 2011; Bethelon & Kruger, 2014; Byham-Urquhart, 2014; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Driscoll, 2014; Golshirazi, 2013; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Hofferth et al., 2001; Kane et al., 2013; Mangino, 2008; Saunder et al., 2007). Both past and current studies from various parts of the globe on the educational attainment of adolescent mothers suggest that early child bearers experience a substantial educational deficit when compared to later child bearers (Ardington et al., 2011, Cook-Kyle, 2014; Harvey-Mendoza, 2014; Trusty-Smith, 2013; Hofferth et al., 2001; Kane, et al., 2013). Without the necessary support and resources adolescent mothers are likely to encounter several challenges that derail their schooling (Brosh et al., 2007; Byham-Urquhart, 2014; Driscoll, 2014; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Mangino; 2008; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Rumley, 2010; Sanders et al., 2007; Smith-Battle, 2007; Stroble, 2013; Taylor, 2009; VanDenBerg, 2012). Girls who become pregnant while in high school are at risk to low educational attainment, a risk that becomes greater when social supports are lacking.

Past Research

Before the mid-1970s, pregnant teens in the United States were not allowed to remain in school. However, change came about in 1972 with the Title IX of the Education Amendments that prohibited the exclusion of pregnant and parenting girls from public educational institutions (Pillow, 2004). From then onward, schools sought

alternative arrangements for teen mothers, enabling their retention in school (Pillow, 2004). Despite the special educational opportunities currently available in America to teen mothers, many still struggle to complete high school.

In the 1960s, a pioneer in research on teen pregnancy in the United States, Campbell (1968) purported a doom perspective of adolescent pregnancy. The writer predicted that a girl who had a child under the age of 16 had “90 percent of her life’s script written for her” (p.238). According to Campbell (1968), she was highly likely to drop out of school, be unemployed and dependent on others. Sociologists, Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Morgan (1987) refuted this claim stating that there was very limited data at the time to substantiate this theory of the inevitable turmoil of premature motherhood. To fill the void in the literature concerning the outcome of teen pregnancy, Furstenberg and his colleagues conducted the Baltimore study. They followed a group of approximately 300 primarily Black, urban, low-income, unwed teen mothers, and their children for 15 years (Furstenberg et al, 1987). Results of the Baltimore study revealed that early childbearing was not as deleterious as previously portrayed. The scholars posited that “the popular belief that early childbearing is an almost certain route to dropping out of school, subsequent unwanted births, and economic dependency is greatly oversimplified, if not seriously distorted” (Furstenberg et al, 1987, p. 46). The notion of the inevitable pessimistic outcome of teen pregnancy purported in the 1960s was subsequently challenged and refuted in the 1980s. Empirical data indicated that teen motherhood was not necessarily equated with adverse life circumstances.

About a decade later, Hofferth et al (2001) in a quantitative study found a significant negative impact of teen birth on years of completed secondary education. Data from the National Longitudinal Survey (NLS) of the Labor Market Experience of Youth and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics were employed to assess the effect of early childbearing on the rates of high school graduation and postsecondary attendance. Adolescent mothers complete 1.9 to 2.2 fewer years of schooling than women who postponed childbearing until age 30 or older (Hofferth et al., 2001). Forty-one percent of teen mothers obtained a high school diploma while 61% of those who did not become mothers gained a high school diploma (Hofferth et al., 2001).

Current Research

Numerous other studies have been conducted on the outcomes of teen parenthood with various and sometimes conflicting findings. The majority of empirical evidence suggests that adolescent mothers are at risk for negative psychosocial and economic challenges that can affect the development of both the young mother and her child. However, educational accomplishment is still purported as a pathway to self-sufficiency and psychological and economic well-being for teen mothers and their infants (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; NCPTP, 2012; UNFPA, 2013). Several scholars have investigated the correlation between early childbearing and educational attainment (Barr & Simons, 2012, Bethelon & Kruger, 2014; Byham-Urquhart, 2014; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Perper et al., 2010; Rico, 2011; Rumley, 21010; Saunders et al., 2007; Taylor, 2009; Ranchhod, Branson, Lam, Leibbrandt, & Marteleto, 2011). Generally, findings suggest that educational attainment and early childbearing are negatively correlated (Kane et al., 2013). Teenage

mothers are more likely to have their secondary education truncated as being a student while caring for a child can be demanding on the time and energy necessary to study and attend school (Kane et al., 2013; Stroble, 2013).

Consistent with these findings, research by Ardington et al. (2011), Harvey-Mendoza (2014), and Trusty-Smith (2013) all indicated that girls who become pregnant between the ages of 12 and 18 years old are less likely than their nonparenting peers to complete high school. For example, Bethelon and Kruger (2014) found that women in Chile who gave birth as teenagers had one less year of schooling and were 31 % less likely to graduate from high school and 49% less likely to have a postsecondary education than women of similar backgrounds who did not have a teen birth. Furthermore, Kane et al. (2013), in an analysis of 40 years of research on the educational outcomes of teen childbearing, suggested the estimated effects of teen motherhood on years of schooling ranged from 0.15 to 2.6 fewer years among teen mothers.

Building on the previous works, Driscoll (2014) employed a longitudinal approach to evaluate the impact of early motherhood on the socioeconomic conditions of young women in the U.S across the life course. Data was collected from the 1995, 2002, and 2006 to 2010 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). Participants were grouped by age at first birth and by their birth cohorts. Driscoll (2014) analyzed the socioeconomic status of teens, young adults (20-24), and older adult mothers (over 24) across four 5 year birth cohorts from 1956 to 1975. Findings suggested that the likelihood of going beyond high school increased across cohorts for adult mothers but not for adolescent mothers (Driscoll, 2014). When compared to older mothers, adolescent

mothers were more likely to be single, poor, and have low levels of education (Driscoll, 2014). This study like the others before mentioned suggests that women who had children as teenagers are more likely to experience education deficits than those who postponed childbearing until adulthood. Thus, the level of educational attainment is determined by the maternal age.

Consistent results were found in another U.S. longitudinal study of national survey data by Perper et al. (2010). Findings reiterated that early childbearing puts young females at risk to educational underachievement or cessation (Perper et al., 2010). A sample of 8,984 young women from across varying racial and ethnic groups who were between the ages of 12 and 16 in 1996 was drawn from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Each participant was surveyed annually to ascertain whether or not she had earned an educational credential by the age of 22 (Perper et al., 2010). Findings indicate that 50% of teen mother participants had earned a high school diploma by the age of 22 compared with 89 % who did not bear a child as a teenager (Perper et al., 2010).

The findings discussed in this section: adolescent mothers' educational attainment, illustrate the severity of the impact of adolescent childbearing on levels of schooling. Though the magnitude of the relationship between teen childbearing and educational attainment varies from study to study, it is established that early motherhood puts the adolescent at an educational disadvantage. These studies of various countries cultures, ethnicities, and racial groups all concluded that early childbearing has a detrimental impact on the academic accomplishment of girls (Barr & Simons, 2012, Bethelon & Kruger, 2014; Byham-Urquhart, 2014; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Perper et al., 2010;

Rico, 2011; Rumley, 2010; Saunders et al., 2007; Taylor, 2009; Ranchhod, Branson, Lam, Leibbrandt, & Marteleto, 2011). Failure to achieve at the secondary level tends to result in further socioeconomic challenges for women who parented at teenagers (Lee, 2010; Smith-Battle, 2012; Taylor, 2009) as they are highly likely to be unemployed or dependent on welfare. In adulthood, they are also likely to be behind older mothers in socioeconomic well-being (Lee, 2010; Smith-Battle, 2012; Taylor, 2009).

During adolescence, girls also experience emotional transformation (Berk, 2007; Halpern-Felsher, 2009). Prior to childbearing, the girl's primary goal may have been to complete high school and there after post secondary education. However, when she becomes a parent her life goals and responsibilities become more complex as she now has to think about balancing the demands of being a student and a parent. Some teen mothers may be motivated to attain their education, while others may lack the self-efficacy to continue. Some may aspire to finish high school while others may desire to cease their secondary education.

Further, during this transitional stage, young people tend to engage in more independent decision making as they endeavor to assert their autonomy from the family (Berk, 2007; Erikson, 1968; Halpern-Felsher, 2009). Having a baby may revert their quest for independence as young mothers may have to rely on their parents for assistance with childcare and financial needs. Moreover, the mothering adolescent's goal to become self-reliant may be hindered as she may have to rely on her family, friends, significant other or welfare for financial help. Girls also seek to develop and clarify their identity at this time (Erikson, 1968). The parenting adolescent, unlike the nonparenting adolescent,

has to deal with dual identities: being a mother and a student. This may be confusing for the mothering teen especially if she has not yet established a clear sense of self and direction in life concerning her life goals.

Prechildbearing circumstances. Contrary to the conventional view, some scholars contend that low educational achievement precedes rather than follow early motherhood. Adolescent motherhood does not necessarily result in adverse outcomes for young mothers (Saunders et al., 2007). A substantial portion of the empirical literature on early childbearing recommends that claims of the causal impact of early childbearing on rates of educational attainment consider the prior circumstance of the young mother, as the adverse outcomes attributed to premature pregnancy alone, may also be impacted by the setting in which the pregnancy occurred (Ashcraft & Lang, 2006; Bar & Simons, 2012; Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014; Branson, Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2013; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Hofferth et al., 2001; Hoffman & Maynard, 2008; Kane et al., 2013; Mollborn, 2007; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Saunders et al., 2007).

Researchers found that often the impetus for teen pregnancy is also the impetus for school dropout. In many cases, where pregnant and parenting teens may have dropped out of school, the pregnancy may not have been the reason for the dropout (Ardington et al., 2011; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Lee, 2010; Saunders et al., 2007).

If there are observed or unobserved variables that are correlated with fertility and the mother's educational outcome, then a negative correlation between teenage childbearing and schooling may arise even if teenage births have no causal influence on the mother's subsequent outcomes at all. (Saunders et al., 2007, p.4)

Saunders et al. (2007) postulated that though a strong correlation between educational attainment and motherhood timing is expected from a simple cross tabulation, correlation does not necessary translate to causation. Therefore, early motherhood may not have been the only or major factor affecting low rates of schooling attainment; other factors may have also contributed.

Grant and Hallman (2008) had similar findings. The researchers examined the likelihood of truncated schooling and subsequent reenrollment among pregnant school-age girls. The data collected in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa revealed that previous school attendance and performance was significantly associated with a girl's likelihood of becoming pregnant while in school, leaving school if she becomes pregnant, and not returning to school after pregnancy. Furthermore, teen mothers who carry the major responsibility for childcare were more likely to drop out of school than those who received assistance with child care (Grant & Hallman, 2008). Therefore, it is important to consider that some young women who parented as teens may have already been experiencing poor educational opportunities or other adverse life circumstances before they became pregnant. Additionally, the evidence suggests that many teen mothers from impoverished families and communities may lack the motivation towards academic success.

Early childbearing and motivation to continue school. Another theory emerging from the literature is that early childbearing may actually give rise to motivation towards educational attainment. According to Chigona and Chetty (2008) many pregnant girls who stay at school or returned after childbirth were driven by the

realization that finishing their schooling would enhance the likelihood of gaining employment, having higher earnings and successfully supporting their offspring in the future.

A quantitative study by Bar and Simons (2012) found that though pregnancy caused African-American teen mothers' educational expectations to decrease, their college aspirations were similar to those of their nonchildbearing peers. This was also supported by Smith-Battle (2007) who suggested that parenthood caused teens to reexamine their priorities regarding their educational and long-term success. Ensuing childbirth, young mothers reported a renewed interest in staying in school and a determination to graduate. Though they expressed a greater interest in further education; they stated that challenges such as competing work demands, parenting responsibilities, and lack of support often hindered their aspirations for educational accomplishment (Smith-Battle, 2007).

Overtime, adolescent mothers develop a higher level of motivation to reach their academic aspirations (Rumley, 2010). Fifty-nine percent of African-American (AA) teen mothers decided to continue their education within six months of child bearing and 27% expressed in less than a year, their recognition of the importance of an education (Rumley, 2010). Most of the participants in this study aspired to graduate or had graduated from their high school. Ninety- two percent reported that they had plans to attend college (Rumley, 2010). Findings of a study by Zachry (2005) of teen mothers in the USA also suggested that becoming a parent can change the young mothers' viewpoint of schooling. Motherhood can also help her to envisage how education could provide a

better life for her children. These findings all challenge the presumption that adolescent motherhood is the beginning of adverse outcomes that included dwindling motivation to complete high school.

Methodology differences. These seeming inconsistencies in the literature may be as a result of the use of different measures and or age cohorts by researchers (Berthelon & Keuger, 2014; Mollborn, 2007; Kane et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2007). Ashcraft et al. (2006) contended that research using regression or matching estimators usually concluded there was a modest but non-trivial negative effect of childbearing on a range of outcomes including education attainment. Furthermore, Furstenberg et al., (1987) speculated that the use of short-term measures of schooling may overestimate the actual effect of parenthood on future educational attainment as many teen mothers who stop attending school returned in the future.

This was taken into account by Mollborn (2007) who examined the education attainment of women age 26 who gave birth as teenagers (about eight years after childbearing) the time by which most participants would have completed their formal education. This research approach provided a long-term view of the impact of teen motherhood on schooling. Results revealed most teenage parents do suffer from a long-term penalty for early childbearing. The findings also show that lack of resources such as housing, child care, and financial support may have contributed to the adverse impact of teenage parenthood on educational attainment (Mollborn, 2007). Thus, the rate of educational attainment may be low when measured soon after childbearing but may be enhanced overtime after motherhood.

Kane et al. (2013) posited that inconsistencies regarding the quantity of education of teen mothers in past studies may have been due more to methodological differences than to cohort differences. Thus, in the researchers' investigation, they employed four methods and a single data source: The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (NLSAH). They replicated analysis across four different statistical strategies: ordinary least squares regression; propensity score matching; and parametric and semi parametric maximum likelihood estimation. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in the US comprised a nationally representative sample of 20,745 seventh through twelfth graders in 1994–1995. Participants were reinterviewed in 1996 (Wave II), 2001–2002 (Wave III), and 2008–2009 (Wave IV). The sample included only women who participated in Waves I and IV ($n = 8,352$).

Inconsistent with other studies, results from this research suggested that teen mothers complete about three-quarter of a year less schooling (0.7) than young women who postpone childbearing until at least age 20. Additionally, results indicated that mothers completed approximately 14 years of education by Wave IV when they were aged 24 to 34. About 12% of young mothers in the sample had children before the age of 19 (Kane et al., 2013). Despite the variations in findings regarding the rates of educational attainment of adolescent mothers compared to their nonparenting peers and women who delay childbearing, it is generally established that teen motherhood places the young woman at an academic disadvantage.

Adolescent Childbearing and Socioeconomic Outcomes

Premature motherhood is not only disadvantageous to the educational aspirations and attainment of young mothers. It is a wider societal problem associated with other economic and social outcomes for both the young mother and her child (Barraza, 2011; Furstenberg, Brook-Gunn, Chase-Lansdale 1989; Hoffman & Maynard 2008; Kirby et al., 2001; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Melhado, 2007). Unfulfilled educational aspirations and failure to complete a secondary education significantly affects the adolescent mothers' future economic well-being (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Branson et al., 2013; Furstenberg et al., 1987; Hofferth, Reid, & Mott, 2001; Lee, 2010; Upchurch & McCarthy, 1990; Smith-Battle, 2012; Taylor, 2009). While educational accomplishment tends to lead to financial self-sufficiency, and psychological and physical well-being (Furstenberg et al., 1987; Kalil & Kunz, 2000; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Turner, 2011). Failure to achieve academically tends to be correlated with underemployment, low earnings and poverty (Hofferth et al., 2001; Kirby et al., 2001; Lee, 2010; Smith-Battle, 2012; Taylor, 2009).

Although growing scientific evidence indicates some variations in the economic well-being of early childbearers, most of the evidence supports the link between teen birthrates and poverty (Boden, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2008; Driscoll, 2013; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Furstenberg et al., 1987; Hofferth, et al., 2001; Lee, 2010; Kirby et al., 2001; Melhado, 2007; Taylor, 2009). For example, Boden et al. (2008) suggested that those who became mothers early were more disadvantaged in economic circumstances

when compared with those who delayed childbearing. They were more likely to depend on welfare and be paid low rates. These findings were also supported by Branson et al. (2013); Driscoll (2014); Elfenbein and Felice (2003); and Melhado (2007) who found that most teenage mothers lived in poverty and relied on welfare.

Further, the link between early childbearing and the risk of poverty seems to have remained constant over time. In 1979, Hofferth and Moore surveyed 1268 women in the US who were between the ages of 20 and 24 in 1968. This cohort was reinterviewed in 1973 and 1975 to assess differences in the economic conditions of those who had given birth as a teenager with those who delayed given birth until after the age of 18. Findings suggested that among women of all races and for each year a young woman delayed first birth the odds of her family being below the poverty level was reduced by 2.2 percentage points, a reduction of the total probability of being poor of 22% (Hofferth & Moore, 1979). The researchers also noted that though there was no direct effect of early birth on the poverty status of young mother's family, there was a significant indirect casual effect as a result of early childbearing on education, family size, and composition (Hofferth & Moore, 1979).

Consistent with these findings are those of a later study by Furstenberg and Brook-Gun (1985) who examined the factors linked to the variation in outcomes among early childbearers. Mothers from a Baltimore hospital who had their first child at age 18 or younger between the years of 1966 and 1969 were followed one, three, five and seventeen years after the birth of their first child. Results suggested that the former teen

mothers were more likely to be unemployed, dependent on welfare and have lower incomes. Compared to those who postponed parenting, they were more likely to be unmarried, or divorced and have more children (Furstenberg & Brook-Gun 1985).

Kirby, et al. (2001) assessed the correlation between poverty and birth rates among black, Hispanic and non-Hispanic white teens in California. Although poverty and education were significantly correlated within all three ethnic groups, it was greater within blacks and Hispanic than within non-Hispanic white population. Manifestations of poverty examined included: low levels of education and employment, and high levels unemployment. Thus, regardless of the ethnicity, women who mothered as teens seem to experience lower levels of socioeconomic wellbeing that women who became mothers later in life.

Moreover, evidence from longitudinal studies reveals a similar negative impact of early motherhood on economic well-being. Taylor (2009) examined the effect of early childbearing on midlife outcomes. Participants (n=548) sourced from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS) who became parents before the age of 20 were tracked from age 18 until age 53. Findings indicated that compared to those who postponed childbearing, early childbearers completed less schooling. Those who parented as adolescents experience less prestigious jobs, more unstable marriages, and less physical health. However, there were no significant differences found in current income, marital satisfaction, social support, and psychological health (Taylor, 2009). Positive adjustment through the life course as well as areas of vulnerability characteristic of adolescent

parenthood were possible explanations of these findings (Taylor, 2009). Based on findings from the before mentioned studies, young women who became parents as teenagers tend to experience more socioeconomic challenges than those who postpone parenthood until adulthood.

Early Childbearing and Motivation towards Socioeconomic well-being

Consistent with those theories that contended motherhood to be a source of motivation towards academic accomplishment, there are some scholars who asserted that early motherhood may also be a source of motivation towards future socioeconomic wellbeing (Barr & Simons; 2012; Bethelon & Kruger, 2014; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Turner, 2011; Rumley, 2010; Smith-Battle, 2007). For example, teen mothers reported that having a child at a young age gave their lives new meaning when personal and social helps were available (Edin & Keflas 2005). Barcelos and Gubrium (2014) and Zachry (2005) also found similar perspectives. Teen mothers in both studies reported that their motivation to succeed increased so as to avoid the public's expectations of them being dependent on welfare with no high school or college education. Hence, for some parenting adolescents, motherhood may actually serve as a positive turning point in their lives driving them to become self-sufficient and economically independent.

