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Sandra Fonseca

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

Ph.D. (Education)

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An Analysis of Discourses within the Context of School-linked Integrated Services
for Pregnant and Parenting Young Women

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Janice Ahola-Sidaway

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS (EXAMINATRICES) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS EXAMINERS

Sharon Abbey

Cynthia Morawski

Richard Maclure

Ann Denis

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

**AN ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF
SCHOOL-LINKED INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR
PREGNANT AND PARENTING YOUNG WOMEN**

By

Sandra Fonseca

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

In North America, over the years, varying historical, social and political discourses have been dominant in constructing the problem of teenage pregnancy and parenthood. In contemporary Canada, teen (single) parenting is framed as a social problem that needs to be solved. To understand the nature of the problem, it is important to examine the shifting social and political imperatives that shape and define teen motherhood.

This study was situated within the context of school-linked integrated services that provide a host of interventions to support these young women and their children. Using an instrumental, collective case study design, this study examined three sites (Centres) that utilized a holistic, collaborative approach providing services that ranged from a schooling program, parenting courses, daycare, social assistance services, counseling as well as other varied programs.

The study used a conceptual context derived from the academic and professional literature in the following three relevant areas: Foucault's poststructuralist theory of discourse and power, interventions within neo-liberal social welfare reforms, and interagency collaboration. The guiding research questions were as follows: Firstly, to understand how the teen/young mothers are perceived by frontline staff and how the teen/young mothers perceive themselves in the midst of prevailing discourses; secondly, to explore how staff at the Centres intervene to assist the teen/young mothers with the competing demands of schooling, mothering and work/life preparation; and thirdly, to examine how collaboration takes place among frontline staff to enhance the success and well-being of the teen/young mothers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine teen/young mothers and fifteen frontline staff at three multi-service centers. Data were also collected through participant observations and Centre documents such as evaluation reports, annual reports, brochures and newsletters.

The findings of this study revealed that the young women were mostly constructed within dominant discourses of 'risk', 'resilience', 'stigma', 'infantilization' and 'welfare dependency'. The front line staff demonstrated immense tact and sensitivity in intervening in the lives of the young women; and the interventions helped to ameliorate the negative impact of inadequate economic, social, and economic resources. A closer look at the collaborative approach highlighted several factors that hindered as well as facilitated collaboration. The young mothers in this study emerged as resilient and hopeful as their voices conveyed their struggle to balance motherhood and schooling.

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Chapter One: Introduction

CAPULET

But saying o'er what I have said before:
My child is yet a stranger in the world;
she hath not seen the change of fourteen years,
let two more summers wither in their pride,
ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

PARIS

Younger than she are happy mothers made.

CAPULET

And too soon marr'd are those so early made.

Romeo and Juliet Act I Scene II. William Shakespeare, (c. 1594)

The above quotation is aptly utilized by Lawlor and Shaw (2002) to illustrate the fact that the question of the right age for motherhood was always a contentious issue and continues to be so in the present times. In contemporary North American society, teen single pregnancy and parenting (mostly done by poor mothers) is commonly discussed as a social problem. Although the issue of teen/young motherhood is not a recent phenomenon, “what is new is *single parenting* by larger numbers of these very young mothers” (Wong and Checkland, 1999, p. xv, italics in original). This reflects the growing trend among young pregnant teens to choose adoption far less frequently than the generations before (Caragata, 1999; Kelly, 1999) and to keep their children despite their single parent status. However, the public perception of the ‘problem’ of teen/young mothers has barely changed and, “even in a climate that is perceived to be liberalizing, [teen

mothers] continue to be made scapegoats, blamed for a variety of negative social trends” (Kelly, 2000, p. 2) and are “highly visible in the public imaginary and in political rhetoric about what is wrong” in society (Lutrell, 2003, p. 3).

Also, as Pittaway (2005) comments, there is a tendency to attach the word ‘problem’ to the subject of teen pregnancy and parenting which reinforces the negative stereotypes and images attached to single parenthood. Many questions arise over why the ‘problem’ of teen mothers is a problem at all, and there are no simple answers. Kelly (2000) points out that the term ‘teen mother’ is not quite a clear finite group. Kelly further questions, “Who counts as a teen mother? A married 19-year old? A 12 year old made pregnant by an abusive father? A 20-year old still attending high school? A teenager who places her baby for adoption?” (Kelly, 2000, p. 26). Therefore one would have to define exactly who the term “teen mother” refers to, since the term does not represent a homogenous category. The use of such a generalized label creates a false sense of uniformity.

The issue of teen pregnancy and parenting is complex and, as Pillow (2004) explains, has been characterized according to different political and social needs at various times in history. Nathanson (1991) suggests that in order to understand what and who makes the issue of teen pregnancy problematic, how the government should intervene and on whose behalf (the teen mother, her child, or society), one has to examine the shifting social context that defines and redefines the problem of teen pregnancy.

During the first half of the twentieth century, as social views about the nature of schooling, conceptions of adolescence, the extent of premarital sexual activity, and early childbearing evolved, pregnancy and parenthood involving adolescents began emerging as a social ‘problem’ in North America. By the second half of that century, the spotlight turned on

teenage childbearing as issues such as sexuality, abortion, family values and social welfare policy took center stage within public discourse (Luker, 1996; Nathanson, 1991; Rhode and Lawson, 1993; Vinovskis, 2003).

In Canada, in the mid 1990s, major shifts and several reforms in federal social welfare policies brought changes related to social assistance. This restructuring of social welfare policies at the federal level led to revisions in social welfare policies at the provincial level in Ontario. This allowed new learnfare programs (part of welfare-to-work programs that emphasize education or training) for teen mothers to emerge under the Ontario Works Act (Bashevkin, 2002). The Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program is a targeted learnfare strategy of the Ontario Works Employment Assistance Program, which encourages teen parents on social assistance to complete their schooling as a first step to achieving self-sufficiency. Administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, LEAP is designed to help young parents aged 16-21 to graduate from high school (Government of Ontario, 1999). Since the year 2000, the LEAP program has supported the schooling of teen mothers in Ontario.

Teen mothers, like all mothers, have needs that cross roles, disciplines, and discourses (Pillow, 2004, p. 219) and so schools, social service and other agencies have to adopt an integrated approach to fulfill the multiple needs of the teen/young mother. Schools remain the primary and frontline service providers implementing the educational component of the LEAP program. Educators and other school personnel are involved in making daily decisions that impact the lives of teen mothers. Yet the literature reveals that educators seldom take the lead in developing educational policy and programs for teen mothers (Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004). Educators, despite their key frontline position, have not been at the center of research and policy

construction regarding teen/young mothers, relying instead on experts in other fields (Burdell, 1998).

The schooling circumstance of the teen/young mother in high school is subject to multiple and complex influences and interpretations. Teen/young mothers struggle to balance the complex interactions and competing demands within and across family and school in which they are simultaneously involved. For their part, frontline service providers operating within and across schools and social welfare institutions serve to define and interpret the needs of teen/young mothers.

Exploring the range of discourses surrounding teen/young mothers from the perspectives of the frontline staff and the teen/young mothers themselves, this study attempts to understand the complex challenges and dilemmas encountered by the teen/young mothers as they try to study and parent at the same time. Reflecting on how certain discourses surrounding the teen mothers become dominant also enables us to recognize the silenced and marginalized discourses.

Creating supportive environments for pregnant and parenting young women, most of whom are on social assistance, can be a challenging task. This study also sheds light on how the school and social welfare systems respond, intervene, and collaborate to help the teen mother with educational, social, economic, and parenting supports. Listening to the voices of the frontline staff and the individual young mothers themselves within the context of school-linked integrated services¹, will provide insights that will help us to understand the complexities of the

¹ “‘School-linked integrated services’ describes programs in which schools are equal partners along with other human service agencies involved in the collaborative arrangement; services can be delivered at the school or at a site located near the school” (Smrekar & Mawhinney, 1999, p. 458).

lives of the young women from varied perspectives. This knowledge will assist in the development of necessary educational and other supports for pregnant and parenting young women. As Letherby (2002) emphasizes, teen/young mothers constitute a “group that is not inactive or inarticulate” and suggests that we need to listen and take into account the perspectives of the young women.

Pilat (1997, p. 187) asserts, “Adolescent parenting is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be lived”. These words emphasize the need for a realistic look at the lives of these young women with a non-judgmental lens. In order to understand the context of their lives as mothers and students, I consider the perspectives of the young women themselves and the perspectives of the service providers supporting them. Through a study conducted at multi-service centers that offer school-linked integrated services for teen/young mothers, I explore the discourses associated with teen pregnancy and parenting within the context of schooling and examine the interventions implemented by frontline service staff, who utilize a multidisciplinary collaborative approach to sustain supportive environments for these young women.

Organization of the Dissertation

In addition to this introductory chapter (Chapter One), this text also includes seven additional chapters. Chapter Two discusses the academic and professional literature relevant to the conceptual context of the study. It situates the study within the literature linked to the following three pertinent areas: poststructuralist theory of discourse and power, interventions within neo-liberal social welfare reforms, and interagency collaboration. The poststructuralist

theory of discourse is useful to appreciate numerous discourses that work to construct the subject of “teen mothers” in society in general and within the context of schooling, through an exploration of the authoritative, marginalized, silent, and absent discourses. Amid the background of neo-liberal social welfare ideology and welfare reform, this study analyzes the types of programs and interventions that emerge in response to the perceived needs of teen/young mothers. Within the context of school-linked integrated services, the study examines the multidisciplinary collaborative approach in service provision within the context of school-linked integrated programs. The chapter concludes with a purpose of the study and the research questions.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used to guide this dissertation study. The various components of this chapter address the methodological framework, the rationale for the use of a qualitative approach, site selection, data collection strategies and selection of participants, activities and processes. It concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, data analysis, trustworthiness, and the role of the researcher in this study.

Chapters Four, Five and Six focus on the findings derived from the data obtained in the study. The findings are related to the three main areas of the study: the construction of teen/young mothers, interventions within a neo-liberal context, and the collaboration efforts of service providers within school-linked integrated services. The subheadings in each chapter address the various themes that emerged from an analysis of the interviews with the staff and the teen/young mothers and by insights gleaned from participant observations and other multiple data sources.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the implications of the findings of the study. It examines the findings of the study along three dimensions: the contribution of the findings to the

understanding of the research questions; the support the findings provide for the existing literature in the field; and the gaps and inconsistencies in the literature that are evident through a discussion of the findings.

Chapter Eight serves as a conclusion to the study. It brings all the pieces of the study to a close. It considers key themes and insights that emerged from this study and presents thoughts for reflection.

Chapter Two: The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Despite the current declining rates of teen births in developed countries of the West, teenage motherhood continues to receive attention and teen mothers are viewed as a problem. This view according to Wilson and Huntington (2005) highlights the point that “changing social and political imperatives” shape the perception of the role of women in society (p. 5). The contemporary construction of teen motherhood as problematic is generally articulated through a range of discourses that inform the policies and interventions addressing the problem of teenage motherhood. For the pregnant and parenting young women, discourses in the medical, religious, legal, governmental, and other spheres present a “mine field of competing interests”, influencing their lives in many ways (Lutrell, 2003, p. 25).

The literature on teen pregnancy and parenting is considerable, extending into the medical, social, legal and psychological spheres. For the purpose of this study, which focuses on how the schooling of pregnant and parenting teens is supported within school-linked integrated programs, the conceptual context is derived from the academic and professional literature in the following three relevant areas: poststructuralist theory of discourse and power, interventions within neo-liberal social welfare reforms, and multidisciplinary collaboration challenges.

The first element of the conceptual framework utilizes the poststructuralist theory of discourse and power to understand the present-day constructions of teen/young mothers within the context of school-linked integrated services, formulated through the discourses of the staff and the teen mothers themselves, and understood to have a tremendous impact on the everyday lives of the teen/young mothers (Kelly, 2000; Lutrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004). Discourses on the

subject of teen mothers are often contradictory and require analysis, but they nonetheless play an important part in shaping the life prospects of the young women (Kelly, 2000).

The second element of this framework explores the interventions that support the education, training, or employment of teen/young mothers within the context of neo-liberal social welfare reforms. Present day Canadian social welfare reforms embrace a neo-liberal model (Lightman, 2003). In Ontario, partnerships between school boards, social service agencies and community based organizations support school-linked integrated services to help pregnant and parenting young women experience successful life outcomes.

The final element of the conceptual framework explores collaboration efforts between service providers from different disciplines within the context of school-linked integrated service provision. Examining service provision within multi-service settings will shed light on the facilitating factors that support collaboration among service providers as well as the barriers that hinder the process. Each of the three elements of the conceptual context is explored below.

Poststructuralist Theory

The first element of the conceptual context draws from the poststructuralist theory of discourse and power in order to understand how language in the form of conflicting discourses has given rise to various constructions of individual subjects. As Lye (1996) postulates, “poststructuralism is not [one] theory, but a set of theoretical positions, which have at their core a self-reflexive discourse which is aware of the tentativeness, the slipperiness, the ambiguity, and the complex interrelations of texts and meanings” (p. 1). The term ‘poststructuralist’ is generally applied to a range of theoretical positions derived from the work of Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Althusser, Lyotard, and Foucault, among others, who share certain fundamental assumptions

about language, meaning and subjectivity. Weedon (1987) explains that the basic assumption of poststructuralism is, “that language, far from reflecting an already given social reality, constitutes reality for us” (p. 22) and “offers various discursive subject positions” (p. 25). In the present study, I draw upon Foucault’s theory of discourse and power to explore how teen mothers are constructed in present day discourses in general and specifically within the context of schooling. Foucault’s concept of power illustrates the shifting nature of power in a network of relations within which teen mothers are situated.

Foucault’s Theoretical Concepts

Foucault theorizes that his “work is not a system of ideas or general theory”, so for instance, he states that when he uses the term discourse, it “is not rooted in a larger system of fully worked-out theoretical ideas, but is rather one element in his work” (Mills, 2004, p. 15). Mills further explains, “Foucault is not interested in which discourses are true or accurate representations of the ‘real’”, but in how choices are made about the truth (p. 17). Gubrium and Holstein (2000) clarify that “the Foucauldian project, in contrast, [to a traditional theoretical framework that explores the ‘why’ question], aims to answer how it is that individual experience comes to be understood in particular terms such as these” (p. 495). Furthermore Mills (2004) states that Foucault is concerned with the mechanics whereby one discourse becomes dominant, supported, and respected, “whereas the other is treated with suspicion, and sited metaphorically and literally at the margins of society.” (p. 17). Foucault’s notion of power describes how power does not reside within individuals but is dispersed throughout social relations. It produces certain forms of behavior as well as restricts behavior.

Foucault’s Theory of Discourse. Foucault (1972) explains that discourses are not “mere intersections of things and words, an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, colored

chain of words” (p. 48). Rather, they are “practices that systematically form the objects [and subjects] of which they speak” (p. 49). Though subjects participate actively in reflexive discourses (practices) that construct them, they do not create these practices, but “they are patterns that [s] he finds in his [or her] culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him [or her] by his [or her] culture, his [or her] society and his [or her] social group” (Foucault, 1988, p. 11). Gubrium and Holstein (2000) discuss how socially encompassing discourses are powerful because they appear natural that “even the weak ‘powerfully’ participate in the discourse that defines them as weak” (p. 495). However Sawicki (1991) suggests that Foucault’s subjects are “neither entirely autonomous nor enslaved” (p. 104), suggesting the possibility of resistance to dominating discourses. Foucault’s theory of discourse reminds us that institutions such as law, medicine, social welfare, family, and education play an important role in the way they characterize and govern individuals (Foucault, 1978).

Foucault’s Theory of Power. Foucault’s complex notion of power illuminates its negative aspects in terms of the restricting, controlling, and normalizing effects as well as the positive aspects of power in terms of it producing new things, ideas, relations, discourses, and resistance (McLaren, 2002; Scheurich and McKenzie, 2005). According to Foucault, power exists and operates on the interpersonal, micro-political level, as well as the structural macro-political level. However, within the social field, “individuals or groups do not possess power but rather occupy various and shifting positions in this network of relations – positions of power and resistance” (Sawicki, 1991, p. 80). Resistance to power comes through new discourses producing new truths. These discourses may be counter discourses, which oppose dominant truths, or reverse discourses, which shift the balance of power (McLaren, 2002).

Feminism and Foucault

Foucault's ideas about the body, power and subjectivity can be useful theoretical resources for feminists (McLaren, 2002). Foucault was not essentially a feminist and his work does not address gender issues, only touching marginally on the question of the "hysterization of women" (Foucault, 1978, p. 121). However, the decision to utilize a Foucauldian perspective to carry out a feminist analysis of teen mothers within the present study is based on the relevance of his work on discourse theory, "particularly productive because of its concerns with theorizing power" (Mills, 2004). Many feminists (Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 1988; Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Smith, 1990; Mills, 1991; Sawicki, 1991; McNay, 1992; Thornborrow, 2002) have explored the use of Foucault's discourse theory, extending it from its original Foucauldian usage. To illustrate how feminists have utilized Foucault's ideas, I provide some examples.

For instance, Bartky (1988) and Bordo (1988) extend Foucault's analysis of the disciplined body to women. Bartky (1988) demonstrates how discourses and disciplinary practices form and shape the feminine body; how cultural norms support disciplinary practices and vice versa. Bartky further explains how women engage in various disciplinary practices such as exercise, dieting, cosmetic surgery, and so on to produce slender, shapely bodies that are acceptable in the current dominant western culture. Thus, her examples highlight how oppressive patriarchal social norms are not simply imposed from outside, but are internalized by women and normalized in society. Bordo (1988) applies Foucault's ideas about the body as a site of cultural inscription and social control to account for the experiences of women. She discusses the specific ways in which culture constructs and pathologizes femininity by exploring three pathological forms affecting women that emerged from different historical periods: hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia. In these ways, Bartky and Bordo apply Foucault's concepts of discipline and power to

show how discourses construct the feminine body. Pillow (2000) extends Foucault's formulation of the social body as regulated, inscribed, and docile to focus on the pregnant female body as a site of disciplinary power and resistance. She draws attention "to how teen girls experience and use their pregnant bodies as sites of resistance" (Pillow, 2000, p. 201), to challenge stereotypical expectations of pregnant teens and to speak about their bodies, sex and pleasure. Smith (1990) uses the notion of a 'discourse of femininity' to emphasize that women are not passive, compliant subjects. Smith explains, "To explore femininity as discourse means a shift away from viewing it as normative order, reproduced through socialization, to which women are somehow subordinated. Rather femininity is addressed as a complex of actual relations vested in texts" (1990, p. 63). Thus women are portrayed as actively constructing positions for themselves. Smith examines these positions from the standpoint of a text. While many feminists have drawn extensively on Foucault's work, they have simultaneously acknowledged the limitations of its use for feminism. Sawacki (1991) in speaking about the usefulness of Foucauldian thinking for feminism posits that feminists can strategically utilize aspects of Foucauldian insights that are appropriate, disregarding potentially 'risky' aspects, such as Foucault's emphasis on self-refusal and displacement that could undermine and repudiate the feminist movement. Sawicki further adds that Foucault abhorred dogmatic impositions of theory and hence it would be "tragically ironic if his discourse were dogmatically imposed on feminism" (1991, p. 109).

Discourses of Teen/Young Mothers – Past and Present

In terms of the present study, these principles of poststructuralism, especially Foucault's theory of discourse and power, are useful to appreciate numerous discourses that work to construct the subject of 'teen mothers' in society in general; and within the context of schooling through an exploration of the authoritative, marginalized, silent, and absent discourses.

Furthermore, Foucault's concept of power as productive is a valuable way to examine how the teen/young mother and the frontline service providers resist powerful discourses in their day-to-day interactions at the micro level.

Throughout the last century and into the present times, dominant discourses have made assumptions about the nature of the teen/young mother. Foucault's discourse theory is useful to understand how teen pregnancy and motherhood have been constructed within the dominant discourse at various times in North American history. Normative perceptions of motherhood have shifted according to the changing social, political, psychological, and cultural orientations regarding the role of women in [Western] countries (Pillow, 2004; Wilson & Huntington, 2005). Mothers who deviated from the normative expectations of motherhood were vilified and considered as 'problem' mothers. Though teenage pregnancy and childbearing caused problems in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century, Harari and Vinovskis (1993) explain that teens were not viewed as a separate group and solutions were found in a quick marriage. Teenage motherhood emerged as problematic in the early twentieth century as "adolescence" was conceptualized as an important developmental period between childhood and adulthood (Harari & Vinovskis, 1993, p. 23). In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, teenage pregnancy was perceived as a major social problem, though the reasons had less to do with the problem itself than with "a cluster of volatile issues involving sexuality, abortion, family values, and welfare policy" (Rhode, 1993, p. 311).

In the present times, in countries such as the U.S. and Canada, pregnant and mothering teens have become scapegoats for social concerns with negative images of teen mothers "refracted through lenses of gender, sexuality, class and race" (Kelly, 2000, p. 42). Social concerns about teen motherhood, argue Wilson and Huntington, (2005) are mostly expressed

through interconnected discourses of “welfare dependency and social exclusion, and legitimized through scientific discourses” (p. 60). Teen motherhood by operating outside the “norm of legitimate reproduction” (Pillow, 2003, p. 202) is described as a paradox to the state for fulfilling their reproductive obligations as female citizens, but not in the appropriate way (Cusick, 1989). Teen mothers more specifically have also been characterized as ‘children having children’, ‘bad girls’, ‘stupid sluts’ and ‘neglectful mothers’ (Kelly, 2000; Lutrell, 2003). Labels such as ‘wanton vixens’, ‘fallen women’ and ‘welfare queens’ reflect some of the changing conceptions of teen mothers (Luker, 1996; Pillow, 2004; Vosko, 2002).

Discourses of Teen/Young Mothers and Schooling

Pillow (2004), in an analysis of the U.S. context, describes how “the provision of education to school-age mothers occurs within a social, political, economic, and moral climate” (p. 57). Kelly (2000) explains that the educational policies in the U.S and Canada are similar in excluding pregnant and mothering students from mainstream schooling. Little (1990) points out that educational policy in Canada has been and continues to be influenced by important U.S. judicial rulings and legislation, though historically Canadians have not used legal avenues to counter discriminatory school practices. The dominant discourses on teenage pregnancy, which have influenced the education for pregnant and mothering teens, are now explored.

Medical Discourse. In the U.S and Canada, a ‘medical’ discourse pathologizing teenage pregnancy has dominated the discussion related to the education of pregnant and mothering teens. Pillow (2004) describes what she refers to as “discourses of contamination” to demonstrate that teen mothers were physically separated from the regular school setting based on the belief that “the presence of a sexually active female student (as a pregnant student or as a mother) will contaminate the student body leading to an epidemic of immoral and promiscuous behavior” (p.

63). This contamination discourse resonates in much of the research on the schooling of teen mothers described since the early twentieth century. It was generally used to expel and exclude the teen/young mother from school. Vinovskis (2003), in an analysis of the historical perspectives on adolescent pregnancy and education in the U.S., presents evidence of the contamination discourse from the 1950s and 1960s, describing how pregnant girls and young mothers were forced to leave school because of the fear that their presence would negatively affect their classmates. Administrators feared, for example, that school age mothers, married or not, would, by their very presence, prompt discussions about sexuality that were “considered undesirable for unmarried girls to hear” (McGowan, 1959, p. 487). Kelly (1993) reports that not all teenage mothers faced expulsion, and evidence suggests that some married teenage mothers were quietly accommodated individually in continuing education and adult schools. By accommodating teen mothers in separate settings, teen pregnancy constructed within a contamination discourse was controlled and contained. The school policy decisions in this regard were not challenged. Few policy makers or even parents protested the termination of the education of these young women because women were not generally expected to have fulltime careers outside of the home (Luker, 1996; Vinovskis, 1988). The discourse of contamination continues to permeate current day debates on teen mothers (see Kelly; 2000; Pillow, 2004; Vinovskis, 2003), as pregnant and parenting young women are overtly or covertly directed to alternative school settings.

A discourse of teen pregnancy as an ‘epidemic’ began to circulate with the U.S. publication of the 1976 Alan Guttmacher Institute’s highly influential report entitled – *Eleven million teenagers: What can be done about the epidemic of adolescent pregnancies in the United States?* The report played a significant role in convincing the media, the public and policy

makers that there was an unprecedented epidemic of adolescent pregnancy in the mid-1970s— even though the demographic evidence on teenage pregnancy suggested otherwise (Vinovskis, 2003). Federally funded initiatives in the U.S. like Title IX, passed in 1972 and effective in 1975, occurred in a climate of an epidemic discourse, and schools were mandated to provide teenage mothers with equal education opportunities. Schools could no longer expel students but they used the ‘epidemic’ discourse to support practices of separation and containment.

Situated within the medical discourse, Pillow (2004) utilizes two metaphors, “pregnancy as a cold and pregnancy as a disability/disease” to describe the educational approaches to school age mothers (p. 83). Her characterization of “teenage pregnancy as a cold” (p. 83) attempts to explain how it allows educators to treat the pregnant teen as any other student with a cold, thereby viewing pregnancy as a temporary inconvenience that goes away and allows one to return to normal conditions. Lutrell (2003) explains that it was the “showing” of the pregnancy that caused the most conflict in the school context (p. 18). On the one hand, this discourse seems to support the work of feminists in that it dispels the notion that pregnancy diminishes a woman’s intellectual and physical capabilities; on the other hand, it meant that schools could easily deny additional supports needed by the teen mother in school such as those related to attendance, make-up work, more bathroom breaks or suitable chairs/desks. Educators used this approach to defend policies of non-accommodation of pregnant teens in schools, and any issues like harassment by students and teachers were ignored or considered as reasons for suggesting home schooling (Pillow, 2004). Thus pregnant teens were subject to subtle discrimination under seemingly benign discourses of equal education opportunity.

Pillow (2004) portrays how the approach of “pregnancy as a disability/disease” constructs the pregnant teen as having special needs, thus allowing for the provision of special

services (2004, p. 83). She further explains that special accommodations for the pregnant/mothering student were only provided if they were labeled as deficient or disabled. Pillow (2004) emphasizes that this only “reinforces understandings of the teen mother as deficient, inadequate, and feeds into contamination discourses, furthering ideological practices of separation and exclusion” (p. 101). She argues that such discourses supporting exclusionary practices of providing an education for teen mothers in alternative, segregated setting were thus justified as being in the interests of the teen mother, student body and the community.

Discourse of Infantilization. The “discourse of infantilization” (Clark, 1994, p. 33) is utilized to portray teenagers as children, immature and dependent and thus not ready for childbearing. In the late 19th and early 20th century, adolescence came to be viewed as a separate and distinct phase of life. Adolescence was believed to be a time to prepare for future motherhood, and teen/young mothers seemed to have moved into the adult domain of motherhood at a time when they were not socially constructed as adults (Phoenix, 1993). This view is in contrast to earlier times when teen/young women were seen to be successfully participating in marriage, childbearing and parenting within societal norms. Caragata (1999) explains that teen pregnancy viewed in the context of the sharp child-adult divide, challenges our notions of childhood innocence and the adult status of parenthood.

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the phrase ‘children having children’ came into general use, and teenage pregnancy came to be viewed as a social problem (Luker, 1996). This “discourse of infantilization” had been used previously to degrade single mothers of all ages, especially low-income, racial and ethnic minority women, as incapable of making their own independent decisions (Kelly, 2000, p.31, citing Clark, 1994). Though the phrase ‘children having children’ has prevailed in the public mind in reference to teenage mothers, in reality

women aged 18 or 19 years account for two thirds of births to teenagers in Canada as well as the United States (Rhode & Lawson, 1993). The discourse of infantilization continues to be used to stigmatize the life choices of teenage mothers and portrays them as victims. Thus the discourse of infantilization supports practices of separation and containment, and it bears elements of the contamination discourse. It reinforces the notion of schooling as being fit for certain individuals and groups and recognizes 'adolescence' as a distinct phase of life.

Discourses of Risk and Resilience. Within present day discourses teenage mothers are considered to be a significant troubled or troublesome subgroup within at-risk adolescent populations, especially at high risk of not graduating from high school. Research shows that certain populations or subgroups such as teenage parents, young homeless, addicts or those with mental health problems are considered as discrete populations of youth at risk (Bunting & McAuley, 2004a, 2004b; Stevens, 2004) and deemed 'more vulnerable' through exposure to multiple risk factors (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2000). On one hand, research on the issue of teen mothers and education showed that teen childbearing negatively affected their educational achievement (Littlejohn, 1998). On the other hand, Probert and MacDonald (1999) suggest that motherhood was an experience that renewed young women's commitment to education, thus highlighting their resilience in spite of stressful conditions. In the present times, teen mothers, along with other vulnerable groups, are generally constituted within broad discourses of risk and resilience.

The present study attempts to remain sensitive to the discourses surrounding teen mothers and schooling. In this research, I consider the range of competing discourses that provide an understanding of the way the teen mothers see themselves and the way they are seen by others. Furthermore, the study will shed light on the prevailing dominant, marginalized, and silenced

discourses that serve to construct the teen/young mothers and impact the interventions chosen to assist the teen/young mothers within the context of schooling.

Interventions within NeoLiberal Social Welfare Reforms

The second element of the conceptual context situates the teen mother within the larger context of the Canadian welfare state and considers the interventions against a backdrop of neo-liberal social welfare reform policies. Kelly (2003) argues that for adults today, youth are a growing cause for concern and this concern “translates into a raft of interventions, strategies and programs that target young people” (p. 1). He further states that these interventions whether planned or otherwise, may perhaps have negative consequences for individuals or populations of young people. McGrath (2002) cautions that in neo-liberal styled countries such as the U.S, Britain, and Canada, policy interventions can be regulatory and punitive through mandatory welfare-to-work programs. He advises, however, that such interventions need not have harsh controlling overtones but can be empowering by recognizing the individual needs of young people. McGrath further suggests, “there is a need to reclaim the more positive and enabling aspects of socially inclusive policy interventions aimed at young people” (2002, p.1). Schoon and Bynner (2003) support a resilience framework within which the positive strengths of young people are recognized over their deficits.

Neo-liberal Social Welfare Discourses

Present day Canadian social welfare reform embraces a neo-liberal model (Lightman, 2003). Three common striking features of the neo-liberal reform are 1) “work-tested” social benefits that push social assistance recipients to participate in education or training in order to be eligible for assistance; 2) “taxified or fiscalized” social policy that pay child tax benefits through

the tax system only to low-income employed parents, thus denying parents on welfare the same benefit; and 3) “economic or market-tested citizenship” that values worker citizenship, as opposed to an expansive social citizenship (Bashevkin, 2002, p. 116). The schooling of teen/young mothers in Ontario, where the present study was carried out, is supported by the learnfare strategy (LEAP), a part of the larger welfare-to-work initiative of Ontario Works, to help teen mothers to develop into economically self-sufficient individuals through supporting their high school education and labor market preparation.

Within the North American context, in the U.S and subsequently in Canada, teenage pregnancy became established nationally as a major social problem warranting state intervention in the early to mid-1970s (Vinovskis, 2003; Wong & Checkland, 1999). Vinovskis (2003) states that the focus, however, has always been on short term interests of decreasing teenage sexual activity and curbing unplanned pregnancies rather than strategies to address the long term needs of teen mothers. Countries such as the U.S. and Canada, embracing a neo-liberal model, have introduced considerable changes in their social welfare policies. In the U.S.A, a welfare reforms were introduced in 1996, through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). It put an end to the AFDC (Assistance to Families with Dependent Children) program and replaced it with a new block grant scheme called TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). Under the terms of the PRWORA, in order to qualify for welfare, all teenage mothers are compelled to live with their parents or another adult, identify the father of their child, and take part in some kind of education or training (Bashevkin, 2002).

In Canada, the 1966 Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP), the federal-provincial cost-sharing plan, was abolished and replaced by the block funded Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). The establishment of the CHST allowed the federal government to save money while

permitting more provincial control over social programs. Also, it paved the way for broad provincial variation in the delivery of social assistance spending programs. Vosko (2002) explains how in 1999, Ontario instituted “Canada’s first mandatory welfare-to-work program through Ontario Works” (p. 176). She further points out that like legislation in the U.S., the Ontario Works Act began to “recognize individual responsibility” and “to promote self-reliance through employment” (p. 177). Bashevkin (2002) explains that the replacement of CAP by CHST was accompanied by the introduction of a National Child Benefit, primarily for low-income employed parents, through the tax system; thus the benefit skipped parents on welfare (in eight out of ten provinces, including Ontario). She further states that “though the CHST did not contain socially invasive regulations about paternity and illegitimacy that were present in the U.S reforms” (p. 126), it still did not serve the interests of poor, disadvantaged women.

Vosko (2002) describes how similar to legislation in the U.S., the Ontario Works Act began to “recognize individual responsibility” and “to promote self-reliance through employment” (p. 177). Vosko further elaborates on the three-tiered set of social assistance programs developed through the Ontario Works Act. “The bottom tier programs entail the direct exchange of unpaid work for social assistance benefits from the government... The second-tier programs offer ‘employment supports’ which include basic education (i.e., upgrading to the maximum of a high school diploma) or job skills training in exchange for benefits and basic assistance with job searches... The top tier deals with employment placements for “employable” recipients (p. 179). The LEAP (Learning, Earning and Parenting) program falls into the second-tier type of program.

The LEAP policy, a part of the Ontario Works Employment Assistance Program, came into effect in the province in early 2000. The program aims at assisting young parents as they

make the transition from social assistance to gainful employment through education or training. LEAP is mandatory for 16 and 17 year-old custodial parents on welfare who have not completed high school and voluntary for custodial parents aged 18-21. The LEAP policy comprises three elements: Learning, Earning, and Parenting (Government of Ontario, 1999).

Against this background of neo-liberal social welfare ideology and welfare reform, this study analyzes the types of interventions that emerged to support the teen/young mothers, at the specialized multi-service centers where the study was carried out.

The Concept of an 'Intervention'

To situate the school-linked integrated programs as multidisciplinary collaboration efforts that aim to intervene in the lives of teen/young mothers, it is helpful to frame the initiatives as an intervention. Schiefelbusch (1988) explains that when we intervene we are assisting another person; and an intervention is a concept used by the helping disciplines. This indicates that professionals in the helping disciplines are knowledgeable and skilled to enter the life of an individual to improve an undesirable state. There is also the assumption that they are capable of providing the right type of intervention at the right time.

Seidman (1983) defines social intervention as a change in intrasocial relationships that may or may not be planned or intentional but has brought about social change and has had an overall impact on the quality of life in society or on the circumstances of a large number of individuals/groups. Policies, programs, and projects can all be thought of as forms of social intervention. He further explains:

Planned social intervention most often takes the form of social policy. Social policy is a plan, guideline, or principle for a course of action. Programs and projects are both operationalizations of particular social policies, however

they differ in magnitude. A program refers to the actual implementation of a policy across multiple sites, and perhaps time and setting; whereas a project tends to be much more limited and short-lived.” (p. 12).

To maximize the efficacy of social interventions, it is important to understand the needs, values and culture of the recipients at the planning stage of the interventions. In light of this notion of social interventions, I now highlight some specific examples of interventions with teen mothers that have attempted to bring about positive change.

Hart and Fishel (1998) describe the success of the interventions with teenage mothers in a project called The Adolescents in Need project that was started in 1981 as an outreach service project of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine’s Division of Community Pediatrics. Hart and Fishel explain that the project was successful because of the collaboration among various agencies and community groups and a one-to-one relationship between a professional caregiver and a client. The project focused on helping adolescents to complete their education by encouraging them to continue in school, by attempting to prevent unintended pregnancies, by involving the fathers when possible, and by providing other supports like childcare and housing.

Percy and McIntyre (2001) present the results of a pilot study designed to test an intervention developed to increase parenting self-confidence in teen mothers. Using a Touchpoints approach (Touchpoints is framework for a child development course for pregnant and parenting teens that focuses on developing trusting relationships and parental self competence), teachers focused on the strengths of the adolescents and their children. A parenting self-competence scale showed that there was a significant improvement in parenting self-competence following the intervention. Percy and McIntyre emphasize that it is important

for healthcare providers, teachers, and childcare workers interacting with teen parents, to understand that teen mothers need to feel valued and supported in order to parent their own children. This approach helps shift the intervention from a deficit model to a positive supportive model. Waller, Brown and Whittle (1999) explore the negative consequences of current remedies for teen mothers based on contemporary myths. They suggest that community volunteering and mentoring programs are cost-effective interventions that provide community members with an opportunity to take positive action, and can lead to improved biological, psychological, social, and economic outcomes for teen parents and their children.

Benson (2004) describes the critical decisions that affect adolescent futures around issues such as abortion versus childbearing, adoption versus teen parenting, continuing in school or continuing a relationship with the baby's father. After reviewing best practices, Benson concluded that individualized approaches and effective timing for interventions for pregnant adolescents could lead to better outcomes. Whitman, Borkowski, and Keogh (2001) argue that an effective intervention program with adolescent mothers should "address [the] mothers' cognitive, socio-emotional, self-sufficiency, social support, educational, and vocational needs" (p. 233); however they also stress that the components of a successful intervention should be tailored to the specific needs of the mother. They suggest that interventions should begin early and should aim to prepare adolescent mothers for the unique challenges they will face and help them to coordinate and reconcile the many roles and tasks confronting them.

Brooks-Gunn (1995) discussed the benefits associated with mother-centered programs that focus on education and job training. In the U.S., the passage of the Health Services and Centers Amendments of 1978 helped to promote a number of school-based interventions with adolescent mothers, targeting both the prevention of future adolescent pregnancies and the

support of adolescent parents. Both educational and parenting goals have been promoted as part of such interventions.

Although school-based as well as school-linked integrated programs and services vary considerably in how they are implemented, most provide some sort of alternate curriculum consisting of the required general education courses as well as courses in child development and parenting. Many programs allow the mother to bring her child to school with her, which helps to solve the mother's child-care problems, as well as providing the mother with an opportunity to learn parenting skills while interacting with her infant.

The initiatives and programs (interventions) described above were said to be successful when they focused on the individual needs of the teen/young mothers and were initiated in a timely manner. Interventions worked well when there was collaboration between the service providers. In the present study, I examine the various interventions developed to address the multiple needs of pregnant and parenting teens. An understanding of the struggles and tensions that arise will shed light on realities and complexities of service provision. The research will examine the challenges and the dilemmas facing service providers as they attempt to respond to the complex needs of the teen/young mothers.

Interagency Collaboration

The third element of the conceptual context situates the present day interventions to assist pregnant and parenting young women within the realm of collaboration within coordinated or comprehensive collaborative services for children and youth. Cibulka (1996) explains that the push towards coordinated services was part of a broader effort to rethink school, family, and community connections to help children in need. In the case of high-risk children and youth, it

was recognized that since the problems they faced were complex, any coordinated efforts would require collaboration between the disparate human service providers in health, education, social services, mental health, and so on (White and Wehlage, 1995). Knapp (1995) used the term “comprehensive collaborative services” to describe some of the coordinated efforts devised to help children and families, that include “the integration of education and human services, school-linked services, services integration, inter-professional collaboration, coordinated services for children, and family support” (p. 5).

To understand coordinated services between schools and other agencies within the North American context, I turn to Volpe (2000), who traced the origins of services integration in Canada. He explained that the first generation of children’s services school integration began in the 1800s when schools began working with health services on disease prevention strategies through the school curriculum; this extended into the 1900s and to the present efforts to integrate health, educational and social and other support services. Volpe concludes that though school-linked services were found to be largely beneficial, no single model of service delivery emerged as superior, illustrating that innovative approaches may be necessary in response to the dynamic nature of education and human service delivery. Crowson and Gardner (2002) provide an overview of coordinated services in the United States, explaining that coordinated services received a major thrust in the late 1980s and moving into the 1990s. Even amidst reports and research of major administrative problems in attempting to coordinate efforts, the notion of coordinated services continued to be popular in the twentieth century mainly in the areas of parenting education, family support and advocacy, and family health services (Driscoll, Boyd and Crowson, 1997).

As children and youth face many overlapping and interrelated problems, there continues to be a greater demand to rethink and reconceptualize coordination and collaboration efforts among human service agencies (Smrekar and Mahwinney, 1999). In fact, the needs of young people today are so varied and complex that it becomes imperative for institutions to work together as partners. Acknowledgment of this fact has led to the development of policies that encourage or require such strategies as integrated services, interagency collaboration, co-located or school-linked services, or school-community partnerships (Heath and McLaughlin, 1994). In fact, Cibulka (1996) emphasizes that there has been a renewed interest in the coordination of services as a means of improving the working relationships between schools, families, and communities. At the same time, he notes that several major tensions could hamper coordinated service efforts. These include different views on the role of schooling as academic or social, the conflicts between the professionals within the schools and outside service providers, varying assumptions about the extent of specific protection that should be offered to children and families in a modern welfare state, and competing values about whether the goal in organizing services should be efficiency or equality of opportunity.

Crowson and Boyd (1993) identify other challenges. They observe that providing integrated services poses organizational problems associated with funding, space, and facilities management. They also highlight other problems related to differing personnel and salary policies; the negotiation of new roles and relationships; the need to nurture effective leadership; the necessity of careful planning; the challenge of professional preparation programs and professional procedures with few links between them; and the issues of communication, confidentiality, and information retrieval. Research demonstrates that schools are resistant to changing practices to accommodate the demands of collaboration (Crowson & Boyd 1996;

DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Herrington, 1996; Mawhinney, 1996). When schools and other organizations attempt to provide collaborative services, complex and subtle organizational dilemmas associated with communication, control and power arise. This may be due to the fact that the organizational culture of the educational system also serves to protect professional roles and responsibilities of members. In fact, school culture is described as being highly bureaucratic; stability and control, even at the classroom level, are greatly valued. Teachers may view collaborative services as extraneous and there may be overt or subversive resistance to collaboration (Mawhinney and Smrekar, 1996; Smylie, Crowson, Chou & Levin, 1996). True collaboration necessitates a major shift in the intrinsic philosophy and work practices of individuals and organizations (Cibulka, 1996; Crowson & Boyd, 1993).

As highlighted above, researchers have been making progress in identifying potential barriers to coordination and collaboration, but many roadblocks still hamper coordination efforts. Kritek (1996) emphasizes there is a need for more case studies of coordinated service programs to provide a better understanding of the contexts in which collaboration and even basic coordination are taking place. In a similar vein, in their research on school-linked services, Crowson and Boyd (1993) recommend that more must be learned about the complexities and “deeper organizational issues implicated in collaborative ventures” (p.141). The present study will examine the collaborative efforts of the staff at the specialized centers, as they attempted to be supportive to the teen/young mothers. The study also sheds light on the barriers and tensions that arise that sometimes threaten to jeopardize collaborative endeavors.

To sum up, a range of discourses serve to construct the teen/young mothers, which has implications for the ensuing interventions provided through comprehensive collaborative

services. The triangular model provided below is helpful to see how the three elements of the conceptual framework are interrelated.

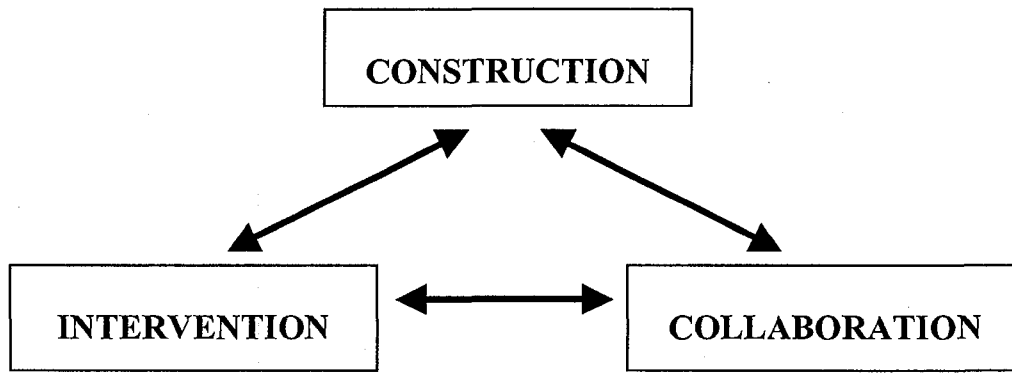


Figure 1: Triangular model of the conceptual framework

The CONSTRUCTION of the teen/young mothers in specific ways warrants a range of INTERVENTIONS to address the multiple needs of teen/young mothers. In order for the broad range of interventions to occur, it is essential for staff to work together in COLLABORATION.

Purpose of the Study

The schooling circumstance of the teen/young mother in high school is subject to multiple and complex influences and interpretations. Teen/young mothers struggle to balance the complex interactions and competing demands within and across family, school and work in which they are simultaneously involved. For their part, frontline service providers operating across schools and social welfare institutions define and interpret their needs and work collaboratively to provide support. The purpose of this study is threefold: Firstly, to explore discourses on the social and institutional constructions of teen/young mothers; secondly, to provide insights into the complexities of interventions within a neo-liberal context; and thirdly,

to explore and understand factors that facilitate collaboration as well as those that challenge collaboration between multidisciplinary groups to enhance the success and well-being of the teen/young mothers. Unless we begin to understand the complexities of the lives of the teen/young mothers, we will not be successful in intervening and providing these young people with the support that they need at a critical phase in their lives.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. How do a) front line staff perceive teen/young mothers and b) teen/young mothers perceive themselves in the light of surrounding discourses?
2. How do frontline staff intervene, to assist the teen/mothers with the competing demands of schooling, mothering and work/life preparation?
3. How does collaboration take place among frontline staff within the context of school-linked integrated services, to enhance the success and well-being of pregnant and parenting young women?

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological framework used in this study. It presents the rationale for the use of a qualitative approach, site selection, data collection strategies and selection of participants, settings, activities and processes. It concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations; data analysis; trustworthiness; and the role of the researcher in this study.

Rationale for the Use of a Qualitative Approach

The present study utilized a qualitative research design. According to Creswell (1998), “qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding... [that is suited to] explore a social or a human problem” (p. 15). The focus of the present study, which aimed at gaining a comprehensive contextualized understanding of how the needs of teen/young mothers are interpreted and supported by front line service providers (a social and human problem), led me to choose a qualitative approach. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain, “It [Qualitative research] consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). By exploring the lived experiences of the participants interviewed in the present study, I attempt to get a glimpse into their world that may provide an understanding of the meaning they make of their life experiences. Seidman (2006) sees “stories and the details of people’s lives as a way of knowing and understanding (p. 1).

The study utilized the case study as a research strategy to do an in-depth contextualized analysis of schooling within three loosely linked multi-service centers serving teen/young women who were mothers or about to be mothers. A case study approach allows for an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution,

community, or program, viewed as a bounded, integrated system (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) identifies three types of case studies, namely intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The intrinsic case study focuses on the case itself; the instrumental case study is the use of case study as an instrument to understand a specific issue; and the collective case study allows one to choose several cases to understand an issue. This study utilized the instrumental collective case study strategy, using the case of school-linked integrated programs for teen/young mothers as a vehicle to study the perspectives and experiences of teen mothers and the frontline service providers at three different multi-service centers. As explained by Stake (2005), in an instrumental case study the case “plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (p. 445).

The inquiry is informed by institutional ethnography, a feminist methodology that begins with experiences in the everyday world but goes beyond to explore the social processes (relations of ruling) that construct and organize experiences (Campbell, 1998; Campbell, & Manicom, 1995; Grahame, 1998; Smith, 1987). The focus of inquiry in an institutional ethnography is the social organization of experiences. In the present study, exploring the everyday experiences of teen/young mothers and their frontline service providers provides an entry point into the social organization of their experiences and the relations of ruling that govern those experiences. To use Babbie’s (2001) words, it “links the microlevel of everyday personal experiences with the macrolevel of institutions” (p. 287). Grahame (1998) identifies three main foci for an institutional ethnography. The first focus is the ideological practices that shape an institution. The second focus is the everyday work activities that shape institutional realities. The third focus is social relations, and involves looking at ways in which the local organization functions as part of a broader set of social relations. The present study attempts to pay attention to these foci.

The study also draws from the principles of poststructuralism, especially Foucault's theory of discourse and power, in order to analyze the discourses that work to construct the subject of 'teen mothers' by examining the perspectives of teen mothers and the frontline service providers within the present day context of schooling at three multi-service settings. Utilizing Foucault's insights on 'power', this study analyses how power circulates within a network of social relations and is resisted at the micro level. Smith (1990), extending Foucault's notion of discourse, proposes a notion of femininity as a discourse to theorize that women actively work out their subject positions and roles in the process of negotiating discursive constraints. The different viewpoints of the participant groups are analyzed amid the background of the historical, social and political discourses 'at work' that construct the subject of teen mothers, determine their needs, and help shape the educational policies, programs and practices targeting this population.

Site Selection

I accessed three specialized multi-service centers that offered specific schooling and other supports to pregnant teens and teen/young mothers. These three sites were linked together under an umbrella network that came into existence to provide services to youth at-risk. By focusing on three different sites I was able to better appreciate, at a provisional level, important in-common patterns and locally driven adaptations. Each multi-service Centre where the investigation was carried out had its own distinct environment. A description of the environment at each Centre is provided to help the reader to understand the findings of this study within the context of school-linked integrated programs. The three multi-service centers will be known

by the following pseudonyms: the Young Moms Centre, the Sisters of Hope Centre and the New Beginnings Centre.

Description of the Sites (Multi-Service Centers)

Young Moms. The Young Moms Centre is located in an airy, modern, three storey building. Beside the Centre is a small grassy playground with play structures. The building is occupied during the day by the staff, the teen/young mothers and the children, with regular school hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For visitors, entry into the Centre is monitored to protect the vulnerable population of teen/young mothers and their children. The first level is occupied by the day care that has different rooms for infants, toddlers and older children. The daycare rooms are painted in bright colours with butterflies, birds and animals on the walls. The rooms have many toys and games for the children. Adjacent to the daycare is a dining area for the children to which is attached a fairly big kitchen with modern cooking gadgets. At the rear end of the first level is the gymnasium, which also serves as a cafeteria for the young mothers during lunch hour. The second level houses the offices of the administrative staff, the counselors and the support workers. On the same level is a room designated for use by the alumni of the Centre. At the end of the corridor is also a small room that I'm told is new and is utilized for meetings or programs with young fathers. From time to time the Centre organizes workshops that include young fathers. The young mothers in school occupy the third level. The schooling section has several bright airy classrooms. The walls of the classrooms are covered with educational posters and student work. On the same level is a computer lab with new flat screen computers; a family studies room equipped with a fridge, stove, and an oven; as well as a budding library. It also has a staff room for the teachers. According to the literature on the Young Moms Centre, the overarching goal of the Centre is to ensure that the young mothers and

their children develop and grow to be self-sufficient contributing members of society (Annual Report, 2004). The staff at the Centre help the young mothers to complete courses that will earn them credits towards a high school diploma. High school credits can also be obtained through the co-operative education program that allows students to explore the world of work. All other supports in place such as the well-established daycare, counseling, parenting programs and other services are designed to assist young mothers to finish high school and become productive citizens.

Sisters of Hope. This Sisters of Hope Centre is located in a quiet residential neighbourhood. The building is surrounded by a well-tended garden. Adjacent to the parking lot is a fairly big grassy playground about the size of a football ground. From the outside, the three storeyed building looked like a regular office building. Inside, it is a cheerful looking place decorated with colorful art made by clients. The walls have posters of mothers and babies with words such as, “*My body is changing to help my baby grow*” and “*Pregnancy isn’t easy but I’m learning.*” The Centre supports several programs for pregnant women and new mothers. Workshops are also offered for young fathers from time to time. At the front office, details of the various programs are available with the receptionist. The primary goal of the Centre is to support the health and well-being of the mother and child. Its focus is on prenatal care and postnatal education. A wide array of services is offered at this Centre ranging from residential services, to school, attachment counseling, a teen obstetrical clinic, and a food bank among other services. All the programs highlight the importance of the parenting role of the teen/young mother. The parenting programs are linked to high school credits. The schooling program is held in a large classroom, part of which is separated into a teacher’s room. It has walls painted in vibrant colors. One side of the room has big glass windows, which makes the room appear spacious. The

classroom is equipped with 8 computers. In a corner is a large teacher's desk/chair, behind which hangs a bulletin board with pictures of graduates from previous years as well as pictures of the mothers and their babies. Words at the bottom of the bulletin board read as follows: "*There is a tugging in my heart to grow and blossom. This is really exciting.*" The room has comfortable sofas, recliners to lounge on, and comfortable work areas. The Sisters of Hope Centre also operates a residence for young mothers a few blocks away from the Centre.

New Beginnings. The New Beginnings Centre is located in a bustling neighbourhood with busy markets and stores. However, the building itself is an old heritage type structure, surrounded by old trees. The yard has several play structures. Inside, the place has many sunny rooms for the different programs offered at the Centre. Programs range from personal development programs, life skills programs, client advocacy, crisis and short term counseling, and the school correspondence program. At the time of the fieldwork new workshops were being developed for young fathers. The Centre also offers services such as a food bank and diaper cupboard, clothing room, breakfast and lunches, prenatal classes and prenatal nutrition programs. On one level of the building are the book and toy lending library, a daycare, and several rooms and offices for workshops and meetings. The Independent Learning correspondence program utilizes several rooms, which is the schooling component of the Centre. The Centre also has a spacious kitchen and a dining area. At the Centre, pregnant and parenting young women are offered support in many areas such as childcare, counseling and crisis management, schooling and so on. According to its literature, the goal of the Centre is to build strong, healthy family units that are able to support and sustain themselves; and to contribute to the community and be comfortable participating in their community, raising happy, healthy children.

Data Collection Strategies and Selection of Participants

As suggested by Yin (1994), in order to build an in-depth case study I utilized multiple forms of data collection such as participant observations, individual interviews, newsletters, documents, and evaluation reports of the Centres². Relying on a combination of observational data, interviews, and document analysis, as recommended by institutional ethnography approaches, also helped me to make conceptual connections within and across individuals, experiences and institutional processes (De Vault & Mc Coy, 2002).

I spent approximately 30 hours in total, over a period of about four months, conducting participant observations. As a participant observer, I was able to gain a general contextualized understanding of how the programs were experienced on a day-to-day level by observing a range of important formal and informal activities such as classes, intake interviews, parenting workshops, and graduation events. I was able to observe the service providers as they interacted with the teen/young mothers at various levels, dealing with different issues pertaining to the schooling, parenting and other needs of the young mothers.

Regarding the individual interviews, at each site I solicited student and staff participation for individual semi-structured interviews through a recruitment letters (See Appendices D and E). The recruitment letters to students were distributed by a staff representative. The recruitment letters to the staff were handed out by me. In total, nine students and fifteen frontline staff agreed to be interviewed. The fifteen key frontline service providers included teachers, student support workers, counselors, program coordinators, and directors. The interviews with the students were

² In the interests of confidentiality, the bibliographic specifics of the primary source documents from the Centres cannot be given in the references.

carried out after school. The Centres provided baby-sitting through their daycare services.

Interviews with the frontline were carried out at pre-determined time as per their convenience.

All interviews were carried out at the Centres itself, where I was provided with a private space for the interviews. Given institutional ethnography's goal of searching to discover "how local practices and experiences are tied into extended social relations or chains of action" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 755), I utilized an emergent approach to data collection more generally and interviewing more specifically (DeVault & McCoy, 2002). The semi-structured interviews that I conducted were individualized and open ended as they emerged from participant observations, previous interviews with other participants, as well as the context and the direction of the discussion. Participants were encouraged to "tell their stories", from their unique standpoint, of their experiences within the context of school-linked integrated programs. Appendix A provides a copy of the interview guides used with students and staff. The semi-structured interviews and field notes from the participant observations were recorded on audiotape and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Description of the Participants

Traditionally, in the social sciences ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm. Researchers have a tremendous ethical responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of the participants of research and to conduct research in a manner that "avoids harm of whatever sort (undue stress, unwanted publicity, loss of reputation) either in the course of data gathering and analysis or in the subsequent text" (Olesen, 2000, p. 233). With these issues in mind, I have endeavored to represent the participants in the study clearly, yet to guard their identity. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the reports and specific program names have been changed.

Fifteen frontline service providers and nine teen/young mothers were interviewed in this study. All the participants were actively involved with the multi-service Centres at the time of the interviews. All the participants were fluent in the English language. Of the nine young women in the study, seven were first-time mothers, one was a second-time mother and one was pregnant. Interestingly, three of the young women were also mothering children of their partners. Eight of the young women were white, and one was black. All were between the ages of 16 and 22. To be sensitive to the fact that the young women may not have wanted to divulge personal information about their lives and their living arrangements (they could not avail themselves of certain benefits if they lived with a partner for example), I deliberately chose not to ask for personal details, but began instead by asking them to just tell me something about themselves, giving them the freedom to choose what aspects of their lives they felt comfortable revealing. While a snapshot of each individual teen mother is provided, the service providers are not described in detail. The intent is to keep the focus on the lives of the teen mothers.

As shown in Table 1, the frontline service staff interviewed in this study consisted of two directors, one program coordinator, five teachers, two counselors, and five student support workers. All the teachers were employees of the local school boards, except for one who was paid through the LEAP funds. All the other staff who were interviewed were employees of the respective Centres. The frontline service staff had different levels of training and different areas of specialization. While each individual staff member provided a distinct service, they also worked together in pairs or teams to support the diverse needs of the teen mothers.

Table 1 lists the frontline service staff with their respective titles.

Table 1

Frontline service staff in the study

Name	Designation
1. Elizabeth	Director
2. Julia	Director
3. Kim	Program coordinator
4. Paul	Teacher
5. Chris	Teacher
6. Karen	Teacher
7. Lauren	Teacher
8. Dawn	Teacher
9. Simone	Counselor
10. Ruth	Counselor
11. Becky	Student support worker
12. Cynthia	Student support worker
13. Denise	Student support worker
14. Michelle	Student support worker
15. Margie	Student support worker

The teen/young mothers interviewed for the purpose of this study came from varied backgrounds and experiences. Table 2 summarizes the group of young women interviewed for the study.

Table 2

Pregnant and parenting teen/young women interviewed for the study

Name	Age	Children
1. Bianca	20	2 year old daughter
2. Katie	20	15 month old twin daughters
3. Reena	18	16 month old daughter
4. Cindy	18	3 month old son
5. Abby	19	Pregnant, 2 1/2 year old stepson
6. Darlene	19	3 year old daughter
7. Jill	16	2 month old son
8. Amelia	19	2 daughters age three and one
9. Susan	22	10 month old daughter

Below is a snapshot of each individual teen mother at the time of the interview.

Bianca – is 20 years old. She has a two-year-old daughter. Within six months, she will have completed all the credits required to graduate from high school. She is trying to get a government internship for nine months before she goes to college. She lives far away from the school and it takes her an hour one way, traveling by two buses to get to school. She lives with her brother and her father and says that she has a lot of support from them. She is not with the father of her child anymore, but has a lot of support from his family and states that she is really close to them. She considers herself lucky to have all this support. Reflecting back on her

decision to have a child, she says she should have waited till she was older and in a more steady, serious relationship. Bianca plans to take up advertising or to be a library information technician.

Katie – is 20 years old. She has twin daughters aged 15 months. She lives with the father of her children, whom she describes as very helpful. When her babies are sick, she says they take turns staying at home as her partner is also in school. Her major concern is that she is turning 22 soon and will not be able to attend the current school. She would have to go to adult school and find suitable daycare. For Katie, the biggest influence in her life was her own mother, who she says single-handedly raised three children. Katie plans to do journalism in college.

Reena – is 18 yrs old. She has a sixteen-month-old son. She lives by herself, close to the school. She has help from her own father who drives her to school in the winter. She also still maintains a relationship with her baby's father. She says she likes to do sports and enjoys caring for her baby. When she arrived at the school, she had no high school credits, but “overloaded herself with work, cramming everything.” She now looks forward to graduating in a year. She plans to apply to college and hopes to become a registered nurse.

Cindy – is 18 years old and has a three-month-old son. As a new mother she seems to revel in her new mothering role. Cindy has just finished high school at the Sisters of Hope. She is now a full time mother and is still connected to the Sisters of Hope where she attends various workshops and programs.

Abby – is 19 years old and pregnant with her first child. Abby is mother to a two and half year old stepson of her partner who is also her baby's father. They all live together. She explains that the decision to have a baby was planned, though she had wanted to finish high school. She was in her final year of high school when she discovered she was pregnant. She then chose to come to the Centre to finish school. At the time of the interview Abby had just graduated one

month ago from Sisters of Hope but she is still accessing the parenting-related services at the center. Abby plans to take a break after the birth of her baby and then go to college to enroll in the Early Childhood Education program.

Darlene – is 19 years old and has a three-year-old daughter. She is getting her credits by participating in the cooperative education program. She hopes to pursue a career in aesthetics. Darlene was involved in a serious relationship for two and half years, which had recently ended. Darlene is distraught and says she misses not only her partner but also her partner's little daughter whom she had mothered. She speaks about her feeling of loss at having her home broken up.

Jill – is 16 years old and has a two-month-old son. She says that the father of her baby works and is around to help her. She lived at the residence facility of the Sisters of Hope during her pregnancy. Though not enrolled in full-time school, Jill is connected to the school at one of the Centres by her participation in parenting courses through which she hopes to obtain credits. Her conversations revealed that she had a rough, unstable family life. Jill is the youngest participant in the study. She appeared at ease while handling her baby and was not shy to ask for help. Jill plans to be a counselor and wants to be able to help other youth who she says “had to grow up young”.

Amelia – is 19 years old. She has two daughters; one is three years and the other is a one year old. She is also a mother to a stepdaughter. She lives with the father of her children and stepchild and says that he helps her out. She appears to have supports from her mother and some friends whom she visits. Amelia has attended several schools since her first pregnancy. She has a learning disability and was denied admission at one teen mother program due to her weak grades.

She is currently attempting to get high school credits through independent learning courses but is not academically strong.

Susan – is 22 years old. She has a ten-month-old daughter. She maintains a cordial relationship with her child's father who visits from time to time. Prior to becoming a mother Susan had changed schools several times, dropped out for a while, and worked before she got pregnant. She is working on her last credit to graduate from high school. She wants to work, but says if she does, she won't earn enough to pay for daycare.

Ethical Considerations

The process of obtaining permission to access each site and to invite individuals to participate in the study were carried out according to the requirements of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board as well as the Research Review Committee of the school boards that oversee ethical approval of research projects under their jurisdiction (See Appendices B and C). Permission was also sought from the directors of the multi-service Centres to interview other social service personnel. Once this permission was granted, I followed all of the ethical procedures as required by the University and the School Board.