Taken together, the empirical evidence suggests that early childbearing tends to have a deleterious impact on the social and economic wellbeing of the adolescent mother and that support mechanisms can help to mitigate this impact. The literature also

indicates that low educational attainment and low socioeconomic wellbeing are closely correlated. Possessing a high school diploma makes an individual more employable (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003). For example, in 2008, workers who possess a high school diploma or its equivalent earned approximately 44% more annually than those who dropped out of school (Melhado, 2007). More recent findings by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2012) also reinforced that acquiring a high school diploma and pursuing a college education is vital for financial success. Therefore, when a girl's education is disrupted by motherhood, she becomes vulnerable to low socioeconomic conditions that usually equates to poverty. Failing to graduate from high school may also decrease the likelihood of transitioning to college and earning a degree, reduce the power to earn higher earnings, and make it more challenging to maintain a job. Ultimately, it may result in dependence on welfare at a cost to tax payers.

Prefertility Socioeconomic Circumstances

In addition to experiencing prepregnancy schooling impediments, women who bear children as teens may also experience prefertility socioeconomic problems. (Ardington et al., 2011; Branson et al., 2013; Grant & Hallman, 2008, Hoffman & Maynard, 2008; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Ranchhod et al., 2011; Smith-Battle, 2012). For example, Mollborn and Morningstar (2009) used data from longitudinal studies to assess the relationship between teen parenting and psychological distress. Results indicated that before childbearing teen mothers were already predisposed to unfavorable life circumstances. Higher distress scores were due to distress that preceded childbearing rather than the experience of teen motherhood alone (Mollborn &

Morningstar, 2009). The results also suggested that the relationship between psychological distress and subsequent childbearing was not directly causal. Other factors such as socioeconomic status, academic achievement, family structure, and sexual experience influenced teen mothers' psychological distress and their likelihood of becoming teen mothers (Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009). Mollborn and Morningstar (2009) found that the young mothers tended to have little motivation to attend school and few educational opportunities.

Hoffman and Maynard (2008) also found that many adolescent mothers came from communities with inadequate public amenities including weak public school supports. Furthermore, in a qualitative narrative study Turner (2011) explored the experiences of women who parented as teens and successfully complete college. Participants reported that they did not possess resiliency and self-efficacy before their pregnancy, but that they developed the trait overtime.

An abundance of evidence may be found in some South African studies (where by developed World standards teen childbearing is high) to support that teen mothers who experienced low socioeconomic life outcomes are likely to have been living in poor life situations before they became pregnant. Using longitudinal and retrospective data, Ranchhod et al. (2011) assessed the effect of teen birth on the educational attainment of young mothers in Cape Town, South Africa. After controlling for prechildbearing factors, the writers found that teen motherhood correlates with reduced educational expectations and that a large part of this correlation was attributed to teen mothers' socioeconomic situation before pregnancy (Ranchhod et al., 2011). Therefore, when assessing the

socioeconomic consequences of early motherhood, the researcher should also examine the socioeconomic life circumstances before childbearing as this will affect the results.

However, slightly different findings were found by Ardington et al. (2011). The writers noted that the gap in educational outcomes between adolescent mothers and their nonparenting peers was not fully attributed to pre-childbearing socioeconomic circumstances among South African girls. The investigators posited that though socioeconomic status preceding motherhood may have explained a small part of the difference in the educational achievement of teen mothers in rural KwaZulu-Natal, the gap was more likely to be attributed to the teen birth itself (Ardington et al., 2011). An earlier study on the long-term consequences of adolescent motherhood by Holmlund (2005) also found modest effects of birth timing on educational attainment, after controlling for educational performance before pregnancy. Thus, it is important when analyzing the data that the researcher takes into account whether or not the extent to which the measured educational disadvantage is attributable to socioeconomic background prior to giving birth. In other words, other reasons for school dropout should be considered.

Cost to Society

Adolescent parenthood does not only impact the young mother and her family. It also affects society as a whole as teen mothers tend to use public services more than older mothers (Hofferth, 1987; Hoffman, 2006; Perper et al., 2010; Smith-Battle, 2012). According to Westman (2009), the adverse outcomes associated with early parenthood such as the mothers' deficit in education, unemployment, underemployment, welfare

reliance, and behavioral and cognitive challenges of the offspring combine to make up social cost (Westman, 2009).

Society loses its economic contributions when teen mothers cannot realize their full educational and occupational potential. According to Hoffman (2006), the cost of early childbearing to the Public is estimated at \$9.1 billion annually. This figure includes the use of public services and lost tax revenue from lower earnings of adolescent mothers and those of their children (Hoffman, 2006). The social cost would be reduced if females delayed parenting until after the age of 20 (Hoffman, 2006). These findings are further supported by Perper et al. (2010) who contended that adolescent mothers are more likely than older mothers to be dependent on public assistance. The cost associated with raising a child such as diapers, clothing, formula, housing, and medical care is high. Without an education it is more difficult to get a job to finance these costs and so many teen mothers may be compelled to rely on the state for assistance. A cost that is borne by taxpayers.

Children of Teen Mothers

Early childbearing also affects the offspring of adolescent mothers. They tend to be at a developmental disadvantage when compared with children born to older mothers (Perper et al., 2010). Branson et al. (2013) examined the educational attainment of African children born to teenage mothers for the period 1994 to 2002. Results indicated that these children attained 0.1 of a year less schooling than those of older mothers of similar socioeconomic status (Branson et al., 2013). The size of the gap remained similar throughout the period. Additionally, the younger the mother at first birth, the greater the child's educational deficit (Branson et al., 2013).

Statistics from CDC (2009) highlighted the health and social impact of premature childbearing. Teen mothers are more likely to encounter higher rates of preterm birth, low birth weights and infant death (CDC, 2009). Moreover, the children of teens tend to be in poor health, suffer from abuse or neglect, drop out of school, and live in foster care (CDC, 2009). They are also likely to be incarcerated during adolescence (CDC, 2009).

The children of teen parents also tend to experience more psychosocial challenges. Preschool children of adolescent mothers tend to be more active, aggressive, and have less self-control than children of older mothers (Furstenberg et al., 1989). Daughters of disadvantaged teen mothers are at higher risk of early childbearing than daughters of older mothers and more advantaged teen mothers (Meade, Ickovics & Kershaw, 2008). These studies all suggest that children born to girls under the age of 20 are expected to struggle with health problems, learning deficits and social challenges.

However, some studies found that when background factors were controlled, the adverse cognitive and behavioral outcomes for children born to teen women were diminished or eliminated. For example, Turley (2003) assessed the association between adolescent childbirth and offspring scores on standardized test of achievement and behavior problems. Results suggested that maternal age at birth was not linked to poor child achievement scores and behavior problems (Turley, 2003). Instead, family background accounted for the increased risk among children born to adolescent mothers compared to children born to older mothers (Turley, 2003). Another study by Chittleborough, Lawlor, and Lynch (2011) examined mothers' age and other factors associated with pregnancy to predict child development outcomes up to age five years.

Results suggested that only a small proportion of children who experience poor development had mothers under the age of 20 years (Chittleborough et al., 2011).

The majority of the studies reviewed examined the impact of early motherhood on socioeconomic life outcomes employing quantitative approaches to inquiry with resulting numerical data. However, there is limited research that explores early parenthood, educational aspirations, and life outcomes from the subjective view of the teen mother. Employing a qualitative approach will provide a voice for each teen mother rather than a summation of results of a measurement instrument. This approach to methodology will facilitate the direct responses of women who parented as teenagers concerning how they perceive their educational aspirations were supported or not supported by friends and significant others.

Support Systems for Adolescent Mothers

There is no debate among the scholars that support systems are fundamental for teenage mothers and that these supports can determine whether or not the young mothers fulfill their education aspirations after the birth of their child. Chigona and Chetty (2008) suggested that although many teenage mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa recognize the significance of continuing their education, they were unable to succeed academically as the necessary supports were lacking. Findings of this study indicated that unfulfilled educational goals were attributed to the lack of support from homes, schools and the community (Chigona & Chetty 2008). Numerous other studies on adolescent mothers' educational experiences concur with these findings that support networks are necessary to deal with the disruptions of school attendance (Bar & Simmons 2012; Grant & Hallman,

2006; Jamal, 2014; Mangino, 2008; Melhado, 2007; Rumley, 2010; Smith-Battle, 2007; VanDenBerg, 2012; Wilson, 2011).

Lack of support for parenting teens' educational aspirations is likely to result in feelings of low self-efficacy towards educational attainment (Brosh et al., 2007).

Balancing the cost associated with raising a baby, the time necessary for child care; while simultaneously attending school can be overwhelming and challenging for teen mothers (Bethelon & Kruger, 2014; Hofferth et al., 2001; Kane et al., 2013; Stroble, 2013).

However, when appropriate supports are provided teen mothers are more likely to remain in or reenroll to complete high school (Bar & Simmons 2012; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Jamal, 2014; Mangino, 2008; Melhado, 2007; Rumley, 2010; Smith-Battle, 2007; VanDenBerg, 2012; Wilson, 2011). Based on the major support systems emerging from the literature, this discussion of supports for education aspirations will focus on family, friends, school-related, community and government support.

Family Support

A supportive family network is closely associated with positive educational outcomes for teen mothers (Furstenberg 1980; Rico, 2011; Turner, 2011). Scholarly works by Brosh et al. (2007); Byham-Urquhart (2014) and Mangino (2008) and all found that familial support was instrumental in helping adolescent mothers to accomplish their academic goals. Results of a quantitative study by Rico (2011) suggested that a relationship between the adolescent mother and her parents played a pivotal role in helping the parenting teen to remain in school. Another study by Mollborn (2010) found that teen mothers who lived with their parents were more likely to have more time and

energy to study. While in their parents' home, they could rely on family members for financial help and child care resources which can increase the odds of them remaining in school (Mollborn, 2010).

Similar results were found among South African teen mothers. Those who lived with an adult female were significantly more likely to return to school after pregnancy (Grant & Hallman, 2008). It was also found that those who took primary responsibility for childcare were significantly more likely to stop attending school than those who received assistance with childcare responsibilities (Grant & Hallman, 2008). Though the literature highlights the extended family as a fundamental aid with childcare, the role of the pregnant or parenting teen's mother as caregiver was a major determinant of whether girls return to school after pregnancy (Grant & Hallman 2008). Regardless to the age of the parent, childcare can be demanding. When school-aged mothers received support from their families with childcare they have a greater chance of focusing on pursuing their academic goals than if they did not receive any support

The positive impact of family support was also noted in a qualitative study by Turner (2011). Teen mothers on government assistance who graduate from college reported that family support was a significant early factor in their development of self-reliance and success. All five participants in the study stated that though their families did not initially embrace the news of their pregnancy they continued to provide them with shelter and other supports (Turner, 2011). One participant reported that "If they had not been in my life, my story probably would have been similar to a lot of other girls who would have probably dropped out of school" (Turner, 2011 p. 80). Thus, the level of

educational attainment of women who parented as teens may be determined by the amount and quality of social and moral support provided by their family.

Furstenberg (1980) examined the long-term reliance on family members by women who parented at teens. Data from the Baltimore project 1966-67 revealed that when compared to women who delayed parenthood, women who had their first child before the age of 18 were more likely to dwell with relatives. However, the size of the kinship networks among the two cohorts was similar. Later childbearers reported just as many family members on whom they could rely as the early childbearers, however, the majority of these family members did not reside with them. These scholarly works all indicate that a supportive family relationship is a significant predictor of educational attainment for school-age mothers transitioning to motherhood.

Friend and Father Support

The shift from the family to friends for emotional and social support is typical during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Peer association is profoundly important at this time as friends play a pivotal role in socialization (Halpern-Felsher, 2009). At this stage in their development, adolescents tend to rely more on their friends than on their family for encouragement (Halpern-Felsher, 2009). Furthermore, the peer group plays an influential role in regulating the self-efficacy of the adolescent (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is an individual's perception of his or her ability to successfully complete a task (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the teenage mother's self-efficacy towards achieving her goals and completing her secondary education is often influenced by her friends. According to Kiran-Esen (2012) peer influence significantly affects adolescent behaviors as well as

their academic self-efficacy. Moreover, the writer found a strong correlation between self-efficacy and academic success and between peer pressure and academic success. Although Kiran-Esen (2012) did not address the pregnant adolescent in this study, the assumption in this proposal (based on Kiran-Esen findings) is that the teen mother's friends and significant others will play a significant role in supporting her educational aspirations.

Conversely, the reliance on friends and significant others as a key source of support for teen mothers' educational goals is not supported by empirical evidence. Furthermore, there seems to be a paucity in the literature focused on the support of friends and significant others for the educational aspirations of parenting teenagers. The limited data on the impact of fathers of children born to teen mothers portrays them in a negative light (Turner, 2011; Saim, Dufaker & Ghazinour, 2014). According to Saim et al. (2014) fathers often abandoned teen mothers during pregnancy or within two years after birth. An intensive search of the literature revealed very little scholarly examination of how significant others contributed or did not contribute towards the teen mothers' education experiences.

In studies by Turner (2011) and Stroble (2013), teen mothers rated their child's father as the least important as support for their educational needs. Findings by Saim et al. (2014) reinforced the lack of support by the father of the baby. The scholars in this study interviewed 17 unwed Malaysian teen mothers living in shelter homes for unwed pregnant mothers. Participants reported the loss of support from their significant others as the fathers of the babies often rejected the children as theirs or broke off relationships

after the pregnancy. Turner (2011) found that teen mothers shared a similar aversion to depending on the child's father for financial or moral support. Another study by Mangino (2008) explored peer and father support under a wider topic: personal support that included support from the father of the baby, parents, and external services. Teen mothers rated school-related and personal support were of near or equal importance in helping them to complete school whereas economic factors were reported least important (Mangino, 2008).

Inconsistent with the findings that suggest little support by fathers of the baby for academic aspirations are those of a mixed method study by Brosh et al. (2007). The scholars sought to understand the connection between the source and the type of support and educational outcomes for pregnant and parenting teens aged 13 to 18 years ($n = 54$) who attended an alternate school. Data from surveys and three focus group sessions revealed that the mostly highly valued sources of support (from most helpful to less helpful) were their husband or boyfriend, their parents, teachers, babysitter or daycare, and the school nurse. The focus group findings suggest that most teen mothers depended on their mother and boyfriend to assist them with childcare. The supports participants deemed least helpful were the parents of their significant other. Moreover, participants believed that developing honest and supportive relationships with their parents and significant others would help them to accomplish their educational and career goals (Brosh et al., 2007).

The marital status and life circumstance of the teen mother seem to determine how she perceives the support for her educational aspirations by her significant other.

Unwed mothers in shelters rated the support of their child's father less favorably (Saim et al., 2014) than mothers who were married or in a relationship with the child's father and who were enrolled in an alternative school (Brosh et al., 2007). However, the limited literature on the contribution of significant others to the educational needs of teen mothers makes it difficult to establish how significant others and fathers of the babies helped or hindered the educational aspirations of young mothers. Furthermore, where significant others are examined in the literature; they are categorized and evaluated with other social or interpersonal supports rather than measured as a separate unit. For example, Brosh et al. (2007) evaluated the supports for teen mothers' self-efficacy toward academic attainment as formal and informal. Informal supports included: family, friends and father of the child while formal supports included: professional services and programs. In this study, there was no focus on the how significant others encouraged or discouraged the teen mother's self-efficacy towards academic goals (Brosh et al., 2007).

School-related supports

School personnel such as counselors and teachers have been credited for the teen mothers' successful graduation from high school (Chohan, 2010; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Jamal, 2014; Smith-Battle, 2007; Stroble, 2013). Many school-age mothers reported that the support of mentors and teachers was critical toward them staying in and graduating from high school (Cook-Kyle, 2014; Jamal, 2014; Mangino, 2008). These individuals encouraged them to set life goals and remain focused on graduating (Cook-Kyle, 2014; Jamal, 2014). School counselors took them on college visits and assisted them to apply

for scholarships that ultimately helped them to earn their high school diploma (Jamal, 2014).

Cook-Kyle (2014) found that African-American women (age 20-35) who parented as teens and who received academic and career guidance from school counselors reported greater motivation to aspire to a college education than those who did not. Researchers, Brosh et al. (2007), Mangino (2008) and Stroble (2013) also highlighted the importance of support from school personnel. Results of all three studies suggested that among supportive school personnel, teachers were particularly useful in enabling adolescent mothers to reach their educational goals. According to Chohan (2010) teachers also helped mothering teens to cope with the stigma and shame of being pregnant. They were understanding concerning the young woman's need to take time off to take care of her child and would help the mother to catch up with school work (Chohan, 2010). When school personnel provide academic and career guidance and moral and social support they facilitate teen mothers' school progress and long-term educational success. Thus, it is fundamental that teachers and counselors be included in programs created to enhance the educational attainment of teen mothers.

Alternative schools. Attending an alternate or special school may also determine whether or not the teen mother achieves her secondary school aspirations. These school-based support programs usually provide several services that may include: parenting education, health care, counseling, mentoring, and child care (Jamal, 2014; Modesto, 2013; Saunders & Saunders, 2002; Williams & Sadler, 2001; Wilson-Mitchell et al., 2014). Participation in these schools increases teen mothers' level of educational

attainment as they are allowed to continue their schooling while their children are supervised. (Jamal, 2014; Modesto, 2013; Sadler et al., 2007; Williams & Sadler, 2001; Wilson-Mitchell et al., 2014). William and Sadler (2001) found that teen parents enrolled in the Child Care Center program within their high school achieved high success rates for high school graduation and continuation. Furstenberg and Brooks-Gunn (1985) in a longitudinal study examined the link between remaining in a regular school and attending a special school for adolescent mothers. The researchers found that the association between attending the special school and further life outcomes remained strong. Those in the special school for pregnant girls did substantially better in later life than those attending a regular school program and than those who dropped out (Furstenberg & Brooks-Gunn, 1985).

Additionally, Saunders and Saunders (2002) found that teen mothers enrolled in an alternative high school rated teachers, counselors, and administrators more favorably than those at their previous high school. In another study by Brosh et al. (2007) the alternative school staff was ranked the most important source of support for fulfilling educational goals. Participants in this mixed method study reported that staff relationships in the special school provided valuable support to help them finish school, support that they would not have in a regular high school (Brosh et al. 2007).

The majority of scholarly works reviewed on alternative schools for teen mothers suggested that the alternative school experience is advantageous to the adolescent mothers' academic success. The pregnant or parenting girl unlike the nonparenting girl will have special needs that may not be adequately met in the mainstream school setting.

The extra services offered by alternative schools such as parenting classes, counseling, and childcare equipped teen mothers with vital skills that may not have been made available in the conventional high school. The provision of financial assistance may also cause them to give more attention to their classroom assignments and less on the cost associated with raising a child. Trained personnel who demonstrate empathy and dedication to their needs will assist mothers to cope with the stress of being a parent and a student. If teen mothers were to remain in the regular school they may struggle more to accomplish their education goals.

Community and Government Support

Support programs for teen mothers may also be community-based. These typically operate outside the school via community agencies. They may also work in collaboration with schools to provide mentoring, skills training, health education and care, and financial assistance (Jamal, 2014).

The Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF) is a government agency in Jamaica that provides services such as education, childcare, counseling, vocational coaching, and support for adolescent mothers who are 17 years old and under (Wilson-Mitchell, et al., 2014). According to McNeil (1992) teenage mothers who enrolled in the WCJF are more likely to complete high school, gain employment and receive higher earnings. A longitudinal study by McNeil (1992) assessed the outcomes of 260 adolescent mothers, 87 of whom were WCJF graduates. Of the 87 graduate participants, 25% were employed compared to 13% of 173 non-graduates. Findings also revealed that 56% of graduates had a monthly income of J\$10,000 compared to \$20,000 versus 35% of the

non-graduate group (Wilson-Mitchell et al., 2014). These results demonstrate the important role that community based support parenting programs plays in teen mothers' successful completion of high school.