The two most important principles in ethics in qualitative research for the protection of human subject are informed consent and anonymity (Soltis, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Informed consent involves telling the people involved in the project as honestly and clearly as possible about the purpose of the project, while protecting the anonymity of participants is done by carefully assigning numbers or aliases (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002). These ethical principles were my guidelines as I conducted the study. Also, as Stake (2005) asserts, "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be

good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 459). All participants were required to sign a consent form (See Appendices F and G), indicating that they fully understood the nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time. There were no problematic issues that arose during my interviews with the young women and there were no disclosures that justified the infringement of their privacy and confidentiality; however, in hindsight, in the process of free and informed consent, it would have been preferable to indicate the extent of the confidentiality that can be promised within the context of the law.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process includes description (summaries of interviews/field notes/document contents), analysis (systematic representations of possible inter-relationships), and interpretation (the meaning and significance of what is learned) within and across organizational sites. The first step in the analysis of data is what Stake (1995) calls a narrative description, wherein the facts of the case are recorded. In analyzing and describing each case, I set the case within its context and conceptual setting. Based on the procedures advocated by Stake (1995), I began with “categorical aggregation” (p.74) by searching for a collection of instances from the data, looking for issue-relevant themes to emerge. For example, although I did not set out to explore the theme of ‘stigma’, it appeared as a prevailing theme across the data. I then examined single instances in my data and drew meanings from them without looking for multiple instances. Stake refers to this “direct interpretation” (p.74) as a process of pulling the data apart and then putting them back together in more meaningful ways. I then worked to establish “patterns” (p.78) and looked for any correspondence between two patterns or categories. For instance, there appeared to be a connection between a teen student’s

disengagement with schooling and the decision to leave school. Leaving school placed the student at risk of not achieving successful life outcomes. However, the disengagement with school could also be linked to the numerous factors that placed them “at-risk” of not achieving success in school. Thus, being ‘at-risk’ emerged as a complex factor that had multiple links and many possible outcomes. Following this, I presented my findings descriptively to facilitate the readers forming “naturalistic descriptions” (p. 85). The analytical work focused on within-case patterns first followed by a focus on in-common cross-case patterns and unique local adaptations. Throughout the data collection and analysis period, I recorded my observations on varied aspects such as my emergent understandings of the research sites, my unanswered questions, my doubts, my hunches, my assumptions and anything that I believed was worth noting. This helped me to conceptualize and understand the interconnectedness of various discourses and the interplay of different factors within the study. My analysis was mainly done by hand through mapping of the emergent ideas. (See conceptual maps in Appendix H for some examples).

Trustworthiness/Validity

To address the issue of trustworthiness or the validity of the findings in the proposed study, I utilized the idea of ‘crystallization’ proposed by Richardson (2000) that “provides a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic” (p. 934), yet, as Janesick (2000) explains, “recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life” (p. 392). By including the perspectives and experiences of the teen/young mothers as well as the perspectives and practices of different service providers, I anticipated that there might be very different versions of events, situations and activities in school. Listening to different ways of experiencing the same events, situations, and activities was helpful to

understand the complex interactions within and across family and school in which the teen/young mothers were simultaneously involved. This recognizes that there are many sides from which to view the world and “we know that there is always more to know” (Richardson, 2000, p. 934). Thus, I explored the multiple viewpoints of the diverse mix of participants in the study and utilized multiple sources of data to deepen an understanding of the study. I also used the counsel of my advisor and professional colleagues, to test hypothetical explanations, theoretical concepts and inconsistencies.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Inherent biases and shortcomings of the researcher might have an impact on the study and therefore, I identified and monitored their impact on the collection and interpretation of the data, as suggested by Merriam (2002).

Positioning oneself within a research study is a complex activity. To begin with, one has to understand different aspects of one’s identity and subjectivity that characterizes one’s positioning. It means acknowledging that possessing a situated knowledge; one understands and conceives of the world through this partial perspective. It is the understanding that “we are located and that what we know of the other is conditional upon that location as part of a relation comprehending the other’s location also” (Smith, 2005, p.30).

As I examined my own position, with a view to representing myself, I see myself in multiple locations. I am a mother, a student, an educator, a wage earner, an administrator, a woman from a privileged middle class background, a Catholic, and a Goan (from the province of Goa, in India). I am also a member of a visible minority, a woman of color. In attempting to

connect with the teen/young mothers I focused on my position as a mother and a student as I believed that this was my point of connectedness with this group. I felt that I would be able to identify with the tensions and conflicts that the teen mothers faced trying to juggle various roles and responsibilities of mothering; however, I was wary of assuming that I could ever completely understand the infinite complexities of their lives as teen mothers, living in a society that frowns upon such a status. I was also aware of the influence of my middle class and Catholic values, which are part of my identity. Being a high school special education teacher and having worked with special needs students and high-risk students, I found that I had developed an expertise and a sensitivity that was helpful in understanding how marginalized groups of students experience schooling.

Herod (1999) speaks about how the researcher can consciously manipulate her position, “on some occasions playing up social distances between researcher and interviewee, on others playing down such distances” (p. 321). Wanting to find a connection with my teen mothers, I dressed casually in jeans. I wanted to minimize the distance between the teen mother and myself. I was as wary of them as they might have been of me (a total stranger – another intruder in their lives). Initially skeptical of my motives, the teen/young mothers began to relax through the interview, though they were still guarded with their answers. In spite of my casual dress, they still regarded me as a person of some power and influence as is evident in the questions of teen/young mother. For instance, one young mother asked me if I could make a request for bigger buses. Another young mother inquired if I could obtain a school admission for her boyfriend (a teen parent). During the time I spent as a participant observer, the teen/young mothers were friendly and sometimes related to me as another member of the staff. At one of the graduation ceremonies, the young women allowed me to dress them by pinning their corsages

onto their graduation gowns and adjusting the graduation caps correctly on their heads. They appeared as nervous and excited as other young non-pregnant peers on graduation day.

When interacting with people in positions of power, I highlighted my status as an educator and a doctoral student at the University, so as to come across as a person of substance. I realized that I was more comfortable conducting interviews with the professional staff than I was interviewing the teen/young mothers. In the interviews with the young mothers who were presently students as well, many aspects of their life in school dovetailed into the private sphere. As Seidman (2006) states, “New interviewers tend to be less comfortable exploring experiences in this realm” (p. 107), perhaps explaining my anxiety about crossing personal boundaries and being yet another intruder in the lives of the young women. Again, my comfort with the staff was probably due to the fact that I was exploring a public aspect of their lives as well as my familiarity with interacting with other professionals in my role as an educator. Also, I realized that the teachers could communicate with me using educational jargon that I understood. At the same time, when working with staff from disciplines other than education, I had to ask for clarification on topics that they believed would be familiar to me.

Reflexivity is viewed as a way of dealing with the issues of positionality, wherein researchers can “seek ways of demonstrating to their audiences their historical and geographic situatedness” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p. 1027). The researcher requires a keen understanding of “what aspects of self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world” (Behar, 1996, p. 13) and as Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) write, “No textual staging is ever innocent” (p. 960). In my role as a researcher, I was cognizant of the impact of my presence, personality, and perspectives on the participants and other aspects of the research process such as the data collection and analysis of the findings. Entering into this research, I was careful to

recognize my inherent biases and endeavored to be open and sensitive to the stories and the themes that emerged.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of the research methodology utilized for this study. It first discussed the rationale for the use of a qualitative approach, and outlined site and participant selection, data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations, and an examination of my role as a researcher in this study. The next three chapters of this dissertation present the findings and the themes that emerged from this research.

Chapter Four: Findings — Constructions of Teen Mothers

To provide a secondary high school level education for teen/young mothers, it is important to understand who the school-age mother is as a student. This is particularly important if educators are to keep these young women engaged in a meaningful education that supports them as mothers and students. At present, schools are serving teen/young mothers in varied ways. In order to better understand this unique population of students at the three multi-service Centres, this chapter begins by exploring the perspectives of the staff regarding the teen mothers. The staff support the young women in different areas such as schooling, counseling, housing, social assistance, and so on. The chapter also examines the perspectives of the teen/young mothers themselves. The chapter is organized according to the various themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews, as well as from other multiple sources of data such as the participant observations, newsletters, evaluation reports, and other artifacts that helped to shed further light on the emergent themes.

Perspectives of the Staff

In the study, staff members who were interviewed interacted with the teen/young mother in different ways, depending on their specific role at the centers. This section presents how various staff members perceived the teen/young mothers.

Factors that Place the Teen/Young Mothers 'At-Risk'

In various ways, all the participating staff interacting with the teen/young mothers expressed the view that the pregnant and parenting young women were not a homogenous group. Despite many similarities, there were differences in the individual life circumstances of each

young woman. At the same time, the staff believed that they were working with a population which was, for the most part, disadvantaged in many aspects: in income, education, age, family, and social support. They spoke about how some of the young women had alcohol and drug abuse issues and had been involved with the Children's Aid Society (CAS) either due to their own troubled childhoods or as troubled parents themselves. They noted that a few young women had experienced trauma and violence through physical or sexual abuse and were in need of professional counseling. Some women had lived on the streets and had no stable housing. The individual circumstances and life experiences of each woman suggest that the needs of each individual teen/young mother were quite different.

According to the staff, the difficult life situation of the teen/young mothers seemed to predispose them to having negative life outcomes, and hence the staff considered them to be an 'at-risk' group. The director Elizabeth wrote in a recent newsletter, "*They come to us as needy, vulnerable, at-risk, and dependent*" (Newsletter). Other staff members used words such as "*fallen through the cracks*", "*victims*", "*not your regular mainstream kids*", "*in crisis*", "*an oppressed group*" to describe the teen/young mothers, indicating that the staff perceived the young mothers as a group at risk of unfavorable life outcomes. According to the staff, there were several likely factors that placed the parenting and pregnant young women 'at-risk'. The factors included poverty, smoking, drug/alcohol addictions, mental health issues, relationship issues, a history of disengagement with schooling, multiple pregnancies, parenting difficulties, risky life styles, and so on. Also, the risk factors varied for each teen/young mother depending on her individual life circumstances. An evaluation report on the pregnant and parenting teenagers at the Sisters of Hope Centre concluded that the young women entering the Centre "are at the highest

end of the at-risk population” (Evaluation report, 2004, p. 23). Though each risk factor is explored separately below, the risk factors often overlap and are linked to other factors.

Poverty. One of the biggest challenges mentioned by the staff with which the young women in this study were confronted was managing their lives in circumstances of poverty. Almost all of the young women in the study were poor and on social assistance. Managing with a baby on a limited income posed many challenges despite the relief provided by a welfare cheque. A major challenge for the young women was to find a stable, affordable place to live and to still have enough money for food. There was a long waiting period for social housing, estimated by staff to be as long as ten years. Hence, unless they lived at home or (illegally) with a partner who was contributing to the rent, the young women had no choice but to pay market rent which was clearly above the amounts they received for rent from ‘Ontario Works’, a program that provides income and employment assistance for people who are in temporary financial need.

Cynthia, a support worker, explained how some of the young women managed this challenge:

A two bedroom apartment would go for seven to eight hundred dollars a month, now Ontario Works will only pay \$535 of the rent, so the other two to three hundred dollars that they have to put into the rent will come out of the rest of their money. So unfortunately, where they’re going to cut to make sure that their rent gets paid is probably the grocery. So then they won’t go do a big grocery, they’ll buy little stuff, or they might not do groceries, they might depend on the food banks.

As highlighted above, the young women struggled to pay the high cost of renting an apartment. To solve their dilemma about the high cost of housing, the young women usually ended up cutting back on groceries, depending instead on the Centres or the food banks.

Kim, a program coordinator, stated that providing for a child is expensive and many teen/young mothers did not have the tools and resources that a middle class person would consider essential to be a good parent. She explained that after paying for basic necessities such as housing, hydro, and heating, the teen/young mothers had to ensure that they had sufficient money to pay for formula, diapers, a bus pass, or telephone service (which she mentioned is considered a luxury). Sometimes the teen/young mothers would run out of diapers or formula before the end of the month. Kim explained that from a middle class perspective, not being able to provide the basics such as diapers or formula milk for a child translated into a measure of the inadequate parenting of the teen/young mothers, instead of a sign of poverty. Kim explained how the center attempted to assist the young mothers through periods of hardship, *“And they have access to 10 diapers a week, 6 cans of formula a week and all of that separate from what they’re already getting”*. To supplement their needs, the centers offered some additional resources to the teen/young mothers.

To help the mothers, the staff explained that the young women were entitled to some extra funds through a locally negotiated arrangement with the LEAP program. Denise, a support worker described how the LEAP program helped the teen/young mothers over and above the regular social assistance:

They [teen/young mothers] are still on social assistance. LEAP is just their extra incentive, so they still get their heat, hydro and housing, which is never

enough and they receive all that and on top of that, anything connected to school. Again, like the books, childcare, things like that are all tacked on.

Denise further admitted that she herself was not completely aware of all the areas covered under the LEAP program, that it was not totally clear and “*not as cut and dried*”. Denise would always encourage the teen/young mothers to make a request, even if they were unsure if it would be covered. Since there was no guarantee that all requests made would be granted, the teen/young mothers had to be prepared for the possible refusal of their requests. To meet the interim needs of the teen/young women it was evident that all the centers attempted to provide ongoing support to the young women through the food bank, clothes swap, free or subsidized breakfast and lunch programs. Bus tickets, diapers, formula milk, and so on were also provided in emergency situations, at the discretion of the staff. Program coordinator Kim explained the bridging role of the Center, “*So at least we’re able to help support them in that they come weekly for our food bank.*” It was evident that the Centers intervened to provide a measure of relief to the teen/young mothers and to supplement their slim resources.

Denise, a support worker, explained that the financial burden is a huge stressor; and the teen/young mothers felt they had little control of their meager finances and were unable to budget efficiently with their limited amounts of money. She further explained the contradiction of being taught to budget, while having no money left over to budget:

We can sit down with them and talk to them about budgeting until we’re blue in the face, but the problem is that they don’t have the money to budget. So that’s what they come back with, “I don’t have the money. How do you budget with zero dollars?”

The teen/young mothers were taught how to budget, yet in reality did not have any money to budget. The teen/young mothers protested that after spending for essential items, they had few dollars left over so they felt that it was futile to begin budgeting. Denise agreed with their view but stated that they had no choice but to make it work. Often, she observed, that in times of financial strain, the young women were unable to concentrate on school work. She believed that as a student support worker, she should share that type of information with teachers so they would understand how financial stress impacts on the focus and concentration of the teen/young mothers in school.

While some staff thought that the support amounts that the teen/young mothers received through social welfare were insufficient, others such as Teacher Paul believed that the problem confronting the teen/young mothers was not insufficient finance, but an inability to manage their finances due to their inexperience. He suggested that maybe some of the young women spent money on items that were not necessary, thus creating hardships for themselves.

Paul explained:

They'll buy things—everybody wants things but you're on a very limited income. 'You told me that you spent your money on this television set but you can't afford it.' So now you've got a crisis, there are bills to pay and you can't pay them so now you're worried about it.

Paul believed that since the teen mothers had a limited amount of money at their disposal, they should utilize it carefully, instead of spending it on expensive items such as a television.

According to Paul the financial debt situation for some teen mothers may spiral out of control due to unwise spending.

From the staff perspective it was clear that the teen/young mothers struggled to manage and budget with their limited incomes. Often, the teen/young mother juggled their bill payments and cut back from one area to make payments in another area, which created other tensions. For example, a young mother would spend money allocated for a bus pass on food items or a mother would use part of her grocery money to pay for housing. On limited incomes, the teen/young mothers struggled to ensure they had basic things for their children such as formula, diapers, and so on. If they could not budget for a bus pass, it meant that they could not attend school, do grocery shopping or take their child to doctors' appointments. Because of their poverty, the teen/young mothers often utilized the food banks and the resources at the center. On occasions, they attempted to access additional funds through their caseworkers. Thus, it was clear that, though many of teen/young mothers found creative ways to manage with limited finances, mothering in poverty circumstances was a challenge for most of the young women.

A socio-demographic profile of the clients of the Sisters of Hope Centre showed that *"almost all of these young women are on very low incomes and many are living far below the poverty line"* (Evaluation Report, 2004, p. 3). The poverty cycle is a vicious cycle in which poor people tend to remain poor over generations and are not able to improve their condition and social status. Some of the staff alluded to the cycle of poverty to describe the disadvantages faced by many of the teen/young mothers who had grown up in poor families on welfare. These young mothers now find that they too are trapped by poverty, dependent on the system and unable to break out of the poverty cycle. Thus, managing within the constraints of impoverished environments was cited as a major factor that put the young women at-risk of unfavorable outcomes in school and life in general. Other staff raised concerns about the fact that the support

level dropped once the young women turned twenty-two, at which time they were no longer eligible to access schooling and many other supports offered at the centers.

Addictions. Most of the staff mentioned that there was evidence of substance abuse and addictions among some of the young women, involving substances such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs that interfered with the mothering and schooling functions of the teen/young mothers and also involved costs they could ill afford. The staff also explained that some teen/young mothers grew up in families with a history of substance abuse. Teacher Paul recollected one instance:

One girl came in tears to tell me that the problem was that her mother is a recovering drug addict and she is living with her mother and they are sharing the rent and at the end of the month, this was last week, she had her share but her mother disappeared and she could not pay the rent. She said her mother had gone, fallen off the wagon.

Although this may be an extreme example, it was clear that substance abuse issues within the family had a negative effect on the lives of the teen/young mother. Furthermore, the director Elizabeth explained that new types of illegal drugs were constantly being produced and drug use was a major challenge for young mothers from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Staff explained that sometimes the young women were addicts before the pregnancy, stopped using during the pregnancy, but succumbed again to their addictions after the birth, perhaps due to the mounting pressures and challenges in their lives or as previous traumas and fears resurfaced. All the centers provided support through an addictions counselor. If substance abuse was suspected, the staff would use their professional judgment to refer them to the addictions counselor or report them to the Children's Aid Society (CAS). In some cases, family members, relatives or neighbors would report suspected abuse to CAS. Staff mentioned that, in some instances, the

substance abuse was well camouflaged and it was difficult to make an assessment of drug use, even though the effects were evident. Kim, a support worker, explained:

Addictions is tough because so much of it happens when we're not around that for us to even know if it [drug abuse] is going on and then it contributes in so many ways, it's such a trickle down effect. It affects your finances; it affects your ability to maintain your household, to be in control of yourself.

In the above excerpt, Kim discusses the complex issues involved in identifying a drug abuse issue, even though the effects of drug abuse over the long run on a person's life and finances were quite evident. She further mentioned that for the teen/young mother, admitting that they were addicts and requesting help was an extremely difficult thing to do as it meant going into treatment and having no one to take care of the child or losing their child to child protection services. Often, the fear of losing their child would compel a teen/young mother to seek treatment for an addiction. The staff conveyed a strong belief that there was a need to ensure the safety of clients, the mother and the child; in the case of addictions, the welfare of the child took precedence. Thus, a mother taking drugs was considered an 'at-risk' young mother, as the staff believed that the drug abuse would have a negative effect on other areas of her life and also interfere with her ability to study and to parent.

Abuse. A number of staff indicated that many teen/young mothers had experienced abuse in the past or might presently be in abusive situations that were unsafe and troubled environments. Abuse may have been physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal or a combination of any or all of those. Staff reported that teen/young mothers who had experienced abuse had to cope with painful emotions and complicated feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and blame.

Depending on the severity of abuse suffered, some abused teen/young mothers became angry, depressed, fearful, and even attempted suicide. Dawn, a teacher, spoke about how certain moments of vulnerability during the pregnancy brought past traumas to the surface, *“every single one of them is a high needs student and that is complicated by the pregnancy and fear of delivering, and all that comes out in class.* Several teen/young women suffered abuse within a relationship with their partners. Physical abuse was sometimes evident through obvious bruises, but in many cases it remained hidden. Other forms of abuse were more difficult to detect. Most cases of partner abuse were referred to the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), to protect the children ‘at-risk’ as well as the mother. According to an Evaluation Report of the Sisters of Hope Centre, *“76 of the 100 current clients interviewed had some involvement with CAS as a parent”* (2004, p. 3).

Support worker Denise recalled that on occasion, neighbors of the teen/young mothers would report arguments and fights to the police or the CAS, *“some of the relationships are abusive...It’s mostly neighbors that call, because the walls are pretty much paper thin where they live.”* This comment by support worker Denise draws attention to the fact that not only were the teens in vulnerable relationships; they also lived in close quarters to other residents, in perhaps not the best of housing. It also points to their lives being under scrutiny that neighbours would report on behaviour and actions that they considered inappropriate.

In her role as a Counselor, Simone came across a range of cases. Sometimes, cases revealed that the teen mother had been exposed to harsh life experiences at an early age. Counselor Simone worked with a number of these young women in troubled situations. She elaborated, *“A small percentage have been on the streets, have done drugs at an early age. Several of the girls who I see now are strippers who work in the sex trade and most of them have*

been sexually assaulted". This view of Counselor Simone demonstrated that a few teen/young mothers who came to her for counseling were highly troubled and were in situations of high risk. This description of the teen mothers accounts for the experiences of a small percentage of teen/young mothers. I sensed from the interviews as a whole that it was not the experience of all teen/young mothers. Also, my interviews with the sample of teen/young mothers did not reveal such types of experiences or situations.

Teacher Paul explained how many young mothers were exposed to violence through living in unsafe, mostly poor neighborhoods, *"They don't live in the best of housing so they're always very much afraid of the community in which they live. Violent situations or violent neighborhoods cause them a lot of tension and grief as well"*. Teacher Paul's comments seemed to indicate that the unsafe neighbourhoods where some young mums lived probably caused them a lot of anxiety as they worried about the safety of their children and their partners.

According to the staff, it was clear that a number of teen/young mothers who had encountered abuse in one form or another were at-risk due to the potential negative impact of abuse on the teen/young mother and her child. Director Elizabeth explained:

The issues that we deal with involving our mums are like the issues with the general public, and I would think are more pronounced with our mums because of the parenting or the pregnancy and the isolation from family and so on. And that's why they can't simply park their child in childcare and their brain in school and get on with life, because it's their life situation that is preventing them.

These comments by Director Elizabeth indicated that the young women were coping with more issues than just those related to pregnancy and parenting. A number of these young women were

facing difficult life issues and some were facing them alone. Her comments also highlight that the teen/young mothers required support to get through these challenging periods in their lives. All the staff interviewed seemed cognizant of the fact that life was tough for most of the young women. For that reason, when they intervened, they attempted to be sensitive to the difficult circumstances in their lives.

Interrupted Schooling. Most of the teen/young mothers had a period when their schooling was interrupted for a variety of reasons. Some of the teen/young mothers had experienced difficulty with schooling and had left school prior to becoming pregnant. The findings of an evaluation study of the Sisters of Hope Centre reported “*Many [pregnant and parenting teens] have been out of school for at least two years*” (Evaluation Report, 2004, p. 4). Many teen/young mothers had changed schools several times before they joined the Young Moms Center according to its director Elizabeth. Some staff reflected that the difficulties in school may have been due to academic, behavioral, family, motivational, social or psychological reasons. An Annual Report (2004, p. 13) of the Young Moms Center reported on some of the barriers that may put the learning of these young women at risk:

Counseling statistics and outcome tracking indicated the following challenges for our clients: mood and anxiety disorders, severe mental illness, trauma, suicidal tendency, eating disorder, domestic violence, anger management, low self-esteem, miscarriage/abortion issues, depression, physical and sexual abuse, dysfunctional home environment

Support worker Becky stated that several teen/young mothers that she had worked with had been suspended or expelled from school due to conflicts with peers or authorities. Most of the staff interviewed had similar views to those expressed by support worker Becky. Teacher

Dawn added that sometimes students might be erroneously labeled as trouble makers and might get into conflict situations because they had orange hair or piercings, or might be dressed all in black. She believed that in large high schools teachers may not have the time to get to know their students as individuals.

Teacher Chris believed that a number of the young women that he worked with at the Young Moms Centre had probably never been comfortable in mainstream schooling and had gradually gravitated to alternate school sites. He stated that students' school records might provide clues about the time period when the student experienced difficulty in school. In some cases, educational frustrations have been evident as early as junior high school. In other words, Teacher Chris highlighted the fact that for many of these young women, schooling was not easy, and over the years there were many indications of the educational challenges experienced by students. He referred to finding relevant information in the student records that may help school staff members at the Centres better understand the needs of the students. In Ontario, the OSR (Ontario Student Record) is a record of a student's progress over the years in school and contains information such as report cards, school transcripts, and other pertinent information. A documentation file within the OSR could include custody orders, assessments, violent incident reports, Individual Education Plans, and so on.

Most pregnant students tend to drop out of school according to Director Julia who believed that staying on in school as a pregnant student would be challenging for most young women. My conversations with the young pregnant and parenting women revealed that even when the young women were doing well academically in school, they had automatically assumed that in their pregnant state, they would have to leave their regular high school, and hence they sought admission at specialized alternate school sites. Julia further added that virtually all the

young women whom she knew had not continued in their regular high school. She explained, *“At a mainstream school, its ‘oh, she’s pregnant’ and its kind of blinking lights are going off”*. She believed that high schools were not yet ready to accept pregnant students in their midst. It was her opinion that schools were caught in a dilemma of wanting to provide the teen/young mothers with an education, but also wanting to minimize the celebration. School officials did not want to be seen as promoting teenage pregnancy as *“this is the way to go”*.

Due to the fact that the schooling of most of the teen/young mothers at the Centres had been interrupted, they faced the challenge of reengaging in academic work after a break in their studies but were now faced with the additional responsibility of parenting. Teacher Paul believed that most of the teen/young mothers at the New Beginnings Centre where he worked had a multitude of problems that had led to the interruption of their normal schooling. He described the strengths and weaknesses of the population of teen/young mothers he worked with by breaking them down into thirds, *“One third is struggling, one third is making progress but it is slow, and one third is doing really quite well.”* With this knowledge about his student population, Teacher Paul is realistic in his expectations for the students, realizing that some of them will be successful whereas some may have a considerable distance to go before they overcome barriers that have interfered with their schooling. All the teachers recognized that some of their students may have difficulty with the level of academic work while others may have life issues that impact their academic work. The teachers were therefore flexible in accommodating the needs of the teen/young mothers

In summary, most of the pregnant and parenting young women had interrupted their schooling. Staff indicated that some of the teen/young mothers had already been disengaged with schooling and had left school prior to the pregnancy. Another view revealed that the pregnant

students had dropped out of school because schools did not welcome pregnant students. Pregnant students clearly presented a dilemma for schools. Though schools might not want to discriminate against pregnant students, at the same time they did not want to be seen as approving of teen pregnancy.

After the birth of their child, some mothers wished to return to school, while some mothers reenrolled in school only because it was a mandatory requirement for social assistance. Irrespective of the reason for their return to schooling, the gap in schooling and the new circumstances of added responsibilities made it challenging for teen/young mothers to reengage in academic work. The staff at all the centers believed that the teen/young mothers returning to school were at a vulnerable stage of their life and hence providing assistance at this juncture was critical for the young mother to succeed in life.

Factors that Stigmatized the Teen/Young Mothers

The staff felt strongly that the pregnant and parenting young women were perceived by mainstream society as a highly stereotyped and stigmatized group. All the staff I spoke with at the three centers were vocal about the stigmatization and negative stereotyping of the pregnant and parenting young women by the public in general. They cited the experiences of the young women and related specific instances when they had witnessed the stigmatizing behaviors as evidence of such stigma. They spoke about what they believed were some reasons for the negative stereotyping of the young women. Some staff related that they were in admiration of the capacity of the teen/young mothers to withstand the backlash from society. At the same time, several staff believed that, though there was a certain amount of stigma still associated with teenage pregnancy, it was much less pronounced than it had been in the previous decades.

Stigmatizing Experiences. Most of the staff stated that they were aware of the stigmatizing experiences of the teen/young mothers. The young mothers told staff that the negative public response to their pregnant or parenting status at times was obvious and at other times was subtle. People would sometimes not hesitate to voice their disapproval aloud through comments that were derogatory and rude. Some staff members could recall occasions described by the young women where the hostility they experienced extended to physical violence and involved pushing, shoving, and even kicking. In some situations the antagonism towards the teen/young mothers was restrained and expressed through body language that included dirty looks and stares.

The staff believed that the teen/young mothers were stigmatized because of their age, social class, and single mother status. The young age of the teen/young mothers was an especially visible attribute and as the Director Elizabeth explained:

People out there in the community are quite ready to cluck their tongues and tell them that they shouldn't have children at that age and they should be married, quite ready to tell them what their perception of their [teen/young mothers'] lot in life is.

It was clear from the comment above that the age, presumed single mother status, and social class emerged as key factors that seemed to provoke a reaction from the general public. Program coordinator Kim reflected on the reasons why the young age of the mother is now a contentious issue:

Young women always had [babies], like a 150 years ago, [you could] be 17 and have two kids and run a farm and nobody would look at you and think you couldn't handle it. And yet today we look at them and go, 'how do they

manage? They shouldn't have children 'till they're 28 or 30". We're just pushing it farther and farther.

It is evident that program coordinator Kim believed that the right age to have a child is constructed by society. She highlights how, in the past, a young woman was considered old enough to bear the responsibilities of child bearing and work at the age of 17, whereas in the present, society has pushed the appropriate age for childbearing into the late twenties for women.

According to the staff, the teen/young mothers encountered stigma at various public venues such as malls, grocery stores, parks, streets, and so on, but the stigmatization was played out or felt most often on the public transit system. The bus was the only means of transportation for the teen/young mothers, and they spent hours on the bus every day. Almost all the staff recounted stories told to them by the teen/young mothers revolving around negative experiences on the bus. Counselor Simone remembered that many of the girls talked about people looking at them on the bus and feeling judged ... *"very much in the sense of, 'oh look at her she's such young girl and she has a baby.'"* Support worker Denise recalled that sometimes the incidents related to unhelpful bus drivers, but mostly it was the traveling public who would either stare, try to give advice or admonish the teen/young mother about the inappropriateness of being a young parent. Denise explained, *"A perfect stranger would walk up to them and give them advice, it's like, 'your child's cold'; my child's fine.... Mind your own business please'. They [public] would not go to a regular person and say that."*

Some staff members recalled that the hostility was physical and involved pushing or shoving. Director Elizabeth remembered an incident when a pregnant young woman was really hurt and outraged by what she experienced, *"one of them came in to see me because a woman had kicked her as she was coming off the bus and called her a slut."* This statement reveals the

hostility of the individual on the bus, directed at the teen/young mother through a derogatory comment “slut” as a mark of contempt. By calling the young woman a slut, the individual was expressing his outrage which was probably a reaction to the fact that the woman was young and pregnant. Her pregnancy was also an indication that she was sexually active.

Teacher Chris suggested that there were many factors besides age that produce people’s negative reactions to the teen/young mothers and mentioned that the color of the babies may trigger negative reactions. He explained, *“Quite a few babies are of mixed race and so people on the bus see a young white girl with a baby that is quite obviously dark and curly hair and they get some negative stuff happening”*. Teacher Chris was reflecting that the mixed race of the baby generated a negative response from some people, indicating that some people may still hold racial prejudices towards colored individuals and may resent inter-racial relationships. Chris also suggested that some of the hostility that the girls experienced on the bus may be related to the space occupied by the strollers, thus implying that people may get frustrated that the strollers impinge on people’s ability to move freely. This hostility may or may not therefore be related to the fact that they are teen/young mothers.

Program coordinator Kim believed that while the girls experienced a lot of negative criticism traveling on the bus, they also faced criticism at other locations such as the mall or the grocery store. Kim describes a possible scenario:

If they can’t keep their children in check, some of them have three children and are doing groceries and a couple of them [children] are running around, they get some negative comments. And people target them because they’re young, they don’t have as much personal power. There could be a 30-year-old

that has three kids running around [but] somebody might be more hesitant to say something.

The above remarks by Kim, indicate that she strongly believed that the manner in which the general public responds to the teen/young mothers is selective and targeted and that it would be unlikely that an older woman in a similar situation with children out of control would be reprimanded. She speculates that people target the teen/young mothers because they are young, and in a position of little power.

In the anecdote below, Kim further illustrated her point that people feel they have a right to chastise teen/young mothers. This anecdote also illustrated how the actions and behavior of the teen/young mothers were always under scrutiny.

We had an incident on Monday where the daycare staff took a group of girls to the pool across the street and the pool wasn't full, and everyone was grumpy and it was really hot and they were waiting for the pool to fill. And a woman made a comment because the girls were having a smoke while they waited, and an older woman said, 'you girls shouldn't be smoking around your babies.' And you wonder why very often people feel as if they have the right to talk to these young women and that they might not say these things if it was a 30-year-old woman smoking around her child.

Support worker Denise remembered an incident when she was at the bus stop waiting with some of the teen/young mothers with babies in strollers. She was astonished at *"people driving by and stopping, staring, literally going ten mph, going 'what is going on with all these teenagers and their children?' ... and the girls will all look at me and go, 'see what we go through.'"*

Though the staff felt strongly that the teen/young mothers were stereotyped and stigmatized, some staff believed that there has been a shift in the societal attitudes towards pregnant and parenting young women. According to Director Julia, there are still stigmatizing stereotypes associated with teenage pregnancy, though the stigma is not as pronounced as it was twenty years ago: *“I think one of the real shifts came around when divorce became more acceptable and prevalent and being a single parent of any age has less stigma in Canadian society.”* Program coordinator Kim believed that there now are more family supports available for pregnant and parenting teens than in the past, *“Their families are less likely to isolate them. It used to be if you were a pregnant teenager, you were sent off and nobody wanted anything to do with you, you were disowned. That does not happen as frequently anymore”*.

Director Elizabeth noted that it is more acceptable now to be a single parent and more and increasing numbers of more teen/young mothers are choosing to keep their babies. Elizabeth elaborated:

It could be part of the backlash against the mandated adoption that we had a generation or two ago, you know, where there wasn't a choice but the girl disappeared and the baby disappeared and she came back on the scene when the baby was gone.

From the comments by Elizabeth above, it appears that many teen/young mothers were choosing to exercise their right to keep their baby in a seemingly liberalized climate. The above statements by Director Julia, Director Elizabeth, and Program coordinator Kim indicate that there may be a shift in current societal attitudes about towards teen pregnancy so that pregnant teens are no longer hidden. More and more, mothers are opting to keep their child and the attitude of many

people towards pregnant teens seems to indicate more tolerance. However, there is still clear evidence of a definite stigmatizing attitude towards pregnant and parenting young women.

Coping with Stigma. The staff described the various ways in which the teen/young mothers coped with the continuous barrage of verbal abuse and behaviors that were clearly hostile. Some teen/young mothers were bold and would lash out in their own defense whereas a more timid young mother would be upset, but would remain quiet. Counselor Simone recalled the girls telling her about their experiences, *“Some of the girls say ‘I just stare them down and look at them in the eye and dare them to say something’ and some of the other girls will just be self-conscious about it”*. Support worker Denise explained that it was challenging to teach the girls to rein in their angry feelings and some teen/young mothers would respond inappropriately. However, the school staff constantly encouraged the teen/young mothers to have confidence in themselves and to not let the hostility affect them. Denise further explained:

You have a choice. Your choice could be walking away, not let it affect your parenting, not let it affect you, and going on about how well you’re doing, you’re in school now, being able to recognize that. Your other choice is to give them the finger or curse them out and get into trouble with bus drivers and others.

As indicated above, support worker Denise attempts to teach the teen/young mothers that they could choose a response that would lower the chances of the situation escalating out of control. As well, Director Elizabeth stated that the girls were taught to respond appropriately to negative reactions and to say things like, *“I am bettering myself by going to school and making a better life for myself and my child.”* Some staff explained that the teen/young mothers were aware that they were a stigmatized group and that awareness made them upset with other young mothers

who, they felt, contributed to the stigmatized image. As program coordinator Kim explained, *“They [teen/young mothers] get very indignant when they see things that make other young parents look bad in their opinion; if they see someone who is not parenting to their standards, they think it reflects on them somehow.”*

Another way that the teen/young mothers coped with their negative experiences on the bus was by supporting each other. The girls would often travel as a group, which was helpful, but also created problems with having more strollers on the bus. Sometimes, too, the young women would avoid traveling on the bus, if they could do so; or as the child grew slightly older, they resorted to discarding the stroller and carrying the child.

Thus, the descriptions and incidents related by the staff provided some insights into the coping mechanisms that the teen/young mothers used to defend or insulate themselves against the stigma they experienced on a daily basis.

“Resilient” Teen/Young Mother

Though the majority of the staff viewed the pregnant and parenting young women as a group ‘at-risk’, they also believed that in spite of the tremendous odds against them, a number of young women displayed tremendous resilience in coping with life’s challenges and were attempting to balance motherhood and schooling. The staff also described situations where in spite of the resilience of the teen/young mother, the incredible everyday life struggles were overwhelming and some young women dropped out of the program.

Challenges of Everyday Life. Most of the staff admired the teen/young mothers for being able to survive and be quite successful in some very tough circumstances. Counselor Ruth was amazed at how the teen/young mothers juggled their responsibilities and arrived on time to school. She stated:

A lot of them have to get up really early to get themselves together, get their child together, get themselves on the bus and get to school. So that's not an easy thing to do. I can barely get here on time and I only have myself to take care of.

These remarks by Counselor Ruth suggest that many teen/young mothers had taken the responsibility of mothering seriously and were somehow juggling the responsibilities of mothering and schooling. She reflects on their daily routine of rising early, getting themselves and the child ready, traveling a distance on the bus to get to school on time; and she marvels at the excellent job they are doing. She compares the work that they do to get to school on time everyday to her own daily routine and she believes that their work is commendable. Ruth also noted that a number of the young women come from out of town to the city and have to make adjustments to city life, and also cope with living alone with their child. For many teen/young mothers, having a child forced them to be responsible, *"From being taken care of to having to take care of somebody else."* Teacher Paul noted, *"When you look at the problems they face, it's amazing that they cope as well as they do."*

Counselor Simone provides a similar glimpse into the day-to-day routine tasks of mothering that were challenging for the teen/young mothers:

Transportation is an issue, busing to school particularly when it is cold and snowing, in the winter, you know it is really hard to get up at 6:00 a.m. in the morning, get their kids ready, get themselves on the bus for you know maybe 7:15, and it may take an hour to get here, two buses... And just the day-to-day routine is often a lot for these women, just getting up and coming to school and doing what needs to be done everyday.

Counselor Simone further added that she was impressed by the strength and determination of the young women, *“Every time I leave the Center, I am reminded of the strength of these girls, how they keep doing what they are doing on a day to day basis and it is very humbling, it is very humbling what these girls go through and continue to do”*.

Program coordinator Kim describes the resilient spirit of some of the teen/young mothers, who demonstrated tremendous inner strength and courage in the face of difficulties in mothering with scarce resources:

Some of them have very good self concepts, and you see the difference in personalities and internal strength. Some people [teen/young mothers] have come up against pretty great challenges in their life and still remain pretty strong and steadfast, even if they have the challenge of caring for their young without a lot of resources; they still move forward and have a positive attitude.

This sentiment, which was expressed repeatedly by the staff, seemed to indicate that they respected the teen/young mothers for dealing with the responsibilities of parenting and schooling successfully, in harsh life circumstances.

Good Mothers. Most staff spoke about how they believed that having a child brought about a difference in the lives of the young women in many ways and about how they struggled to be good mothers.

Paul described his observations of the teen/young mothers, *“The way I look at it, most of them seem overwhelmingly attached to their children. I don’t see much evidence of their children not getting their full attention. They try. They try very very hard”*. Simone strongly believed that all the teen/young mothers whom she had worked with made every effort to be good mothers. They did not want to be known as welfare moms and strove to dissociate themselves from that

label. Simone explained how she tried to reassure them that accepting welfare can be a stepping stone out of poverty if they utilize it well. She described the attitudes of the teen/young mothers towards their children:

I can't think of one girl that doesn't love being a mother. It gives them a sense of purpose, of taking care of another human being. It is a sense of 'I like being a mom' and many of them are very good moms, I mean given their circumstances and their history.

Though most staff expressed an understanding of the circumstances of the lives of these young women and believed they were good mothers, there was still a distance in terms of social class that prevented the staff from really understanding the harsh realities of their lives. Teacher Chris explains, *"There is a lot of stress in these girl's lives that's just hard for me to imagine actually that with kids and everything like that."* He concluded that many of the girls coped with the pressures of everyday life by networking and depending on each other for support.

Perspectives of the Teen/Young Mothers

To understand some of the complexities of the everyday lives of the young women from their own perspectives, this section will focus solely on the perspectives of the teen/young mothers. The following discussion provides a glimpse into how the young women see themselves as they make this enormous transition from girlhood to motherhood at a young age, taking up the challenge of being responsible mothers. The discussion also helps us to understand the realities and challenges they experience on a daily basis. The section is organized according to the themes that emerged from the interviews with the young mothers, as well as the participant observations.

Transformations Created by the Birth of the Baby

The teen/young mothers whom I interviewed described their passage into motherhood as a personal transformation. They believed that before the birth of their child, they had been irresponsible, unmotivated and cared about little in their lives. However, having a child seemed to have changed their lives almost dramatically. They began to care more about the direction of their life. The teen mothers interviewed felt that the birth of their child brought about positive changes in themselves. It also gave them hope and a focus for the future. For many, the baby was the turning point that helped them transform their lives for the better.

Below are descriptions of the teen mothers' responses to the impact on their lives of having a baby. As will be shown, in reflecting on their prior school experiences, many of them acknowledged that they had been defiant and involved in stupid fights, and/or drugs; and as a result they got into trouble in school. Some students who were under pressure and who were discouraged with school simply stayed away from school. To highlight the view of the teen/young mothers of the transformation in their lives, the reflections are arranged sequentially: their lives prior to having a child, their present situation and their future goals.

Schooling Experiences Prior to Having a Child. Most of the teen mothers I interviewed spoke about their experiences of school prior to the pregnancy. Some talked at length about their disengagement with schooling, but others seemed reluctant to speak in any detail about their life in school prior to the pregnancy. The teen/young mothers who described their disconnection provided a range of reasons for their negative experiences in school.

Bianca spoke about her life at the age of 14 -15. She was not at all engaged in school, was involved in drugs and would attend school on and off for a week or two. She stopped going to school altogether at 15, when she was thrown out of school as she describes, "*for being a brat,*

being rebellious and stupid.” She explained that at that time she didn’t care if she achieved any credits in school. Reena also admitted to having a troubled high school life and was in and out of several high schools due to her behavior. She says that she was caught up in drugs and was the kind of person who would snap at anybody for the slightest reason. She described her attitude to life when she was in high school:

I didn’t care. I’m being honest. I didn’t care. I was just like whatever. I remember I went to one school and that same day I got into a fight and they kicked me out, on my first day at school.

Reena recollected that she got into fights without provocation. She explains, “*Oh! The stupidest things, ‘You’re looking at me, why are you looking at me? Don’t look at me’. A fight would just break out. Really the stupidest things you could possibly imagine.*” Katie explains that before she had her babies she was a typical teenager, getting into trouble in school, which she considered as a place to socialize. Abby had attended two high schools and was nearly finished high school in grade 12, when she discovered that she was pregnant. It was not planned, but she and her boyfriend decided to have the baby. At that time, she was living with her boyfriend and looking after his two-year old son. Abby believes that it would have been difficult to continue in her regular school with her pregnancy, and she is glad she had the flexibility to finish her high school at the center. Susan remembers that her years in regular high school were unpleasant. She recalls that things were fine up to the time when she became a victim of bullying that caused her to become “*severely depressed and suicidal*” and to drop out of school. Susan continued at an alternative school, dropped out, became pregnant, returned to adult high school, and finally to the New Beginnings Centre to finish her high school. She chose this Centre to finish her credits because it has daycare facilities. The adult high school only had daycare for children who were

18 months and older. She needed one more credit to graduate. Jill recollects that she was in an amazing school and was doing really well. Then her parents got divorced, her mother became a drug addict and she says everything started going downhill from that point. She explains the impact of her parent's divorce on her schooling saying her grades dropped, she talked a lot, acted up in school, challenged her teachers and "*everything got messed up*". Jill was fourteen when she got pregnant. She was just starting grade 8. Jill appears to have displayed tremendous initiative when she found out that she was pregnant. She called every agency possible to find out about services for teen mothers. She finally decided to live at the residential program run by the Sisters of Hope and to attend school simultaneously.

Present Schooling Situation. The teen/young mothers who spoke about their prior experiences of schooling provided a snapshot of their present circumstances. They highlighted the considerable difference in their present approach to school. Bianca emphasized that before she had a daughter she was doing drugs but now does not do that anymore. Her daughter is important to her and, though it was scary, she made a decision to change. Bianca says that when she thinks back on the choices she made, she does not regret having baby Lise, though she admits that she would have waited to have her daughter until she was older and in a more serious relationship. Bianca explains that it was her daughter that was her motivation to return to school:

It was when I came back because I really wanted to come back. I wanted to get it done. I wanted to go to college because I have a daughter now and I don't want to be on welfare for the rest of my life.

Reena says she is extremely happy right now. She is quiet, calm, and focused on her school work. She adds:

Right now, I'm just thinking about like how I need to finish my school now that I have a baby. If I was baby-less, I don't think I would really care if I got into a fight or if I got expelled or whatever, but now that I have my baby, I've matured and I just hope to finish school so I can give my baby a better life.

Reena concludes that returning to school has brought about a positive change in her.

She describes the impact of the baby in her life, saying that it was having baby that saved her from a life where she would probably be running the streets, getting into fights, selling drugs or engaging in some other self-destructive activity. Once she found out that she was pregnant, she slowly began making some definite changes in her life. She started saving her money for an apartment and began thinking seriously about going back to school because as Reena emphasizes, *"I was like I need to go back to school because I don't want to be a welfare mom for the rest of my life."* Once in school, she stuck to two or three girls she knew and concentrated solely on her school work, studiously avoiding any potential distractions. She now had a goal that she was determined to achieve if not for herself, then for the sake of her baby. Another mother, Katie, believes that she is more focused, does more work, and concentrates more in school because she has the responsibilities of her twin daughters.

Katie explains what keeps her moving forward:

Because I don't only think about myself. I have to finish my education for myself of course, but also for my girls. And I was like, 'I have other people to worry about, depending on me'. I think it's been positive actually.

Abby has currently finished high school and is about to have her baby. Her biggest fear is that she gets frustrated easily and worries about not having enough patience with her baby. She is not afraid about the delivery and says she is mentally prepared to deal with whatever happens. Her

big concern at this time is not being able to recognize that she is in labor. Susan is working on her math credit that she finds extremely interesting. It is her last credit to finish high school. She likes the flexibility that the Centre offers and the daycare. Her conversations suggest that she is very fond of her child and is concerned about the health and safety of her child. Jill has a baby boy and is currently absorbed in looking after him. She is anxious to get back to school and feels bad that she is getting behind in school. She is certain that she wants to return to school and get her high school diploma. Jill says that she truly loves her baby and strongly believes that her baby is her motivation to return to school.

Future Aspirations after School. While some mothers did not have plans for further studies and were happy to be immersed in full-time 'mothering', a handful of mothers spoke animatedly about their plans for future careers after graduation. Within six months, Bianca will have finished high school. She hopes to do a government internship before enrolling in college in the fall. She intends to choose between programs such as Library and Information technician or Advertising. Reena will finish by the end of the year, wants to go to college, and hopes to be a registered nurse. Katie has a passion for reading newspapers and plans to go to college and do a course in journalism; however her big worry is being able to find suitable daycare spots for her twin girls. She has done some research on colleges that offer journalism and has found a college with a good journalism program in which she says students run their own paper. She aims to branch out and study broadcasting and other related areas as well. Abby is looking forward to taking a break and having her baby after which she plans to go to college and enroll in an Early Childhood Education program. Susan has no definite plans for the immediate future. She hopes to go to college when her child is older and maybe do a course in baking, something she says that

she is really good at. Jill plans to become a counselor and help teen mothers with similar experiences as her own.

In all the conversations with teen mothers, there was a unanimous agreement that the baby inspired them to pursue school and was their primary reason for staying engaged in school. Many of them felt a strong sense of responsibility towards their child, were conscious of the need for change and had taken definite, positive steps towards completing their high school education.

Awareness of the Stigma of Being a Teen/Young Mother

The teen/young women were aware of the fact that society typically held negative stereotypes about 'teen mothers' and as a result they were subjected to the stigma of being a 'teen mother'. They felt strongly that they were judged unfairly and that they were generally negatively stigmatized due to stereotypes of teen/young mothers as irresponsible, immature, neglectful, and bad mothers. Most of the teen mothers in the study were articulate about their experiences of stigma as those experiences were ubiquitous in their day-to-day lives.

Stigmatizing Experiences. Most of the teen/young mothers described their experiences of facing stigma in different circumstances- while grocery shopping, strolling through the park, walking down the street or in a mall, or traveling on the bus. The teen/young mothers related that the negative attitudes towards them were demonstrated non-verbally through body language that ranged from staring, looking down upon, or verbally through scornful comments and put-downs. Sometimes the behavior was even physical and involved pushing, shoving or blocking the way. The stigma experiences seemed to intensify on the bus where the interactions with the public took place in close quarters for an extended length of time. The teen mothers related that traveling by bus was an ordeal due to the lack of adequate space for their strollers and the impatient attitude of the public towards them. Jill and Susan expressed their frustration in

attempting to travel with their strollers on the bus. Susan explained the reason why traveling by bus was an aggravation:

When I'm on the bus, trying to get off the bus, six people from the back of the bus will come to the front, make themselves into a little line and I can't get off the bus until all of them go! They'll step over my stroller or kick my stroller to get through. Everybody has to be first! Sometimes people will even lean against my stroller and I'll have to go, 'Can you get your bag/butt off my stroller? There is a child in there and you're about two inches from her head!

It appeared that the fact that the strollers occupied space on the bus and probably blocked the aisle was frustrating for the passengers who were preoccupied with their own need to enter or exit the bus and often did not pay attention to the mother with her baby in the stroller. The teen mothers perceived the attitude of the public as callous and uncaring. Susan also recalled the dirty looks and glares from strangers on the bus. She believed that when traveling on the bus with her ten month old daughter, she received the least priority in the priority seating area and had been asked to get up and give her seat to others more deserving.

The age, class, and single status of the teen mothers seemed to be the primary reasons for the public hostility towards the teen/young mothers. Jill who is a 16 year old mother of a little boy says that people just stare at her, especially on the bus. She gets asked questions like, *"Aren't you awfully young to have a child?"* Bianca was particularly articulate about the stereotyping of teen/young mothers and cited her own experiences on the bus. She described her daily commute to school from the upper middle class area of town where she lives with her older brother:

Yeah! I live in Brentwood. Now I take the express bus in the morning with my daughter and there's all professionals on the bus, so it's very like, I feel they're looking down on me almost, you know what I mean? And that's kind of frustrating... but yeah, there are ignorant people out there.

As evident from the above excerpt, Bianca was quite conscious of the way that people on the bus look down at her and she specifically mentioned that they are “*professionals*”, indicating that these are not average commuters. At the same time, she copes with their disparaging looks and her own frustration by challenging their class privilege and labeling them as “*ignorant people.*” Bianca further related that people would become quite vocal about their concerns and would not hesitate to reprimand her. Bianca, who breastfed her baby, related an anecdote about a time when she was traveling on the bus with her very young baby. Her baby was crying and nothing would help pacify her. Bianca knew that she was close to home and was doing her best to comfort her baby, when a man on the bus turned to her angrily and screamed at her telling her that the baby was hungry. Bianca responded by saying that her baby was breastfed and told the man to leave her alone. She says that she reassured herself by questioning who the more mature one was in the situation, especially since she had made the decision to breastfeed and not bottle-feed her baby.

Amelia recounted that she often heard comments directed towards her on the bus. She has three children, who she emphasized are well behaved on the bus as she has trained them and sets down rules. But she explained that some times things get out of hand; on one occasion the bus braked and one of kids went flying; another time her little boy could not control himself and peed in his pants. On such occasions, it appeared as if she was not in control of her children. People on the bus were quick to judge her as an incompetent and unfit parent. She stated, “*People say things like kids having kids, you shouldn't have kids, and you don't know what you*

are doing. Her response was, *“You don’t tell me what I know and don’t know. Do you know me; no you don’t, so leave me alone”*. It was apparent that Amelia was perceived to be an unsuitable parent due to her young age, and people in general felt they had a right to admonish her.

Notably, the hostile reaction from the public on the bus towards the young women appeared to diminish when they traveled with a male companion. Reena believed that people were not judgmental when she was traveling with the father of her child, but she faced the wrath of the public when she was alone. She explained her frustrations:

When I’m by myself with my baby, I notice from older people, there’s dirty looks, or, “Oh, are you babysitting your little brother?” It’s like “no, that’s my baby”. But when I’m with his dad, all three of us as a family, they’re like “Oh, you have a cute baby, da da da da...” It’s like, didn’t I see you two days ago, and you were giving me dirty looks because I was by myself?

Reena expressed her exasperation at the hypocrisy of people who treated her differently when she traveled with the father of her child in comparison to the hostility she experienced when she traveled alone.

Katie, a young mother with the 15 month old twin girls also reported that people acted differently towards her when she was with the babies’ father. She believed that people have this “attitude” towards women when they don’t see a man around. She related that people question her regularly about her age and her ability to parent. *“Yeah, a lot of people think, a lot of people ask me, “Are you old enough to have children? How old are you? Are you babysitting your sisters?” I’m like, (quietly) “no, those are my babies.”*

It is evident from the anecdotes that the presence of a man seemed to change people’s perception and attitude toward the teen/young mothers. The young age of the mother was

overlooked if it appeared that there was a man in the picture and the teen mothers did not receive any comments or questions from the public.

Coping with Stigma. The responses of many of the young women varied. On some occasions, the teen/young mother would lash back at the criticism while in other cases the young women would be cowed down and silently endured the hostility. Some of the responses demonstrated an effort to dispute the negative stereotyping of themselves as “bad” teen mothers and to forge a positive identity for themselves. I sensed that the young women try hard to respond appropriately, but some found it hard to accept that people were so quick to condemn them without knowing them at all.

Bianca is less bothered by people’s attitude and finds it easier to travel on the bus as her daughter gets older. She is quite used to people’s responses, and also without her stroller (she carries her child) people seem to be less bothered by her presence. Reena fights back by telling people that she knows that her baby is beautiful and that is why they are so jealous. She does not allow their dirty looks and comments to bother her. She throws their comments back into their court. Katie explained that although she is really bothered by what people say to her, she tries not to let it affect her. She says that she does not respond because she knows that she will say something rude back and does not want to be at their level. One senses that by stating that she will not move to their level, she maintains her sense of control, of being able to maintain her sense of dignity. Jill says she deals with the judgmental looks and comments by maintaining a positive outlook. Jill believes that people should mind their own business. She takes pride in her ability to look after her baby by herself and counters the stereotype of age by saying, “*There are people out there who are 40 and doing a crappy job of being parents.*” Amelia is not afraid to confront people who make disparaging remarks and to question how they can make a judgment

about her without even knowing her. Susan counters the negative reaction on the bus by wearing a wedding ring on her finger and displaying it proudly, an action that she says gets her instant respect.

The above reflections by the teen/young mothers of the attitudes of people in society towards teen mothers suggests that many people do not feel ashamed to stare at the teen mothers and feel that they have a right to question them or comment about their age or their ability to parent. This type of behavior directed towards adult women with babies would in all likelihood be considered outrageous and would never be tolerated, yet the teen mothers trying hard to be good mothers, traveling long hours on the bus with the babies and strollers, are subjected on a daily basis to “hostile stares”, dirty looks”, “mean comments” and downright rudeness. Most of the teen mothers encountered hostility in public and the situation only got slightly better if they traveled with a male companion. Each of them devised their own strategies to cope with the rude behavior of strangers and tried hard to counter the negative stereotype of “bad” teen mother. Most of them stated that they did not let the negativity get to them, however they admitted that dealing with the barrage of criticism they received continuously left them exhausted. The dominant discourses were so powerful that the young women found it difficult to formulate a counter discourse.

“Struggling-to-be Good” Mothers and Students

Most of the teen/young mothers described their struggles to be good mothers and good students. They emphasized that they worked hard to balance the dual tasks of mothering and schooling.

Challenges of Mothering. The teen/young mothers reported that some of the challenges of mothering were as follows: establishing and following a daily routine, being a good mother and time constraints. Most of the young women stated that they had attempted to establish a daily routine with their child, but spoke about the challenges and the stress of parenting. A description of the daily routine provides a glimpse into their daily lives.

Bianca relates that she and her daughter wake up early at 6:30 to get to school at 9:00 as she lives a distance away and has to take two buses to get to school. It takes her an hour each way. Her daughter is generally happy at the beginning of the day but gets a little cranky at the end of the day. Katie says that she wakes up at 5:30 as she has the twins and herself to get ready and out of the house. She gets a break as her babies fall asleep at 7:00 in the evening and sleep through the night for eleven hours at a stretch. Katie, however, finds traveling by bus with her twins very cumbersome and hopes to get her driver's license soon. She explains:

Because I have a big double stroller and it's the worst. Sometimes I have people on the bus that are very rude. Um, bus drivers don't really help. And not every bus is low. Some buses have stairs and I can't take them because the bus driver is not gonna help me on. So I have to wait.

Amelia who has three children explains that some days are difficult. For instance, she describes that on occasion her youngest child would be fast asleep and the oldest would invariably wake her up or they would get into fights. In spite of these situations which leave her feeling very frustrated, she says that she likes being a mother and that she has fun with her children. Being in the company of her children helps her to avoid thinking about stressful things such as rude people, bills and rent. However, what Amelia finds really challenging is finding

economical things to do with her children such as going to the museum, or sports, that she says, “*won’t cost an arm and a leg.*”

All the teen/young mothers spoke of their effort to be good parents and the challenges they experienced in the process. While the examples of the challenges described do not seem huge on the surface, they underline how the little stresses and strains experienced on a daily basis, especially in circumstances of little support, are major for the young women.

Bianca describes putting her daughter to bed every night as one of her mothering challenges. Her daughter wants her to lie down next to her and very often Bianca says that she is so tired that, if she lies down as well, she falls asleep too, which means that she only wakes up the next morning and that means catching up on all household chores. She also struggles with her child when she has a temper tantrum, and she explains:

Those are the hardest for me because you don’t know what to do a lot of the time. I just ignore her a lot of the time. If she starts freaking out I let her do her thing, and when she’s done, she can come and talk to me. I don’t really give time-outs or anything; I just let her have her temper tantrums.

Jill acknowledges that she finds it extremely hard when her baby cries and she can’t figure out what’s wrong. Katie provides an example of how the teen/young mothers learn through a process of trial and error, through their experiences of what worked for them. Katie describes how she deals with temper tantrums:

I don’t agree with that temper tantrum thing to put your kid in a crib--I tried that, it gets worse, I honestly did. My girls were having a temper tantrum, I’m like, okay, you go to your crib and I put them in crib, it got worse! I’m like, okay, I’m not doing that again. I’m not. But I’m always open for suggestions.

Another major constraint described by the young women was the constraint of time. A number of the girls stated that they had no time for themselves and barely managed to get housework done after looking after their babies. Katie expresses how she copes with this challenge, especially with having twin girls:

The biggest challenge is time. That's what I think. I'm always saying I'm rushing time. I'm racing time. You have so much to do and not enough time. Like, you have to go to school, take care of your babies, you've got homework to do, you've got the house to take care of, laundry, this...that..

When queried on how she manages to fit everything in, she speaks about having a schedule that works for her. She mentions that she has developed her schedule based on her mother's way of bringing up the family. She provides a detailed explanation:

I'd see how she was doing it, like for example, like she'd prepare everything for us to go to school, like the night before, she'd do our lunches the night before, prepare our clothes and in the morning she has more time for herself and that's what I do and it works. It works. For food, she'd do like a big big supper so the next day she won't have to cook, because there's leftovers. And that's what I do. I have a house to take care of, but I also have myself to take care of, and I want some time for myself to go shopping and do some things so I manage my time and my schedule. My biggest influence is my mom because she raised three children on her own, totally on her own.

Most of the teen/young mothers appeared to have invested in the "good mother" identity. Some mothers would be quite upset with other mothers whose behaviour they felt gave all young mothers a bad name. They would try to distance themselves from such individuals.

Challenges of Schooling. When queried about the challenges of schooling, many teen/young mothers mentioned that they had to learn to stay away from peer conflicts and remain focused on the goal of finishing high school. Some expressed a frustration of not being treated like an adult and felt that their actions and behavior came under too much scrutiny. Others mentioned that returning to school after a break in their education posed considerable challenges.

Many of the teen/young women spoke of the drama in school, the conflicts that arose among peers and the need to stay away from the peer pressures. A number of young women seem frustrated that this was happening at this level as they felt that they were now grownups.

Bianca explains:

Well, there's a little drama at this school because it's all girls. Yeah, a lot of girls, a lot of gossip about other girls, kinda frustrating because we're all older and we all have kids so it shouldn't be like that but it is.

Most teen/young mothers acknowledged the assistance they received from the staff, but some felt that at times the support was a little too much and they wished that they did not have to explain every single behavior and action. Bianca states:

Yeah, sometimes, when there's stuff going on at home and stuff going on with her dad, and I'm—sometimes I just really don't want to come in for a day or something, and I just need time to de-stress, and sometimes when I come here it makes me more stressed out. And then if you don't come, you're gonna get in trouble and even if you do explain your situation to them, they say that they want to help you, but you're still getting in trouble for it. Sometimes they don't treat me like I'm twenty years old, but like I'm a student in a normal high school.

Reena also voices the same concern:

Sometimes the student support is a little too much like if you don't smile, they'll be like, 'Oh! What's wrong? There's nothing wrong. I just don't feel like smiling and putting on a happy face and I'm not, you know' and they just ask questions and it gets frustrating sometimes. They are just a little too much in your business and your lifestyle. That's sometimes though, not all the time.

Darlene describes her challenges with school after a traumatic break up with her partner, after which she lost contact with her stepdaughter whom she looked after since the girl was four months old:

Then I broke up with him and then I didn't have any contact with him or his daughter... So that's when I started sort of sliding a little bit. Then I got like this huge talk about how I'm like not going to school and I was getting in trouble. It was just like so much—come to school everyday, go to co-op and then do all this stuff when I was just in shock with everything. It was like having my kid and my husband die in a car crash, cause we just stopped talking.

Darlene was appreciative that there was a counselor on site, but says that this issue was something that she needed time to deal with herself. She wished that the school staff had been more understanding of her situation.

All the girls were nonetheless in agreement about the tremendous assistance they received through the schooling staff, the support staff, and the daycare staff. Many of them acknowledged their personal challenges in reengaging with schooling, many having come to

school with few or no credits and with many gaps in their education. Some felt the pressure to complete as many credits before they turned 22 and would have to leave the Centre.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to capture how the teen/young mothers were perceived by the frontline staff as well as how the teen/young mothers perceived themselves. The perspectives of the staff and the teen/young mothers were mostly similar with differences in certain aspects. When asked to describe the young women, the staff emphasized that the pregnant and parenting young women were not a homogeneous group and though there were commonalities, there were differences in age, life experiences, and individual circumstances of each young woman. The staff indicated that in general, they viewed the teen/young mothers as a group 'at-risk' created by factors such as poverty, addictions, abuse, and interrupted schooling. Among the risk factors, the staff referred to circumstances and the cycle of poverty as a major factor that placed the teen/young mothers 'at risk'; the financial constraints placing incredible pressures on the young women to somehow manage. There was a general consensus among the staff that the risk factors had an adverse impact on the lives of these young women and pre-disposed them to having negative life outcomes. The dominant construction of the young women as a group 'at-risk' was also evident through multiple sources of data. The dominant framework of 'risk' provides a warrant for interventions, however, the language of 'risk' can be pathologizing and may dangerously position all the young women as deviant or delinquent.