However, some teen mothers are reluctant to use available government assistance because of the social stigma connected to the use of federal aid (Turner, 2011). Teen mothers reported that they found the government and community assistance programs helpful, but they did not want to rely on them for the long term (Turner, 2011).

The literature on the support networks of teen mothers illustrates that resources and support provided by the family, school, community and government are fundamental. These supports may either facilitate or impede the pregnant or parenting adolescent remaining in school or returning to complete school after childbirth. The majority of studies highlighted the essential role of the family in providing emotional support and assistance with child care that allowed the mothering teen to concentrate on her studies. School-related supports were also vital inducements of successful high school completion. However, studies on the support of their peers and father of the baby were not as prevalent in the literature.

Despite the many supports that exist to assist adolescent mothers to navigate through high school, many of them lack the motivation to pursue their academic goals. Many still achieve low levels of schooling. Hence, it is crucial to understand the teen mother's desire to fulfill her education aspirations and her perceptions of supports for these needs. Directly inquiring of those who lived the experience of parenting and truncated schooling may provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon. Allowing

them to share their reality, without the controls of a statistical tool, and void of judgment and presumptions may provide a rich description of their thoughts, feelings, goals, and viewpoints. The essence of their lived experiences may create a picture of how interpersonal supports for their aspirations may have assisted or discouraged them from achieving their high school aspirations. This insight may be used to guide programs aimed at increasing the educational attainment of this vulnerable population with potential optimistic outcomes for the teenage mother, her child and society.

Review of Literature Related to Methodology

Within the past ten years, various research approaches have been employed to examine the educational consequences of adolescent childbearing. The researcher's belief about reality and his or her philosophy of what constitutes valid research influence the selected approach to inquiry (Patton, 2015). Creswell (2009) calls this the researcher's worldview and categorizes worldviews into four groups: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy, and pragmatism. Most of the studies reviewed employed quantitative research approaches but limited studies used qualitative and mixed method approaches. The quantitative approaches were primarily guided by postpositivism. Postpositivists endeavor to identify and assess the causes that impact outcomes (Creswell, 2009). They contend that there is no absolute truth and that knowledge is objective and quantifiable; therefore, evidence is always imperfect and fallible (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative approaches were mainly guided by constructivism. Constructivists assert that reality is shaped by an individual's subjective experiences of the external world (Patton, 2015). They hold the

ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed. Hence, multiple realities are often accepted in their research (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Studying teen mothers in a laboratory will pose ethical challenges and the random assignment of mothers to treatment groups may be difficult. Hence, few studies were found that utilized quasi-experimental or experimental designs. For the most part, the literature was descriptive and correlational in nature. The worldviews adopted in these studies guided the data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Quantitative Research

The descriptive quantitative research produced past and current statistics on the fertility rates and the educational attainment of teen mothers. These studies did not generally test hypothesis nor did they predict relationships between variables. Rather, they provided numerical data on the birth rates among girls under the age of 18 and measurements of schooling attained by women who parented as adolescents (CDC, 2013, National Center for Health Statistics, 2012, UNICEF, 2013; UNFPA, 2013). The national surveys employed closed-ended questionnaires or interviews to garner facts to inform policy decisions to reduce the number of teen births or to enhance the socioeconomic wellbeing of women who parented as teens. For example, in the UNFPA (2013) document, the writers used an ecological approach to examined factors and the interconnection of these factors in driving adolescent pregnancy. Other nationwide surveys conducted by the Guttmacher Institute (2014), the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2013), the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2012), and the United Nations Children's Fund (2003) produced hard facts and numeric

data on demographics, attitudes and beliefs of the teen mothers. Large samples were assessed that may be generalized to larger populations (Creswell, 2009).

The national surveys were often found to compliment other correlational research approaches which seem to be the most commonly used in the literature. The researcher who utilizes a correlational design seeks to determine the relationship between two or more variables using statistical data. The findings of the correlational research served as a basis to predict the outcomes of early motherhood. For example, Barr and Simmons (2012) found that college aspirations of teen mothers were similar to those of non-mothers though their educational expectations decreased. Berthelon and Kruger (2014) suggested that teen motherhood resulted in low educational attainment in Chile. Cook-Klye (2014) found that adolescent mothers who sought help from school counselors were more likely to attend college than those who did not. Mollborn and Morningstar (2009) found that the relationship between early childbearing and distress was not directly causal. Rico (2011) indicated a significant relationship between individual characteristics and socioeconomic factors and the adolescent mothers' level of academic performance. In studies where supports for the teen mothers' academic pursuits were examined, the focus was on the supports provided by the family of origin, school, and community (Berthelon & Kruger, 2014; Furstener, 1980; Cook-Kyle, 2014; Golshirazi, 2012; VanDenBerg, 2012). All of these studies highlighted the availability of social support as a significant predictor of the teen mother's academic achievement

Overall, relationships, trends, and patterns related to early pregnancy and educational accomplishment emerged from the correlational literature. Though the

magnitude of the relationship between early childbearing and educational attainment and other socioeconomic outcomes varied among the studies, the findings were conclusive that early parenthood puts young mothers at risk to low levels of schooling and low socioeconomic well-being. However, the deductive nature of these studies did not facilitate an in-depth understanding of the teen mother's educational aspirations. The use of survey instruments that usually comprised closed-ended questions limited the quality of data collected relating to the young woman's experiences.

Qualitative Research

While the quantitative works lacked rich descriptions of the phenomenon, the qualitative works allowed participants to describe their stories, thoughts, feelings, and memories of the phenomenon in settings that were natural and comfortable for them. Participants were not confined by survey tools; instead, face to face interviews allowed them to share their opinions.

The majority of the qualitative works conducted on the educational experiences of teen mothers build on the constructivists' paradigm, an approach that involves the construction of meaning based on the multiple realities of human beings (Creswell, 2009). Chigona and Chetty (2008), Modesto (2013), and Turner (2011) were less concerned with obtaining objective 'truth' and more with acquiring meaning from the participants' perspectives. The inductive approach used in these studies was effective in discovering the deeper meaning of the teen mothers' subjective realities. Opened-ended questions and semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their views on the challenges of mothering as teens (Barcelos & Gurium, 2014; Modesto, 2013; Stroble,

2013; Turner, 2011). As a result, comprehensive descriptions of the young mothers' stories emerged from the data (Modesto, 2013; Stroble, 2013; Turner, 2011).

For example, Zachry (2005) explored teen mothers' perception and interest in school before and after having a child using a grounded theory approach. This methodology is an open and systematic approach which does not necessarily start with a hypothesis but aims to formulate a theory after several stages of data collection and refinement (Charmaz, 2006). Zachry (2005) found that several concepts emerged from the data that explained the young mothers' major challenges and how they tried to resolve them. Results produced rich and varying descriptions of the teen mothers' experiences. Although the data demonstrated multiple realities, most of the girls interviewed reported that their children influenced their desire to return to school (Zachry, 2005).

Turner (2011) employed a qualitative narrative approach to explore the experiences of five college graduates who parented as teenagers. Findings indicated that the teen mothers' perceptions of support for their educational goals were influenced by their social backgrounds. Thus, several themes emerged that included: perseverance, self-efficacy and resiliency, support, state assistance, and faith in God (Turner, 2011). Their stories demonstrated the uniqueness of each mother's experience. They also underscored that reality is subjective and that it is determined by the individual's social context. Similarly, Modesto (2013) found that teen mothers' attitudes were influenced by their social backgrounds. The researcher investigated the lived experiences of teen mothers who graduated from an alternative school using a phenomenological approach. Feeling

safe, getting assistance, finding the impetus to finish school and learning in a supportive environment were themes that emerge from this study (Modesto, 2013).

The construction of meaning as shaped by the individual's life circumstances also emerged from these qualitative studies. For example, mothers in alternative schools (Modesto, 2013; Jamal, 2014) seem to have more optimistic perceptions of their support than mothers who were not enrolled in alternative schools (Saim et al., 2014). Women who lived with their families were more likely to desire to return to school after pregnancy than those who did not (Turner, 2011). Overall, results from these studies were varied and provided rich meaning to the adolescent mothers' educational experiences.

Conclusion

Taken together, the use of qualitative methodologies produced rich descriptions of the subjective experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of the teen mothers. On the other hand, the use of quantitative methodologies produced numerical objective descriptions of relationships, trends, and attitudes. However, there is a gap to be filled in the literature on the meaning of the adolescent mothers' experiences of interpersonal supports for their high school education. Teen mothers are faced with many challenges trying to complete school because along with the demands of their academic work they have to balance the responsibility of childcare (Hofferth et al., 2001). They often experience isolation and criticism from peers and stigmatization of being a teen mother from their communities (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Brosh et al., 2007; William-Mitchell et al., 2014). Resulting feelings of stress and depression may also influence their drive to accomplish their academic goals (Smith-Battle, 2007; Trusty-Smith, 2013). Hallman (2007) contended that

they are more likely that their nonpregnant and nonparenting friends to be stressed. Yet, there is a void in literature that seeks meaning from the adolescent mothers' perspective. Methodological approaches focused on objective truth and the measurement of objective reality will not adequately address the meaning of these experiences. The specific social backgrounds of the mothers will determine and shape their interpretations of support or lack of support for their schooling aspirations. The phenomenological qualitative method of inquiry is inductive and can be effective in discovering the deeper meaning of the lived experiences of adolescent mothers who struggle unsuccessfully to graduate from high school. More details of why the phenomenological approach is more appropriate is discussed in Chapter 4

Summary and Transition

This chapter provided an overview of the literature that has been written on early childbearing and its implications for adolescent mothers' education attainment and aspirations. The literature addressed social constructionism, adolescent development, birth rates, and educational attainment, the socioeconomic outcomes of early childbearing, support systems for teen mothers and the research methodology used in the literature. Some themes that emerged from the literature are as follows:

1. The responsibilities and challenges of being an adolescent, school-age mother.
2. Low educational attainment of adolescent mothers compared to nonparenting girls and older mothers.

3. The association between prechildbearing life circumstances and educational achievement.
4. Teen motherhood and motivation to complete school.
5. The adverse socioeconomic consequences of adolescent childbearing.
6. The importance of support systems for adolescent mothers.

The following chapter provides a description of the methods and procedures that were used for conducting this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this Chapter 3, I present a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology employed in this study. In this section, I discuss why the research tradition was chosen and justify why it was the most appropriate research approach to use. Additionally, I explain the purpose of the study, research questions, population, sample, ethical procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, validity, and trustworthiness.

The review of the literature regarding the educational experiences of adolescent mothers revealed numerous scholarly works on the association between adolescent motherhood and the level of secondary school attainment. However, there is little empirical evidence of the experiences of adolescent mothers who struggle to complete formal high school. During adolescence, teenagers turn to their peers for social and emotional support (Erikson, 1968), yet there is a paucity of literature pertaining to the support for the teen mothers' educational aspirations by their significant others and peers. To address this gap, I used a qualitative, phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of Barbadian women who parented as teens and who struggled unsuccessfully to fulfill their high school aspirations.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Barbadian mothers between the age of 20 and 25 years old who parented as teenagers and who

struggled to fulfill their high school aspirations. Two specific research questions guided this study. Those questions were:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences regarding the educational aspirations of Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school?

RQ2: How do Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school perceive support or lack of support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others?

Research Design and Rationale

There are three types of research approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2009). With each type, the researcher holds a basis philosophical assumption and conducts specific strategies of inquiry with a distinct protocol for collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative methods involve ‘hard’ data, statistical procedures, equations, and formulae; whereas, qualitative methods involve stories and the emerging patterns within these stories (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative researchers are primarily concerned with measuring variables and expressing the relationship among the variables using effect statistics (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers are mainly concerned with the details of a particular time and place and acquiring rich meaning from the context of the study (Patton, 2015). Mixed methods combine both quantitative and qualitative research procedures and involve the use of both strategies of data analysis simultaneously (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate data collection and analysis strategy to resolve the research questions. Quantitative methodology was rejected because the research problem could not be adequately answered using statistical procedures. Moreover, the intention of this study was not to test a theory by examining the relationship among variables. The goal was to describe the educational experiences of young women who parented as teenagers. The key purpose was to discover their perceptions of how support from their friends and significant others encouraged or discouraged their educational aspirations. Employing measurement tools and numbered data associated with quantitative methods could not have answered the research question nor adequately addressed the problem. A qualitative paradigm was preferred because I sought to understand how young mothers who parented as adolescents describe their supports or lack thereof for their educational aspirations.

The essence of the young mothers' experiences of their supports was better extracted from their lived anecdotes than from results of a statistical tool. Interacting with them in their natural environment and providing a safe place for them to voice their perceptions and attitudes produced a rich, detailed understanding of the phenomenon. Creswell (2013) contended that qualitative inquiry unlike quantitative provides insight into deeper thoughts and behaviors that direct responses.

Furthermore, this paradigm was well suited as there was little empirical evidence on the support systems for teen mothers' educational aspirations. According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative inquiry is necessary when there is no research to explain why a phenomenon occurs. It is unknown how friends and significant others contribute towards

parenting adolescents' secondary educational aspirations. Talking directly to the participants helped to develop an in-depth understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). The face-to-face interactions generated a rich description of meaning and allowed for an interpretive understanding of the data collected. Moreover, qualitative methodology is inductive in nature and allowed participants to shape the themes that emerged from the interactions and collaborations (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). These themes were then organized and analyzed to produce an in-depth description of the phenomenon.

Qualitative Research

Characteristics unique to qualitative research that make it more appropriate are:

1. **Interpretive:** Researchers interpret what they see, hear, and understand and are receptive to the multiple perspectives of participants. The researcher's background, context, and understanding are all considered important in interpretations. As participants and researchers make interpretations, multiple perspectives of the problem may come into view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
2. **Naturalistic:** It is experiential and field oriented. Data tends to be collected in the field where human behavior and events happen. The researcher does not arrange the situation to gather data (Creswell, 2013).
3. **Researcher as the key instrument:** Qualitative researchers do not rely on measurement instruments. They gather data by observing behavior, examining documents or artifacts, and interviewing participants (Creswell, 2013).

4. Personalistic: The key focus is on understanding the meaning that participants have about the problem. Qualitative researchers seek uniqueness and diversity and they are interested in the participants' view point and frames of reference. (Creswell, 2013)
5. Emergent design: The process of research may change as data is collected. Data analysis inductively develops from particulars to themes as the researcher interprets the meaning of the data. Thus, researchers may not stick to an original design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

There are a variety of strategies of inquiry within the qualitative tradition. Five of the more popular are narrative research, case study, grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Each of these approaches focuses on specific data collection procedures, analysis, and write-up (Creswell, 2013). The uniqueness of each strategy helped me to determine that the phenomenological approach was the most appropriate for this research.

Narrative research. Narrative research is an approach in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals by engaging one or more participants to share stories of their lives (Creswell, 2013). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that narratives are employed to capture the personal dimensions of experience over time. One unique characteristic of narrative study is that insight is presented as a chronology. The researcher retells the participants' stories using structural devices that include a plot, setting, and denouement (Creswell, 2013). These characteristics render the narrative inappropriate. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of teen

mothers regarding their supports for their educational aspirations and attainment. It was not to present a chronology of their life stories.

Case study. The researcher who employs the case study approach explores in detail a program, event, or one or more cases (Creswell, 2013). Stake (2010) defines a case as bounded by shared time and activity. Data may be collected from multiple sources such as archival records, observation, interviews, and artifacts over time (Stake, 2010). The researcher explores the phenomenon as it occurs. The case study approach did not align with the purpose of this study as participants had given birth at different times. Thus, this research cannot be considered a case.

Grounded theory. Grounded theory is less concerned with describing and meaning and more with generating theory. It is an open and systematic strategy of inquiry in which the researcher formulates theory after several stages of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). A unique feature of this strategy is that it allows the investigator to seek out and conceptualize patterns by consistently comparing indicators, concepts, and categories as the theory emerges (Creswell, 2013). The procedure associated with the grounded theory is beyond the scope of this study. The objective of this research was not to formulate a theory about teen mothers but rather to explore and understand their lived experiences. It would be more helpful to ascertain what teen mothers experienced before conducting a study to formulate a theory about why or how they experience it. These factors assisted me to resolve that grounded theory methodology was an inappropriate fit to explore the meaning of the lived experiences of participants.

Ethnography. The ethnography goes beyond the individual or the case. It involves the extensive study of an entire culture or part of it. The researcher becomes a participant observer immersing self in the culture over a prolonged time; recording notes of observational and interview data (Creswell, 2013). The focus of ethnographic research is the meaning of behaviors, language, perceptions, and beliefs of a cultural group (Creswell, 2013). However, the focus of this research was on the multiple realities of women who parented as teens. Individuals were explored rather than culture. Thus, the ethnographic approach to inquiry could not adequately address the uniqueness that each participant brought. Because of the above-discussed rationale, I chose phenomenology as the qualitative method for the study.

Phenomenology. Of the five commonly used qualitative approaches mentioned above, I selected the strategy of phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of young women who parented as adolescents. This approach was the most appropriate for this study because it facilitated the description of meaning for individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the phenomenon was the human experience of support or lack of support for one's educational goals while trying to complete high school. According to Moustakas (1994), the role of the investigator in a phenomenological study is to determine the meaning of the experience and the influence this experience had on the individual. Therefore, after collecting data from the young mothers, I composed a description of what they experienced and how they experienced it. Additionally, I wanted to understand the participants' perception of supports for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others. Phenomenology aligned

with this purpose as it is focused on the collection and analysis of data drawn from the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of participants.

One characteristic of the phenomenological paradigm is the use of retrospective interviews (Moustakas, 1994). I interviewed participants 20 to 25 years of age concerning their lived past related to their partners' and friends' support for their educational goals. This approach to data collection was appropriate because it facilitated the collection of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Personal perception and interpretation are essential to understanding the subjective experience and finding meaning from participant's motivations and actions (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the researcher endeavored to capture the essence of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon in naturalistic real-world settings (Patton, 2015). There are several approaches to phenomenology. However, Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology was selected because this approach is focused on the participants' meaning of the phenomena rather than the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2013). An explanation of transcendental phenomenology is provided in the data collection procedures section.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

In social science research, there are two main types of sampling designs: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2008). In probability sampling, all members of the population have the same chance of being included in the sample. Conversely, in nonprobability sampling, there is no certainty that every member of the population has some chance of being included

(Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2008). Four commonly used probability sampling techniques are: simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, and cluster sampling.

Probability sampling was not a suitable option for this study because it required a list of the entire population of women living in Barbados who became mothers as adolescents. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) contend that probability sampling can only be calculated using the correct estimate of the population's parameters. Currently, a record of teen mothers whose high school education was truncated is unavailable. Therefore, nonprobability sampling was chosen as the more appropriate sampling design. This sampling design is commonly used by researchers in exploratory studies and when a full list of the sampling population is unavailable (Creswell, 2013).

There are several nonprobability sampling strategies. For this study, I chose the purposeful criterion sampling strategy because I wanted to procure comprehensive information of the phenomenon. I intentionally selected individuals who were especially knowledgeable and experienced with parenting as a teen while striving to complete their schooling and those who shared other preestablished attributes or characteristics.

I selected participants based on the following criteria. The first criteria for selection was Barbadian females between the ages of 20 to 25 who parented as adolescents. Participants would have been pregnant with their first child between the ages of 13 and 19 years old while they were in secondary school. The second criterion was truncated high school. It was crucial to this study that participants were unsuccessful in meeting their academic aspirations while in formal high school. The majority of the

literature to date examines the teen mother who successfully completed her high school education. This study sought to fill the gap by exploring those who aspired to complete formal secondary education but faced challenges. Teen mothers whose high school education is terminated or shortened are in dire need of support and resources which can minimize their risk to future adverse outcomes such as unemployment, dependence on welfare, and additional pregnancies. The third criterion is that the pregnancy or pregnancies should have gone to successful completion. Therefore, women who had a miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth only but no live births were excluded. The fourth criterion for selection was that the young woman should have been the primary caregiver of the child or children.

Sample Size

The principles of qualitative research suggest that sample size follows the concept of saturation (Morse, 1995). Saturation occurs when new data does not necessarily add any more insight to the phenomenon being explored (Morse, 1995). An individual can generate many ideas and many words; thus, large samples are not necessary to produce large amounts of data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). For this phenomenological study, participants would have all experienced the same phenomenon; therefore, a small sample of eight persons was appropriate. A small sample was also suitable as the primary data source was the interview. The interviews facilitated verbatim reports that captured rich depth of the essence of the participants' experience.

To locate and recruit participants, I sought the cooperation of a gatekeeper, Mrs. Jemmott who is the president of the Barbados Association of Guidance Counselors

(BAGC). The members of the BAGC are school counselors who may have had contact with adolescent mothers in the secondary schools in Barbados. A flyer was created about the research and emailed to the gatekeeper who in turn emailed it to the counselors requesting that they share the flyer to young women who met the criteria of the study (see Appendix E). An email from the president of the BAGC to the members accompanied the flyer and requested that their share the flyer with potential participants. The counselors emailed the flyer to potential participants to find out if they were interested in participating. Interested individuals contacted me, Kathy-Ann Bellamy via telephone number. The president of the BAGC assured me that sending emails to past clients was acceptable under professional practice guidelines in Barbados.

When the calls from the potential participants were received, the researcher sought to determine if they met the criteria to participate in the study (see Appendix C). Only those who volunteered to participate were included in the sample for interviews.

Measures for Ethical Protections

Before any research was conducted, I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The application process addressed ethical concerns and responsibilities stated in the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence and justice. Sharing personal experiences of parenting while aspiring to graduate from high school might have been sensitive for some participants. Therefore, I was mindful about asking potential emotionally provoking questions. I ensured the confidentiality of all participants was protected. Participants were also assured that identifying information would not be disclosed to anyone who was not directly involved in the research. A private room

located at the Lodge school was provided for interviewing. To ensure that their identities be kept anonymous, pseudonyms were used instead of real names. Before requesting a commitment to participate, the consent form and procedures of the study were explained to each potential participant (see Appendix A). I explained the nature and purpose of the research verbally to each participant. They were told about the procedures and risks involved. Participants were also informed that they could refuse to take part in the study or leave at any time without penalty, reprimand or questioning. When they consented, they were then asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix A).

All electronic data was stored on a flash drive and on a password-protected laptop. Typed and printed transcripts of recordings were also done as a backup to data recording. All physical raw data including audio recordings and printed transcripts were kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher. I informed each participant that all research documents would be destroyed seven years after the completion of this research. Maintaining these files for seven years will ensure that any questions derived from the study can be addressed by referring to the original data sources. Afterwards, software would be employed to completely clean all electronic data from the flash drive and laptop's hard drive to the point that data would not be retrieved. Non-electronic data such as printed transcripts was destroyed using cross-cut shredders.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary researcher who recruited, selected, and interviewed participants, entered transcripts into the Nvivo software, analyzed data, and disseminated the findings of the study. The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research (Patton,

2015). Thus, it was my duty to treat participants with dignity and respect during the interview process. I tried to establish rapport, show empathy and make participants feel comfortable to disclose their personal experiences.

Before the interviewing and throughout the research process, I set aside any preconceptions concerning the phenomena. Guided by Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenology, I bracketed my experiences. Tufford and Newman (2010) suggested that “...initial preconceptions arising from personal experience with the research material are surfaced prior to undertaking the research project” (p.7). As a professional who works with counseling adolescents who are at risk of dropping out of school, I brought personal bias to this study. I am passionate about helping adolescents who are likely to be expelled from school, to remain in school. To ensure that my personal and professional experience did not affect my research, I did not interview participants with whom I had prior personal or professional relationships. There were no potential conflicts of interest. Additionally, I maintained a personal reflective journal of my experiences throughout the data collection and analysis procedure. The process of my bracketing is further explained in the data collection procedures section that follows.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary data collection instrument was the face-to-face, one-on-one, semi-structured interview (see Appendix B). Situational notation was also used. That is, notes were taken during the interview of participant’s reactions such as laughter or tears. The phenomenological interview involved an informal and interactive session on the lived experiences of participants who engaged in the phenomenon to get an in-depth account of

their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The focus of the interview was to gain an understanding of the feelings and perceptions of young women who parented as adolescents regarding the support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others.

I used the following guide of transcendental phenomenology by Moustakas (1994) as a frame for data collection and analysis:

1. Identify a phenomenon,
2. Bracket one's experiences,
3. Collect data from several participants, who have experienced the phenomenon,
4. Analyze the information by reducing the data to significant statements or quotes and combining the statements into themes,
5. Afterward, the researcher develops a textural description of what participants' experienced, a structural description of how they experienced it and combines the textural and structural descriptions to suggest the overall essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

After I identified the phenomenon, I bracketed my experiences. Bracketing is the process of setting aside personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions that may adversely taint the research process. It is essential especially when there is an emotional relationship between the researcher and the research. For example, the researcher may

have experienced negative emotions about the phenomena under study in the past. This emotional connection may affect his or her interpretation of data and skew the findings of the study. Furthermore, bracketing allows the researcher to engage in deep reflection which enhances the validity of the research (Tufford & Newsman 2010).

Therefore, it was crucial that before conducting interviews and throughout the data collection and analysis process that I examined my preconceptions of the phenomena so as to avoid bias and personal prejudices (Moustakas, 1994). I did this by making entries of my experiences in a journal. This process is also referred to as *Epoche*, a Greek word translated to mean refrain from judgment (Moustakas, 1994).

Before the interview, informed consent was explained. After participants granted permission, each interviewee was given the same direction and asked the same questions. The interview consisted of two sections: 1) a demographic questionnaire and 2) semi-structured, open-ended questions (see Appendix B). In the first section, I elicited data such as name, age, and age of first pregnancy. The second section was constructed to help the researcher discover and identify themes and patterns from the shared lived experiences of young mothers. Questions in this section were guided by the literature on the subject. The semi-structured, open-ended nature of questioning was selected because the researcher wanted the participants to focus on information concerning their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of support for their educational goals by their friends and significant others.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were completed and transcribed, the data was reviewed. I had planned to use Nvivo software, a qualitative software package for qualitative analysis to import the interviews, audio recordings, and notes. The use of the software generates a record of all data which enhanced trustworthiness and makes data analysis less time-consuming. However, upon the completion of the transcriptions I devised a way to use MSWord for data analysis. This produced the requisite printed record of data analysis and NVivo was deemed unnecessary. Inductive analysis was applied to assess, review, and check data. Inductive analysis allowed me to extract common themes of the mothers' lived experiences.

According to the qualitative techniques suggested by Moustakes (1994), codes were created based on emerging patterns from the participants' experiences and things that stood out from the interviews. The significant statements were first reduced to themes. Coded themes were then used to compose a description of what participants experienced. Moustakas calls this textural description. After, I wrote a description of how participants experience the phenomenon. Moustakas calls this structural description. The textual and structural descriptions were then combined to develop a composite description of the essence of the participants experiences (Moustakes, 1994).

Validity and Trustworthiness

To prevent threats to internal validity the following validity strategies were used:

- Member checking- Copies of the participants' textural and structural descriptions were returned to them for feedback to determine whether they

felt that the descriptions were accurate. This ensured that accurate accounts of the participants' experiences were represented in the findings

- Clarify bias- I clarified any bias by maintaining a reflective journal throughout the data collection and analysis process. This is one component of my bracketing and is essential for the integrity of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). In the section on the role of the researcher, I explained bracketing in more detail.

Dissemination of Findings

I am the sole researcher responsible for the dissemination of the findings.

Participants who indicated an interest in the results of the study were given a two- page summary of the findings. Community stakeholders such as educational officers, guidance counsellors, teachers, and social workers may benefit from the results of this study. They can use the insight in their practice and future research on the topic. I condensed the findings into a two page summary and sent to them.

Summary

In this section, I presented an overview of research design and the specific methodology selected for this study. The phenomenological approach was explained and the rationale for its selection provided. Additionally, the research questions, the population and sample, measures for ethical protections, the role of the researcher, data collection and analysis procedures and validity and trustworthiness were described. In the next section, Chapter 4, I present the procedure used to collect, record, and analyze the data. The findings of the analysis are also presented. In Chapter 5, the findings are

interpreted and discussed along with implications for social change and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of Barbadian young mothers (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and who struggled to fulfill their high school aspirations, so that the reader may understand how this phenomenon was experienced. A transcendental phenomenological approach was employed to ascertain the essence of the experiences of support or lack of support for the teen mother's educational aspirations by their friends and significant others. Social constructionism was the conceptual framework that guided this study. This framework is concerned with multiple realities as constructed by individuals. Based on this framework, the following research questions were answered: (a) What are the lived experiences regarding the educational aspirations of Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school?; and (b) How do Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school perceive support or lack of support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others?

This chapter includes the results of the interviews conducted with eight young mothers who struggled to complete their secondary education. I explain the research setting, participants' demographics, data collection and management, data analysis, the major themes and subthemes that emerged during data analysis and evidence of trustworthiness.

The systematic procedure of the transcendental phenomenological approach by Moustakas (1994) guided this study. This approach framed data collection and analysis. The phenomenon was first identified and bracketing explained. The data was then collected from participants who experienced the phenomenon and analyzed by reducing to significant statements. Textural and structural descriptions were combined to suggest the overall essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This is explained in more detail in chapter 3.

Research Setting

Data were collected via face-to-face, semistructured interviews in a private room at the Lodge School. This location was chosen because it was easily accessible to the adolescent mothers, and the principal of the institution agreed to provide a safe and private environment for the interviews. Before each interview, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The contacts of counselors were provided in case they felt upset by the interviews (see Appendix A, Consent Form). To my knowledge, none of the participants felt upset as a result of the interviews, and no unexpected events arose that might have affected the interpretation of the data.

The opened-ended nature of the interviews allowed participants to share their experiences without constraint. Rapport between the participants and the researcher was good as most of them shared extensively about their experiences of support for their aspirations and of the challenges of balancing school work and care of the child. The young mothers felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

Participants Demographics

The following demographic characteristics outlined in Table 1 and 2 are necessary to understand the context of the individual participant's experiences with support for their educational aspirations. These findings also show the diversity of their experiences.

Participants in the study were purposely selected based upon the following criteria: (a) females aged 20 to 25 who became mothers in their teen years (12 to 19) while in secondary school, (b) had parenting responsibilities of the child, and (c) struggled to meet their academic aspirations while in formal high school. In Table 1 is a list of participants' demographic characteristics pertinent to their name, number of children, age at the time of the interview, and age at birth of first child. Table 1 also shows whether participants returned to formal secondary school or an alternate institution to fulfill their aspirations, and whether they experienced support from their friends or significant others. In Table 2 is an overview of the participants' educational aspirations before and after pregnancy, and their highest education level completed to date. The participants' names are pseudonyms.

The sample of eight participants had an average age of 20 years. The oldest participant was 25 years old and the youngest participant was 20 years old. All eight participants had given birth to one child. The average age at the birth of first child was 16 years. The majority of the participants (six out of eight) reported returning to their previous secondary school soon after the birth of their baby (see Table 1). Two of the participants enrolled in another institution to fulfill their secondary educational

aspirations. All eight participants reported assistance with child care and other support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others but at different levels and of varying types. One participant stated that she did not experience support from friends. Six participants stated that they received some level of support from their family for their educational aspirations. Two stated that they experienced lack of support by their family. All participants indicated some type of support by school personnel such as principals; teachers, and guidance counselors for their aspirations.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

Participant	Present Age	Number of children	Age at birth of first child	Returned to former school after the birth of the baby	Received assistance and support from friends	Received assistance and support from significant other
India	20	1	15	Yes	No	Yes
Kenya	21	1	17	No. Alternate institution	Yes	Yes
Sherry	20	1	18	Yes	Yes	Yes
Natasha	25	1	16	No. Alternate institution	Yes	Yes
Rene	20	1	17	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sandy	20	1	15	Yes	Yes	Yes
Francine	20	1	16	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sabrina	20	1	15	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2

Participants Demographics: Educational aspirations before and after pregnancy

Participant	Educational aspirations	
	Before pregnancy	After pregnancy
India	To graduate secondary school with CSECs qualifications. A soldier in the Barbados Defense Force.	Aspirations remained the same.
Kenya	To graduate secondary school with CSECs and CAPE qualifications. To be social worker.	Aspirations remained the same.
Sherry	To graduate secondary school with CSECs and CAPE qualifications. No specific aspirations. She wanted to be a teacher, then a hairdresser, then a nurse. Aspirations were constantly changing, was unsure about her aspirations.	A nurse. Long term aspiration: a surgeon. Currently desires to study nursing.
Natasha	To graduate secondary school with CSECs qualifications. An office job or a secretary.	To work in Management post.
Rene	To graduate secondary school with CSECs qualifications. To be a dentist.	Aspirations remained the same.
Sandy	No specific aspirations.	A lawyer
Sabrina	To graduate secondary school with CSECs qualifications. To be a chef	Aspirations remained the same.
Francine	To graduate secondary school with CSECs and CAPE qualifications. To be a chef or have own business	Aspirations remained the same.

Notes: CSEC = Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate; CAPE = Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations.

Table 3

Participants Demographics: Highest Educational Level Completed

Participant	Highest Educational level completed
India	No CSECs
Kenya	Four CSECs: Mathematics, English, Social studies and Human and Social Biology.
Sherry	Five CSECs: Mathematics, English Language, Human and Social biology, History and Social Studies. Four CAPE (unit 1) certificates: Sociology, Management of Business, Caribbean Studies, and Literatures of English.
Natasha	Five CSECs: Mathematics, English, Principles of Business, Typewriting, and Accounts One CAPE certificate: Accounts
Rene	Five CSECs: Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Principles of Business, Integrate Science, and Food and Nutrition
Sandy	Three CAPE certificates: Sociology, Literatures of English , and Caribbean Studies
Sabrina	One CSEC: Food and Nutrition
Francine	4 CSECs: English, Food and Nutrition, English Literature, Clothing and Textiles

Notes: CSEC = Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate; CAPE = Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations.

Data Collection and Management

Bracketing

According to Moustakas' (1994) model of transcendental phenomenology, the first step of the research process is to identify the phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is the human experience of support or lack of support for one's educational aspirations while trying to complete high school as a teen mother. The second step in Moustakas's model directs that the researcher brackets his or her experiences. Therefore, before collecting any data, I started the process of bracketing of my experiences. Bracketing as explained in chapter 3 is the process of setting aside personal experiences and biases that may adversely impact the research process. This was vital as my personal presumptions might have affected my interpretation of data and skewed the results of the study. Furthermore, bracketing allowed me to engage in deep reflection which enhanced the acuity of the research (Tufford & Newsman 2010).

Throughout the data collection and analysis, I kept a reflective journal in which I recorded the participants' names, pseudonyms, dates, times, and duration of the interviews. After each interview, I noted the setting, my observations, and my feelings about the session. This journal was kept in a locked cabinet in my home office.

Data Collection

Moustakas' third step instructs the researcher to collect data from participants who experienced the phenomenon. After the IRB at Walden University granted approval to conduct research on the 23rd August, 2016 (approval number is 08-23-16-0454910), I conducted eight semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (see Appendix C) over a period

of nine days (between 24th August and 2nd of September, 2016). The interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes determined by how much participants chose to share.

After receiving the call from the potential participants, I briefly described the study to ascertain if they would be interested in participating in the research and if they met the criteria for inclusion (see Appendix D, phone script). Of the 12 who contacted me only eight met the criteria to participate. I met the eight who agreed to participate at the Lodge school for the interviews. Before requesting a commitment to participate, the consent form and procedures of the study were explained to each participant (see Appendix A). I explained the nature and purpose of the study to each participant. They were informed of the procedures and risks involved. Participants were told that they could refuse to participate in the research or leave at any time without penalty, reprimand, or questioning. When they consented, they were asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix A).

The interviews were audio recorded and manually transcribed by the researcher. After that I saved copies on to a flash drive and on my password-protected personal computer. Copies of the participants' textural and structural descriptions were returned to them for feedback to determine whether they felt that the descriptions were accurate.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process utilized for this study also followed the transcendental phenomenology methodology developed by Moustakas (1994). According to this methodology, the next step after data collection was the process of horizontalization. Significant statements from the database were highlighted (see Appendix H). These

statements are verbatim reports of the young mothers' experiences of support. From the significant statements, codes were created based on similar responses from the participant's experiences and from responses that stand out from the interview. Based on these codes, themes were identified. Creswell (2013) identified themes as "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (p. 186). Statements that were irrelevant to the research questions were not included. I carefully assessed each of the statements before I clustered them into core themes of experiences. Some discrepant data emerged where only one participant reported a specific experience. These two instances were singled out and noted in the section discrepant data under the theme: support by friends. The use of Nvivo software was omitted from the initial data analysis plan because after data collection, I found that the software was no longer necessary.

Themes Identified

The themes identified present the textural description of what the participants experienced. Though each young mother's experience was unique, seven themes were identified: a challenge coping with the demands of motherhood, determination, their children motivated them to accomplish their educational aspirations, support by friends, varied support by significant other, support by family, and lots of support by school personnel. The following is a list of the themes and subthemes that emerged from the significant statements.

Themes and subthemes

1. A challenge coping with the demands of motherhood

- Fatigue
 - Stigma
 - Initial feelings of hopelessness
2. Determination
- Determination to achieve educational aspirations
 - Determination to increase employment and career possibilities
 - Determination to achieve educational aspirations and increase employment and career possibilities
3. Children motivated them to accomplish their educational aspirations
- They envisioned a better future for their child
 - They wanted their child to be proud of them
4. Support by friends
- Few friends
 - Friends changed after becoming a mother
 - School-related support
 - Emotional support
5. Varied support by significant other
- Lack of support
 - Neither encouraged nor discouraged
 - Limited support
 - Initial support
 - Material support

- Lots of support

6. Support by family

- Lack of support by family
- Support by family

7 Support by school personnel

- Emotional support
- Social support

Theme 1: A Challenge Coping With the Demands of Motherhood and School

A challenge coping with the demands of motherhood and school work was the primary theme that emerged regarding how participants experienced support for their educational aspirations. All of the participants reported that they encountered challenges in their quest to fulfill their educational aspirations. They struggled with fatigue, stigma, and feelings of hopelessness.

Subtheme: Fatigue. Participants reported consistently that balancing the responsibilities of motherhood such as child care and the expectations of school such as completing assignments on time was a major struggle that resulted in exhaustion. Seven of the eight participants (India, Sherry, Natasha, Sandy, Francine, Rene, and Sabrina) stated that taking care of the infant while attending school derailed the accomplishment of their educational goals in the time they expected. For example, India stated that, “On mornings, before I left for school I had a lot to do. I had to make the baby’s tea, press, and pack his school clothes...” She also said that the evenings after school she would be tired but would still try to do homework. She explained, “On evenings, I had to go for the

baby and my school bag would be heavy and his bags were heavy too. Some evenings he would refuse to sleep.” Sherry reported that having to take care of her little boy while trying to complete assignments was very difficult, she was often exhausted and wanted to give up on her aspirations to finish secondary school. She reported:

Aiden was sick from cutting teeth, and you know, he would be really clingy. I would be extremely tired and then I would have to wake up at six to go to school. It was really getting to me so I didn't want anything to do with it no more. I was prepared to drop out.

Francine also reported that she struggled to keep up: She said, “It was hard, I could not even keep up with the school work because Christian is my priority and so that work was the last thing on my mind.” Rene reported:

I was tired coming up to examination time. Some nights I did not go to sleep. I was up revising and as soon as I put down my head, I had to get up, go to school. I tried not to sleep in the exam room, but it was hard.