The teen/young mothers that I had interviewed acknowledged that they had experienced many difficulties in the past and were aware of the reality of their current circumstances; however, they did not describe themselves as a group 'at-risk'. In comparison to the perspectives

of the staff who described the negative impact of the inadequate economic, social, and other resources of the teen/young mothers; the young women did not elaborate on the hardships in their lives. The young women spoke about their appreciation of the extra social assistance through the LEAP program. Several young women were quite emphatic that though they were currently receiving social assistance, they would not always be 'welfare moms' and were doing their best to get off welfare. Perhaps the young women did not wish to present themselves to me as individuals with 'problems', or perhaps they were hesitant to voice their concerns to me.

The perspectives of the staff and the teen/young mothers indicated that there was a definite stigma attached to being a young mother. Both groups described the stigmatizing attitudes and actions, the stigma experiences, and the coping mechanisms used to deal with the stigma. The staff described the stereotyping and stigma from their recollection of the stories of the young women. Some of them described examples of witnessing the stigmatization of the teen/young mothers on occasions when they accompanied the young women. The reflections of the teen/young women indicated that were quite aware of the stigma associated with being a young mother and described feeling the 'gaze' of hostility in public places. As a result, they were probably more defensive in conflict situations. They believed that it was their young age and single status that resulted in their stigmatization. The resistance demonstrated by the teen/young mothers in responding to the stigmatizing stereotypes highlighted their attempts to counter and reframe the dominant stigmatizing discourses. From conversations with the staff and the young women, it was evident that the stigma experienced by the teen/young mothers seemed to intensify on the bus. It was clear that they could not avoid using the bus as it was their only means of transportation. On the one hand, while it was apparent that the experiences of stigmatization definitely had an impact on the young women and made their work of mothering

difficult; on the other hand, some of the issues that the young women faced, especially on the bus may have been due to inadequate space for the strollers on the buses rather than the stigmatizing actions of the public.

Though the staff mostly felt that the teen/young mothers were an 'at-risk' group, there was also the belief among a number of the staff that the young women demonstrated incredible resilience in the face of the tremendous odds against them. In some cases, despite the resilience of the young women, the barriers proved too great and some women felt compelled to leave school to meet the demands of their life situations. In a similar vein, the teen/young mothers' perspectives reflected their struggle-to-be 'good' mothers and students. In speaking about their children and their future, I noticed that there was, in fact, a heightened sense of optimism and hope that seemed to have been brought about by their babies. All the young women revealed a sense of pride in their child and strongly believed that having a child had enhanced their lives. The young women recognized that it had been not easy to make changes in their lives. They felt scared, alone, and unsure if they would make it. While they spoke of being determined to finish high school and better their lives, they also indicated that it was a challenge to cope with simultaneous demands of parenting and schooling.

Paul, a teacher at the New Beginnings Centre used these words to describe the young women, "*One third is struggling, one third is making progress but it is slow, and one third is doing really quite well.*" Perhaps, the group of young women that I had interviewed in this study were representative of the one-third who had managed well and were not quite at the high risk end of the spectrum.

This chapter mainly accentuated the perspectives of the staff regarding the teen/young women and the perspectives of the teen/young women of themselves. The next chapter explores

how the staff constructions of the teen/young mothers translated into a determination of their needs and the subsequent interventions to serve those needs. The chapter will also examine the interventions from the perspective of the teen/young mothers to examine their effectiveness.

Chapter Five: Findings—Interventions

Young mothers on social assistance with limited resources and education often face monumental challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities connected with schooling. In Canada, federal and provincial government neo-liberal social welfare policies support certain interventions through education and social welfare services aimed at supporting poor, pregnant and parenting young women. In order to adequately address the multiple needs of these high risk pregnant and parenting young women and ameliorate any negative consequences, frontline service providers at the local level are required to provide a broad range of services. In doing so, they face many challenges. This chapter explores how front line service providers at the multi-service centers in this study intervene, to assist the teen/mothers on social assistance in meeting the competing demands of schooling, mothering and work/life preparation. It also sheds light on the response of the young women, interviewed in this study, regarding the interventions.

The chapter explores the complex field of service provision through interviews with the staff at the three Centres, participant observations, and an examination of available documents, evaluations reports, and newsletters. The chapter is organized according to the various themes that emerged from these sources. An examination of these themes helps us to appreciate the complexities of service provision within a neo-liberal framework and to recognize the impact of these interventions in the lives of the pregnant and parenting young women.

All three Centres in the study have mandates to provide programs to poor and pregnant or parenting young women that gives them skills to take care of themselves and their child. The programs assist them to *“finish high school, gain job experience and learn more about good parenting. It helps [them] to rely more on [themselves] and less on social assistance”* (Ontario

Works brochure, 1999). At the Young Moms Centre, the programs aim to develop the skills in the young mothers “[that are] required to become self-sufficient contributing members of society” (Annual report). At Sisters of Hope the programs aim at “optimizing the future for pregnant and parenting youth” (Evaluation Report). Partner agencies interviewed in an evaluation study suggested that the programs offered by the Sisters of Hope help “to break the cycle of dependency, possible child abuse, drug and alcohol addictions, and in fact save tax payer’s money (Evaluation Report, 2004). Director Elizabeth reiterates that the students at the Young Moms Centre are aiming towards self-sufficiency, “Gaining independence, getting off welfare, contributing to society, giving back to the [centre] ...are long term goals of our former students” (Newsletter). Thus, it is evident that the focus of the centres within a neo-liberal framework aims at preparing the young women to be independent and places responsibility on the individual women to work to attain a better life for themselves.

In order to meet the complex, multiple needs of the young women, all the Centres have established partnerships with social services and other agencies in an attempt to provide comprehensive services in areas ranging from education, counseling, to childcare, housing and social services. To support the varied needs of the teen/young mothers, all the Centres have adopted a holistic, multidisciplinary approach. The various aspects of the services provided by the Centres to address the schooling needs, the socio-emotional needs, the monetary and various other needs are discussed below.

The Educational Environment

Within a neo-liberal social welfare policy, the LEAP program focuses on education and job training as a means to achieving economic self-sufficiency (Ontario Works Brochure). As stated earlier, all pregnant and parenting youth between the ages of 16-17 on social assistance are required to be in school as participants in the LEAP program. Parents aged 18-21 on social assistance are encouraged to complete their high school education as participants in the LEAP program. Schooling is an integral component of the programs for pregnant and parenting youth offered at the three centers. The programs at the Centres are supported by various funding agencies and delivered through the local school boards. At the same time, the delivery and structure of the schooling component varied at each Centre in an attempt to address the schooling needs of its specific student population. Each Centre also offered various other services to support the schooling of the teen/young mothers and to enhance the well-being of the mother and child. The staff at all the Centres also worked with personnel from outside agencies like the Children's Aid Society (CAS) workers, the case-workers from the LEAP program, the police, medical staff, and the staff from numerous community agencies to provide the teen/young mothers and their children with assistance as needed.

Description of Schooling at the Three Centres

The three Centres in this study, New Beginnings Centre, the Sisters of Hope Centre and the Young Moms Centre, were part of a larger network that worked to support high risk single parents and their children. At each of the Centres, the focus was different and the schooling was geared to suit the needs of the specific student population. The focus of the Young Moms Centre was full-time education specifically for women who were young mothers aged 16-21. Daycare was provided on-site. The Sisters of Hope provided programs and specialized services for

pregnant and parenting youth; schooling was mainly for pregnant teen/young women. Limited day care was available for certain programs. New Beginnings provided day and evening programming for young, single parent families; schooling was provided only through independent learning courses and was open to pregnant and parenting youth. Daycare was provided for the young women who accessed the schooling program. The schooling of the teen/young mothers at these Centres was delivered by the local school boards. The set-up of schooling at each center is detailed below.

Young Moms Centre. The Young Moms Centre was mainly an educational setting. The delivery of schooling was the focus of the Centre. The clinical and educational staff utilized a multidisciplinary, highly collaborative team approach to provide a supportive environment for the young mothers. The school day began at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 2:40 p.m. The semester was divided into four blocks. Each block spanned ten weeks and each teacher had 12 students per block. Each semester the students rotated between teachers. Teacher Karen explained that though the school had spaces for 48 students at a given time, the actual number of students who went through the schooling program in a given year was at least 120, as there was a continuous intake and discharge process. Students could also obtain credits through the co-operative education program and through summer school courses. The cooperative education program allowed students to secure high school credits in conjunction with off-site work experience. The schooling of teen mothers did not happen in isolation, it was supported by other services such as counseling, housing assistance, social support, pediatric services, nutrition programs and day care. At the Young Moms Centre, the teachers, support workers, counselors and other frontline staff worked with one another to support the mothers as students and parents.

Sisters of Hope Centre. The schooling at the Sisters of Hope, designed specifically for pregnant teens and new mothers, was provided through a satellite program of a local area high school. The schooling program was put in place in the late 1990s. The school had spaces for a maximum of 15 pregnant and mothering teens and was run by one teacher. In the mornings, students worked under the supervision of the teacher to earn credits in different subjects. Students mostly worked at their own pace utilizing some ministry provided independent learning courses or some locally developed courses. In the afternoon they earned credits by participating in parenting and other programs run by the Centre. The “Sisters of Hope” encouraged the young mothers to take the Attachment Counseling program, which focused on building a strong trusting bond between mother and child. The Centre permitted new parents who had not graduated to stay registered with the school for at least six months after the birth of their baby. During those six months, the young mothers could either complete credits that they had begun prior to giving birth or they could enroll in parenting programs at the Centre. If they had not completed their courses, the young mothers would have to move on to another school to complete any remaining credits.

New Beginnings Centre. At the New Beginnings Centre, the Learning Coach Program was offered through collaboration with the Young Moms Centre and the LEAP program. High school upgrading was offered solely through Independent Learning Courses (ILC) and facilitated by a certified teacher, also called the learning coach, who was available onsite three times a week for three hours in the morning. Students generally worked at home at their own pace and visited the classroom at the Centre to receive academic assistance, to submit assignments to the teacher, or to write exams. When the students attended school at the Centre, daycare services were provided. The classroom setting was informal and there was a certain amount of flexibility with

regards to the pace of learning. The students however were expected to take responsibility and to take the initiative to complete their credits.

Teacher Paul cited the possible reasons for students choosing the New Beginnings Centre: the flexibility of the educational program, the mandatory schooling requirement for pregnant and parenting young women under the LEAP program, the provision of day care for children of students, and the linkage to programs and the possibility of admission into the Young Moms Centre which had a waiting list of approximately 90 young women. Teacher Paul further explained that some pregnant and parenting youth chose to complete their education at the New Beginnings Centre because they might not be ready for full day school. At the time of the study, the program had 95 registered students in the schooling program.

The educational environment of the schooling programs at the three Centres for teen/young mothers were different in many ways from a traditional school setting. Schooling at the three Centres was adapted in many respects to meet the needs of its students. Though most students began school at the beginning of the academic year, in the fall, students could join the school at any point through the year. All schools adopted a flexible entry/exit policy with a continuous intake and discharge process in order to accommodate young women who either left to give birth or joined mid-year. The student populations consisted of young women between the ages of 16-21 who were pregnant and/or parenting and working at varying grade levels. Within the same classroom, most of these students had significantly different life experiences compared to most high school students. Some of the students entered with few or no credits and others needed only one or two credits to finish high school. The educational environment was largely shaped by the needs and requirements of its students. The following section explores the

specifics of the educational environment where the staff and the students worked together to make schooling a reality.

Addressing the Schooling Needs of the Pregnant and Parenting Young Women

This section explores the struggles of the teaching staff in their efforts to provide an education that would engage and sustain the interest of these young women. It considers the strategies utilized by the teachers to educate and guide the pregnant and parenting young women, each one of whom was at a different stage in their schooling.

Determining Varied Academic Levels. In these specialized schooling environments, teachers devised focused education plans for each student. Most of these plans had to be individualized, varying from formal to informal, because each student was at a different point in her schooling. In order to begin with a plan of action, the teachers needed to ascertain the academic level of the students through an examination of their transcripts.

This seemingly simple task of developing an education plan was complicated for a number of reasons that could be attributed to gaps in schooling. Schooling for most of these young women had been interrupted for various reasons: social, emotional, health, economic or family issues that caused them to dropout or be pushed out of school. Several teen/young mothers had been away from school for a period of time or had moved a lot, within and outside the province boundaries, or changed schools several times within a short interval. When these young women re-enrolled in school, staff had to determine their credit history from their previous school transcripts, in order to chart out an academic plan. Typically, within regular high schools, student transcripts are available through the student services secretary or through the student service personnel of a school, however the frequent changing of schools often caused

problems. It would often take weeks or months before the Ontario Student Records reached the Centres. This caused a delay in students getting registered in appropriate courses.

An example of this kind of situation was provided by Teacher Paul who explained the problems he encounters in accessing information from mainstream high schools:

They [school staff] are very busy dealing with their own clients so that when I phone up to ask for help or to ask what the diagnostic testing shows for this person, there are privacy concerns. You've got to prove who you are — that adds a layer of complexity to the process. And also, if they have a list of a 100 things to do, I'm number 150 — cause they are dealing with their clients first and I understand that.

Being a retired teacher himself, Paul reiterated that he understands the pressure in regular high schools but he realizes that he is now an outsider to mainstream schooling and that obtaining information is a slow process. He further explained that if he were to wait for the transcripts to arrive, he would probably lose the students, so he offers them independent learning courses that have no prerequisites as starter courses. However, he stated that eventually he would require the transcripts to sign them up for courses that have prerequisites and for students to pursue a high school credits towards obtaining a diploma.

Teacher Chris also describes a similar situation. He pointed out that since most students are at a different level of preparedness, the main concern was finding the course at their level:

The biggest thing, I wouldn't say the biggest thing, [but] the real concern for this group is to determine the level that the girls are comfortable working with where they don't need a lot of hand holding, so they have a competence in

what's been asked of them and then develop a confidence so there's a real progression.

In the course of one of my school visits to the New Beginnings Centre, I observed the intake process of a new student registration. It provided a glimpse into some of the complexities involved in the process. Tammy, a young mother and her partner had come with their baby, seeking admission into school. Tammy tells the teacher Paul that she had last attended two different schools saying, *"I had them [her transcripts] but the landlord took all our stuff when we got evicted, so I lost my transcript."* Her partner also expresses an interest in getting registered. He is 23 years old and has so far only done one independent learning course at a Detention Centre. Paul makes a call to the independent learning central office to find out if the student was enrolled as he said *"it would cut down on the paperwork."* I observe that Paul treats him with utmost respect and is nonjudgmental telling him, *"the world is wide open since you have no credits."* For the present, he attempts to find the courses such as a learning strategies or a parenting course that have no prerequisites so the both Tammy and her partner can get started.

At the Young Moms Centre and Sisters of Hope Centre there was some assistance from office staff who would assist with procuring transcripts, but, at the New Beginnings Centre teacher Paul had no office staff support. All the teachers mentioned the difficulty of getting the student started at the right academic level and believed that more support and guidance in that respect would facilitate the process of placing students at the right level and in appropriate courses.

Teaching Varied Subject Areas. As classrooms had students at different grade levels and at varying academic stages, it meant that the teachers often had to move beyond their fields of expertise and areas of specialization to help students in a range of subjects. Teacher Karen

explained that she teaches English and Art, which are her teachables, but adds that here she teaches what needs to be taught. Teacher Chris taught Science and Math, but was also the coordinator for the study of the independent learning courses that students are working on in other subject areas. He also monitored and helped students in independent learning courses in subjects such as science and math as well as other subjects. Chris attributed his ability to work with a range of students to his experience in the subject. He stated, *“It is difficult to start with, but having done it for 3 years I have a familiarity with the material and the marking and that definitely makes it easier than coming in and starting cold.”*

Teacher Dawn at Sisters of Hope explained that she tries her best to make a range of courses available to her students, but admitted that it was difficult at times, “because there’s just so much going on and I’m only one teacher”. She also pointed out, *“I’m not a Math teacher so that’s a little more of a struggle for me”*. As stated earlier, Teacher Paul supported students mainly through independent learning courses. He helped them in all subject areas. He explained, *“I will help them if I can. I’m not an expert in every subject area, but generally speaking I can help them with most of the problems they face.”*

The teachers appeared to be trying their best to accommodate for the variation in the academic levels and subject areas, but it was evident that there was a feeling of inadequacy when teacher had to teach beyond their fields of specialization. Sometimes a teacher was fortunate to find a volunteer tutor to do some coaching in subjects like advanced math or science, and that was helpful. During my visits to the centres, I saw volunteer tutors who came in for a few hours to provide individual one on one tutoring. In fact, during one of my scheduled interviews with a student, I waited till she finished her tutoring session in Math. She indicated that she found the extra help useful. At the Young Moms Centre, the teachers seemed to cope better as the

workload was shared between four teachers, with students rotating between teachers every semester. Also, they seemed to feel supported by the efforts of student support workers and the counselors, who maintained a close relationship with the teachers and the students. In the case of the other two Centres, where there was only one teacher, the task of addressing the diverse needs of the students appeared to be an onerous one and each teacher had to strategize with ways to manage and guide the students. It appeared that the Centres attempted to offer courses similar to other high schools, but due to limitations on staff and resources, not all credits could be offered. Thus, the students had to choose from the limited number of courses offered, in contrast to the greater selection of courses available in mainstream high schools. The teachers did their best to find creative ways for the students to earn credits through supervised independent learning courses or through links with parenting and other courses offered at the Centres, thus fully utilizing available resources.

Strategizing to Sustain Student Involvement and Interest. Due to the unique educational environment in the classrooms with students at different academic levels and grades, teachers stated that they had to devise strategies and establish systems so students could be involved and could take ownership of their work. All the teachers spoke of the need for meticulous planning, organization and structure to have students actively involved in learning. The teachers also maintained a transparent system, where the work expectations were visible and assessment results were always available to students. Speaking on the subject of managing the classrooms, teacher Lauren described the process by showing me a visual example of how she tracked the progress of her students. She took me to a big chart on the wall that she explained further. She emphasized the need for meticulous planning and organization. The chart had the names of all the students in the class in the first column. Across the columns were the days/dates of the week

and each day had an activity next to it. Each day the students would come and they would check the assigned work for the day. When done, the completed work was handed to the teacher who then placed a check mark besides the student's name. In case of an absence, the student would have to catch up on missed work by doing the activities on other days. These procedures were routinely followed.

Teacher Karen explained that she utilized a strategy of providing open access to information that was beneficial to her as well as her students. She explained that her strategy was to keep a single, fairly large binder and to devote a section in it to each individual student. All interactions with the student were recorded in that section for future reference. She also added the annual education plans into that binder. Students could check this binder at any time and monitor their own progress. Teacher Karen believed that this strategy allowed students to feel in control of their educational goals and it helped her as well to keep track of their progress. Students had their own agendas as well to help them stay organized. Karen also mentioned that she would periodically focus on the topics of time management and organization as part of her class lesson.

Teacher Dawn, who has been involved with the Sisters of Hope schooling program since its inception, found herself developing materials and methods as the program evolved. She said that her method of sustaining the interest of her students was to have them involved in every aspect of their educational planning. Each student had her own portfolio that was placed on the teacher's desk. Dawn explained that this method allowed students to have a concrete idea of where they were heading:

They have access to their records at all times. They know when marks have gone in, what work has been corrected. It's an open file for them. And the

reason that works is that they take ownership then, and they remember what they've written down. They know how far they've progressed.

Teacher Paul has about 95 students on his list at the New Beginnings Center, working through independent learning courses. To keep track of them all he devised a tracking mechanism and maintains detailed records on the computer. He explained why he had to come up with a tracking mechanism:

I didn't realize this when I started that this is a huge paper trail, for me, because you see when you deal with 95 people with all the combinations and permutations and all the people they have, I quickly found that unless I could keep very detailed records or comments, for instance – the number of Stephanies or Crystals...that I would forget and I don't think it has anything to do with my age. I think it has to do with the fact that there are just so many combinations so that [the tracking mechanism] is the one thing that I found that I did.

Teacher Paul explained how he resolved his problem of remembering the details of his students. In order to have a visual reminder of each student, he takes a picture of each student and downloads it on his computer, so he can attach a face to a name. He described his method of monitoring the progress of his students:

I take their photographs. Most of us are visual learners, yeah, so that their name comes up and a picture comes up, so oh yeah, now I know which one I'm talking about so that I do that and I keep for all of them very detailed records of what it was...every time that they come in or every time they talk on the telephone... what it was we talked about, so in doing that the objective is

to try and keep a handle on who they are and what they are doing and what they are trying to accomplish and I mentioned that I am able to take a look at what they are working on.

At the Young Moms Centre, Teacher Chris also spoke about the need for planning:

Well, we do a lot of planning, the girls know where this course work is all going and so we have an education plan that we work out collaboratively with the students so they've had input and we've had input and the content that they are working on is sort of a best agreement that we can come up with.

He also pointed out that that efficiency was required with respect to marking and record keeping, *“the students are all having lessons marked chapter by chapter and lesson by lesson and that helps monitor in terms of the progress and that's where my record keeping becomes important”*

Thus, an interesting point gleaned from the teacher's conversations was that not only did they realize that there was a need to promote student's active involvement; they also seemed to have the necessary experience and expertise to do so. From my conversations with the teaching staff, I found that most of them had been teaching for a number of years. The teachers' comments also indicated that they were familiar with the content of most high school subjects, even beyond their area of specialization. They also seemed to utilize teaching methods that were effective in reaching out to the diverse mix of students.

To keep the students engaged and interested in their school work, especially since the students were at different grade levels and of varied abilities, teachers indicated that they used a variety of strategies such as varying the instruction, providing consistent feedback and involving students in their educational planning. Teacher Karen described how she would plan common activities such as uninterrupted sustained silent reading. She also organized the class into juniors

and seniors—for example, getting one group to work on a murder mystery activity while another group worked on journal writing. Karen added that many of her students enjoyed the debates that she organized, as they were quite articulate and had better oral than written skills. Teacher Chris spoke about keeping students focused on their work by being active in the classroom, *“Basically I’m moving around pretty much for the day. I’d say about 60% of my day is moving from one student to another, doing a little tutoring here, and more there.”* Chris is quite comfortable teaching students at varying grades and abilities in one classroom. He described the range of students in his class:

Yeah, it’s a regular classroom. You know there are some students that will just pick it up and go and there are some that are really needy and it involves a lot of handholding. I don’t like to use the term [handholding]...so there’s a spectrum, a real spectrum. There are girls that have a little difficulty and get some questions answered and away they go again.

Teachers Dawn and Paul strongly believed that students needed to feel connected to school in order to succeed. Teacher Dawn felt it was important for the students to know that someone at school cared about them because as she explained, *“in some schools they’ve dropped off the face of the earth,”* indicating that students may fall through the cracks and may not be noticed. Teacher Dawn also spoke about assuring the students of her ongoing support. She added:

The baby is the pivotal point, the point of motivation for them and I will work as hard and as fast as they are working and if they are not working I don’t have time to go get them to work. I tell them that at the very beginning. I say,

'if you go fast and you work hard, I'll go fast and I will work hard on your behalf to help you. I can't do more than that.'

Teacher Paul draws on his vast experience in teaching and knowledge of students to keep his students motivated. He comments:

Because one of the things, I think, clearly is the most important indicator of success for this is constant contact with the client. Anyone who has done any teaching knows that if the teacher comes in and writes homework on the blackboard and never ever does anything about it after that, the number who will continue to do the work will rapidly decline and the same is true of this group.

Teacher Paul strongly believed that students respond if a teacher shows interest in them; and he monitored the progress of his students by keeping in touch with them on the telephone:

What is needed for the person to do, in this case me, is to simply express interest. So I'm not demanding in the sense saying "oh, how come you're only on lesson two?" that's being critical, so what it is- I phone up and say, "how are we doing?" and just the simple act of my calling and asking the question, how are we doing? What are you working on? is in many cases sufficient ---- not pressure, just an expression of interest that someone cares...Everyone needs in some way to feel that someone is interested in what they are doing so that to me is the most important part of the job that ...to try and keep it going.

Supporting Co-operative Education Programs. At the Young Moms Centre, co-operative education programs offered students the opportunity to obtain high school credits through work experience. Through co-op education programs students could explore *"the expectations and*

advantages of being involved in, and a 'valued' member of, the working world. As a result of fine cooperative education work during the year, three graduating students were offered summer jobs in their area of interest, thus allowing further growth of skills and independence" (Annual Report). The above statements highlight the value of the worker citizen as a valued member of society. It also makes the link between work and independence suggesting that workers can aspire to a life of independence and self-sufficiency through work.

Though the cooperative education program offered students an opportunity to explore the world of work, it also placed added responsibilities on the teen/young mothers. Some students experienced difficulty meeting the expectations of the program. Teacher Laura explained the special challenges faced by students managing work requirements in co-operative placements and mothering tasks:

One of the barriers they face is time management, getting to school, dropping off their child and getting to their co-op placement on time, sometimes taking two buses to get to places. It requires managing time and planning and it requires stamina and energy. Very often they are tired.

Laura further explains how work placements teach students that working requires commitment:

At first they are quite excited and enthusiastic. They like the idea of getting dressed up to go to work. When they are getting ready for their interviews, most of them exude an aura, they are bright and shiny, however the glamour soon wears off and then it is just work, the job then gets onerous and it is hard for some of them to maintain that consistency. The other barrier is seeing something to its completion.

In the course of working at the co-operative education placements, many teen/young mothers experienced tensions at work due to a number of reasons. The co-operative education teacher Laura and her assistant generally mediated to resolve issues in a satisfactory manner. She explained:

Some girls have problems with body odour and poor oral hygiene (which many employers are kind and tolerate). Some don't phone in. Some of them have personalities that clash with people, poor social skills. Many lack support at home. Some students determine that things are not fair and quit. When that happens, we go over things and over what went wrong and what could they learn from the experience. Even if there is one little thing that could be learned or the fact that they have worked and now have a good resume, is a bonus.

The above excerpt clearly indicates that the teen/young mothers were disadvantaged at the work place as they seemed to lack appropriate social and life skills. There appeared to be obvious socio-economic and class differences between the teen/young mothers and the people that the teen/young mothers were interacting with at the work place. The teacher Laura appeared to be sensitive to the circumstances of the young women and to the fact that the young women were attempting to study and parent at the same time. The teacher also seemed to attempt to mediate with the employers and to support the students on the job, even when things did not work out.

Based on the interviews with the staff involved with the co-operative education program it was evident that more attention was needed to support students in co-operative education placements. The staff realized that there was much more involved than merely placing students

in their work placements, and the challenges of working at lower end jobs was stressful for many of the teen/young mothers. Counselor Simone mentioned that when the students were involved in the co-operative education placements, they were isolated from the supportive environment of the Centre and she hoped that she could help the teen/young mothers through her role as a counselor to ease the transition from school to work.

Teacher Laura emphasized that the students in the co-operative education program sometimes appeared cool and calm but actually needed more support as they were going out into the world of work and faced all kinds of stresses. She provided an example of a supportive environment at the school – Every Wednesday, the students had a break from attending their co-operative education placements. Teacher Laura spoke about how she utilized these Wednesday morning sessions at school to involve the co-operative education students in other activities such as rug making, doll making, sewing, making Christmas angels and so on. The teacher described this time that the students spent together as “reflective” time. During this time, the students chatted and shared stories about their co-operative education placements and as teacher Laura explained, “*They [teen/young mothers] talk about the good, the bad and the ugly.*” It was evident that the teen/young mothers were provided an opportunity to not only vent their grievances but to also bond and to derive support from their peers in similar situations.

Addressing the Social-Emotional Needs of the Teen/Young Mother

The staff at the Centres recognized the difficult circumstances in the lives of the teen/young mothers and hence regarded them as a high risk group that required substantial support and protection from harm and danger. In certain instances, to protect the teen/young mother and her child, the staff was obliged to implement interventions that had disciplinary

implications. The next section takes a closer look at the instances when staff intervened and the manner in which they fulfilled their roles and responsibilities of assisting the young women.

Supporting the Teen/Young Mothers in Abuse Situations. The program staff was quite concerned about the many risk factors for the teen/young mothers and employed certain interventions to protect the young mothers and their children from harm and danger. One of the reasons for concern often cited was the risk to teen/young mothers in abusive relationships. This concern for the safety of the mother and the child caused the staff to utilize strategies such as monitoring, reporting, counseling, or making referrals to other professionals.

As a means of protecting the teen/young mothers, the Centre staff were often implicated in surveillance of the behavior and actions of the teen/young mothers. To detect situations of domestic abuse, the staff explained that they had to be alert for overt signs of abuse. Teacher Karen believed that it was her job as a teacher to be perceptive and constantly alert to the slightest variance in the behaviors of the teen/young mothers and to interpret cries for help. She described that a girl may get desperate and do rash things. She spoke about watching out for the “slashers” (girls who might attempt to slash their wrists). On the issue of abuse, Counselor Simone explained that, very often, the mothers did not realize that they were actually experiencing abuse. The young women would describe some of the domineering actions of their partners that included not giving them permission to go to school or forcing them to stay home. Simone related how she would try to explain to the teen/young mothers the behaviour was abusive and the teen/young mothers would be shocked, justifying it, saying, “*Well, he’s not really punching me and there are no marks*”. Counselor Simone would explain to them and educate them about the danger to themselves and their child.

Other staff also noted that the teen/mothers were often unaware that they were victims of abuse, even when it involved physical abuse. It is evident that for the teen/young mothers, it was difficult to identify which behaviors and actions of their partners were “abusive”, as they were involved in the relationships. This comment underlines how human relationships are complex and that it is not always easy for people in conflict situations to pinpoint which human behaviors and actions are abusive.

Quite often, the staff had to use their professional judgment, asking difficult questions if they suspected abuse. Becky, a support worker recounted a situation:

I had a mom who had a bruise on her arm, but on the inside, so it didn't look like, you know what I mean?, and she's in gym class so my initial thought was did she hurt herself playing volleyball or something like that. And once I asked that question, I could tell from her demeanor that something else was going on, coupled with the fact that she had been away two days beforehand. So you know pulling her downstairs and finding out that she had been assaulted in the last 24 hours.

Becky felt strongly that it was not just the mother, but also the child who was her concern. This lengthy quotation helps us understand the series of events set in motion upon the discovery of an abusive situation. It involved many extremely difficult choices and tough decisions for the mother and for the staff as well.

Because we don't serve one client, we're serving two, and really our client is the child who is downstairs in the daycare Centre. So, you know, it's about realizing that the abuse is taking place by itself or in front of the child and then trying to work with the mum to get her to a safe place. At minimum,

whether it be a safety plan to make sure that she's in safe stable housing—if she's willing to do that—or at least go to a friend or a family member for the next few days till she's safe. Whether or not she's going to file a police report, letting her know that we have to file, that we have to speak to child protection and I like to do that with the mom present. Sometimes the mom will become quite upset over that so I have to let her know that I have to make that call. We ask her to work with us and if she decides to leave the premises—that's something else. And then that crisis spirals right into another crisis and sometimes it might just end at that or sometimes it might be that the Children's Aid is called in and so there'll be that piece, the child protection piece, and the police will be coming in and the courts, they might be going down to the courthouse to file... and then it'll be a whole piece generally speaking.

Support worker Becky's account provides a glimpse of the complex actions and decisions that follow the detection of an abusive situation. It is clear that the Centre staff are sensitive to the vulnerability of the teen/young mother in these situation and try to minimize the distress of the teen/young mother by involving her in all the decisions, presenting all possible options and even making the difficult call to CAS in her presence.