Rene delayed further study so she could focus on her daughter. She explained that she plans to enrol later in an online program in dentistry. She stated:

As it is an online program, I would not have to take her to the nursery. I can work at night. Right now she is still breast feeding so I have to get that off first before I can do anything computer wise. After, I will be able to do the classes online.

Sandy experienced similar challenges. She said:

When I came home on evenings and she is calling for me that would make it kind of hard. I would have to wait until she goes to sleep to wake up about 2:00 in the morning to study.

Natasha did not complete formal secondary school. She attended an evening institution to complete her secondary level certificates while she worked. She experienced a struggle coping with school, work, and child care. She stated:

I went straight to school after work. Most of the time, I reached home after 9:00 p.m. and then had to feed him, check his homework, and prepare for the next day. At times, getting time from work to attend classes was a challenge as well.

Most of participants felt overwhelmed and fatigued trying to balance motherhood and being a student.

Subtheme: Stigma. Another finding related to the challenges experienced by the young mothers was social stigma from their peers. Four participants (Rene, Sandy, Sherry, and Sabrina) reported that they experienced stigma from other students. Rene stated that some of the students would look at her and ask, “she pregnant and at school?” Similarly, Sandy felt embarrassed by negative statements made by other students. She said:

Well, when I first became pregnant people at school were saying a lot of bad things about me. It started to play on my mind to the point where I did not want to see my daughter. I would go home and say “you’re the reason everybody is saying stuff about me.” I would not say it to her but that is what I would be thinking. And then I realize I had to grow past that.

Sherry also shared that she felt ashamed to be at school and pregnant. She reported, “the only problem I had was the staring. People would stare and ask “Wait, she pregnant” and I would say, “Yes, so what happen?” She reported:

When I was pregnant, I could not wear my school uniform because it was too small. I had to wear my own clothes and obviously you could see my little tummy there. Everyone would be staring at me so I would always be in the Home Economics room sitting down.

Likewise, Sabrina reported: “I was excused from going to general assembly because the other children would stare at me, most of the time, I stayed in one place.” Although these four women felt judged and shamed by their peers, they were not made to feel the same way by teachers or other school personnel.

Subtheme: Initial feeling of hopelessness. Three participants (Sherry, Francine, and Sabrina) indicated that they felt initial hopelessness regarding their aspirations and that they wanted to give up. For example, Sherry stated: “It was really getting to me so I didn’t want anything to do with it no more. I was prepared to drop out.” Francine stated: Sometimes, I would ask the teacher for help and they would help but still I could not really meet the deadlines. When it comes to school I will try, but often I would just give up and say forget about that. Sherry reported: “I was prepared to drop out. Then my head teacher, Mr. Dash, called me into the office a time.” Similarly, Sabrina shared. “I did not see the sense of continuing school.”

Participants experienced various challenges that included: fatigue coping with being a mother and a student, stigmatization by peers and feelings of hopelessness.

Theme 2: Determination

Initially, some participants (Sherry, Francine, and Sabrina) felt overwhelmed with the challenges and desired to give up. However, over time, they were determined to succeed at accomplishing their aspirations. Seven participants (Sherry, Rene, Natasha, India, Sandy, Kenya, and Francine) reported that they were resolute to achieve their educational aspirations and increase their employment and career possibilities.

Subtheme: Determination to achieve educational aspirations. Sherry and Rene stated that they were determined to achieve their educational aspirations. Sherry was determined despite stigmatization from her peers to pass her examinations and complete her secondary education. She stated:

Then one day, I say to myself, “you know what Sherry? It happened and it ain’t really making no sense you being in a little shell, like, it happen. Don’t be afraid...” So, I started walking around the school, going for stuff myself instead of sending out people for stuff for me and things just changed from then. I made up my mind then I wanted to pass my examinations.

Rene stated, “I never felt like giving up when it came to the studying part.”

Subtheme: Determination to increase their employment and career possibilities. Three participants (Kenya, Natasha, and Rene) reported that they were resolute to enhance their employment and career possibilities. Kenya explained that she always aspired to be a social worker but after becoming a mother she was even more determined to reach her goal. She stated “Because, before I wanted these things, but now I want these things even more now that I have my daughter.”

Natasha stated:

I realized that I had opportunities to take me higher, to increase my pay to better support my son and myself and not allow him to be like me who grew up without parents. Therefore, I stretched my goals beyond a secretary and looked towards a Management post instead.

Rene stated, "I trying to find a job save some money to do the dentist course before the little girl get too old." She also had a plan to enhance her career possibilities.

She explained:

One of my teachers is trying to get me to work in the government polyclinic as a dental assistant, but they would not take me unless I am trained. So, I will have to work with a dentist get the training for six months then apply.

Subtheme: Determination to achieve educational aspirations and increase their employment possibilities. Four participants (Sherry, India, Sandy, and Francine) were determined to achieve both educational and career goals. For example, Sherry reported:

My goal now is to be a surgeon, but for right now I would like to study nursing. The only science subject I did is Human and Social Biology. If I am accepted to the Barbados Community College's nursing program, I will get to do Chemistry. ...I don't want nothing lower than a grade 1 because to be a doctor you have to have grade ones.

India did not gain any Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) passes while in secondary school; however, she was determined to succeed. She stated, “I will pay at a private institution to do the studies and examinations. After I achieve the CSEC certificates, I will then apply to join the force.”

Sandy reported, “... I want to go to University definitely not in Barbados because I want to become a lawyer.” Francine stated:

I wanted to go to Pom-Marie (Hotel School) to be a chef and to have my own business, like a bakery and a spa. But right now, I am looking for work, after that I am going back to school.

Most participants were determined to accomplish their educational and career goals.

Theme 3: Children motivated them to accomplish their aspirations

The participants’ determination to achieve was driven by their children. Five participants (Kenya, Natasha, Sandy, Sabrina, and Sherry) stated that having their child enhanced their motivation to keep on working to reach their educational aspirations. The participants envisioned a better life for their child and they wanted their child to be proud of them.

Subtheme: They envisioned a better future for their child. Three participants (Kenya, Natasha, and Sandy) persevered despite the challenges faced to complete their secondary education because they wanted a better future for their offspring. Kenya explained how having her child enhanced her motivation:

I wanted to be social worker before becoming pregnant and I still want to be a social worker. Having my daughter pushed me so much harder. I feel motivated.

Before, I wanted these things, but now I want these things even more now that I have my daughter.

Likewise, Natasha was unsure about her aspirations before having her son but after her son was born she was inspired to continue her secondary studies at another institution. She explained:

To increase my pay to better support my son and myself and not allow him to be like me who grew up without parents. I stretched my goals beyond a secretary and looked towards a management post instead.

Sandy also wanted to give up on her goals but observing her daughter motivated her to keep trying. She reported:

My daughter also kept me going, because she is really smart. Every time I think about giving up she reminds me that there is more and that I need to push on to get my certificates.

Subtheme: They wanted their child to be proud of them. Two participants (Sabrina and Sherry) were motivated because they wanted their children to be proud of them. Sabrina reported:

My mother was also a teen mother. I don't want to be like her though. I want my daughter to say good things about me. I want her to know that even though I was pregnant in school I still tried.

Sherry was unsure about her aspirations before becoming a mother; she stated that her goals were constantly changing. However, after her child she resolved that she had to

succeed in her CSEC examinations, enrolled in a tertiary institution to pursue studies in nursing so that her son would be proud of her and her perseverance. She reported:

I realized that it was not just me anymore. It was me plus one. My baby going to be looking up to me because how I was looking at it, I want him to say “yea, my mummy got pregnant when she was going to school but she didn’t stop. She pushed and pushed to get back her O levels, and then she went on to Barbados Community College to do nursing. She had some kind of academic qualifications. She made sure she finished, she is working, she is the head of this. She is in charge of this.”

Their offspring inspired these young mothers to achieve their academic goals. Becoming a mother gave them a different perspective about life and the future. They desired a better life for their offspring and wanted them to be proud of them.

Theme 4: Support by friends

The findings relating to support by friends revealed that four of participants (Kenya, Rene, Natasha and Sabrina) had few friends. While two (Sandy and Natasha) experienced a change of friends after they became mothers. India said that her friends did not support her aspirations (This is discussed under the discrepant data heading). Moreover, they experienced school related, emotional, and child care related support by friends for their educational aspirations.

Subtheme: Few friends. Four participants (Kenya, Rene, Natasha and Sabrina) reported that they had few friends who supported them. When asked about support by her friends, Kenya stated:

I did not really have any relationships with friends before I became pregnant.

There was one girl before I became pregnant she was cool with me. After, I became pregnant she was still cool with me

Kenya explained that her girl friend allowed her to stay with her when she was pregnant and she would call often to find out how she was doing.

Rene explained:

I would talk to one girl all the time. We were close before the pregnancy and we still close now. When I use to go work as a dentist assistant, she would come and keep the little girl and I would give her a little something because she wasn't working. Now things slow. Any little thing she can give the baby now, she gives.

I am out of work now.

Natasha said. "One school friend in particular was there with me while I was pregnant and after the baby was born." Sabrina also stated that she experienced support primarily from one friend. She reported: "My best friend, who is also my daughter's god mother, encouraged me to come to school and focus on my work." While India stated that she did not receive any support from friends.

Subtheme: Friends changed after becoming a mother. Two participants (Sandy and Natasha) stated that their circle of friends changed after becoming a mother.

Sandy explained:

My friends I had before I became a mother changed. As maturity kicked in, those friends were no more. My current friends want to pass all their examinations.

They encouraged me to grow as an individual. My friends want to go to school

and graduate from school. My best friend, she just wants to go to the university and save the world. So I am encouraged by the more mature girls because they want something in life.

Natasha reported:

... when I got pregnant, those same persons who were really not close but were in higher classes and whom I thought were cool to be with, were not around, I made up my mind that I will not follow bad company or long to be with friends anymore.

Subtheme: School-related support. Three participants (Francine, Sherry, and Sabrina) received school-related support from friends. For example, Francine said:

If I asked for help I would get it, it wasn't a problem. Anybody in my class. If I did not understand something and I wanted someone to explain it, they would. I would get in a group and do the assignments and stuff. There is one girl in my class who live out by me and if I missed anything in the class she would tell me, she would call and explain the work to me.

Similarly, Sherry explained that her friends supported her by providing the school work that she had missed. She reported, "I did not come back at the start of the term. When I did, they give me work that I missed." Sabrina also experienced assistance with school work. She reported:

When I was pregnant I would be sick. I missed a lot of classes. Andrea would call me and tell me about what went on in class, the work that was done. At school,

she helped me with notes and stuff. She shared her items for Food and Nutrition practical with me...

Subtheme: Emotional support. In addition to assistance with school assignments, Sherry and Sabrina experienced emotional support from their friends. Sabrina reported, “My best friend, who is also my daughter’s god mother, encouraged me to come to school and focus on my work.” Likewise, Sherry stated:

They would help me if I had problems at home; for example, when I get stressed out with the baby. One time I would be so happy then another time I would be like don’t touch me, don’t come around me. That was a problem to me. I would be miserable. That did not matter to them. My friends were there all the time. Always up in my business and giving me encouragement to push on.

Participants reported that they had few but committed friends and that their friends changed after they became mothers. They experienced school-related, emotional support and help with childcare from their friends. These supports encouraged them to strive to achieve their educational aspirations.

Discrepant findings. India was the only participant who reported that she experienced lack of support from her friends for her aspirations. Rene was the only participant who reported assistance with child care from friends. She stated, “When I use to go work as a dentist assistant, she would come and keep the little girl...”

Theme 5: Varied support by significant other

The participants reported varied levels and different types of support for their educational aspirations by their significant others. Five participants (Francine, Sabrina

Kenya, Sherry, and Sandy) received no support for their educational aspirations by the father of their children. The father of India's child did not want her to return to school; however, he provided material and financial support for the child. Natasha and Rene received initial support by the father of their children. On the other hand, Sherry and Sandy received lots of support both emotional and material from their boyfriends but not from the father of their children.

Subtheme: Lack of support. Five participants (Francine, Sabrina Kenya, Sherry and Sandy) experienced lack of support for their educational aspirations by their significant other. Francine stated, "He does not support the child at all. He does not encourage me." Likewise, Sabrina reported that the father of her child does not support her in any way. She explained, "He left the island for Grenada when I was pregnant. Tried to find him, but like he disappeared." Sherry and Sandy also reported that the father of their children do not support them in any way.

Sub-subtheme: Neither encouraged nor discouraged. Kenya stated that her daughter's father neither encouraged nor discouraged her from pushing on towards her academic goals. She reported:

He did not really care either way. He did not tell me not to go to school. He just did not care. If I went, I went, if I did not go, I did not go. However, he did not discourage me.

Sherry reported that the father of the child neither helped nor supported her. However, her significant other encouraged her. She reported, "the father never helped, I never asked him to help. My boyfriend helps with everything."

Subtheme: Limited support. Three participants (Natasha, Rene and India) reported that they experienced limited support for their aspirations by the father of their children. Natasha and Rene experienced support for some time after the baby was born. India received assistance with the baby but was discouraged from pursuing her secondary educational goals. Although India's boyfriend and father of her child assisted by providing for the physical needs of the baby, he did not support her returning to school to achieve her CSEC qualification. She reported, "After I became pregnant, I did not want to go back to school. My mother told me to go back. The father of my baby questioned why I was returning."

Sub-subtheme: Initial support. Natasha said that her son's father supported her before and during the pregnancy and seven months after the baby was born. She stated that "After our baby was born, he would keep the baby and then come to collect me from classes." However, the relation broke up when she found he was unfaithful. Natasha said it was then she determined to get back on track to achieve her goals.

Similarly, Rene reported initial support by the father of her child. She said that before the birth of the child he was very supportive about her continuing her education.

Before the pregnancy he was supportive. He did not really want me to go to school because I had to put on the belt and the children in the bus stand and thing. He was concerned with me being hit or hurt while the other children were running around and thing. Like now we always arguing and got problems. Things are not like before, but we still talk. He does not really help and doesn't seem to care about my education

Sub-subtheme: Material support . India indicated that the father of the child provided little emotional support for her educational aspirations; however, he provided material and financial assistance with the baby and this allowed her to focus more on her academic aspirations. India shared that the father of her child, “would bring things like pampers and milk for the baby. He would pay the nursery fees.”

Subtheme: Lots of support. Two participants, (Sherry and Sandy) experienced lots of support for their education aspirations by their significant other. However, they experienced lack of support by the father of their children. Sherry explained that her boyfriend currently helps with everything she needs to make reaching her academic goals possible. She stated:

My boyfriend now, he supports everything, every aspect of my life. He gives me a lot of advice and encouragement... When I was pregnant we were not together, he was still there throughout the entire pregnancy. He did not want me to stop 6th form. As I said, at a point in time I just got tired of it. He pushed me to continue.

Sandy explained that she had no relationship with the father of her child.

However, her boyfriend often encouraged her when she felt overwhelmed with school work. She stated:

He tells me that I can do it, I can do better. Sometimes I would just get up and night and cry and the only number I call is his. He listens to me crying and tells me it is okay. He says lets pray about it. He is there for me.

The participants reported different levels of support by their significant other and father of their child for their aspirations. They experienced no, limited, or a lot of support.

Where there was support it came in the form of encouragement to push on, assistance with childcare, and material and financial provision for the child.

Theme 6: Varied support by family

With the exception of two participants (Kenya and Natasha) all others (India, Francine, Sabrina, Rene, Sherry, and Sandy) experienced supportive family members who encouraged them, assisted with child care, and provided material and finance necessary for them to participate in and remain in school.

Subtheme: Lack of support by family. Kenya and Natasha indicated that they did not receive any support from their families. Kenya lived in a shelter and did not have a supportive family network. She stated: “I did not have any support from my family. I lived in a shelter at the time. My mother was not supportive at all.” Natasha also stated that her parents were not supportive. She said, “The fact that my parents were not there and I did not want to repeat that cycle.”

Subtheme: Support by family. Six participants (India, Francine, Sabrina, Rene, Sherry, and Sandy) experienced different types of support by family members. They received either emotional, childcare related, material and financial support or a combination of all.

Sub-subtheme: Emotional support. Rene’s mother passed away and her father lives in Canada. She said, “He encourages me to remain focus. He told me I can come to Canada and do the dentist course there.”

Sub-subtheme: Childcare related support. Sandy’s adopted parents helped her to fulfill her aspirations by helping with the baby. She reported, “I also had the help of my

adopted parents who would hold her until I finished my work, then bring her back to me.”

Rene also got assistance with child care from her older siblings who she lives with. She stated, “Sis assists me with baby. Sometimes she bathes and dresses the little girl, I really appreciate her.” Likewise, Sabrina said, “My mother encouraged me to continue my studies. She said “you go back to school and I will help you with the baby.”

Sub-subtheme: Material support. Sherry experienced material support from her grandmother. She stated:

My grandmother especially helped. She went out of her way to get me the things I needed for school like school bags and clothes. Everything I need to go back to 6th form. If not for her I was not going back, I was going to look for a job.

India reported, “My mother told me to go back. She said she would help me with school supplies and money to get to school.” Similarly, Francine also reported, “My family supports me.”

Theme 7: Lots of support by school personnel

Although the participants experienced varying levels of support by their friends, significant others and families, all of them (India, Francine, Natasha, Rene, Sabrina, Kenya, Sherry and Sandy) experienced a lot of support from school personnel. They received both emotional and social support from teachers, guidance counselors, and principals.

Subtheme: Emotional support. Six participants (India, Kenya, Sherry, Rene, Sandy and Sabrina) experienced emotional support from school personnel. Emotional

support came in the form of words of encouragement. For example, Kenya stated:

The guidance counselor, Mrs. Arthur, really helped me through some difficult times. Mrs. Arthur was always there for me, telling me that I can succeed. I think it is because of her that I want to be a social worker. Even though I was pregnant and should have been at home, the school, the principal allowed me to continue...

India stated, "The principal, Mr. Browne, would encourage me to get to school early. He would help me to do any test that I had missed. He encouraged me to try to get a skill." Likewise, Sherry experienced warm and up-lifting words from her teachers. She reported, "Teachers would come to me and say that they happy to see me out, to see me still at school."

Rene experienced empathy from her teachers. She reported:

They just help me with things I didn't know and things I didn't understand at that time...so that I would not have to stress out about it. They (teachers) did not give me any pressure.

Sandy stated, "My teachers were there for me all the time." Similarly, Sabrina reported, "My year head told me, it happened already. You are not the first nor will you be the last to get pregnant in school. The important thing is to focus on getting your CSECs."

Demonstrations of warmth and empathy, openness to assist, and words of encouragement helped the young women to cope with the challenges of parenting and attending school.

Subtheme: Social support. In addition to emotional support teachers also

provided social support such as opportunities for further study and jobs, the provision of items, and assistance with school assignments. Five participants (Rene, Sandy, Sherry, Sabrina, Natasha, and Francine) experienced social support. Rene reported:

One of my teachers is trying to get me to work in the government polyclinic as a dental assistant...One of my teachers told me about a course of training online and that they will help pay. But I am not ready yet. I would like to start it later.

Francine reported: “When I went back to school, cause I went back late, my form teacher kept all my assignments for me.”

Likewise, Sabrina explained that the guidance counselor and teachers helped her during and after her pregnancy. During her pregnancy she stated.

One teacher took me to the supermarket, she said you can't be eating junk, you have to eat healthy foods like green leafy vegetables for you and the baby to be strong, you have to feed your brain you know. After the baby was born, my teachers encouraged me to return to school. One teacher tried to help me get the baby in a government nursery so that I could come to class.

Sabrina also explained that, “for the summer holidays the guidance counselor got me an internship at the probation department”

Sherry did not submit her course work necessary to gain her CAPE certificates and was reported to the principal. She experienced a reprimand and assistance with the assignments by the principal. She said:

I was prepared to drop out. Then my head teacher, Mr. Dash, called me in the office a time. This man quarreled with me for over a whole hour. I brought in (submitted) all my course work the next day, every one! The parts I could not get done, he sat with me and told me to write in something. Even though it wasn't much, I may still earn a little one or two marks he told me. He told me to make sure I get all my information in. Francine reported, "When I went back to school, cause I went back late, my form teacher kept all my assignments for me." Natasha said,

After I had my little boy, I did not go back to the school. Mrs. Holder arranged for me to attend the Barbados O- level Institution. She paid for my classes and got sponsorship to help me with items for school and things for the baby.

All participants stated that they experienced some type of support by school personnel. They experienced encouragement to remain in school and continue their education. They were granted opportunities to be self-sufficient such as sponsorship for further study or job opportunities. They also experienced extra assistance with school assignments, and guidance to strive to succeed.

Composite Description

The last step in Moustakas' (1994) data analysis process is to combine the individual textural and structural analyses to describe the "essence" of the phenomenon. Based on the themes uncovered from the individual participants' interviews, the following composite description was developed. It provides an overall understanding of

the human experience of being an adolescent mother trying to complete high school and of the perception of support by friends and significant others. It explains what they experienced (textural description) and how they experienced it (structural description).

The women in this study became mothers in their teen years and struggled to complete secondary school and to fulfill their high school aspirations while being the primary care giver of their child. They experienced a challenge coping with the demands of motherhood and of school. They struggled to cater to the needs of their child, attend school, and to complete assignments necessary to earn their CSEC and CAPE qualifications. These participants felt exhausted trying to balance the duties of parenting such as taking the child to daycare, feeding, comforting the child when sick and meeting the requirements for earning CSEC and CAPE passes such as study and completion of course work task. They also struggled with being judged by their peers. Some of them felt ashamed and tried to isolate themselves. The lack of support by the father of the child may have aggravated their stressful life situation. All these challenges seem to have lead to initial feelings of hopelessness as some of them indicated that they were prepared (at first) to give up on their aspirations of earning their qualifications.

Despite the challenges, over time, the young women were determined to achieve their aspirations and to increase their employment and career possibilities. Becoming mothers gave them a different perspective on life. They were motivated by their children to strive even more to accomplish their educational goals because they envisioned a better life for their family and they wanted their child to be proud of them.

The young women experienced various types of support by their friends. Four of them had few friends and three changed their circle of friends after becoming mothers. Only one mother indicated that she did not experience support by her friends. Their friends made available school assignments the mothers may have missed, explained things that they misunderstood, kept the baby, and provided material and emotional support. In addition, their peers' words of encouragement 'to push on' and remain 'focused' seem also to help them deal with the challenges of teen parenting.

The young mothers experienced varied support by their significant others. Some experienced no support, others little support while others a lot of support. Six of them did not feel that their quest to achieve their educational aspirations was supported by the father of their child. However, two of the mothers felt that their significant others, their boyfriends, provided a lot of support for their aspirations. Two other mothers indicated that they received initial support for their aspirations but that when the relationship was broken so was the support. One mother thought that she did not receive support for her education aspirations even though she received material and financial help with the child. Regardless to the level of support the young mothers received by their significant others, they all appeared determined to accomplish their goals.

On the other hand, most of the mothers (six) experienced support by family members. Two did not experienced support by their families. A grandmother, mothers, adopted parents and siblings provided emotional, child care related and material and financial support for the young mothers' educational aspirations. Holding the baby while the mother studied, providing items such as school bags and clothing, and assuring words

that they would continue to help if the mothers continued to work towards fulfilling their goals seem to be the impetus that gave the mothers hope and kept them on the path to achieving success.

Although the participants experienced varying levels of support from friends, significant others and the family they all experienced lots of support from school personnel. All of the women interviewed shared that they experienced either emotional or social support from personnel at their secondary school. Their principals provided reprimand when students failed to attend school or to complete assignments. One young mother reported that her principal after he “quarreled with” her sat with her and helped her to complete course work assignment, a necessary component of CAPE examination. Several mothers stated that their teachers empathized with their situation and tried to ease their stress. Teachers sought to make achieving less challenging. They made available school work the mothers had missed. They offered additional assistance with tuition when mothers struggled to keep up. They also went beyond their call of duty to facilitate additional training and educational opportunities, to provide healthy foods for the mothers and daycare services for children. Guidance counselors offered similar social support. Moreover, they experienced encouragement to remain in school and continue their education.

The “essence” of the young mothers’ experience of trying to fulfill their aspirations is that they faced challenges coping with being a mother and being a student simultaneously. They experienced little support by the father of their child. Nevertheless, they were determined to succeed and inspired by their offspring. The support by friends,

the family and school personnel helped them to cope with their challenges and may have compensated for the lack of support by the fathers of the children.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, measures of ethical protection were adhered to throughout the research process. These included: maintaining confidentiality, disclosure of the nature and purpose of the study, and informing participants of the benefits and risks of participation and of their rights.

Additionally, member checking and clarifying bias (using reflective journaling) procedures as described in Chapter 3 were employed during data collection and analysis to ensure the results of this study demonstrated high evidence of trustworthiness. Member checking is a research process where the researcher asks the participants to read the final results and provide feedback to ensure that final report is accurate or that it represents the participant's view point as closely as possible (Creswell, 2013). The participants' textural structural descriptions were presented to them to determine whether they accurately reflected the participant's experiences.

Finally, I clarified and exposed my personal bias by recording my thoughts and emotions throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Reflexive journaling involves keeping a record of one's personal thoughts and reflections while conducting research to remove researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2013) this self-reflection allows the reader to understand how the researcher's interpretation of the findings might be shaped by their background.

During data collection and analysis, when I recalled my personal thoughts and experiences of counseling adolescents who may have experienced similar circumstances I stopped, reflected and noted the idea then set it aside. After this I was able to better listen to participants share their experiences.

As a researcher, my biases include perceptions and assumptions gained from my professional experience of working with adolescents at risk to deviance and dropping out of school. As a teacher and counselor, I interact with young girls and young women who meet the criteria of the participants. My work with this population has caused me to develop a passion for helping teenage mothers to reach their potential whether in or out of school. I empathize with their tumultuous experiences of trying to cope with balancing their education and child care. My efforts at maintaining ethical boundaries, member checking and clarifying my bias were to minimize bias so as to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results and analysis from the semi-structured interviews of eight young women who parented as teenagers while trying to complete high school. The themes and subthemes identified represent the textural and structural descriptions. Also included is a composite description of the “essence” of their experiences. Chapter 5 will provide an interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for social change and the conclusion.

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present an interpretation of the findings of Chapter 4, comparing them with what has been found in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. The limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for social change and the conclusion will also be included.

I set out (a) to explore the lived experiences of Barbadian young mothers (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and who struggled to fulfill their high school aspirations, and (b) to discover how they perceived support or lack of support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others so that the reader may understand how this phenomenon was experienced. The goal was that in ascertaining the “essence” of the participants’ experiences, results would provide insight that educational practitioners and policy makers might employ to reduce the dropout rate of teen mothers and to enhance educational supports and resources needed to help them achieve their educational and career aspirations. The following research questions guided this study: What are the lived experiences regarding the educational aspirations of Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school? and How do Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and struggled to graduate from formal secondary school perceive support or lack of support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others? The findings of this phenomenological study produced an in-depth description of the participants’ experiences of parenting as teen mothers while aspiring to achieve their

secondary academic goals. The research revealed that participants faced challenges balancing being a mother and a student; they were determined to achieve and their children motivated them to strive to accomplish. They experienced varied support for their educational aspirations by their friends and families. On the other hand, they experienced little support by the fathers of their children and lots of support from school personnel.

Interpretation of the Findings

The following discussion is an interpretation of the results based on the themes. The results are compared with findings from the literature discussed in chapter 2.

Theme 1: A Challenges Coping with the Demands of Motherhood School

The young women who were teen mothers all shared that they encountered challenges coping with motherhood and being a student. They were often overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted trying to fulfill their maternal duties as well as their school responsibilities. Taking the baby to and from daycare, dressing the infant, breast feeding, comforting the child when he or she was sick; whilst attending school and trying to meet school assignments deadlines lead to fatigue for many of them. Participants shared that they were often late or absent because they had to take care of the baby. “Extremely tired,” “hard,” and “a challenge” are some of the words the mothers used to express their struggle.

Other associated challenges experienced included stigmatization by their peers and feelings of hopelessness. At school, some of them felt judged for being a teenage mother. They experienced embarrassment and wanted to isolate themselves from the

“staring” and derogatory comments made by their classmates. One participant profoundly affected by the stigma stated, “It started to play on my mind to the point where I did not want to see my daughter” (Sandy). Fortunately, she and others who felt stigmatized overcame the feeling of shame and pushed on to achieve their aspirations. Fatigue and stigma seem to have contributed to the initial feelings of hopelessness. Some expressions of the young mothers were: “I was prepared to drop out” (Sherry), “often I would just give up...” (Francine) and “I did not see the sense of continuing...” (Sabrina).

The mothers’ experiences of fatigue trying to balance the responsibilities of motherhood such as child care and the expectations of school such as completing assignments on time have been confirmed by the peer reviewed literature. Kane et al., (2013) and Stroble (2013) also found that teenage mothers are more likely to have their secondary education derailed as being a student while caring for a child can be demanding on the time and energy necessary to study and attend school. Smith-Battle (2007) found that though adolescent mothers expressed a greater interest in further education, they stated that challenges such as competing work demands, parenting responsibilities, and lack of support often hindered their aspirations for educational accomplishment.

The finding that teen mothers experienced stigma is partially supported by the literature. Smith-Battle (2007) suggested that teen mothers experienced being judged by teachers and peers. However, most of the participants in this study spoke of stigma solely from their peers. None of them reported stigma from their teachers and other school personnel. In contrast, most of them stated that their teachers were empathic to their

circumstances and offered moral support. One participant stated “My year head told me, it happened already. You are not the first nor will you be the last to get pregnant in school” (Sabrina).

Erikson’s theory of the psychosocial development of adolescents reinforces the finding that being a mother while attending school can be overwhelming. Erikson posited that during adolescence, the individual grapples with several tasks including finding an identity, making educational and career decisions and widening peer affiliation. He contended that that trying to fulfill these tasks may create “identity confusion” for the young person. Elfenbein and Felice (2003) also contended that girls who transition to adolescence and motherhood simultaneously may encounter more profound psychological and social challenges. Additionally, “pregnancy before a girl is physically, developmentally and socially ready jeopardizes her right to a safe, successful transition into adulthood” (UNFPA, 2015, p.3). The literature accentuates the vulnerability of this group and highlights the importance of addressing the special psychosocial needs of school-age mothers.

Theme 2: Determination

The data from this study revealed that though challenged with fatigue, stigma, initial feelings of hopelessness, and little or no support from the fathers of their children the young mothers were determined to remain in school, and to complete their secondary school certification. They possessed the will power to fulfill their educational, employment, and career goals. With the emotional, social and school-related support of friends, family and school personnel they all endeavored to meet the demands of school

necessary to gain their CSEC or CAPE qualification or both. Some participants shared that they felt like giving up at the beginning but all indicated that they had a plan in process to achieve their aspirations.

These findings add to the body of literature that suggests that many teen mothers give up and drop out of school because of struggles associated with teen parenting such as stigmatization and the lack of support. For example, Brosh et al. (2007) found that stigma, isolation, and the lack of support for the parenting adolescent educational aspirations were likely to result in low self-efficacy towards educational attainment. Generally, this study found that young mothers who parented as teenagers grappled with the challenges of teen parenting and overcame them. With the exception of one participant, all participants had attained some level of secondary school certification by the age of 20. These findings disconfirm the assumption of the inevitable high school reduction or cessation of teen mothers. Perper et al. (2010) found that only 50 % of teen mothers had earned a high school diploma by the age of 22. Similar evidence by Driscoll, (2014); Hofreth et al. (2001); Kane et al. (2013) and Melhado (2007) suggested that girls who became pregnant in high school were vulnerable to low levels of educational attainment and or school cessation.

Theme 3: Children Motivation them to Accomplish their Aspirations

The participants experienced enhanced motivation to accomplish their educational aspirations. Despite the many challenges confronting them, they all wished to complete their educational and career aspirations. They were driven by their vision to provide a better future for their offspring and they wanted their children to be proud of them. One

participant stated, “Before, I wanted these things, but now I want these things even more...” (Kenya), and another explained, “My daughter also kept me going...” (Sandy).

These findings have been confirmed in the recent literature. Studies by Chigona and Chetty (2008), Rumley (2010), and Zachry (2005) all found that becoming a parent can change the young mothers’ outlook on education and life. These studies support the finding that girls who remained at or returned to school after childbirth were motivated by the realization that completing their schooling would increase the likelihood of gaining employment, getting higher earnings and successfully supporting their children in the future. Smith-Battle (2007) also found that becoming a mother caused teens to reexamine their priorities in relation to their educational and long-term success. The participants in this study, like those in Smith-Battle’s study, also expressed a renewed interest in staying in school and a determination to graduate.

Theme 4: Support by Friends

The data revealed that some participants had few friends while others changed their friends after becoming a mother. Four of the participants reported that they had few friends and that these friends were committed to supporting them in their efforts to achieve their goals. Their friends whether new or old provided them with the school work they missed, explained lessons they did not understand, and one participant also received help with the baby when she worked. Additionally, their friends provided emotional support in stressful times. Their peers encouraged them to remain focused and push on towards their goals.

These findings add valuable insight to the body of literature on the topic as there is a dearth of empirical evidence that focuses on the support of friends for the teen mother's education. The results of this study suggest that some of the mothers did not have a lot of friends to rely on for support, but that the few they had were very supportive emotionally and socially. The change of friends seems to be associated with the young mothers' adjusted outlook on life and the future. The participants who shared that their circle of friends changed also stated that their perspective on life and education also changed. One participant whose circle of friends had changed reported, "...I am encouraged by the more mature girls because they want something in life" (Sandy). This suggests that once they became mothers, the girls started to think more like adults and less like children.

Moreover, the findings suggest that friends were a major source of support that propelled adolescent mothers to aspire to complete secondary school. The mothers who parented as teens contended that they persevered to gain their CSEC and or CAPE qualifications or both because of the words of encouragement and assistance with school assignment provided by their peers. The mothers reported that they missed class work because of the pregnancy, taking care of the baby or because of the fatigue associated with trying to balance being a mother and a student. Some of them felt "stressed" and did not see the sense of continuing. However, their friends' encouragement to remain focused; their willingness to bring them up to date with the work they may have missed and their compassion to explain things they did not comprehend help them to gain hope of achieving their goals.

Erikson (1969) posited that during adolescence, the individual grapples with several tasks including finding an identity, making educational and career decisions and widening peer affiliation. Though the participants in this study did not indicate that they wanted to broaden their circle of friends, they expressed gratitude and appreciation for the friends who support them in their quest to complete secondary school.

Theme 5: Varied Support by Significant other

Overall, participants experienced varied levels of support for their educational aspirations by their significant others. Four experienced no support by the father of their child; however, two of these four experienced a lot of support from their boyfriend (who was not the father of the child). Two others experienced initial support and later no support. Some experienced only emotional support, others only financial and material support and some a combination of both emotional and physical support.

These experiences add to the limited literature pertaining to the support by the father of the child for the teen mother's education. Saim et al. (2004) found that fathers often abandoned teenage mothers during pregnancy or within two years after the birth of the child. Research by Turner (2011) and Stroble (2013) indicated that teen mothers rated the father of their child as the least important support of their educational needs. Neither of these studies examined the support by fathers of the child for the adolescent mother's educational aspirations. In this study, two of the young mothers disclosed that the fathers of their children supported their academic aspirations for a limited time after the baby was born. One of them reported that her son's father supported her during the pregnancy and seven months after the birth of their son. He kept the baby while she attended classes

and transported her to and from classes. The other mother stated that the father of her child initially encouraged her to continue her education. However, she explained that currently, “things are not like before...” and that “he does not really help and doesn’t seem to care about my education” (Rene). Yet, another mother stated that the father of her child questioned why she wanted to return to school even though his family persuaded her to return. However, he provided material support for the infant and financed his nursery fees. Two other participants, who experienced non-support by the fathers of their children, experienced a lot of support from their significant other. Another participant stated that her daughter’s dad neither encouraged nor discouraged her from aspiring towards her goals.

The mothers who parented as teenagers did not perceive that their aspirations were supported by the fathers of their children. The participants reported, “He does not encourage me” (Francine), “...neither encouraged nor discouraged...” (Kenya), “neither helped nor supported” (Sherry) and “doesn’t seem to care” (Rene). Even where material and financial assistance was provided for the child, the mother did not see this as support for her aspirations. The mothers felt that the fathers did not care. The lack of support by the fathers may have added to the already stressful situation faced by the parenting teen.

Two out of the eight participants (Sherry, Sandy) experienced lots of emotional support by their boyfriends. Both young women highlighted the words of encouragement and comfort received from their partners. One stated, “He gives me a lot of advice and encouragement” and “He pushed me to continue” (Sherry). The other stated, “He tells me that I can do it”, and “He listens to me crying and tells me it is okay” (Sandy). Neither of

the two participants shared that they received material of financial support nor did they indicate the need for such support. This suggests that mothers felt contented with the emotional support and that they valued highly the encouragement from their significant other.

Theme 6: Varied Support by Family

Two of the participants experienced no support by their families whereas six of them experienced support by family members for their aspirations. They shared that they received emotional, child related and material support. Mothers, adopted parents, grandmothers, and older siblings helped to ease the struggle of teen parenting by providing assistance with babysitting enabling the young mother to study and by providing school clothing and other resources necessary for them to remain in school. One participant said: “If not for her I was not going back, I was going to look for a job” (Sherry). Family members also assured mothers that they could rely on them to support them through secondary school.

The experiences shared of the increased motivation to achieve as a result of familial support concur with and amplify the literature. Mollborn (2010) found that adolescent mothers who had the support of their parents were more likely to have more time and energy to do school work. Grant & Hallman (2008) also found that involvement of the pregnant or parenting teen’s mother determined whether or not girls return to school after pregnancy. Turner (2011) also found that family support contributed significantly to the teen mother’s development or self-reliance and success. The absence of supportive family members appears to have been filled by the support of school

personnel and peers as the two mothers who experienced lack of familial support also aspired to fulfill their aspirations.

Theme 7: Support by School Personnel

Participants experienced a lot of support for their educational aspirations by teachers, guidance counselors and principals. School personnel encouraged teen mothers to remain in school and to work towards successful completion of their CSEC and CAPE qualifications. They also assisted them with extra lessons, provided opportunities for training and employment, facilitated day care services and provided food items. Their non-judgmental, warm and open attitude seems to have ease the stress associated with teen parenting and made it easier for the mothers to continue to strive.

These findings support the literature which indicates that supportive school personnel that catered to social and emotional needs of the teen mothers inspired them to push on towards success (Cook-Kyle, 2014; Jamal, 2014; Stroble, 2013). No participant indicated that school personnel ridiculed or judged them because they were teen mothers. Instead, school personnel appeared empathetic to their circumstances. The mothers reported: “My teachers were there for me all the time” (Sandy), “... telling me that I can succeed” (Kenya), “helped me to do any test that I had missed” (India), “...come to them if I didn’t understand something...” (Sherry) and “they did not give me any pressure” (Rene) The experiences shared emphasized the important role that teachers, counselors and principals play in empowering adolescent mothers to reach their goals.

According to UNICEF (2003) in the Caribbean many pregnant and parenting girls are asked by school officials to abandon their secondary education after becoming

mothers. The results of this study do not support this. All of the participants were allowed to continue their schooling. The findings that encouragement and assistance by school officials had a profound impact on the participants' impetus to succeed demonstrate the importance of permitting the adolescent mother to complete school. On the other hand, depriving them of this major support could derail their advancement in education and in life.

In sum, participants persevered despite the challenges they encountered to attain some level of CSEC or CAPE qualification (only one participant failed to acquire any). The support by friends, the family and school personnel help the mothers who parented as teens to navigate through fatigue, stigma, feelings of hopelessness and lack of support from the father of the child to achieve their educational goals.