The support staff had to walk a tightrope, trying to protect the teen/young mother and child by reporting to CAS, and simultaneously trying to support them through the process. The discovery of an abusive situation led the staff to follow a series of steps as mentioned in the quotation above. Though the staff indicated that they attempted to involve the teen/young mother at every step, it is evident the process was not simple. There were layers of complex issues and

emotions related to the relationships of teen/young women and their partners that were not easy to sort. The staff had the difficult task of finding solutions to ensure the safety of mother and child and to respect the choices and decisions of the teen/young mother.

For the teen mother, confronting their partner about issues of partner abuse was potentially dangerous, and the situation sometimes got worse when the young mothers asserted themselves. Though most mothers were appreciative of the counseling and supports were available to leave an abusive situation, the stakes were high and the women risked losing custody of their babies and they risked destroying their relationships with their partners and the family structure and homes they had established. As a result, some mothers abandoned the counseling services or dropped out of the school program completely. There were often occasions when the mother would go through a whole series of procedures after the detection of the abuse, but would still return to the abusive partner. The staff would have to then inform her about possible CAS involvement and criminal charges. Although the staff at all the Centres were cognizant of the difficult life circumstances of the young women and attempted to handle issues with sensitivity and respect, it was evident that implementing welfare reforms within a neo-liberal context increased the monitoring work of the staff at the centres.

Supporting the Teen/Young Mothers with Addiction Issues. Another main concern of the staff was the issue of substance abuse. The staff would watch for signs, symptoms, and changes in moods and behaviors that indicated that the teen/young mothers had substance abuse problems. As with domestic abuse the staff believed that the issue of substance abuse was dangerous not just for the mother but, more importantly for the child. Support worker Becky relates her position, “*We deal with a lot of substance abuse, alcohol abuse and all of those things*

because we're dealing with more than one client, one actual client that needs to have an advocate".

At the Young Moms Centre, the students were monitored through a unique arrangement. The support staff would visit the classrooms every morning and spend about 10-20 minutes just touching base with the mothers. It provided an opportunity to detect anything unusual and also to monitor the well-being of the young women.

As one staff member explained:

It's also kind of to head off an issue that might be brewing. They are teenage girls for the most part; for any teenage girl it's a difficult time period with a lot of issues that crop up, but then add the additional stress of being a parent and having a child. So I'm up there really to kind of scope things out. If I see somebody who's not being social with everybody then I know something's wrong and I can pull her out of the classroom right away or I can call her down to the office to see how things are going.

It is evident that concern for the safety of the mother and child prompted the staff to closely monitor the behavior and actions of the teen/young mothers, such that every change in mood or behavior was noted and further investigated. Though the continuous monitoring of the teen/young mother allowed the staff to intervene to help them, it was evident that the staff intervened with tact, consideration and respect for the young women.

The consequence of being involved in substance abuse was more severe for the mother where the addiction was drugs rather than an addiction to cigarettes. The teen/young mother involved with drugs would lose custody of her child. On one occasion, I observed a custody battle in a courthouse. At the request of a program co-coordinator who could not attend court, I

accompanied a young mother along with her own mother, who had come from out of town to a court hearing. This young woman was found using drugs soon after the birth of her child, who was now over a year old. The young woman had her child taken away and custody had been awarded to the young father, who lived with his parents. After a period spent in counseling and rehabilitation, the young mother was allowed only supervised visits, in the presence of the CAS workers and the father. The young mother was now pleading for more time with her daughter in a less formal environment. She asserted that the formal, supervised environment was not conducive to her establishing a bond with her daughter. Her request to take her daughter to visit her mother, who lived out of town, was denied as well. Although I realized that the CAS had a job to do and may well have had a valid case, I felt sympathy for the teen/young mother. She had gone through the drug rehabilitation program and had stayed clean. I could sense the despair in the voice of the young woman as she begged for a chance to reconnect with her child. The young woman pleaded her case with the CAS worker, saying she had done everything they had asked her to do, but they were not keeping their end of the bargain. As she grew increasingly frustrated, she was told by the CAS workers that she was losing control. She attempted to implore the father of the child to give her an opportunity, and was warned by the CAS worker not to speak to him and to show restraint. The father sat quiet and powerless, showing little emotion through the entire proceedings. There appeared to be an obvious class difference between the two families that may have had an impact. The young man's parents were teachers and seemed to be dominating the proceedings. The court hearing ended with full custody awarded to the father, with no contest from the mother. Privately, the mother was advised that it was an essential step to get CAS out of the picture and off her case and maybe something could be worked out with the father and his family. I wondered if CAS could have been a little more sensitive to the

mother. The teen/young mother told me that the CAS worker she dealt with had always been rude and unhelpful. This example illustrates how substance abuse issues wrecked havoc in the lives of the teen/young mother and her child, affecting all other aspects of life. Though counseling was available for pregnant and parenting teens/young mothers with addiction issues, there also appeared to be little sympathy and support among some CAS workers towards these young women.

Addressing the Need for Advocacy on Behalf of the Teen/Young Mothers

As has been argued at different points in the thesis, most of the staff considered the teen/young mothers to be a vulnerable group, marginalized in many ways. They felt a duty to intervene and advocate on their behalf. The staff also strongly believed that it was not enough to speak on behalf of the young parents but that it was also important to teach the young women to advocate for themselves.

Need for Advocacy. A number of staff reported that they felt compelled to speak out in support of the teen/young mothers for many reasons, such as the negative perceptions of the teen/young mother, the disregard of their requests for help, their inexperience, and lack social skills. Several staff spoke in support of the teen/young mothers in an attempt to challenge the negative stereotyping. For example, Teacher Paul at New Beginnings Centre believed that most often people held a negative view of the teen/young mother and he would routinely tell the teen/young mother, *“I will be your personal champion and try to represent you as positively as I can to all the stakeholders up to the point that I won’t lie for you.”* It is clear that while Teacher Paul offered his steadfast support to the teen/young mothers, he also candidly explained the parameters of that support to them.

Director Elizabeth would go to great lengths at public events to impress upon people that these young women were not just accepting handouts but were striving to improve the circumstances of their lives and needed support. Elizabeth wrote:

We want to give the moms a hand up not a hand out. We want to help them help themselves- learn how to think things through, make wise decisions, be proud of their ability to solve problems and advocate appropriately for themselves and their family (Newsletter).

It was evident that the staff were strong supporters of the teen/young mothers in public, and were also keen on empowering them to be self-advocates and to dispel negative stereotypes of the teen/young mother as irresponsible and dependent on welfare.

The main reason why the staff advocated for the teen/young mothers was their inexperience. In many cases, the staff believed the requests of the teen/young mothers for help would often go unheeded or be denied. Denise, a support worker explained that she would speak on behalf on the teen mother if the situation warranted her intervention. For example, she knew that most of the young women were poor and struggling to make ends meet. If she found that the teen/young mother was not coming to school because she had spent her bus pass money on food, she would phone the LEAP worker and say, *“really, is there anything you could do for this mum? Let’s try to help her out a bit more.”* At the same time, Denise also explained that sometimes the requests of the teen/young mothers would be denied because the LEAP case worker may not be convinced of the legitimacy of the claim. She explained how she was able to convince the LEAP caseworker that the teen/young mother’s claim was genuine and she was not taking advantage of the system. She further explained that this type of intervention was possible because of the relationship of trust that she had established with the LEAP worker.

During my time spent at the Centres, I observed that the teen/young mothers requested many things, ranging from bus tickets to milk coupons, or sought information about the numerous workshops, the timing of the doctor, and so on. On one occasion at the Sisters of Hope, I was assisting support worker Margie at the reception where young women came to register for programs. I heard a young woman complain to the support worker Margie that she had requested additional LEAP funds as her baby could only tolerate a special formula and she was not getting a response. The support worker Margie asked if the young mother had a doctor's prescription for the formula, and then faxed the prescription to the LEAP caseworker, saying she would follow it up with a phone call. The young woman appeared quite relieved and appreciative of the assistance provided. Another young mother asked Margie for bus tickets. Margie queried her about the reasons why she did not have a bus pass, making notes about the same. Margie then explained to me that based on her professional judgment she would often advocate for a bus pass or provide bus tickets as she believed that the young women needed to go out into the community or else there was a significant danger of them becoming isolated from support structures, which could have a detrimental effect on the mother and the child.

This example highlights how the staff at all the Centres utilized their good relationships with other professionals to obtain required services for the teen/young mothers. Most of the staff that I interviewed felt that having access to some means of transportation was vital for the young women to do grocery shopping, go to the doctor, attend school and other programs in the community. Support worker Margie suggested that the teen/young mother needed encouragement to travel by public transportation as some mothers might avoid traveling or being in public because they experienced the harsh gaze of condemnation and the stigma of being a young mother.

Program coordinator Kim explained that because of various life circumstances, most of the young women would have to deal with government organizations like the police, the courts, CAS and other social service agencies. She further explained that, for most of the young women, it was a frustrating experience attending court, meeting with children's aid workers and the police because they were inexperienced and lacked the social skills and savvy required to navigate through these systems. In view of that, Kim strongly felt there was a need to advocate on behalf of the young mothers, *"So, just helping support them and helping them understand that there are ways of dealing with particular issues without it blowing up in their face and helping them recognize that they have a right to the service here."* The staff at the Centres appeared to be the most vocal advocates for the teen/young mothers on social assistance. It was evident that there was an obvious class difference between the teen/young mothers and the staff at the various institutions and the teen/young mothers were at a clear social disadvantage when interacting with a more privileged group of people with a different set of social skills. The staff attempted to mediate between the teen/young mothers and the staff from various agencies in order to bridge the class and age divide. They did this by serving as a compelling advocate and an active coach between the government bureaucracy and the young client. Most of the centers had established partnerships with social service agencies; staff from these agencies were invited to provide services at the Centres as well as to provide information about the work of the agencies in supporting the teen/young mothers. This was done to increase the familiarity of the teen/young mothers with the workers and the work of these outside agencies.

Forms and Instances of Advocacy. The staff would advocate on behalf of the teen/young mother in different ways and at different instances. As suggested above, staff would intervene through personal phone calls, face-to-face interactions, referrals, collaborative team approaches,

public forums and newsletters. Staff would intervene when the teen/young mothers dealt with the courts, police, CAS, housing, education, social services personnel. Most of the staff mentioned that they would not hesitate to pick up the phone and speak with other professionals and staff at the different public service agencies. As one staff member commented:

So when they ask and they're denied and I really feel it is a cause I could advocate for them, I don't mind picking up the phone and saying, "really is there anything you could do for this mum. Again it is making sure they don't take advantage of the system... And I think that's what the caseworkers need, another professional working closely with [the worker] to make them feel like okay; sure we'll give them the little bit extra this month.

This method of communication by telephone was considered to be fast, effective and timely; not surprisingly, it was the most utilized strategy. Face-to-face meetings were another effective way that the staff used to present specific cases or issues. Some staff utilized the occasion of the LEAP worker's visits to present the needs of the teen/young mothers. Teacher Dawn described the interaction:

So she [the LEAP worker] might say how is so-and-so doing, and I'd say well, she hasn't been here too often, look at her attendance or here's her work, this is what she's been working on, she's doing a good job.

Teacher Dawn then presented the requests of the teen/young mothers for items ranging from shoes, a new couch, or a new dress for a wedding. Thus, other staff similarly found avenues to advocate on behalf of the teen/young mothers. In instances where the staff felt inadequate to deal with complex issues, most of the staff said that they would support the young women by making referrals to an individual or agency that they knew would be helpful.

The staff would also take every opportunity to speak on behalf of the teen/young mother at public venues and gatherings and would advocate on behalf of the teen/young women within the larger community. The director Elizabeth explained how she advocated and promoted the cause of the teen/young mother at social functions, sometimes to skeptical, conservative people who would argue, *“Why should we be helping them when they’re living out of my pocket... they’ve made their bed, let them lie in it.”* In response, the director would offer reasons why their support would help everyone in the long term. She would tell them:

Well, if I let them lie on it, they’ll be living out of your pocket for the rest of their lives and there is a pretty good chance, their children will do the same. If I accept though, that their lives could get changed around, I can get them out of your pocket and maybe I can make sure that the next generation never gets there in the first place.

As illustrated above, the Director Elizabeth utilized her social location to convince affluent members of the public that the cause of the teen/young mother was worthy of support despite the fact that many of them believed that the teen/young mothers should pay the price for their bad choices. She attempted to win the support of potential donors by presenting a picture of hope for an independent self-sufficient future generation based on their support for the current generation of teen/young mothers. Other methods of advocating and supporting the cause of the young mothers to potential donors was done through newsletters, flyers, handouts, and postings in the local newspaper and in the schools, churches, medical clinics and in the community.

Elizabeth discussed the problem of presenting the success and the needs of the program as she sought funding for the continuation of the services. She spoke of wanting the *“folks out there to recognize the worth of the programs that were really making a difference in the lives of*

the teen mothers". At the same time, she felt that she had to accentuate the "*high needs*" of the young women to garner support for their cause.

Nurturing Self-Advocacy. The staff also believed that it was essential to encourage the teen/young mothers to advocate and stand up for themselves. A number of staff related examples of strategies that they taught the young women to help them cope in difficult situations. Ruth explained that many of the young women suffered from low self-esteem that was not a result of being a young mother but most likely stemmed from childhood experiences. However, the constant negative stigmatizing behavior of people towards the young women had an adverse impact on them. Counselor Ruth further recounted that she would encourage the young women to identify one positive aspect in themselves, even if it was a small thing and that she hoped that technique would lead them to realize that they have something worthwhile. Director Elizabeth explained how people who were total strangers, unaware of the circumstances of the lives of these young women would come right up to them and tell them that they should not have had children at such a young age and that they should be married. The young women were encouraged by staff to keep their emotions in check, in the face of negative stereotyping, even if it was extremely hard to do so. They were taught to say, "*I'm going to school because I'm trying to be a good mum and to get an education*" and to "*just walk away and leave that person who hurled the insult with something to think about.*" In terms of social assistance, often, the young women did not really know what they could ask for under the LEAP program or how to ask for services. Support worker Denise encouraged the young mothers not to be shy and to request for things even they were unsure if LEAP covered it.

Sometimes, the girls were easily frustrated and needed to be taught how to ask questions appropriately, and to receive unwelcome information back if a request is denied. A number of

the mothers are involved with the police, courts and CAS. Through role play and enactments of real life situations, the staff attempted to help the teen/young mothers bridge the age and class divide. By walking them through the process and preparing them what to expect, the staff empower these young women and teach them the important life skill of self-advocacy.

Addressing the Varied Needs of the Teen/Young Mothers

The staff at the Centres assisted the teen/young mothers in many areas, interacting with professionals from outside agencies or by designing programs that would address the evolving needs of these young clients.

Supporting the Provision of Social Welfare Services. Almost the entire population of young women at the three Centres qualified for and received welfare support under the LEAP learnfare program for young mothers with the exception of a few cases. (For example, a teen/young mother who lived with her parents or with a partner might not be eligible for assistance under the LEAP program). Each teen/young mother was assigned her own LEAP case worker. All the Centres recognized the importance for the caseworker-client relationship and intervened to build those relationships. The staff went to great lengths to cultivate a trusting working relationship with the local offices and specific caseworkers; new students were encouraged to get reassigned to one of these case workers. In order to make it convenient for the mothers, the centre staff and the caseworkers themselves, most LEAP workers visited the young women right at the Centers instead of at their office. At the Young Moms Centre, it was evident that the Centre staff went to great lengths to organize the LEAP activities. They appointed one staff member to be the liaison between the Centre and the LEAP workers. Before the scheduled weekly LEAP visit, the young mothers were requested to sign up if they needed an appointment. Also the mothers were required to phrase their questions in advance which were passed on to the

workers so that the workers could come prepared. This was done to make the process more efficient for all concerned to facilitate the smooth provision of services. Although the student remained the primary contact, this batch-processing strategy meant that the Centre staff came to know the caseworkers; it helped local staff stay more aware of tensions; it reduced the number of phone calls by clients to their caseworker; and it reduced the amount of time students would have otherwise spent away from the Centre meeting with their caseworker. Thus, although a level of privacy was lost, for the most part these strategies appeared to be beneficial to all the parties involved in service provision at the Centre.

Supporting the Teen/Young mothers through Parenting Programs. The teen/young mothers were thought to be in need of parenting programs to help them to become better in their roles as mothers because they were young and inexperienced. Also, many teen/young mothers came from troubled and unstable families and may not have seen responsible parenting models. Staff members at the Centres were also expected to be role models for the teen/young mother, teaching them appropriate skills to function as good parents. As Support worker Denise explains, *“It kind of goes back to the clientele that we’re working with, because we’re not working with the kind of young parent that has a lot of support, [but with those]who haven’t had a “normal” childhood themselves”*. She further comments, *“In a lot of regards because we generally fall back on our previous life experiences, so when they [teen/young mothers] are coming from something that is not the best ideal and... in many cases the worst case scenario, so it is hard to move them to something different”*, indicating that it was generally believed that the absence of role model parents or not having a ‘normal childhood’ may interfere with the parenting practices of young mothers. Support worker Becky, a facilitator for the parenting programs, explained that the teen/young mothers often requested assistance with disciplining their children. For example,

a teen/young mother might get frustrated that her nine month old child is turning off the television when she is watching it. Support worker Becky would use that example to analyze the possible underlying reasons for the child's behaviour, suggesting that the child may be seeking the mother's attention or maybe the television should be moved to higher location beyond the child's reach.

The issue of mothering however was not just a matter of learning how to parent effectively; there was also the issue of needing to spend time with their child. Support worker Denise explained that some teen/young mothers genuinely wanted to bond with their child and the fact that they had to pass along their four month old baby to daycare and go upstairs to attend school caused a lot of separation anxiety. It was not reassuring enough for them to know that their child was in daycare and they could still breastfeed, for example, the teen/young mothers wanted to be with their child. Denise further explained that for some mothers, this was a dilemma and some would make a decision to quit school, choosing to stay home with their babies over their academics, at the cost of losing a spot in school and funding from the LEAP program.

However, there is an irony inherent in the way that the mothers are taught to be good parents. The fact that they are welfare mothers and that schooling is mandatory, especially for 16-17 year olds, means they have to either be in school or work and do not have the luxury to stay home and parent their child if they wish to do so. Most mothers also lack the basic resources such as an adequate supply of diapers, formula milk and so on to parent effectively. This lengthy quotation by program co-coordinator Kim demonstrates her indignation that the mothering aspect was given importance in theory, but in practice, the teen/young mothers had no time to spend being good mothers.

I have a problem with that because I think that any parent should have the right to stay home with their child if they want to. And I think it's after a very short period of time that they have to start school after the baby's born. So in terms of bonding and all of that, that bothers me. I'm really glad that they're going to get their education but I think that they're rushing into it too quickly. And we already know that a 16/17-year-old is at risk of attachment issues with her child, then you rush them into school and that is their world and they don't have time to build that relationship with their child that most of us have, at least recognition under 6 months, but they don't give them. I think they only give them two months or something [actually, LEAP provides 16 weeks] before they have to be back in school. It's not enough time, and being a 16 or 17-year-old you need even more time to build that relationship and to understand how to parent and to get into that routine. Yeah. So that I have a problem with that.

The above comments by Kim indicate that in the case of young mothers, social welfare policies encouraged the young women to choose education and work as a desirable path. Mothering, though important was given secondary importance. Staying home to raise a child was not an option for young mothers on social assistance. Clearly, within a neo-liberal framework, the student/worker role is favoured over the maternal role of the teen/young mothers.

Perspectives of the Young Women on the Interventions

The young women interviewed in the present study spoke in positive terms regarding the services they were receiving at the Centres. They were clearly appreciative of the supports

offered such as assistance from the schooling program, the parenting courses, the daycare services, the social assistance services, the counseling and other supportive services. While the teen/young mothers spoke freely about the services they received, some young mothers were more vocal about the advantages. In general, they much more reticent about elaborating on aspects that needed improvement. Perhaps they found little to criticize or did not wish to criticize the people and the institutions that were helping them, or they were afraid of the implications of being forthright.

The pregnant and parenting young women at all the three Centres were attempting to work towards completion of their high school diploma. Among the nine women interviewed in this study, Abby and Cindy had recently graduated, while the rest of the young women with the exception of Jill were close to graduation. They shared some of their reflections on various helpful and less helpful aspects of schooling.

The young women spoke in different ways about the qualities of the teachers at the Centres. They expressed gratitude for the supportive teachers at the Centres who made it possible for them to reconnect with school. Bianca described her teachers, particularly attributing her success to the patience of her math teacher. She explained that she was not good in math and did not know the basics of fractions and division, but was able to slowly understand and make progress with the teacher's help. She explained:

The teachers are really good. They are really nice. I'm really close to this teacher X. He's a really nice guy, very down to earth, and very helpful. He

helped me learn how to do math because I didn't know how to do it before.

He's really patient and he's a really good teacher.

Reena related that she hadn't lasted long at any regular high school due to the constant conflicts she would have with staff and students. She had very few credits when she enrolled at the Centre, but now was well on her way to finishing high school. Reena recalls several facets of the schooling at the Centre that helped her succeed. She mentioned the class size, the accommodations she received from "*understanding, lenient teachers*" and the encouraging class environment as helpful. In a small class setting, Reena felt more comfortable asking her teachers questions than she previously did in larger classes:

The teachers are very nice and basically you have more quality time one-on-one with the teachers than you would in a regular high school because you only have classes of about 10 or 12 girls. There are only 50 girls in the school. I used to go to [a regular high school] which had 1500 students, so its much easier if you don't understand something to go to the teacher and talk to them and they actually have the time to give to you, to explain [things]. In the regular high school you didn't have that, so it's more one-on-one [here].

Abby, who was pregnant and had just finished her credits at the Sisters of Hope spoke about the teacher who motivated and encouraged her. She explained that there were days when she was tired and the teacher would tell her to sit down and relax on a comfortable chair. She believed that she was able to complete her credits due to the accommodations provided by the teacher and the flexibility of the program.

While most of the young women reported that the schooling program at the Centre provided them with an opportunity to reconnect with school, it was apparent that some aspects

related to school caused tensions. A main point of disagreement was over the way that many school staff treated the young women as children, and not as young adults. As explained earlier in chapter four, some young women believed that they were competently carrying out their responsibilities as mothers and students and hence did not feel they deserved the close monitoring of their actions and behaviours. They wished the staff would understand their need for some privacy and space. Some teen/young mothers who attended the full day school related they would appreciate some flexibility with regards to the demands of attendance and punctuality. From these comments from the young women, it was clear that they wished to be recognized as capable young adults and sometimes felt discouraged at being treated in a childlike fashion.

One of the main courses offered at the Sisters of Hope Centre addressed varied aspects of parenting. Some teen/young mothers described the knowledge and skills they learned through these courses. Jill was pregnant at the time she had taken several courses in prenatal and postnatal care. She explained that she picked up many useful tips on parenting:

They teach you about car seats, household safety and like everything to do to baby-proof your house. They teach you about breastfeeding, how to bathe the baby, feed the baby, like make sure the formula is at the right temperature... They teach you a whole bunch of nursery rhymes to sing to your baby.

Even as the teen/young mothers commented on the benefits of the parenting courses, there were many questions about the parenting styles and advice given through the courses. Susan mentioned that she did not agree with the idea that if a child falls down, she should not be picked up immediately and fussed over. Katie disagreed that a child in a crib having a temper tantrum should be left alone. Bianca

wanted to know how to get her child to sleep alone in her bed. Jill questioned why bumper pads were not recommended as she remembered her mother using bumper pads. Also, some teen/young mothers suggested that the messages about the right way to parent did not always work and they struggled to figure out the best way to manage. It is not surprising that the young women received competing advice on parenting or that the advice did not achieve the desired results.

The topic of parenting covers a vast area and it is almost impossible to cover every possible parenting scenario, let alone differing parenting philosophies. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on whether there really is a right way to parent and the extent to which good parenting can really be taught or comes with experience? Also, some mothers believed they were good mothers and did not need parenting advice as much as guidance in other areas such as self-defense, budgeting and first-aid.

The young mothers at the Young Moms Centre who were involved with full day schooling spoke highly of the daycare services. They reported that their babies were happy and loved going to the daycare. This helped them to focus on their schoolwork. The comments by Katie below reflect the feelings of the mothers I had interviewed at the Centre . Katie who had twins was delighted that her twins were actually learning things at the daycare. She explained:

They learn so much there at the daycare that even though I'm doing the best that I can as a mother, I won't have time to teach them. For example, they can't talk but they sing songs, play games and activities. They come home and they do them, and that's good, that's something I can do with them, help them

more. But I honestly don't think that I have time with two kids to teach them everything that they learn here.

The young women at the Sisters of Hope and the New Beginnings Centres also spoke of the value of the daycare services that they could avail themselves when they enrolled in the parenting programs or the learning coach program. In addition to the daycare, the young mothers who utilized the services provided by the counselors and the support workers commented on the benefits of those services. Some of the young women related that they were relieved to just have someone to talk with, in times of stress and need. The young women also reported that they were pleased with the assistance that they received through the Centres through the breakfast and lunch programs, the food banks, the clothes swap, and the emergency supplies. Darlene was the only participant interviewed who was mostly out of the Centre at the co-operative education placement. She mentioned that she felt a little disadvantaged that she missed out on the supports offered at the Centre.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the Centre staff also worked in partnership with the LEAP caseworkers to ensure a smooth client-caseworker relationship. Regular days and times were scheduled for the teen/young mothers to meet with their caseworkers. The teen/young mothers were unanimous in their comments about the convenience of these arrangements. They related that it provided easy access to their caseworkers and saved them the time that they would have spent traveling to see their caseworkers. Also, the teen/young mothers mentioned that the staff at the Centres were very helpful in passing a message or request to their caseworkers. As Reena stated, *"if they don't return your phone calls they usually leave a number for an assistant or if not, one of the student support workers will contact them"*. In response to the type of

supports provided under the LEAP program, most young women described that besides a fixed basic amount, LEAP provided some extra assistance for items ranging from a bus pass to gym clothes and shoes, winter clothes, eye glasses and other school related supplies. However, the teen/young mothers were unsure of the exact benefits that were available to them through the LEAP program, an unsurprising circumstance due to a certain level of case-by-case ad hoc decision-making by caseworkers who had to distinguish between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' requests. All the young women reported that the benefits through LEAP were extremely valuable to young mothers and their children and especially was a great support to young mothers interested in finishing high school.

Overall, the young women at the three Centres reported they truly appreciated the role of the Centre staff in providing many services as well as linking them with other services in the community. They particularly valued the role of the Centre staff at a critical period in their lives when they felt most vulnerable.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the various aspects of the holistic, multidisciplinary approach that the staff at the Centres employed, within a neo-liberal social welfare framework to address the diverse needs of the pregnant and parenting young women. The interventions addressed the educational, social, emotional, economic, and other emergent needs of the teen/young mothers. Through the perspectives of the staff, we are provided with a glimpse into the interventions instituted to help the young women to become independent, self-sufficient, contributing members of society. It also sheds light on the complexities of service provision highlighting the tensions and the challenges faced by the staff in implementing the interventions.

The perspectives of the teaching staff indicated that they faced issues that were quite different from a regular high school. The Centres had to address the varying academic and other needs of the teen/young mothers with certain limitations in resources and personnel. However, it was clear that the staff worked hard to support the young women. Strategies utilized by the teachers ranged from involving the students in goal-setting, providing clear expectations, transparency in marking and assessment, consistent and immediate feedback, and demonstrated caring and respect for the students. In addressing the social-emotional needs, economic and other needs, it was clear that the staff exercised caution and tact in handling sensitive issues. The interviews conducted with the staff revealed their struggle to fulfill their legal obligations without breaching the trust and confidence of the young women. It was clear that the staff worked to ensure that the interventions were supportive and nurturing instead of punitive. The staff at all the three Centres also felt compelled to advocate on behalf of the young women and on numerous occasions encouraged them to self-advocate.

In my conversations with the teen/young mothers, they spoke warmly of the staff and often alluded to the qualities of the staff that motivated them and helped them re-engage in school. The young women related that they appreciated the various services such as the schooling program, parenting courses, daycare, counseling, social assistance and so on. Some women, however, expressed their disappointment at not being treated as young adults.

Overall, the perspectives of the staff indicated that though it was difficult to fully address all the needs of the young women and some situations were quite challenging, they believed that the interventions were making a difference in the lives of the pregnant and parenting young women. The responses of the young women confirmed that the interventions were indeed helpful.

Chapter Six: Collaboration

Pregnant and parenting women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds face many pressures and challenges. As seen in the previous chapter, the challenges faced by these young women were often complex and multi-dimensional. Support was required in different areas to help them manage parenting or school responsibilities in the face of tremendous obstacles. Clearly, this kind of support could not be provided by one group; and hence schools, social welfare, health, and community-based organizations are required to work together in the interests of this vulnerable population.

In Ontario, the social welfare policy directives of the Ontario Works Program state, *“Service delivery must be based on a collaborative model that maximizes the use of cost-effective and expert resources located in the local community, and streamlines and rationalizes the use of services”*. As stated earlier, the young women in the study receive benefits from the learnfare program LEAP (a part of Ontario Works) that supports a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to meet the multiple needs of pregnant and parenting young women. Collaboration is thus essential among various partners such as *“schools, community and public health, childcare services, community agencies, and the private sector”* (Government of Ontario, 1999).

While the previous chapter examined the varied interventions instituted by the three multi-service centers against a backdrop of neo-liberal social welfare policies, this chapter focuses on how those interventions are implemented through a collaborative approach at the three centres. In the present study, the staff from multidisciplinary groups at the three centers adopted a collaborative framework to provide a range of supportive services aimed at fulfilling the diverse needs of pregnant and parenting young women.

A Collaborative Framework

As described in the preceding chapter, each of the three Centres included in this research project are unique in that each one offered a different arrangement for schooling and for the delivery of its other programs. At the New Beginnings Centre and the Sisters of Hope Centre, education was offered to pregnant women and young mothers as part of a range of other equally important services. Schooling at these centres was very flexible in its delivery, whereas at the Young Moms Centre, education was provided to young mothers through a full-day structured school program. The focus of the Young Moms Centre was schooling, and other programs were integrated to support the goal of schooling. Given the pivotal focus of the Young Moms Centre on schooling and its full-time schooling model, the centre had established elaborate collaborative structures to support schooling. At the same time, the staff from different disciplines at the three multi-service Centres certainly worked together to support the pregnant and parenting young women. Also, staff at the three Centres liaised with staff from outside agencies such Children Aid workers from the Children's Aid Society (CAS), the LEAP case-workers from Ontario Works, policemen, lawyers, medical staff and members of other community agencies. Interviews with the staff at the three Centres repeatedly highlighted that the staff generally recognized the importance of collaborative efforts to support the pregnant and parenting young women, and participants spoke, at some level, about personally working and supporting each other to provide services for their respective populations. This chapter looks closely at why the staff found it essential to collaborate, the factors that supported collaboration, and the challenges that emerged in the process of collaboration.

The Need for Collaboration

The mandate of each of the three Centres in the study was to support disadvantaged pregnant/parenting young women and their children through comprehensive support services. This support was essentially provided through the collaboration of staff from varied disciplines. This collaborative approach required that the staff interact and work with each other to deliver an array of services. The interviews with the staff who worked closely with the teen/young mothers revealed a range of reasons for a collaborative approach.

Specific Populations, Diverse Needs. According to the opinions of most staff, the needs of the pregnant and parenting teens were diverse, extending across varied areas such as education, social services, health, counseling, and so on. The diverse needs of this 'at-risk' group of young women could not be adequately met by one individual or group; instead they required communication and collaboration between and among different individuals and groups to address the needs of their clients. The needs of the teen/young mother ranged from financial needs related to housing, food and clothing, to emotional needs connected to loneliness, alienation from peers and family, and stigmatization by society. Other needs were mental health needs believed to stem from issues of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and troubled family backgrounds that were manifested through anxiety, depression, anger and social adjustment problems. The teen/young mothers also needed support to deal with the everyday stresses and strains of being a young parent, and in most cases of being the sole-caregiver.

Each Centre responded to the above types of needs by offering a range of supports. The New Beginnings Centre supported pregnant and parenting young mothers up to the age of 25 and their children up to age six. Schooling was provided only up to age 22. Daycare support is available for young women accessing the schooling and other programs offered at the Centre.

New Beginnings has a flexible and informal environment in which the pregnant and parenting teens are encouraged to choose any of the programs that they find suitable. Kim, a program coordinator at New Beginnings, explained that the some needs of the teen/young mother population may be related to diverse, yet interrelated issues of poverty, violence within relationships, and addictions. To address the day-to-day needs of the teen/young mother and to attend to issues that could develop into crises, the staff found it necessary to work collaboratively both within the Centre and with outside organizations. Referrals were often made to outside qualified staff in areas such as counseling, legal, and social services. Most collaboration occurred in an informal manner through phone calls or face-to-face meetings.

As noted earlier, the Sisters of Hope Centre provided services specifically for pregnant teens and brand new mothers. The numerous programs run by the Centre, such as the prenatal classes and the programs relating to baby care and nutrition, were designed keeping in mind the needs of the specific population of pregnant and parenting young women. The Centre provided daycare services on a limited 'as needed' basis. The young women signed up for programs ahead of time and daycare services were provided accordingly. Although many clients lived on their own, the Centre also offered a residence where young women could live throughout their pregnancy and for a period of up to six months after giving birth. Pregnant young women and brand new mothers were required to register in the schooling program which involved classroom work in the mornings and participation in parenting related programs in the afternoons. Students could obtain credits through regular course work as well as through links with the parenting programs. The classroom at the Sisters of Hope Centre accommodated up to 15 pregnant students and new mothers under the guidance of a single teacher. The young women were at different grade levels with varying number of credits and came with diverse backgrounds and

experiences; hence the schooling program was highly individualized, based on the unique needs of each student.

Dawn, the teacher, described the varied school experiences and backgrounds of the students in her program:

Many girls have been dropouts, on an average out of school for about 2 years at least. Some have been in alternate programs but more and more they are girls from regular high school. The one thing that they all have in common is that for one reason or another – unstable homes due to family breakups, learning difficulties due to FAS, ADHD and so on – they all have had problems in regular school and been in trouble and booted out.

As Dawn's words highlight, and as noted earlier, faced with the many overwhelming, competing problems in life, many of the young women were unable to succeed in mainstream schooling, choosing to drop out or being pushed out of school. The excerpt also provides evidence of the diverse range of needs of the teen/young mothers that would require more than the services of the teacher in the classroom. A recent evaluation study (2004) of the Sisters of Hope Centre reported that the staff observed a needy clientele where the vast majority is poor and also have other serious problems with issues related to mental health, alcohol, and drugs.

At the Sisters of Hope Centre the pregnant girls and new mothers received support from the staff throughout their pregnancy and after. Most of the girls were first-time mothers and were fearful of the unknown variables involved in giving birth. Some of them were abandoned by their family and deserted by the father of their child, so the Centre was their last alternative. The teacher worked in partnership with the other staff at the Centre such as the counselors and support workers, to assist students. Referrals were often made to programs and services outside

the Centre. Thus, it seemed necessary for the staff to interact and work closely with one another. There appeared to be an on-going collaboration between the various Centre staff at the informal and formal level. Formal collaborative processes included bi-monthly board meetings, bi-weekly leadership team meetings, weekly program and case meetings during which the staff discussed issues related to policy and development (Evaluation report, 2004). Informal meetings occurred through consultations and face-to-face meetings.

As noted earlier, the Young Moms Centre offered programs specifically for teen/young mothers who were for the most part full-time students. They offered day care services that ran parallel to the school day, and on three Tuesday afternoons a month when there were no scheduled classes. The program for the school was organized much like a regular high school but was adapted to suit the needs of the teen/young mother population. Though the population of students at the school was small in comparison with a regular urban high school, the level of need in this population was high and necessitated tremendous amounts of collaborative planning among the varied staff at the Centre. Though collaboration at the Centre was highly organized and formal, it also occurred at an informal level. As reiterated at different points, the needs of the teen/young mothers were complex, with many interrelated challenges. Many of them lived in tough life situations of poverty and family instability and now were faced with the additional demands of parenting, combined with the everyday pressures of full time schooling. Denise, a support worker, provided a glimpse into some of the issues that arose:

A lot of boyfriend issues, babies' fathers, getting out of relationships that may not be so healthy, getting custody... they are constantly struggling with budgeting with \$0 by week two, when their cheque does not come in till week four.

It was clear that these young women were dealing with issues that were diverse and they needed support to get through this difficult phase in their lives. As Elizabeth, the Centre's director, stated, *"They can't simply park their child in childcare and their brain in school and get on with life."* For the teen/young mothers grappling with complex issues that were not easy to resolve, it was difficult to compartmentalize issues and that would invariably affect their school work. To help the young women focus on school, it was vital for the staff to assist them in other areas of life. Providing support in different areas through a holistic approach required that staff from varied disciplines work in collaboration.

Team Approach. According to the staff that I interviewed, it was beneficial to work collaboratively as a team as it allowed staff from different disciplines to pool resources to address the multiple needs of the young women. Each Centre accomplished collaboration in its own way. Teams of people worked in specific areas but collaborated with other staff from different disciplines to address the needs of the clients as they arose. The hard work and the joint efforts of the Centre staff were evident at the graduation events. At the two Centres, the Young Moms and Sisters of Hope, I observed that the graduation events were celebrated with great enthusiasm. As a participant observer at the graduation events, it was evident that the admirable graduation rates were a result of the collaborative efforts of the Centre staff. Counselor Ruth's comments below echo the sentiments felt by most Centre staff who believed that tremendous collective efforts were required to help students complete all the requirements for graduation:

It's interesting that I see them in September and then see them at graduation, you know, this school has transformed these girls into mothers, into adults just from their experiences, it's unbelievable to see. I sit back there and the

[student support] workers sit back there and see the same thing, so do their parents who are at graduation. It's just phenomenal.

Similar sentiments were expressed about the graduation ceremony. “[The graduation] *represents the successful team approach to learning employed at the centre*” (Centre Newsletter). At the time of the present study, the New Beginnings Centre was preparing to celebrate its first graduation event.

At the New Beginnings Centre, services and supports were offered in the areas of daycare, counseling, education, parenting and other programs related to health, nutrition, counseling, pre-natal education, and life skills. The staff from different groups offering the varied services at the Centre worked together to support the teen/young mothers through various conflict and crisis situations. Often, a crisis in one area would spill over to other areas, so the staff found it helpful to coordinate their efforts to serve the teen/young mothers.

At the Sisters of Hope Centre, staff from different disciplines shared resources and worked closely with each other to problem-solve on numerous issues. Dawn, the teacher, described how she worked in close partnership with the associate director of the Centre, who was also a trained counselor, to support the teen mothers. She explained that the high needs situation of the teen mothers was complicated by pregnancy-related issues and fears of giving birth as most of the teens were pregnant with their first child. The staff were aware of specific problems associated with each of the pregnant teens and young mothers. The staff assisted each other by sharing observations with one another, and exchanging necessary information with one another, forming a supportive web to assist the young women and their children. Dawn related that all key staff members were provided with relevant information about the teen/young mothers so that “*they will keep an eye on the girls*”. She explained that sometimes conflicts arose within the

classroom around issues of bullying. In those instances, she worked together with the counselor to diffuse those issues. Sometimes, the students just needed a sympathetic ear — someone to listen to their stories. If Dawn was busy attending to the needs of the other students in the classroom, she knew she could send the teen/young mother to another staff member who also knew the students. She admitted that she did not feel equipped to deal with issues such as drug addictions, so she would always refer the student to the drug addictions counselor who had a part-time office onsite. Thus, the staff worked jointly to meet the needs of the teen/young mothers.

At Young Moms Centre several staff spoke about how that they met regularly to brainstorm on issues and worked together as a team. Chris, a teacher, emphasized that, for a team to function effectively, all the parts had to be working together. He explained:

It's a team. It's a real team. The daycare is just an incredible component of it and the counseling staff they've hired and the support team and the teachers, it all has to work together. Everything has to be working for it to work for the girls.

The school teams at this Centre worked together to resolve and address various issues ranging from internal issues of peer conflicts or issues of students at-risk of dropping out to external issues such as dealing with the negative stereotyping of the girls by neighborhood residents. Staff described how the staff from individual disciplines met regularly and discussed issues within their own disciplines, as well as meeting with staff from other disciplines. At the Young Moms Centre, the student support team was one team of staff members that consisted of frontline staff who were each responsible for a specific portfolio. The portfolios were related to working with the CAS (Children's Aid society), Housing, LEAP, and Clinical services. The staff members

offered great support to each other; team spirit was built on trust, dependability and helping each other. Denise, a support worker, explained that if there was a problem out of her specialization she would get direction from the student support team. She stated, *"I take a lot of things to my team, I think that's a real bonus here, that we have a really strong team."* Thus, being able to rely on one another provided the student support workers who were part of the student support team, with additional support in dealing with varied day-to-day issues at the Center.

Teams across disciplines also worked collaboratively with one another. At the Young Moms Centre, "clinical and educational staff continue the tradition of a strong effective partnership" (Annual Report). Each student support worker was partnered with a teacher and 12 students for a block of ten weeks. The student support worker visited the classroom every morning for half an hour from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. to be a presence for the girls. They answered questions, discussed issues that the young women presented, or scheduled appointments for the more complex problems. At this time, the student support worker also alerted the teacher if the young woman was facing any problems that would impact her academic performance or classroom behavior. Becky, a support worker, believed that the young mothers were also teenage girls and that it was a difficult time in their lives, with the additional stress of being a parent and having a child. She further explained that the morning routine was established at this Centre to spot issues before they developed into a crisis. Becky described how she used that time in the class to *"head off an issue that might be brewing"* and how it provided an opportunity *"to scope things out"*.

It was evident that, though the staff were involved in supporting the teen/young mothers and appeared to be concerned about the well-being of the teen/young mothers, they were also implicated in regulating the lives of these young women through a constant monitoring of their

behaviour, moods and actions. Thus, it was apparent that the supportive roles of the center staff also served an underlying regulatory function.

As noted earlier, the student support worker and teacher were paired together each semester. Denise believed that her partnership with the teacher was important in terms of each supporting the schooling of the teen/young mothers. She felt that it was as an important part of her role at the Centre and held that everything else had to be in place for the young women to come to school. Denise further stated, *“If you make communication, partnerships and relationships a priority, it’s going to work out.”* Cynthia, another support worker, emphasized that *“good communication skills”* were necessary for collaboration with different staff at the Centre. She believed that communicating with other staff was also a means of sharing important information. Becky described the support worker-teacher relationship as *“more like a married couple with the need to consult and agree or agree to disagree on decisions.”* From the comments above of the student support workers, it was clear that for collaboration to really work, all the staff have to be equally committed to the collaborative process.

Common Goals. The staff that I interviewed at the three centers mostly believed that there was a need for them to share in and believe in a common vision and common goals for the success of the programs at the Centres. Though the three Centres had a similar goal of supporting poor pregnant/parenting young mothers, there was a difference in the focus of each organization on schooling, which in turn influenced the extent of the collaboration. According to the staff whom I interviewed, they strongly believed in the goals of the Centres and seemed committed to working with one another as well as with professional staff from external agencies to meet the goals of the Centre.

New Beginnings was based on the philosophy of providing for the needs of humanity and being a transforming influence in the community. This philosophy was reflected in the informal environment of the New Beginnings. The focus of the staff was to provide services based on the needs of its individual clients with a mandate to provide assistance as needed. Thus, any new pregnant or parenting young woman was welcome at the Centre, irrespective of the extent of her participation in programs and services. Some the young woman initially only availed themselves of the services of the food bank and gradually joined other programs. Participation in the programs was voluntary and the mothers were invited to join and to decide if the programs offered were suitable for them. The staff collaborated as needed to find solutions and deal with crisis situations. The schooling program at New Beginnings was an independent learning program and students worked at their own pace. The teacher was flexible and accommodating within reason. The teacher viewed himself as the "*personal champion*" of the teen/young mothers, advocating for them and functioning as a bridge between them and their assistance workers who provided the funding, and also liaising with the external staff associated with the independent learning program.

The staff at the Sisters of Hope Centre worked collaboratively to achieve their common goal of providing support to pregnant and parenting youth in an atmosphere of respect, care and safety. Through reassuring words and caring behavior, the staff demonstrated their keenness to create a pleasant, nurturing place where pregnant teens and new mothers would feel comfortable and respected. Schooling was one of the many services provided by the Center. Julia, the director, strongly believed that besides the focus on school, the pregnant teens needed to focus on pre-natal care and education that would focus on their health, the health of their baby, and preparation before and after the delivery of the baby. The director explained the philosophy of

the Center, stating, *"It is an environment that says come and be with others who are experiencing the same thing and get support through this very special time for yourself and your child."* The environment at the Centre was welcoming. Here, the pregnancy of the young mother appeared to be accepted as well as celebrated. Most of the staff at the Centre appeared to be strongly committed to the philosophy of the Centre, saw their work as being important, and therefore worked together to achieve the common goals of the Centre.

At Young Moms Centre the main goal of the organization was to prepare the teen/young mothers to become independent and self-sufficient members of society, and thus the focus of the organization was twofold, to assist the young women to finish their high school education and to acquire strong parenting skills to raise their children effectively. The staff at the Centre worked within a highly organized collaborative framework to ensure that they supported the goal of schooling and parenting at the same time. There were strict rules and regulations in place and certain expectations regarding attendance and behavior at the Centre. For example, most staff worked towards achieving the goal of preparing the teen/young mothers for an independent life beyond the Centre. It was clear that all the staff interviewed at the Young Moms Center had bought into and were committed to the goals of the Center. There was also evidence that staff who did not share the vision of the Center were let go, according to Elizabeth, the director, *"as they were not on the same page."* She further described the staff as *"change agents"* questioning how one could expect change if the staff themselves resisted change.

At the New Beginnings Centre, as well, the teacher (learning coach) had been in the position for just over a year. Kim, the program coordinator related that though the educational program at the Centre was a fairly new program and had been functioning for three years, it was the commitment of the current teacher that made a difference to the program. She stated, *"The*

person working on it before just did not put the same effort into following up with students.” This statement by Kim suggests that if the staff goals are in line with the goals of the centre, a positive difference in outcomes was evident. From the above examples shared by the staff, it was evident that there was a need for all the staff working at the centre to be committed to common goals for the success of the programs at the Centres.

Factors that Supported Collaboration

As stated earlier in this chapter and earlier, each Center in the study served a specific clientele among the teen/young mother population. Though there were some commonalities, each Centre still retained a distinctive focus. The type of collaboration that occurred at each Centre reflected the desired goals and focus of the Center and was shaped largely by the vision of its leaders. The segment below takes a closer look at specific factors that facilitated collaboration.

Leadership. Leadership by the administrative staff was displayed in various ways: by offering encouragement and support, by anticipating or responding to the needs of the students and staff, by organizing of schedules to facilitate collaboration, and by promoting the goals of the Centre. In all the three Centres the leadership seemed to be aware of the changing needs of the client population of teen/young mothers and of the need to adapt to those changes.

The administrative staff at the New Beginnings Centre encouraged the teen/young mothers to take an active role in and to work in collaboration with the staff at the Centre to make necessary changes to certain policies and practices as needed. The Centre approved a parent advisory committee formed by the teen/young mothers. Through the committee, the teen/young mothers offered suggestions to the staff at the Centre on ways to improve programs. The

feedback provided by the parent advisory committee was taken seriously and policies and practices that were viewed as not beneficial were changed accordingly.

At the Sisters of Hope, collaboration was facilitated through a supportive and encouraging leadership. Staff from varying disciplines worked together at the Sisters of Hope to provide services that supported the pregnant teens and new mothers at the Centre. All the new initiatives and workshops at the Centre had the wholehearted support of the director who strongly believed that the needs of the pregnant teen were well served in a specialized setting like the Sisters of Hope. The director of the home was involved in a lot of planning and organization that ensured that the different staff members operating at Sisters of Hope could work autonomously and collaboratively as needed to support the pregnant teen. For example, outside professional staff such as doctors, counselors, and caseworkers visited the Center regularly. Some of the staff had regular offices on site while others had spaces reserved for their visits. These staff operated independently but also worked with and shared key information with the Center's staff on important issues relating to the health and well-being of the teen/young mothers. Julia, the director, asserted, "*We are here to celebrate life*". Her leadership also helped create an environment that was warm, nurturing and inclusive, where all staff worked together for the benefit of the pregnant and parenting young women.

At the Young Moms, there was also compelling evidence of leadership and foresight by the director, Elizabeth, and the staff of the Centre in anticipating the needs of the teen/young mother. The Centre staff developed and delivered workshops and programs accordingly. For instance, anger management, parenting, and personal development programs were regularly offered. Elizabeth set up various structures and mechanisms to make the collaborative team approach a reality in practice. For instance, multidisciplinary team meetings were held on a

weekly basis to discuss individual cases. Also, different staff members such as the student support team, the teaching team and the childcare team met on a weekly basis during school hours. To schedule a meeting time for teachers during school hours, the Director structured the school week such that four days of the week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday were full school days, whereas Wednesday was a half day. The teen/young mothers were involved in educational programs only for the mornings and would go home in the afternoons. Teaching staff were thus provided time for collaborative meetings.

It was clear that staff collaboration occurred through regularly scheduled meetings that were planned ahead of time. Thus collaboration was possible because of the organization and creative planning by the leadership of the director and other administrative staff at the Centre.

Organizational Structures and Processes. At each site, there were structures and processes in place that promoted different levels of collaboration among the staff. Structures and processes as used here refer to the manner in which arrangements were made within the school day to maximize opportunities for staff and student interaction.

At New Beginnings, the schooling component for pregnant and parenting youth was offered through independent learning courses (ILC), which the students completed at their own pace. On three days of the week, they could come to a classroom at the Centre, where the teacher was available for assistance. Baby-sitting was provided for the duration of classroom hours. This arrangement involved the coordination and cooperation of the schooling and daycare components, as they provided services that ran parallel to each other; however the degree of collaboration between the teacher and daycare staff was minimal. At the Sisters of Hope, the schooling component for pregnant teens and new mothers was delivered through a high school classroom setup that was run by a teacher, in the mornings, on five days of the week. In the

afternoons, the students attended parenting and related programs conducted by the Centre. These programs were linked to the high school credits obtained in the classroom and thus required a certain degree of collaboration between the teacher and the program staff.

At the Young Moms Centre, the schooling was structured in ways that encouraged the collaboration of all staff at the Centre. As noted earlier, schooling was provided for parenting young women through a full time regular classroom schedule that ran on four days of the week. On Wednesdays, the mornings were utilized to deliver programs related to parenting, finance, mental, physical and emotional needs of the students. Before heading home the students accessed the food bank. Those early dismissal days were used by the staff for multidisciplinary team meetings at the Centre which facilitated a high degree of collaboration between the different groups. Meetings were used to discuss and resolve issues and to plan for anticipated needs in the future. Professional development was also provided on common issues that further emphasized the rationale for working within a collaborative framework and helped team building. The regular school day also had designated meeting times that facilitated partnerships between staff from different disciplines. As noted earlier, at the beginning of the regular school day, the student support staff visited the classrooms for half an hour. This setup allowed the student support staff to interact with the young mothers and to deal with emergent issues. It also promoted the development of a partnership between the teacher and the student support staff that ensured that they worked in tandem when dealing with the teen/young mother. Each team at the Centre – the teaching team, the childcare team, the student support team, the administrative team also met weekly with members of their own team during and after school hours. These meetings took place at fixed times and were routinized into the schedules of the staff. These scheduled times for meeting allowed the staff an opportunity for greater collaboration.

Small Client Case Load. Although overall, the Centres served over a hundred students, at two out of the three centers in the study, it was clear that the caseload of pregnant and parenting young women who were students at a given time was small in number. This small client caseload provided an opportunity for the staff to manage the education and other needs of the students effectively. The small client caseload meant that the staff were not overwhelmed by the number of clients. Addressing the needs of the pregnant and parenting young women in a collaborative manner was facilitated by the manageable numbers.

The New Beginning Center was the exception in terms of the large number of students at the Center. The clients, approximately 95 students, made the job of the single teacher onerous. The teacher's task was daunting in terms of monitoring student progress and there was no opportunity for close collaboration with such a large number of students. Though the teacher worked closely with other professionals in the field, it was apparent that the collective efforts were more at the level of cooperation and coordination of services than collaboration.

The Sisters of Hope could only accommodate up to 15 students in the schooling program and that allowed the teacher, the counselor, and other staff at the Centre to easily attend to the individual needs of those students and to consult with each other and support the schooling of the pregnant young women.

The Young Moms Center had spaces for 48 students. However, though the number stayed constant at 48, the staff served more than that number through the year. The students entered the program with a different number of credits. Some required only one or two credits to graduate and their leaving the program after completion of the required credits opened up a space for a new student. The intake process was open throughout the year. On average each staff member would work closely with about 12 students. The number of students in the school was

manageable, thereby allowing the staff the opportunity to work closely with the students and with each other.

Space and Location. New Beginnings and Sisters of Hope had many different organizations on-site that provided services. It was thus easier for individual staff to access each other in case of a problem. For instance, at Sisters of Hope, the teacher would often refer students to the addictions counselor who had an office on the same floor. The teacher also received regular feedback from the staff who managed the parenting programs, and that feedback helped the teacher to link the parenting courses to a credit program. There was also a private space allocated for the doctor and nurse who provided medical care for the pregnant young women. Several other groups had offices located within the Centre itself which made it easier for staff to connect with each other and the students benefited from the coordinated services.

Young Moms had three different groups located on three separate floors: the daycare on the first level, the program support staff and counselors on the second level, and the teaching staff on the third level. At the beginning of the day, the young mothers left their infants/toddlers in daycare and headed up to their classrooms. The physical layout of the building was such that they would have to go through the second level, past the offices of the Centre staff to get to their classrooms on the third level. This physical arrangement of the building promoted convenient access to the program support staff as the mothers passed through the hallways, en route to their class. The multidisciplinary groups at the Centers which consisted of the daycare staff, the student support team, the counselors and the teachers in one physical location allowed the staff to access one another easily. Being in close proximity to one another within the same building allowed for a higher level of collaboration and communication among the different staff members.

Thus, all three sites attempted to offer comprehensive services in one location, and when services were not available on-site, referrals were made and the young women were directed to appropriate alternate services.

Personal Factors. As explained above, the work environment of the Centers involved continuous interaction of its staff with other professionals from within and outside one's discipline. The staff was required to communicate with each other on a regular basis; it was also evident that the staff had to possess personal characteristics of openness, a genuine concern for the pregnant teens, willingness to share knowledge and ideas, and flexibility. Denise, a support worker, describes her views on how one's personality impacts on interaction with other staff:

I've always been a people person, I'm not shy to go and speak to somebody about something. So I think it is all in your personality and how you work, your work ethic, and if you make communication, partnerships and relationships a priority, it's going to work out. I have a great relationship with the daycare, I have a great relationship with my teachers, and I connect with my [teacher] partner. And, again, our [student support] team, we have a great relationship.

The above excerpt by Denise provides insights into the complex network of staff from different disciplines with whom she interacted in her role as a student support worker. Denise suggests that an individual would need to be an outgoing person to collaborate effectively. It was evident that personal characteristics of an individual played a role in supporting a collaborative relationship. Overall, the staff at the three Centres appeared friendly with each other. On most occasions when I visited the staff seemed to treat the Centres as more than just a place of work. Also, some staff had been at their respective Centre for a number of years, in different positions,

and appeared committed to the task of supporting the pregnant and parenting teens. A key personal characteristic that allowed for greater collaboration was flexibility. Support worker Cynthia explained the importance of being “*open-minded, to not be black and white and be able to be flexible*”. She explained that flexibility was important because one had to be receptive to the possibility that there might be more than one side to a problem and more than one solution. Cynthia also admitted that one may not always agree with other staff on issues but one had to be able to communicate differences of opinion. She stated, “*If we’re successful amongst the staff then the institution’s going to be successful*”. It was apparent from the above comments that individuals who were not open and flexible in dealing with people would find it difficult to work within a collaborative framework. To successfully collaborate with one another, it was easier if staff were willing to share ideas, to communicate, to listen and to be flexible enough to change if the situation warranted it.

At New Beginnings, which was more of the nature of a drop-in Centre, the teacher worked in collaboration with the staff at the Centre, the social assistance case-workers, and the staff of the Independent Learning course program in Toronto. This collaboration was facilitated by the ability of the teacher to respond to the demands of each case on an individual basis and to be extremely flexible in terms of dealing with the unique needs of the student population. At Sisters of Hope, the staff responded to the needs of the student population of pregnant teens and was flexible in dealing with the day-to-day crisis situations at the Centre. They had to plan their days around interruptions due to the nature of the student population. At Young Moms, the organization and routinization of structures required that staff work together. In such a set-up, it was essential that the staff have a flexible attitude; otherwise working closely with other staff on

an on-going basis would be extremely difficult. Flexibility and the ability to be open-minded seemed to support collaboration.

The Challenges of Collaboration

Many integrated services were offered for pregnant and parenting young women that required the joint working of staff; however the opinions of the staff indicated that working together was not always easy. This section explores the factors that could hamper the process of collaboration at the three Centres, including the tensions surrounding confidentiality, communication lapses, and the diverse groupings of the staff population.

Confidentiality Issues. One of the significant factors impacting on collaboration was the issue of confidentiality. Some of the teen mothers were dealing with issues around troubled family lives and other issues linked to sexual and physical abuse, violence, poverty, substance abuse, depression, and/or anger management. Hence, the staff at the Centres were often dealing with extremely sensitive information about the personal lives of the teen mothers. At the same time, they were frequently required to assist the teen/young mother in varied crisis situations by sharing information with staff from other professional groups within and outside the Centres. As Elizabeth, the director, explained:

So if we've got a mum that's in crisis, it's important that everyone in the building is able to support her through that crisis without divulging things that are very confidential and without making this a public agenda item and so on.

Most of the staff expressed similar sentiments as they felt strongly about maintaining the confidentiality of information in the process of collaboration. Cynthia, a support worker, noted, "It's remembering that when there's a mum in crisis, that childcare's aware, and the school is

aware and the support workers are aware...Trying to do it without disclosing any [private] information.” Support worker Becky explained that it was not easy to keep things confidential from other clients, given the small student population. Other students often witnessed the whole process. They saw the police and the CAS workers come in and everybody knew that a certain student was in a crisis. Also as young teenage girls, there was a natural tendency to gossip and information did not stay private. Becky believed, however, that there might be some benefit to the young women being aware of the process of intervention with CAS because even though the young women may not fully agree or understand the reasons for CAS involvement, they may begin to realize that it is in the best interests of themselves and their child to be in a safe non-violent environment.

The staff working with the teen/young mothers were available to counsel the mums in crisis situations and encouraged the young mothers to share information to facilitate this. The staff were also forthright with the teen/young mothers. They informed the mothers that if any staff member were to find out that they were in a vulnerable situation with their children, the staff member is obliged under the law to report to CAS. In crisis situations the staff struggled with the issue of reporting to CAS and they tried to make the process easier, by offering support at every stage, from the first phone call to CAS to dealing thereafter with the CAS worker. The staff were compelled to divulge information in order that the young mothers could receive help. The tension centered on how much to reveal without breaching the trust of their clients, and accessing help without jeopardizing their already fragile lives.

The counselors and the support workers, in particular, who had access to very private and confidential information, were challenged by the confidentiality conundrum. The counselors and the support workers explained that many of the teen mothers had traumatic lives and had

difficulty trusting strangers, and so it took a period of time to build a relationship and establish that trust. Counselor Simone's words were particularly noteworthy. She stated that the teen mothers seldom had trusting relationships in their lives and had difficulty trusting anyone.

Simone described their initial reluctance to share information:

Other girls will come very hesitantly and be very cautious and very... you can see that they are choosing their words very carefully it doesn't feel safe for them and... That's where the building of a rapport and trusting relationship starts.

Both counselors emphasized that they reassured their clients about maintaining confidentiality, yet they were also clear about their reporting obligations. As professional staff, they were required to tell the young mothers that there were certain instances, especially concerning child abuse, that they were obliged to report. They had to convince the young vulnerable mother in distress that what was being offered as support was in their best interests, even when it did not appear to be so. For instance, in the case of substance abuse, a consequence of the young woman seeking treatment may be that her child could be taken by CAS, or, in the case of partner abuse, her partner may be prosecuted and even go to prison.

The staff spoke passionately of the dilemmas this caused even though they knew that they were working to help the young mother. This dilemma had a dampening effect on their collaboration efforts as they struggled to strike a balance between maintaining confidentiality and their legal obligation to report any perceived threat to the safety of mother or child. Cynthia, a support worker, describes how she attempts to manage this aspect of her job with tact and sensitivity. She explained:

You realize that because you haven't done A, B and C, they [CAS] are going to apprehend— it's going to happen; how do we do it? So it is easier for you and the baby..." So that's the kind of support that we do, whether it be a simple phone call or practically holding their hand through this very difficult time.

Cynthia wants to be open with the teen/young mother so that if she has to report on the teen/young mother as part of her job, she does so with respect and compassion. She also wants to demonstrate her support; she handles the situation by explaining to the teen mother how the events following a report to CAS are going to unfold. She is hopeful that might lessen the stress for the teen/young mother.

As a support worker, Denise has learned that it is only after a couple of months of working with the teen mothers that they will open up. When a young mother would mention a serious issue as part of her conversation, she would say, *"Wow, did that happen to you? Okay, let's start dealing with this, so a huge trust issue and it takes a while. It is not something that comes overnight."* She struggled with the burden of having access to so much private information about the lives of the teen mother, yet struggled through having a legal and moral obligation to divulge information. Denise involved the young women with any relevant decision to report to CAS so, *"It does not seem like I'm calling on them, but calling with them, to support them."* Denise is also careful about reporting something that is not true or hearsay as, in her opinion, that would just irrevocably damage any relationship of trust that she shared with the young mother.

Lapses or Failure in Communication. Breakdowns in communication were cited by a number of staff as one of the barriers in the process of collaboration, particularly at the Young

Moms Centre. The interviews with the staff and my own observations highlighted the importance of communication as a key factor in ensuring effective collaboration. As mentioned earlier, each Center was organized differently and hence the expectations and demands on the staff related to collaboration were also quite different.

At the New Beginnings and the Sisters of Hope, the schooling program was not as structured as the schooling program at the Young Moms Center, which had three interdependent groups occupying three levels of the building. As noted earlier, the first level was allocated to the daycare Centre; the second level had the offices of the student support staff, the counselors and the director while the third level housed the schooling program. Elizabeth emphasized the importance of keeping all lines of communication open. She explained:

Something as simple as an early dismissal one day that might make a lot of sense disrupts the childcare impossibly. So nothing can be done here in isolation. To get everybody to take note of the other when they aren't used to that [is difficult]. You also don't deliver social services the way you run the school. You don't run a daycare the way you run a school. But they all run simultaneously and they all run because of the mums.

In order to work collaboratively, it was important that all the groups at the Center be informed about the activities or changes in the activities of the other group.

Support worker Denise noted that communication breakdowns occur in any organization. She described why communication was a critical piece at the Young Moms Centre:

Because the teachers don't know what's going on in the daycare on a regular basis and the daycare [workers] do not have a clue about what is happening

on the third floor. So being able to connect the pieces for all the parties involved [is important].