Figure 1. Experiences of support for the adolescent mothers' aspirations.

Implications for Social Change and Practice

Some of the key findings regarding the participants' lived experiences were that they struggled to balance school, work, and parenting and they were inspired by their children to strive to succeed. The support of friends, family, and school personnel made it possible for them to remain in school. However, they received little support from the fathers of their children. One major finding is that the matrix of support by teachers, principals, and guidance counsellors enabled the mothers to cope with fatigue, stigma, feelings of hopelessness and lack of support by fathers of their children.

These findings have the potential to effect positive social change and practice at the individual, family, organizational, and societal level. At the individual level, the women in this study played a vital role in the construction of the knowledge on the topic. This study gave them the opportunity to freely share their perspectives, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, their individual viewpoints were exposed, their perceptions uncovered, and their feelings revealed. They were also allowed to review their individual textural-structural descriptions to ensure that findings represented their unique experiences. This study gave them a voice.

This study may also be used to inspire other teen mothers and their families who may be experiencing similar tumultuous circumstances. Knowledge of how others grappled with the challenges of teen parenting and overcame might strengthen their self efficacy to complete their high school education. Social change may also be impacted when the families and friends of teen mothers are more aware of the need to ease the

stress of teen parenting by providing emotional and financial support, assistance with child care and other resources.

Furthermore, this study could contribute to positive change in the educational system. The young women provided insight of what works as supports to enable them to accomplish academic success. This knowledge might enable educators, school administrators, guidance counselors, and other practitioners working with teen mothers to be more aware and sensitive to the struggles and the unique needs of this vulnerable population. Applying this knowledge, they might be better informed as to how to relate to and empower adolescent mothers. For example, offering words of encouragement rather than judgment or discouragement might provide hope and motivate teen mothers to strive harder to complete school assignments.

The Ministry of Education in Barbados now has access to current empirical evidence about teen mothers' educational experiences that may guide policy to increase the graduation grade of pregnant or parenting girls. Educational initiatives in the Caribbean and globally aimed at empowering adolescent mothers to aspire academically and enhance their career opportunities might also benefit from this study. Additionally, teacher training programmes might use this knowledge to prepare teachers as to how to cater to the needs of these "at risk" and "special needs" students.

One major support for the young mothers' aspirations was the school. Therefore, when societies allow pregnant and parenting girls to return to school they are increasing the likelihood of advantageous socioeconomic outcomes such as better paying jobs for these women. Enlightening society of the reality of teen parenting might also affect social

change. Providing a voice for the mothers who parented as teens to share their lived experiences was crucial because their struggles and subsequent success disconfirm the negative portrayal in popular media and general public of parenting teens. This study is evidence to the public that adolescent mothers strived to succeed in high school even when they receive little or no support from their friends and significant others. With this insight the social stigma associated with teen parenting might be diminished.

Limitations

A limitation of a study is any factor that restricts the study. The limitations of this research stemmed primarily from the characteristics of qualitative research. The researcher is the key instrument for data collection and analysis. Hence, interpretation may have been shaped by personal bias. I work with adolescents who are at risk for dropping out of school, so I bring personal experiences and pre-assumptions to the study. My interpretation of the findings may have been influenced by my professional experiences. Based on the phenomenological paradigm, it is essential that the researcher identifies his or her preconceptions that may taint findings (Moustakes, 1994). To control for potential human bias, I monitored my influence on the research process by maintaining a reflective journal during data collection and analysis. I was always aware of my affective responses to the study and I bracketed my personal feelings and professional experiences.

Another limitation is the use of a small sample. Only eight women who parented as teenagers were included in the study. The sample did not include any fathers; hence, the views of men who parented as teens are excluded. Participants were selected based on

their knowledge and experience of parenting while striving to graduate from high school. The results of this purposefully chosen sample may not be generalizable to the larger population of teen mothers. Additionally, adolescent mothers are stigmatized in Barbados; thus, this may have influenced the participants' self-report or increased socially desirable responses

While the intent of this study was to understand the lived experiences of young mothers who parented as teens, there was no triangulation of data from the fathers, family members, or educators to verify the accuracy of the information from mothers. However, member-checking was used to confirm the data for accuracy. Despite these limitations, this research adds rich insight to the literature on the educational experiences of adolescent mothers.

Future Research

What are the lived experiences of fathers of children born to adolescent mothers? Based on the findings of limited support by the fathers of the children, an exploration of the perceptions of fathers could significantly inform educators and social care practitioners of what is necessary to help fathers be more supportive to the educational needs of teen mothers. Another recommendation for future research is to conduct a longitudinal study on the lived experiences of this sample in five or ten years to ascertain to what level their long term goals were achieved. This may provide insight concerning what supports are needed beyond high school for adolescent mothers to succeed in their post secondary educational and vocational goals. The goal of this study was to explore the education aspirations of teen mothers; however, emotional issues emerged from the

data base. Future research that evaluates the psychological functioning of teen mothers across the lifespan is also recommended to determine their future development in this area. Another question worth examination is the perceptions of school teachers and administrators towards their pregnant and parenting students. In contrast to these findings, the literature indicated that teen mothers are stigmatized by teachers (Brosh et al., 2007). This research could fill the gap in the literature by providing another perspective on how educational personnel perceive teen mothers' school attainment. Results of these research recommendations could add valuable knowledge to advance the cause to empower young mothers to succeed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the essence of what young mothers who parented as adolescents experienced in their efforts to accomplish their secondary school aspirations is that they experienced a challenge balancing motherhood and being a student. However, they were determined to be successful in school and to increase their employment and career possibilities. Their children profoundly impacted their determination as the mothers envisioned a better future for their families and they wanted their child to grow up proud of them. The young mothers struggled with fatigue, stigma, initial feelings of hopelessness and little support from the fathers of the children. Over time, they overcame these challenges with the help and support from their peers, families and the school. Teachers, principals, and guidance counsellors fostered a matrix of warm, encouragement and support that helped them through their struggles and enabled them to succeed.

Despite the abundance of literature on the educational attainment of adolescent mothers, few studies have directly explored what girls who become mothers and who struggled to graduate from high school perceive as valuable supports helping them to achieve their educational aspirations. Furthermore, few studies have focused on their perceptions of how friends and significant others support or did not support their goals. This exploration is fundamental because educational aspirations are closely associated with academic performance and subsequent educational attainment (Brosh et al., 2007). The level of secondary education an adolescent mother attains tends to determine future socio economic status for her and her offspring (Bar & Simon, 2012; Byham-Urquhart 2014; Elfenbein & Felice, 2003). Low socioeconomic status is likely to lead to reliance on social services (Elfenbein & Felice, 2003; Rico, 2011) which are funded by you and me the taxpayers. Therefore, when educational and community practitioners focus on and invest in the special needs highlighted in this study, the investment is highly likely to result in positive outcomes not only for adolescent students and their families but also for the society at large.

References

- Alan Guttmacher Institute. (2014). Facts on American teens' sexual and reproductive health. Retrieved from www.guttmacher.org/
- Ardington, C, Menendez, A, & Mutevedzi, T. (2011). *Early childbearing, human capital attainment and mortality risk*. South Africa Labor and Development Research Unit. Working paper no. 56. University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa. Retrieved from http://www.opensaldru.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11090/61/2011_56.pdf?sequence=1
- Ashcraft, A., Fernández-Val, I., & Lang, K. (2013). The consequences of teenage childbearing: Consistent estimates when abortion makes miscarriage nonrandom. *The Economic Journal*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1111/eoj.12005
- Ashcraft, A., & Lang, K. (2006). *The consequences of teenage childbearing*. (NBER Working Paper No. 12485). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Barcelos, A. B., Gubrium, C. G. (2014). Reproducing stories: Strategic narratives of teen pregnancy and motherhood. *Social problems*, 61(3), 466–481, 0037-7791.
- Barr, A. B., & Simons, R. L. (2012). College aspirations and expectations among new African-American mothers in late adolescence. *Gender & Education*, 24(7), 745-763. doi:10.1080/09540253.2012.712097

- Barraza, L. (2011). *Teen pregnancy: A content analysis of existing literature* (Order No. 1499137). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (888029379).
- Berk, L. E., (2007). *Development through the lifespan*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Berthelon, M. & Kruger, D.,(2014). The impact of adolescent motherhood on education in Chile. Discussion Paper No. 8072, Retrieved from <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8072.pdf>
- Boden, J. M., Fergusson, D. M., & Horwood, J. L. (2008). Early motherhood and subsequent life outcomes. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 49(2), 151-160.
- Branson, N., Ardington, C., Leibbrandt, M., (2013). *Trends in teenage childbearing and schooling outcomes for children born to teens in South Africa*. A Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit. Working Paper Number 98. University of Cape Town: Cape Town, South Africa. Retrieved from http://www.opensaldru.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11090/614/2013_98.pdf?sequence=1
- Brosh, J., Weigel, D., & Evans, W. (2007). Pregnant and parenting adolescents' perception of sources and supports in relation to educational goals. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 24(6), 565-578. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10560-007-0107-8>
- Byham-Urquhart, M. (2014). *What adolescent mothers who successfully complete high school and avoid additional unplanned pregnancy perceive as factors in their success*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Capella University, *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*, (3610404).

Campbell, A.A. (1968). The role of family planning in the reduction of poverty. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30(2), 236-245.p. 238

Caribbean Examinations Council. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.cxc.org/about/about-cxc/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *About Teenage Pregnancy*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/aboutteenpreg.htm>.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory. A practical guide through qualitative Analysis*. London, England: Sage Publications.

Chigona, A. & Chetty, R. (2008). Teen mothers and schooling: lacunae and challenges. *South African Journal of Education*, 28, 261-281

Chittleborough, C, R., Lawlor, D. A., Lynch, J, W. (2011). Young maternal age and poor child development: Predictive validity from a birth cohort. *Pediatrics*, 127(6), 1436-1444

Chohan, Z. (2010). *Deconstructing teenage pregnancy: Teenage mama's talk about the self*. (Master's thesis), University of the Witwatersrand.

Cook-Kyle, J. (2014). *Exploring potential predictors of college attendance for African American women who parented as teen* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Texas Woman's University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. (3637142).

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Driscoll, A K. (2014). Adult outcomes of teen mothers across birth cohorts. *Demographic Research* 30(1), 1277-1292.
- Edin, K., & Maria K. (2005). *Promises I can keep*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Elfenbein, D. S., & Felice, M. E. (2003). Adolescent pregnancy. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 50(4), 781-800.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, N.Y: Norton.
- Frankfort-Nachmias, C. & Nachmias, D. (2008) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 6th Edition, Wadsworth, New York: Worth Publishers
- Furstenberg, F. F. (1980). Burdens and benefits: The impact of early childbearing on the family. *Journal of Social Issues*, 36(1), 64-87. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1980.tb01899.x
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Morgan, S. P. (1987). *Adolescent mothers in later life*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

- Furstenberg, F. J., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Chase-Lansdale, L. (1989). Teenaged pregnancy and childbearing. *American Psychologist*, *44*(2), 313-320. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.44.2.313
- Gergen, K. J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist*, *40*, 266-275
- Golshirazi, M. (2013). *Neighborhood impact on adolescent mothers' educational outcomes* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Tufts University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. (1547235)
- Grant, M. J. & Hallman, K. K. (2008). Pregnancy-related school dropout and prior school performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Studies in Family Planning*, *39*(4), 369-382
- Hallman, H. L., (2007). Reassigning the identity of the pregnant and parenting student. *American Secondary Education*, *36*(1), 80-98. Retrieved from <http://www.libraryproxy.csm.edu2248/ehost>
- Halpern-Feisher, B. L. & Cauffman, E. (2001). Costs and benefits of a decision: Decision-making competence in adolescents and adults. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *22*, 257-273.
- Harvey-Mendoza, E. C. (2014). *Examining neighborhood, maternal, and cultural influences on Mexican-origin adolescent mothers' educational outcomes* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Arizona State University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. (1555912)

- Hofferth, S. L., & Moore, K. A. (1979). Early childbearing and later economic well-being. *American Sociological Review*, 44(7), 784-815.
- Hofferth, S. L., Reid, L., & Mott, F. L. (2001). The effects of early childbearing on schooling over time. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 33(6), 259–267. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.2307/3030193>
- Hoffman, S.D. (2006). *By the numbers: the public costs of teen childbearing*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- Hoffman, S. D , & Maynard R.A (2008). *Kids having kids: Economic costs and social consequences of teen pregnancy* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
- Holmlund, H. (2005). Estimating long-term consequences of teenage childbearing. *Journal of Human Resources*, 40(3), pp. 716–43.
- Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Jamal, L. (2014). *Teen mother perceptions of support program influences on self-efficacy, parenting-efficacy, and school success* (Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, (3610404).
- Jones, S. R. (2002). (Re)writing the word: Methodological strategies and issues in qualitative research. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(4), 469.
- Kalil, A, & Kunz, J. (2000). *Long term effects of teenage childbearing on mental health in young adulthood*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago and Joint Centre for Poverty Research.

- Kane, J. B., Morgan, S. P., Harris, K. M., & Guilkey, D. K. (2013). The educational consequences of teen child-bearing. *Demography*, *50*(6), 2129-50.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s13524-013-0238-9>
- Kiran-Esen, B. (2012). Analyzing peer pressure and self-efficacy expectation among adolescents. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *40*(8), 1301-1309.
- Kirby, D., Coyle, K., & Gould, J. B. (2001). Manifestations of poverty and birth-rates among young teenagers in California zip code areas. *Family Planning Perspectives*, *33*(2), 63-9. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/224552174?accountid=14872>
- Lee, D. (2010). The early socioeconomic effects of teenage childbearing: A propensity score matching approach. *Demographic Research* *23*(25), 697–736.
doi:10.4054/DemRes.2010.23.25
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mangino, J. G. (2008). *Voices of teen mothers: Their challenges, support systems, and successes* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh). Retrieved from <http://etd.library.pitt.edu/ETD/available/etd-04212008-221354/>
- Meade, C. S., Kershaw, T. S., Ickovics, J. R. (2008). The intergenerational cycle of teenage motherhood: an ecological approach. *Health Psychology*, *27*(4):419-29.
doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.27.4.419.

- McNeil, P. (1992). *Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation Successes and Constraints—Social, Economic, Cultural, and Political. Paper II Presented at the DSE International Seminar, 27 July–7 August 1992, Berlin, Germany*; Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation: Kingston, Jamaica.
- Melhado, L. (2007). Teenage parents' educational attainment is affected more by available resources than by parenthood. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 39*(3), 184-185.
- Modesto, O. P. (2013). *The lived experiences of adolescent mothers who graduated from an alternative school*. (Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from Walden University Proquest Dissertations Publishing. (3587214).
- Moerer-Urdahl, T., & Creswell, J. (2004). Using transcendental phenomenology to explore the “ripple effect” in a leadership mentoring program. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3* (2). Article 2. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_2/pdf/moerercreswell.pdf
- Mollborn, S. (2007). Making the best of a bad situation: material resources and teenage parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*(1), 92–104.
- Mollborn, S., & Morningstar, E. (2009). Investigating the relationship between teenage childbearing and psychological distress using longitudinal evidence. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 50*(3), 310-326.
- Morse, J., (1995) The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research, 5*(2): 147-149.

- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2010). *Policy brief: Preventing teen pregnancy is critical to school completion*. National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved from http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/Briefly_PolicyBrief_School_Completion.pdf
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2012). *Why it matters: Teen childbearing, education, and economic well-being*. Centers for Disease Control and Support Program Influences 160 Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/Childbearing-Education-EconomicWellbeing.pdf>
- National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). (2012). *Health, United States 2011: With Special Feature on Socioeconomic Status and Health*. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Papalia, D. E., Olds, S.W., & Feldman, R. D. (2009). *Human development* (11th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Patton, M, Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. 4th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Perper, K., Peterson, K., & Manlove, J. (2010). *Diploma attachment among teen mothers.*: Child Trends. Retrieved from [http:// www.childtrends.org/files//child_trends-2010_01_22_FS_diplomaattainment.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/files//child_trends-2010_01_22_FS_diplomaattainment.pdf).

- Pillow, W. (2004). *Unfit subjects: Educational policy and the teen mother*. New York: Routledge Falmer
- Ranchhod, V., Branson, N., Lam, D., Leibbrandt, M., & Marteleto, L, (2011). Estimating the effect of adolescent childbearing on educational attainment in Cape Town using a propensity score weighted regression. South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit. University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.) working paper no.59, 1-27.
- Rico, N. (2011). *Adolescent mothers and educational achievement: The factors associated with teenage pregnancy and the effect of pregnancy on truncated education*. (Dissertation) Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (880774313).
- Rumley, S. R. (2010). *Factors associated with African American parenting adolescents (primiparas) avoiding a repeat pregnancy and continuing their educational goals*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (756399796). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/756399796?accountid=14872>
- Saim, N. J., Dufăker, M., & Ghazinour, M. (2014). Teenagers' experiences of pregnancy and the parents' and partners' reactions: A Malaysian perspective. *Journal of Family Violence*, 29(4), 465-472. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10896-014-9595-4>
- Sanders, S., Smith, J. and Zhang, Y. (2007). *Teenage childbearing and maternal schooling outcomes: evidence from matching*, (Unpublished manuscript). Working Paper, University of Maryland, College Park.

- Smith-Battle, L. (2006). Helping teen moms succeed. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 22(3), 130-135. doi: 10.1622/1059-8405(2006)022[0130
- Smith-Battle, L. (2007). I wanna have a good future: Teen mothers' rise in educational aspirations, competing demands, and limited school support. *Youth & Society*, 38(3), 348-371.
- Smith-Battle, L. (2012), Moving policies upstream to mitigate the social determinants of early childbearing. *Public Health Nursing*, 29, 444–454. doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1446.2012.01017.x
- Stake, E., R. (2010). *Qualitative research*. Retrieved from [https://bookshelf.vitalsource . com/#/books/9781609181123/](https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/books/9781609181123/)
- Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose your Method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10): 1372-1380.
- Stroble, C. M. (2013). *A phenomenological study: The lived experience of teen mothers who graduated from high school and attended or completed college*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. (3563255).
- Taylor, J. L. (2009). Midlife impacts of adolescent parenthood. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(4), 484–510. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X08329601>
- The Laws of Barbados. (1982). *The education act, 1981 (act 1981-25): The education regulations, 1982*. Barbados. (n.p.)
- Title IX protections for pregnant and parenting students (2012). A guide for schools.

National Women's Law Center. Retrieved from <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/title-ixprotections-pregnant-and-parenting-students-guide-schools>

Trusty-Smith B. (2013). *The optimism to overcome: Educational beliefs and strategies of resilience among African American college graduates who are former teenage mothers*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from University of Maryland, Baltimore County, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. (3563379).

Tufford, L & Newman, P. (2012). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work* 11 (1), 80-96.

Turley, R. N. L. (2003). Are children of young mothers disadvantaged because of their mother's age or family background? *Child Development*. 74, 465–474.

Turner, R. L. (2011). *From teen mom on government assistance to economically self-sufficient college graduate* (Order No. 3453937). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (868276649). p. 80

United Nations Children's Fund. (2003). *Children in Focus*. (Vol.1). Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/cao_publications_cifed.pdf

United Nations Children's Fund. (2008). *Young people and family planning: Teenage pregnancy*. Fact sheet presented on World Population Day, Malaysia. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Teenage_Pregnancies_-_Overview.pdf

United Nation Population Fund. (2013). *Adolescent pregnancy a review of the evidence*. Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/adolescent-pregnancy>

- United Nation Population Fund. (2015). Girlhood, not motherhood: preventing adolescent pregnancy. Retrieved from http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Girlhood_not_motherhood_final_web.pdf.p.3
- United Nations Population Fund (2013). Jamaica offers a model for preventing adolescent pregnancies while supporting young mothers. Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/news/jamaica-offers-model-preventing-adolescent-pregnancies-while-supporting-young-mothers>
- United Nations. (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, Retrieved from <http://childrensrights.ie/childrens-rights-ireland/un-convention-rights-child>
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). World population prospects: The 2012 revision highlights and advance tables. Working paper No. ESA/P/WP.228. New York, N. Y.: United Nations.
- Upchurch, D. M., & Mccarthy J. (1990). The Timing of a first Birth and High-School Completion. *American Sociological Review*. 55(2), 224–234.
- Westman, J. (2009). *Breaking the adolescent parent cycle: Valuing fatherhood and motherhood*. New York: University Press of America, Inc.
- Williamson, N. (2013). Motherhood in childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy. In *State of the World Population Report 2013*. New York, NY, United Nations Population Fund. Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>

- Wilson-Mitchell, K., Bennett, J., & Stennett, R. (2014). Psychological health and life experiences of pregnant adolescent mothers in Jamaica. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 11(5), 4729-44. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1525757729?accountid=14872>
- World Health Organization. (2011). WHO guidelines on preventing early pregnancy and poor reproductive health outcomes among adolescents in developing countries. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/immunization/hpv/target/preventing_early_pregnancy_and_poor_reproductive_outcomes_who_2006.pdf ISBN 978 92 4 150221 4
- VanDenBerg, M. P. (2012). Theses: *Protective factors for teen mothers: Relations among social support, psychological resources and child-rearing practices*. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, Colorado State University, (1517089).
- Zachry, E. M. (2005). Getting my education: Teen mothers' experiences in school before and after motherhood. *Teachers College Record*, 107 (12), 2566-2598. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/>

Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about teen mothers' educational aspirations. The purpose of the study is to find out how women who parented as teenagers and did not graduate from formal secondary school perceive support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others. The researcher is inviting women between the ages of 20 and 25 who gave birth between the ages of 13 and 19 to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Kathy-Ann Bellamy who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to obtain an understanding of the experiences of women who parented as teenagers while aspiring to graduate from high school.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Take part in a face-to-face interview with the researcher about your experiences as a teen mother trying to complete high school. This will take approximately 90 minutes in a private room at the Lodge School. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder.
- Before starting the interview, please have ready the phone number of a counselor that you trust and can call if you feel upset from the interview. If you desire, you may also call: Network Services Centre Inc: 246-228-3056 or Supreme Counselling For Personal Development: 246-228-9769.
- Review your transcript at the end of the interview.
- Use a fictitious name at all times.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What is your age?
2. How many children do you have?
3. At what age did you become a mother for the first time? Second time?
4. At what age did you stop attending formal high school?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Compensation:

There will be no type of gift or compensation for your participation in this study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life. Being in this study, you might feel emotional distress when talking about some aspects of your experience. If this is the case, you are free to end the interview, take a break, or withdraw from the study without consequences.

A potential benefit to this study is that it gives you the opportunity to share your experiences of parenting as a teenager with professionals and the general public. Additionally, such self reflection may generate personal insights for you. Educational officers, guidance counselors, teachers and social workers may also benefit from the results of this study. They may use the findings in their practice and research to help mitigate the numbers of teen mothers who drop out of high school.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your real name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports.

All electronic data will be stored on a flash drive and on a password-protected laptop. All other physical raw data including audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher. All research documents will be destroyed seven years after the completion of this research. Software will be employed to completely clean all electronic data from the flash drive and the laptop's hard drive to the point that data cannot be retrieved. Non-electronic data such as printed transcripts will be destroyed using cross-cut shredders. Maintaining these files for seven years is required by the university. This will ensure that any questions derived from the study can be addressed by referring to the original data sources.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Kathy-Ann Bellamy and the researcher's faculty chairperson is Dr. Ruth Crocker. You may ask any questions you have at any time. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher, Kathy-Ann Bellamy via telephone number: 246-425-6089 and email: kathy-ann.bellamy@waldenu.edu. or Dr. Crocker via email: ruth.crocker@Waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Director of the Research Center at Walden University at irb@waldenu.edu.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Introductory Script

The literature has indicated that adolescent mothers face several barriers to fulfill their high school educational aspirations. An understanding of the educational experiences of school-age mothers might provide insight into how to increase the graduation rate for adolescent mothers.

Thank you for taking the time to be with me today and for agreeing to be a participant of this study about adolescent mothers' educational aspirations. I am going to ask several questions about your background and about your experiences of parenting as a teenager while trying to complete your secondary education. I will also ask you about how your friends and significant others supported your goals. Please answer the questions honestly.

If you begin to feel upset or uncomfortable, please inform me and I will cease the interview. If there is any question you do not wish to answer or a question you would like me to explain, please let me know. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. How many children do you have?
3. At what age did you become a mother for the first time? Second time?
4. At what age did you stop attending secondary school?
5. Did you return to secondary school after having your baby? If yes, when did you graduate there after?
6. Did your friends and significant other (boyfriend, father of the baby, husband, other) assist you with your child (ren)? If the answer is yes, How?

7. What is your highest education level completed to date? (e.g., CSEC, CAPE qualification, Associates degree, Bachelor's degree, college, Master's degree, Professional degree, Other/please specify).
8. Describe your relationship with your significant other (the father of your child (ren), husband, boyfriend, other) before and after becoming pregnant.
9. Describe your relationship with your friends before and after becoming pregnant.

Research Question 1:

What are the lived experiences regarding the educational aspirations of Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and did not graduate from formal secondary school?

10. What were your educational aspirations before becoming pregnant?
11. What changes, if any, occurred in your educational goals after becoming a parent?
12. Describe your experiences of trying to complete secondary school while also being a parent?
13. What situations or factors (people, school rules, policies and practices) supported your educational aspirations?
14. What situations or factors (people, school rules, policies and practices) did not support your educational aspirations?

Research Question 2.

How do Barbadian young women (ages 20 to 25) who parented as adolescents and did not graduate from formal secondary school perceive support or lack of support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others?

15. Tell me about the support or lack of support you received from friends for your educational goals. How did they encourage you or discourage you?

16. Tell me about the support or lack of support you received from your significant other (the father of your child (ren), husband, boyfriend, other) for your educational goals. How did he help you or discourage you?

Would you mind reviewing the transcript to make sure everything is correct?

Thank you so much for your participation. When I have completed my study, would you like a copy of the results?

Appendix C: Phone Script

Hello, may I speak with _____?

My name is Kathy-Ann Bellamy and I am a doctoral student at the Walden University. I am seeking participants on a voluntary basis for my study: Barbadian Adolescent mothers and their Educational Aspirations: Perceptions of Peer and Partner Support.

The purpose of the study is to find out how women who parented as teenagers and did not graduate from formal secondary school perceive support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others.

You are a potential participant because you were suggested by your school counselor.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may say yes or no. There are no negative things that can happen if you say no.

Would you be interested in participating in this study?

If the individual says yes: That is great! May I set up an appointment with you so that I can explain the study more? If you agree to take part, I would like you to sign a consent form. Let us set a time and place for me to meet you. Thanks!

If the individual says No: That is okay. This study is voluntary. I respect your decision.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation from a Community Partner

July 20, 2016

The Principal
The Lodge School
Massiah Street, Barbados

Dear Kathy-Ann Bellamy,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to use the Lodge school to conduct interviews for the study entitled “Barbadian Adolescent mothers and their Educational Aspirations: Perceptions of Peer and Partner Support.” A private room will be provided at the school for you to conduct interviews with the participants. This facility will be private and safe for the participants and the researcher.

I confirm that I am authorized to give permission to conduct research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization’s policies. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student’s supervising faculty or staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

pvasco_4@yahoo.com
The Principal
The Lodge School

Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer

ATTENTION COUNSELLORS
**Barbadian Adolescent mothers and their Educational Aspirations:
Perceptions of Peer and Partner Support**

This study seeks to find out how women who parented as teenagers and did not graduate from formal secondary school perceive support for their educational aspirations by their friends and significant others. Findings may be used to enhance the educational outcomes of teen mothers.

Counselors, your assistance is needed in this study conducted by Kathy-Ann Bellamy. Do you know of any young women who fit the following criteria?

- Barbadian females between the ages of 20 to 25 who parented as adolescents.
- They should have been pregnant with their first child between the ages of 13 and 19 years old years while they were in secondary school.
- They were unsuccessful in meeting their academic aspirations while in formal high school.
- Their pregnancy or pregnancies should have gone to successful completion.
- The mothers should be the primary caregiver of the child or children.

Please exclude:

- Women who had their first child before the age of 13, women over the age 25, and women not living in Barbados.
- Women who had a miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth only but no live birth.
- Men will be excluded.
- Any individual who attended the school where I work.
- Any individual who I may have counseled.

If you know of individuals who meet this criteria and might be interested in this study, please provide their contacts to Kathy-Ann Bellamy, **425-6089 or 254-8629 or email kathy-ann.bellamy@waldenu.edu**

This study is not a project of the Barbados Association of Guidance Counselors. It is a dissertation conducted by Kathy-Ann Bellamy for Walden University. The Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval number is: 08-23-16-0454910

THANK YOU

Appendix F: List of Significant Statements

<p>It was difficult to get up on mornings and I was often late for school. On mornings before I left for school I had a lot to do. I had to make the baby's tea, press, and pack his school clothes. On evenings I had to go for the baby and my school bag would be heavy and his bags were heavy too. Some evenings he would refuse to sleep. He would be looking for breast. After I would be tired but I would still try to do my homework.</p>
<p>Aiden was sick from cutting teeth, and you know, he would be really clingy. I would be extremely tired and then I would have to wake up at six to go to school. It was really getting to me so I didn't want anything to do with it no more. I was prepared to drop out.</p>
<p>I went straight to school after work. Most of the time, I reached home after 9:00 p.m. and then had to feed him, check his homework and prepare for the next day. At times, getting time from work to attend classes was a challenge as well.</p>
<p>I was tired coming up to examination time. Some nights I did not go to sleep. I was up revising and as soon as I put down my head, I had to get up, go to school. I tried not to sleep in the exam room, but it was hard.</p>
<p>As it is an online program, I would not have to take her to the nursery. I can work at night. Right now she is still breast feeding so I have to get that off first before I can do anything computer wise. After I will be able to do the classes online.</p>
<p>I trying to find a job save some money to do the dentist course before the little girl get too old</p>
<p>When I came home on evenings and she is calling for me that would make it kind of hard. I would have to wait until she goes to sleep to wake up about 2:00 in the morning to study.</p>
<p>She pregnant and at school?</p>
<p>Well, when I first became pregnant people at school were saying a lot of bad things about me. It started to play on my mind to the point where I did not want to see my daughter. I would go home and say "you're the reason everybody is saying stuff about me." I would not say it to her but that is what I would be thinking. And then I realize I had to grow past that.</p>
<p>The only problem I had was the staring. People would stare and ask "Wait, she pregnant" and I would say, "Yes, so what happen?"</p>
<p>When I was pregnant, I could not wear my school uniform because it was too small. I had to wear my own clothes and obviously you could see my little tummy there. Everyone would be staring at me so I would always be in the Home Economics room sitting down.</p>
<p>It was really getting to me so I didn't want anything to do with it no more. I was prepared to drop out.</p>

I was excused from going to general assembly because the other children would stare at me, most of the time I stayed in one place.
I was prepared to drop out. Then my head teacher, Mr. Dash, called me into the office a time
I did not see the sense of continuing school.
Sometimes, I would ask the teacher for help, and they would help but still I could not really meet the deadlines. When it comes to school I will try, but often I would just give up and say forget about that.
Then one day, I say to myself, “you know what Sherry? It happened and it ain’t really making no sense you being in a little shell, like, it happen. Don’t be afraid...” So, I started walking around the school, going for stuff myself instead of sending out people for stuff for me and things just changed from then. I made up my mind then I wanted to pass my examinations
I never felt like giving up when it came to the studying part
I wanted to be social worker before becoming pregnant and I still want to be a social worker. Having my daughter pushed me so much harder. I feel motivated. Before, I wanted these things, but now I want these things even more now, that I have my daughter.
I realized that it was not just me anymore. It was me plus one. My baby going to be looking up to me because how I was looking at it, I want him to say “yea, my mummy got pregnant when she was going to school but she didn’t stop. She pushed and pushed to get back her O’levels certificates, and then she went on to Barbados Community College to do nursing. She had some kind of academic qualifications. She made sure she finished, she is working, she is the head of this. She is in charge of this.” So I say I just have to get somewhere in life for me and my child.
I realized that I had opportunities to take me higher, to increase my pay to better support my son and myself and not allow him to be like me who grew up without parents. Therefore, I stretched my goals beyond a secretary and looked towards a Management post instead.
One of my teachers is trying to get me to work in the government polyclinic as a dental assistant, but they would not take me unless I am trained. So, I will have to work with a dentist get the training for six months then apply.
When I went back to school, cause I went back late, my form teacher kept all my assignments for me.
My daughter also kept me going, because she is really smart. Every time I think about giving up she reminds me that there is more and that I need to push on to get my certificates.
My goal now is to be a surgeon, but for right now I would like to study nursing. The only

<p>science subject I did is Human and social biology. If I am accepted to the Barbados Community College's nursing program, I will get to do Chemistry. ...I don't want nothing lower than a grade 1 because to be a doctor you have to have grade ones.</p>
<p>I will pay at a private institution to do the studies and examinations. After I achieve these CSEC certificates, I will then apply to join the force.</p>
<p>I wanted to go to Pom-Marie (Hotel School) to be a chef and to have my own business, like a bakery and a spa. But right now, I am looking for work, after that I am going back to school.</p>
<p>During school, I would be very tired. I never lost focus, because I was very strong in my mind what had to be done.</p>
<p>I realized that I had opportunities to take me higher, to increase my pay to better support my son and myself and not allow him to be like me who grew up without parents. Therefore, I stretched my goals beyond a secretary and looked towards a Management post instead.</p>
<p>I applied to almost all the dentists in the island. I send out 300 applications and right now I am very tired because I am getting nothing. ...I send a lot of money on letters.</p>
<p>That there was one girl friend who was supportive before and after her pregnancy. Her friend allowed her to stay with her when she was pregnant and she would call often to find out how she was doing.</p>
<p>I did not come back at the start of the term. When I did, they give me work that I missed.</p>
<p>They would help me if I had problems at home for example when I get stressed out with the baby. One time I would be so happy then another time I would be like don't touch me, don't come round me. That was a problem to me. I would be miserable. That did not matter to them. My friends were there all the time. Always up in my business and giving me encouragement to push on.</p>
<p>My friends I had before I became a mother changed. As maturity kicked in, those friends were no more. My current friends want to pass all their examinations. They encouraged me to grow as an individual. My friends want to go to school and graduate from school. My best friend she just wants to go to the university and save the world. So I am encouraged by the more mature girls because they want something in life.</p>
<p>One school friend in particular was there with me while I was pregnant and after the baby was born.</p>
<p>I saw that some of them were misleading by introducing boyfriends and sex in the bathrooms and then when I got pregnant, those same persons who were really not close but were in higher classes and whom I thought were cool to be with, were not around, I made up my mind that I will not follow bad company or long to be with friends anymore.</p>
<p>If I asked for help I would get it, it wasn't a problem. Anybody in my class. If I did not</p>

<p>understand something and I wanted someone to explain it, they would. I would get in a group and do the assignments and stuff. There is one girl in my class who live out by me and if I missed anything in the class she would tell me, she would call and explain the work to me.</p>
<p>When I was pregnant I would be sick. I missed a lot of classes. Andrea would call me and tell me about what went on in class</p>
<p>My best friend, who is also my daughter's god mother, encouraged me to come to school and focus on my work.</p>
<p>I talked to a lot of people but I did not consider them my friends. I would talk to one girl all the time. We were close before the pregnancy and we still close now. When I use to go work as a dentist assistant, she would come and keep the little girl and I would give her a little something because she wasn't working. Now things slow. Any little thing she can give the baby now she gives. I am out of work now.</p>
<p>He would bring things like pampers and milk for the baby. He would pay the nursery fees</p>
<p>After I became pregnant, I did not want to go back to school. My mother told me to go back. The father of my baby questioned why I was returning.</p>
<p>He did not really care either way. He did not tell me not to go to school. He just did not care. If I went, I went, if I did not go, I did not go. However, he did not discourage me.</p>
<p>He left the island for Grenada when I was pregnant. Tried to find him, but like he disappeared.</p>
<p>My boyfriend now, he supports everything, every aspect of my life. He gives me a lot of advice and encouragement. Even though I would be vex at times when I look back. He helped me a lot. When I was pregnant we were not together, he was still there throughout the entire pregnancy. He did not want me to stop 6th form. As I said, at a point in time I just got tired of it. He pushed me to continue.</p>
<p>After our baby was born, he would keep the baby and then come to collect me from classes.</p>
<p>Before the pregnancy he was supportive. He did not really want me to go to school because I had to put on the belt and the children in the bus stand and thing. He was concerned with me being hit or hurt while the other children were running around and thing. Like now we always arguing and got problems. Things are not like before, but we still talk. He does not really help and doesn't seem to care about my education</p>
<p>He tells me that I can do it,, I can do better. Sometimes I would just get up and night and cry and the only number I call is his. He listens to me crying and tells me it is okay. He says lets pray about it. He is there for me.</p>
<p>I did not have any support from my family. I lived in a shelter at the time. My mother was not supportive at all.</p>
<p>My mother had passed away, I live with my siblings. Sis assists me with baby. Sometimes she bathes and dresses the little girl, I really appreciate her.</p>

<p>My father is in Canada. I would like to go and do the dentist course there but he said when he gets a house... He encourages me to remain focus. He told me I can come to Canada and do the dentists course there.”</p>
<p>My grandmother especially helped. She went out of her way to get me the things I needed for school like school bags and clothes. Everything I need to go back to 6th form. If not for her I was not going back, I was going to look for a job.</p>
<p>The principal, Mr. Browne, would encourage me to get to school early. He would help me to do any test that I had missed. He encouraged me to try to get a skill. The guidance counsellor, Mrs. Arthur really helped me through some difficult times. Mrs. Arthur was always there for me, telling me that I can succeed. I think it is because of her that I want to be a social worker. Even though I was pregnant and should have been at home, the school, the principal allowed me to continue as I had already paid for my examinations.</p>
<p>I had support from the Head teacher, friends and teachers. Teachers would come to me and say that they happy to see me out, to see me still at school. They would tell me to come to them if I didn't understand something or had problems with assignments. I was prepared to drop out. Then my head teacher, Mr. Dash, called me in the office a time. This man quarreled with me for over a whole hour.. I brought in (submitted) all my course work the next day, every one! The parts I could not get done, he sat with me and told me to write in something. Even though it wasn't much, I may still earn a little one or two marks he told me. He told me to make sure I get all my information in.</p>
<p>My teachers were there for me all the time.</p>
<p>They just help me with things I didn't know and things I didn't understand at that time...so that I would not have to stress out about it. They (teachers) did not give me any pressure. One of my teachers is trying to get me to work in the government polyclinic as a dental assistant.</p>
<p>When I went back to school, cause I went back late, my form teacher kept all my assignments for me.</p>
<p>My year head told me, it happened already. You are not the first nor will you be the last to get pregnant in school. The important thing is to focus on getting your CSECs</p>
<p>One teacher took me to the supermarket, she said you can't be eating junk, you have to eat healthy foods like green leafy vegetables for you and the baby to be strong, you have to feed your brain you know. After the baby was born, my teachers encouraged me to return to school. One teacher tried to help me get the baby in a government nursery so that I could come to class.</p>
<p>One school friend in particular was there with me while I was pregnant and after the baby was born. A school teacher was with me throughout the pregnancy and was my son's</p>

Godmother and stayed to help and support me throughout until she died.
After I had my little boy, I did not go back to the school. Mrs. Holder arranged for me to attend the Barbados O- level Institution. She paid for my classes and got sponsorship to help me with items for school and things for the baby.
For the summer holidays the guidance counselor got me an internship at the probation department.