Denise further explained how the student support workers attempted to bridge the gaps by linking the day care and the school, and by providing important information to the daycare staff, the school teachers, and the counselors. Denise explained that it was important to provide teachers with information about a student so they may be able to see why the student's academics were suffering:

If the girl again is struggling with her financial situation, she is not going to be focusing on school; she's going to be focusing on that [lack of finances]. So they [her teachers] need to know that, so they are not talking to her about her academics when she is not in a place to talk about it.

It was evident that Denise shared relevant information with the teachers so that the teachers understand that some of the teen/young mothers may be experiencing financial hardships that may impact on their concentration and focus in the classroom. Sometimes, she explained, the teacher may come across an issue and may need to communicate with the support staff: *"The teacher may say, 'a mum came in crying, came in after lunch upset; can I send her down?'"* For a holistic approach to work, it is important to find time to communicate even though staff are busy with their own responsibilities. Sometimes, in an unexpected crisis situation, a communication breakdown may happen because staff are busy attending to the crisis on hand and do not take the time to relay information. Denise stated that communication is a key element in collaboration. I witnessed the confusion created by a failure to communicate on one of my visits to the Sisters of Hope Center. I stepped in to assist the receptionist for a short time at the front office as mothers came in to register for the parenting programs. One of the programs

usually offered that evening was cancelled and no one had relayed that information to the receptionist who was providing information to the contrary on the phone. Mothers began arriving with their babies, only to be disappointed. There was also a meeting group for young fathers running that day which the receptionist had not been told about, leading to more frustration. Another staff member advised her that people higher up should be informed if she wanted to see things change. This example highlights how gaps in communication cause tremendous confusion. The incident demonstrated that information has to flow to staff at all levels, as lapses at any level can lead to a ripple effect of confusion.

Support worker Cynthia emphasized that it was very important to communicate with all the key people in the institution and provided a personal example of how her failure to communicate created chaos for other staff in the organization. She related how she was so absorbed assisting a young mother in a crisis situation that she forgot to communicate to the daycare staff that the mother would be delayed, *“If it’s a really intense issue and I’ve been meeting with a police officer and I’ve been dealing with the mum and the counselor and stuff like that, I may be overloaded and forget to communicate with the childcare.”* She adds, *“And then I’ll realize, oh, I forgot to tell them and now downstairs, the daycare staff is like, ‘what’s going on, so-and-so is late, etc.’”* Counselor Ruth revealed her frustration in trying to communicate with outside professionals, *“That’s the one issue, nobody’s ever on the other end of the phone; it’s always an answering machine, that’s the one problem and especially community resources, everyone’s so tight with time that it’s difficult to reach somebody”*.

Although all the staff had their designated roles, many staff stepped out of their assigned roles and took on broader responsibilities. Support worker Denise tried to imagine herself in the shoes of the young women to understand the complexities of their lives. She communicated with

the teacher if the mother was upset due to problems with her child and she communicated with daycare if the child was going to be out of sorts because the mother was dealing with issues.

Denise attributed her comfort with her role to her outgoing personality, her positive attitude, and her ability to pick up the pieces and move along as a professional when things broke down.

Staff with Varied Levels of Training and Divergent Goals. One of the challenges of collaboration mentioned by some staff centered on the diversity of the staff who were involved in collaboration. Director Julia provided an example of conflicting goals in the case of addiction counseling:

There are different approaches to addictions. There's the kind of addictions counseling that is based on total abstinence and there's addictions counseling based on harm reduction. The problem with a pregnancy is you have to have abstinence, So, if you have a service provider whose approach is harm reduction, we have to think that one through.

This example by Julia reflects how diverse philosophies and goals may jeopardize collaboration.

The main goal of the Young Moms Centre was to support the schooling of teen mothers by providing support in areas like parenting, childcare, housing, welfare and nutrition. This support necessitated staff from different disciplines working together to support the young mother in completing her high school education. Requiring that staff interact and work closely in a collaborative manner created some tensions due to the fact that different groups had varying levels of education, training and salaries, and they had different goals and provided different services. Director Elizabeth made every effort to foster a collaborative environment but admitted it was a challenging job to bring staff together from such varied levels of education, experience and backgrounds to collaborate as equal partners and to realize the impact that the actions of one

group could have on another group. She described the task of making provisions to facilitate the involvement of all the staff as *“the hardest part of her job.”*

Support worker Becky explained how she found it challenging to blend the treatment and the educational component of the program: *“I think that there are obviously different goals from the treatment and educational perspectives and I find that it is something that can be well married but in many cases it sabotages the other.”* In this instance Becky clearly felt that conflicts with her teacher partner sent mixed messages to the teen mother and did not lend itself to an effective partnership. She attributed the difficulty in collaboration to the different training and perspectives of individuals in different disciplines. Becky further explained how the different roles of staff caused them to focus on different areas. For some staff the focus may be the overall welfare of the mums, whereas for others it may be the welfare of the child. The teachers are focused on the academics. She emphasized that there was a need for the staff to look beyond their roles, to understand the goals of other staff members, and to see the supportive services from a holistic perspective.

Collaborating with staff from other fields and from outside agencies was not always easy for the staff at the Centers. Though all agencies were involved in working to provide supports to the teen/young mother and her child, collaboration sometimes placed additional, sometimes conflicting, demands on the roles and responsibilities on the staff.

The relationship of the Young Moms Centre with the CAS is a case in point, as support worker Becky explains:

Child Protection knows the Centre and because we have a partnership with them, then we become almost the supervisors of their orders. Child Protection is really only in there to set the goals and to meet with the moms on a monthly

basis. We'll make so many calls to the CAS. It would be upwards of a week, because it's coming from here, they know the moms come in here and they get support and the child's in a community safe area, for 10 hours a day.

The above excerpt highlights the tensions experienced by staff when they had to enforce rules and regulations of the state and were caught in conflicting roles of providing support on one hand and on the other hand having to monitor and regulate the lives of these young women. One can sense Becky's ambivalence with the relationship. In the eyes of CAS, the Centre was so successful in managing crises that it was implicated in carrying out some of the work of the CAS, and the Centre staff consequently felt that the boundaries of their work became blurry.

The above discussion provides us with a glimpse into the factors that supported and hindered the collaborative efforts of the many stakeholders interacting with each other to support the diverse needs of the teen/young mothers and their children.

Chapter Summary

Though many of the participants in the study indicated that working within a collaborative framework was not an easy task, most of them strongly felt that it was essential to work collaboratively as the benefits to the pregnant and parenting teens far outweighed the negative outcomes or frustrating processes of collaboration. It was clear though that some individuals worked more closely with each other and had developed good working relationships. The staff reported that they could see the tremendous results and positive outcomes of their collaborative efforts. Working in a collaborative environment, they felt that they had strong support network and they could rely on each to develop creative solutions. The needs of the pregnant and parenting teens were complex and multiple and not easily met by one individual or

group. Working together meant that knowledge, skills, and resources could be pooled together and information shared so that more effective and efficient services could be delivered.

Collaboration was not always easy and some individuals felt a loss of control and power within the collaborative working relationships, which were viewed as contrived rather than as a mutually beneficial partnership. Collaboration was also challenging when all the staff were not on board with the goals and philosophy of the organization. Another challenge in the process of collaboration was the confidentiality issue. Most of the participants in this study indicated that the constraints resulting from confidentiality made collaboration a challenging task. Individuals with personal characteristics of flexibility and open-mindedness were also found to be better suited to work in a collaborative environment. Leadership emerged as the main factor in creating and sustaining a collaborative environment.

In conclusion, although most of the participants were in agreement about the need for collaboration to serve the needs of pregnant and parenting teens, there were differences in the extent to which individuals were willing to collaborate, and many relationships were based on cooperation rather than collaboration. When issues were resolved successfully through a joint approach and individuals could see some tangible results, they began to see the benefits of collaboration.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perspectives of the front-line staff and the teen/young mothers as well as to explore how the frontline staff intervene and collaborate to support the teen/young mothers through a comprehensive arrangement of services. The previous three chapters presented a selective description and an analysis of the multiplicity of discourses that shaped the experiences of the teen/young mothers; the wide-ranging interventions organized by the service providers to support the young women and their children; and issues related to collaboration between the service providers. A close examination of the data from multiple sources presented many viewpoints that highlight the complexity of the subject matter. Yet, among the different views, several common themes and sub-themes come to light.

In this chapter, the themes and sub themes that emerged from the findings are examined within the context of the larger body of relevant scholarly literature. The discussion explores the findings of the study along three dimensions: the contribution of the findings to the understanding of the research questions; the support and links that the findings provide for the existing literature in the field; and the gaps and inconsistencies in the literature that are evident through a discussion of the findings. The discussion is organized according to the three research questions and the themes previously presented, namely the construction of teen/young mothers, interventions, and collaborative endeavors. Each topic will be considered individually and relationally, synthesizing the findings from this study and linking them to the existing academic literature. Following this discussion, the interrelationship among the three elements of the conceptual framework will be considered. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications and limitations of the study.

Constructions of the Teen/Young Mothers

The first research question addressed in this study asks, “How do a) frontline professional staff perceive teen/young mothers and b) teen/young mothers perceive themselves in the light of surrounding discourses?” Many interweaving discourses have constituted the subject of the teen mother within the social, political, psychological, economic, and educational context. The present study examines the various constructions of teen/young mothers as reflected in the discourses of the staff and the teen/young mothers themselves, in general and within the context of schooling. As stated earlier, most of the pregnant and parenting young women are on social assistance and all are attempting to complete high school at the multi-service Centres. An analysis of the findings reveals that the dominant discourses around pregnant and parenting teen mothers have a powerful impact on the life of the young woman, especially as she “enters into any spaces and domains (conceptual, textual or material)” influenced by prevailing social and political discourses (Cherrington & Breheny, 2005, p. 90). A Foucauldian discourse analysis of the constructions of teen/young mothers enables one to see how the teen/young mothers are characterized within current discourses, how certain discourses are produced as the dominant discourses while other discourses are marginalized or are silenced. However, Foucault (1984) warns against the trap of viewing the “world as divided between [an] accepted and [an] excluded discourse or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but [he suggests one can view discourses] as a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various strategies” (p. 100).

In the present study, the teen/young mothers are mainly characterized within discourses of ‘risk and resilience’, ‘stigma’, and ‘infantilization’, among other discourses. Though there were many similarities between the perspectives of the staff and the students, there were also

differences in many aspects. It is important to note that in describing the pregnant and parenting young women, the staff were speaking about the general population of students enrolled at the Centres and were not specifically referring to the nine young women in the present study. In fact, the staff did not know the identity of the young women whom I interviewed. Though the staff identified some commonalities among the pregnant/parenting young women on social assistance, they also emphasized that the young mothers were *not* a homogeneous group and there was a huge spectrum of differences among the young women based on their individual life situations. Mills (2004) acknowledges that a range of conflicting discourses may appear in the construction of a text, often in conflict with one another, making a text appear less cohesive. The varying discourses also point to the complexity of discursive structures and perhaps explain the different ways meanings are articulated and assigned (Foucault, 1972). As explained by Mills (2004, p. 10, citing Pecheux 1982), “discourses do not occur in isolation but in dialogue, in relation to or, more often, in contrast and opposition to other groups of utterances” (p. 10) thus stressing the conflicting nature of discourse. Kelly (2000) explains that although several discourses exist simultaneously, all discourses are not equal; some gain hegemony while others are marginalized.

‘At-Risk’ Discourses

In the present study, the ‘at-risk’ discourse emerges as one of the dominant discourses. Amid the varying discourses circulating in relation to the teen/young mothers, a common theme revealed through the participant observations, review of various documents and my conversations with the staff, was that the pregnant and parenting young women as a group are ‘vulnerable’ and more susceptible to unfavourable life outcomes. The staff use words such as ‘fallen through the cracks’, ‘victims’, ‘not your regular mainstream kids’, ‘in crises’, and ‘an oppressed group’ to describe the teen/young mothers, indicating that the staff construct them

within an 'at-risk' discourse. The language of various documents such as evaluation reports, newsletters, brochures, and annual reports contained words that referred to the 'risk' in the lives of these young women. An analysis of the interviews with the teen/young mothers in this study reveal that though these young women are aware of their position of disadvantage, they do not speak about themselves as being 'at-risk'. Perhaps the teen/young mothers did not want to highlight the negative aspects of their lives. They spoke about wanting to end their dependence on welfare, of bettering their lives, of their hope for their children and their future. Maybe the young women desired a fresh start and wanted to leave their past behind or perhaps they were cautious about the implications of speaking to me about the challenges in their lives, fully cognizant of the power of the agencies to withdraw financial supports or to apprehend their children. As stated earlier, the young women who consented to be interviewed appear to be managing well in their present situation with the supports in their life and may be representative of a segment of the population of young women who were able to cope with the new challenges in their lives. The meanings attached to the 'at-risk' discourse are explored below.

Several meanings exist in the literature on the concept of 'at-risk' youth, with varying definitions of the term in the psychological, sociological, medical and educational literature. Schonert-Reichl (2000) points to the ambiguity and vagueness in definitions of the concept, emphasizing that more clarity is needed regarding the meanings applied to the concept of 'at-risk'. Since the findings of the present study reveal that teen/young mothers were considered 'at-risk' largely due to the factors that interfered with their schooling and to the future consequences of not attaining a high school education, the term 'at-risk' is discussed from an educational perspective. Within the educational literature there are varying definitions of the concept. Sanderson (2002) posits that "young people who are out of school before completing year 12 are

deemed to be 'at-risk' - which generally means at risk of having their lives shaped by long term unemployment and/or at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behavior or even criminal activities" (p. 9). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development designates children and youth "at-risk" if they are "failing in school and are unsuccessful in making the transition to work and adult life and as a consequence are unlikely to be able to make a full contribution to active society" (Evans, 1995, p. 21). The above definitions designate students 'at-risk' in terms of their possible failure to complete school and successfully integrate into the larger community. However, Marquardt (1998) cautions about the danger of assuming a universal high school education is essentially good and that our graduates will have quality employment after high school. Furthermore, Wotherspoon and Schissel (2000) warn "that language identifying children as being 'at-risk' can serve as a euphemism for racism, class-based biases, sexism, or regional inequalities" (p. 7).

In the present study, the 'at-risk' discourse employed by the staff and evident in various documents point to the risks linked to school failure, the implications of being economically unsuccessful and the consequent dependency on welfare. The 'at-risk' discourse associated with the discourse of welfare dependency reflects the present day neo-liberal social, economic, and political contexts that emphasize self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance. In the present study, the frontline staff are involved in supporting the teen/young mothers to become "*productive members of society*" (Annual Report) and to "*optimize their future*" (Evaluation Report) through participation in education/work preparation. The staff believe that there are many existing risk factors that may interfere with achieving those objectives. Depending on their position and role at the Centres, each staff member has a different level/area of interaction with the teen/young mothers and hence describes the teen/young mothers as not being successful or

being 'at-risk', based on different factors. For example, the teachers may observe that a young woman has gaps in her learning that place her 'at-risk' of not completing high school whereas the support workers may determine that circumstances of poverty place the learning of the teen/young mothers at risk. Some of the key factors that the staff identify as instrumental in putting the women 'at-risk' are poverty, addictions, abuse, interrupted schooling, and stigmatizing stereotypes. Throughout the scholarly literature on youth 'at-risk', findings have similarly documented factors such as "poverty, family characteristics, and child-abuse" (Evans, 1995, p. 48), as well as alcohol and drug abuse, violence, and threats to mental and physical health (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2000, 2001) as risk factors. The following discussion presents the various risk factors cited in the findings of the present study. These factors will be examined to understand how they impacted the lives of the young women.

Poverty. A significant finding of the present study is that mothering in conditions of poverty was a major challenge for the teen/young mothers and was considered a key risk factor. While the multiple sources of data in the present study highlight poverty and its negative impact on the young women, it is important to note that the teen/young mothers themselves did not dwell on their poverty circumstances. When specifically asked about social assistance and the advantages of participating in the LEAP program (a learnfare program, part of Ontario Works), they unanimously spoke about benefiting from extra money towards things such as running shoes, gym clothes, school supplies, books and so on, however, the young women also spoke of their dependence on welfare as temporary and they made it clear that they had future plans of going to college, of working, and of supporting themselves. Perhaps the young women did not speak about their poverty circumstances because there is still a stigma and shame associated with being on welfare as widely reported in the scholarly literature because of the implications that

one is not just poor, but also lazy and not contributing to society. In the present study, we hear Elizabeth, the director's continued attempts to reframe this negative discourse, "*We want to give the moms a handup not a handout. We want to help them to help themselves*". Elizabeth emphasizes that the support the Centres provided was a short-term measure to help the teen/young mothers to eventually become self-reliant.

Phoenix (1991) argues that "mothers in poverty are simultaneously dependent and responsible. Having a child gives a woman responsibility for protecting a vulnerable person, but increases her dependence on others to help with childcare and often to provide her with money" (p. 4). Many studies describe the teen/young mothers in circumstances of poverty and emphasize its negative impact on the lives of the young women and their children (Harris, 1997; Horowitz, 1995; Maynard, 1997; Musick, 1993). An analysis of the perspectives of the staff and other data sources in the present study indicate that many teen/young mothers at the three Centres in the present study were struggling to manage under financial constraints. The welfare cheque, though welcome, is not sufficient; and the continuous struggle to budget with zero dollars keeps them engrossed in juggling their finances and unable to plan for anything. These results are similar to the findings in a study on teen mothers (Victor, 1995) where financial hardships left teen mothers feeling they were not in control and unable to look at the big picture. In her study of teen mothers on social assistance, Jenkins (2001) reported that all of the young mothers were living in severe poverty that forced them to make judicious choices, and to stretch the money they received. A very similar pattern is evident in the present study. The staff described that the wait for social housing could be as long as ten years and so affordable housing is a major concern for the teen/young mothers. Paying market rent often meant that the teen/mothers cut corners with other expenses such as groceries. Jenkins (2001) reported that when the rents were higher than the

amounts that the teen mothers received, the young women would make up the difference by utilizing money from their food or clothing budget. These findings were quite different from findings in a U.S. study by Pilat (1997) where the majority of teen mothers indicated that the system was adequate in providing financial services for housing as well as other basic needs. It should be noted, however, that Pilat's study was conducted in the U.S before 1996, when the welfare reforms of 1996 were introduced in the form of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in the U.S. This Act "reduced federal government spending on welfare by over \$55 billion over six years" (Bashevkin, 2002, p. 120). This suggests that the teen mothers in Pilat's study may have benefited from funding prior to the cutbacks in welfare spending. In fact, Pilat suggests that the funding levels must continue to remain stable if the same level of service is to be maintained. Lutrell (2003), in her ethnographic study on American teen mothers, describes this population of young women as mostly African-American and living in poverty. She was amazed by their awareness of the value of money and what appeared to her as a preoccupation with the cost of day to day material goods.

Within a considerable body of literature, a finding that resonates with the findings of the present study is the dominant discourse on the link between poverty and teen pregnancy. Several studies suggest that poverty and teen pregnancy are linked and, in fact, that teen pregnancy is a cause of poverty. For instance, studies such as those done by Geronimus (1997), Lawson and Rhode (1993), and Luker (1996) have found that problems associated with teen mothers and their children such as low birth weight, low educational attainment, persistent poverty, juvenile crime and long-term welfare dependency have more to do with poverty itself than other related disadvantages suffered by teenage females before they became pregnant. Thus teen pregnancy needs to be seen not as a cause of poverty, but an indication of poverty that causes more poverty.

In her research study, Phoenix (1991) concludes that, given the educational and family background of the teen mothers, it did not appear that their financial circumstances would have necessarily improved if they had deferred motherhood beyond the teenage years. Cocca (2002) argues that the research on teen pregnancy largely ignores the structural causes of poverty. She asserts that the focus on the issue of teen pregnancy must shift to include the questions of economic, political, social and cultural inequalities. Examples in the present study demonstrate how the teen/young mothers attempt to budget with “zero dollars” or how they try to ensure that they have material resources so as not to be viewed as negligent. It also highlights the tremendous strain of parenting in circumstances of poverty. A study by SmithBattle and Leonard (1998) suggests that the adolescent mothers’ negative life situation is not due to adolescent childbearing, but is instead the result of poverty, violence, illness, and social exclusion. Miranne and Young (2002) also recognize that young girls growing up in impoverished communities face numerous barriers which far outweigh the positive factors that could provide them with an opportunity to experience a measure of success in life. The research findings in the literature support the findings in this study that it is not solely the pregnancy that causes problems for the teen/young women, but poverty that creates tremendous stress in the lives of the teen/young mothers. As Victor (1995) and Pillow (2004) assert, parenting is a burden for all mothers with meager economic resources, though for adolescent mothers, there is the additional burden of being young and sometimes single.

Addictions. The findings of the present study also allude to issues of drug and alcohol addictions that place the pregnant and parenting young women ‘at risk’. The staff clearly communicate to the teen/young mothers their obligation to intervene and to either refer the young women to addictions counseling or in severe cases to report them to the Children’s Aid

Society. During my interviews with the teen/young mothers, some spoke about drug use in the past, stating that they were not doing drugs anymore. In the case of drug and alcohol use, most staff in the present study express concern about the effects of drug and alcohol addictions not only on the lives of the young women, but also on the lives of their children. These findings are similar to the results in a study by Pilat (1997), in which service providers articulated their concerns about teen/young mother using drugs and alcohol as well as the fact that many of them also had lived or were living in homes with parents, partners or other adults who had problems with addictions. Though drug and alcohol abuse by youth is portrayed as negative, self-indulgent, irresponsible behaviour, Wotherspoon and Schissel (2000) explain that marginalized and disadvantaged youth often turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with the stress and strain of their lives of despair and powerlessness.

Abuse. The findings of the present study suggest that some of the young women had experienced physical or emotional abuse within relationships with their partners. However, the young women experiencing abuse were not always in a position to realize that they were in abusive relationships, perhaps because of their emotional involvement in the relationship. Regarding abuse, in the present study, several young mothers believed that they had good and bad moments in their relationships with their partners, so that deciphering when a fight with a partner was an abusive situation was not easy for them. Other young women revealed that though they knew they were in abusive relationships, ending such a relationship was not easy. This points to the complexity of emotions in human relationships that may explain why situations of abuse are not always clear for young women and also highlights the vulnerability of young women in abusive relationships. Studies on adolescent mothers reveal that they may experience more conflict and stress in personal relationships with their partners than older mothers (Garcia-

Coll, Hoffman, & Oh, 1987). Often, adolescent mothers found themselves coping with unpredictable anger — both their own and their partners' (Victor, 1995). Evidence in the scholarly literature reveals that domestic violence is quite prevalent among teen mothers on welfare “with young women experiencing sabotage of birth control, education, training and work” (Mirianne & Young, 2002, p. 374). However, the findings of the present study reveal that not all the teen/young mothers experienced troubled relationships. Out of the nine women interviewed, five spoke about partners who were really helpful and supportive. They mentioned the satisfaction they derived from those loving, committed relationships. Though some young women spoke about the difficulties they had with their partners, I sensed from their comments that the relationships with their partners had ended for various reasons not linked to abuse. They spoke about moving on with their lives without their partners. A similar finding was reported by Davies, McKinnon & Rains (1999) in exploring the context of the relationships of teen mothers with their “baby-fathers” (p.39), where the teen mothers “weighed a variety of considerations” in deciding about continuing a relationship with their partners (p. 40).

Besides physical and emotional abuse, this study indicates that some teen/young mothers may also have experienced situations of sexual abuse. In the present study, staff indicate that they knew of some instances of sexual abuse. In cases where the young women had experienced sexual abuse, the staff relate that it was mostly *pregnant* young women who remembered these experiences: somehow their pregnancy caused them to feel more vulnerable, thereby triggering memories of past traumatic experiences, a finding also documented in a study by Victor (1995) on the experiences of teen mothers in a teen education program, in which it was revealed that close to 50 percent of young mothers in the program had been sexually molested, often by older

relatives or family members. The pregnancy of the young mother in that study was said to often trigger repressed memories of early sexual abuse.

The findings of the present study also suggest that the teen/young mothers may have been afraid to admit to problems of addictions or abuse and reluctant to ask for assistance because they did not want to be considered unfit to mother and more importantly they did not want to risk losing their child or in some cases their partner. Most young women were aware of the stereotypical perception of the 'irresponsible, incompetent' teen mother and were guarded in sharing the difficulties and struggles of mothering under conditions of duress. Middleton (2006) explains this fear by young women stating that women who are "mothering under duress" [addictions, illness, abusive relationships] are subject to an intense degree of pathology as well as constant scrutiny and evaluation by institutions that are designed to support them. This "prevents them from seeking help from institutions that are labeling them as 'other'" (p. 79). Many women are afraid of not measuring up to the task of mothering, and as Maushart (2000, p. 7) asserts, women hide behind a "mask of motherhood".

Interrupted Schooling. The findings of the present study indicate that the schooling of the teen/young mothers had been interrupted for various reasons. Presently, they were supported through the social assistance program to complete their high school credits. The findings of this study suggest that a number of these young women had been disengaged with school and had dropped out of school prior to their pregnancy. They cited instances ranging from instances of bullying to learning difficulties, conflicts with peers, family/personal issues and their own lack of motivation as reasons for dropping out of school. Pregnancy and motherhood were events that actually drew the young women back to school. Many teen/young mothers related that they now felt compelled to better their lives, motivated by the responsibility of a child.

Not all the young women reported having difficulty, and some were quite successful academically; however, they related that they had left mainstream high schools, opting to continue their education at alternate sites. They stated that they did not feel they could comfortably continue in their regular school. In this study, Julia, a director, speculates that perhaps schools do not want to be seen as supporting teenage pregnancy “as the way to go”. In my experience as a teacher in a regular high school, pregnant girls were discreetly directed towards the alternate sites and remained in the regular school only until they started to ‘show’. Similar findings were revealed in a study by Victor (1995) where she states that the young women in her study faced awkward interactions and received covert messages; thus many pregnant young women left school as leaving school reduced the discomfort that they experienced.

The above discussion provides clear evidence that the discourse of ‘risk’ emerged as the dominant discourse from multiple sources of data. While the discourse of ‘risk’ legitimates a need for much required services, there is a danger that it pathologizes all teen/young mothers as somehow being deviant or deficient. In associating pregnancy for this age group with negative psychological and health related outcomes, it conjures up images of all pregnant and parenting young women as deviant and high risk. This study highlights the complexity of providing services to needy populations. On the one hand, labeling the young women as ‘high risk’ highlights their deviance; on the other hand, the option is to ignore their differences and their needs. This catch 22 is pointed out by Minow (1984) who states, “The dilemma of difference is the risk of reiterating the stigma associated with assigned difference either by focusing on it or ignoring it” (p. 159, 202, as cited in Kelly, 2000). Phoenix (1991) suggests that a solution may be to view the young women as mothers with ‘problems’ rather than as ‘problem mothers’, thus

shifting the focus of the problem from the individual to the context of their lives. Pilat (1997) takes it a step further in her suggestion that we view “adolescent pregnancy not as a problem to be solved, but a reality to be lived” (p. 187).

‘Resilience’ Discourses

In the present study it was evident that the staff also viewed the teen/mothers as ‘resourceful’, ‘good mothers’, ‘strong’, and as ‘young women who had big dreams and hopes of a better future’, thus suggesting that the staff also employed a ‘resilience’ discourse in reference to the young women. A strategic review of the literature on the discourses of resilience reveals that disciplines such as physics, biology, environmental sciences, and the social sciences have defined the construct of resilience in many ways, and as Terrise (2000) posits, it is a “hypothetical construct that has no meaning until it is contextualized”. Ungar (2004, p. 346) defines resilience as “the outcome from negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse”. Masten (2001) defines resilience as a “class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228). An analysis of the data revealed that the teen/young mothers were characterized by discourses of resilience. The staff at all three Centres were unequivocal about their view that the teen/young mothers displayed amazing strength in the face of difficulties, a feat that they believed some adults would find difficult to emulate. The staff spoke of the resilience of the teen/young mothers in coping with poverty, abuse, stigmatization and other difficult life situations. So, though the staff considered the teen/young mothers as an ‘at-risk’ group, they also viewed them as ‘resilient’. From the interviews with the staff and students, my participant observations and articles in the newsletters and other documents, it was clear that many teen/young mothers demonstrated

amazing coping skills in juggling the responsibilities of mothering and schooling under demanding circumstances. This, however, is not to suggest that the stories of their lives were all success stories. There were instances provided through the staff accounts and other reports that illustrated that several young women were overwhelmed by the difficulties they faced. Despite supports from the Centre and the personal resilience of the young women, the demands and pressures of certain life situations made it very hard for the young women to succeed in school and they consequently left school. To encourage mothers to stay engaged in school, most staff at the three Centres in the present study focused on the strengths rather than deficits of the teen/young mothers. Ungar (2004) describes this as using “salutogenic discourses” in contrast to “pathogenic discourses” (p. 346). In the interviews with the teen/young mothers themselves, many of the teen/young mothers described ways that they addressed difficult situations whilst parenting. The young women highlighted their optimism, perseverance, and their determination to make a better life for themselves and their children. These characteristics of the young women, which can be categorized as “compensatory or protective factors” (Ungar, 2004, p. 348), mitigate the negative effects of risk factors.

A facet of the resilience of the teen/young mothers is observed in the manner in which they attempt to resist the powerful stigmatizing discourses. Explaining the power constituted in discourses, Foucault (1984) states, “Discourse transmits and produces power: it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it feasible and makes it possible to thwart it” (p. 100). Thus, Foucault suggests that where there is power, there is resistance, and resistance to power can lead to reversal of power (even though temporary). In the present study, the teen/young mothers resisted the stigmatizing discourses of themselves as ‘bad’ mothers by embracing the discourse of motherhood and devoting their energies to their children. The young women, as a

marginalized group were in asymmetrical relations of power in most of their day-to-day interactions, yet there were spaces of resistance that were seized by them. Often, they used their silence as a means of resistance. On the bus, for instance, some of them reported that they refused to be drawn into conversations that were demeaning and stigmatizing. On some occasions, the staff revealed that the young women would not reveal information and it took time to build trusting relationships. Staff also related that some young women made a decision to leave the program to be full time mothers. While the action of quitting the program can be viewed as a failure, it also demonstrates that the mothers resisted the dominant discourses of worker citizenship, choosing motherhood over schooling/work. Some teen/mothers were also seen to exhibit resilience in coping under extremely difficult circumstances, utilizing any help they could find from sources such as family, boyfriends, social services, and so on. Some of the mothers made difficult, heart wrenching decisions to move on and leave behind unreliable partners or to leave abusive home situations. These findings are similar to findings by Davies, McKinnon and Rains (1999), where mothers decided the extent of the involvement of the “baby-fathers” (p. 41), thus demonstrating they were not passive victims. Similar to the findings in the study by Davies, McKinnon and Rains, all the young mothers interviewed in the present study perceived their pregnancy and parenthood as an opportunity to pursue a different pathway. This phenomenon has been described by McMahon (1995) as ‘moral reform’- a chance to become a better person by taking on the responsibilities of motherhood. This was an especially strong incentive for teen mothers from disrupted homes to live their lives differently. For most of the teen/young mothers, the baby was a turning point in their lives, which might otherwise have gone down a self-destructive path. Many recounted how the birth of their child motivated them to do better in life, as they felt responsible for another human being and they were now interested

in pursuing an education. Perhaps adolescent parenthood can reverse a path of self-destructive behavior, the presence of a baby prompting necessary maturity (Lesko, 1990). Instead of “the conventional idea that mothers produce children”, McMahon (1995) suggests that we should examine “how children produce mothers” (p. 3).

The teen/young mothers in the study, though guarded in their responses, spoke about how they attempted to balance the responsibilities of mothering and schooling at the same time. They described the challenges of being a mother attending to sick and crying babies. They spoke of dealing with their own level of stress and needs while simultaneously attending to the needs of their child. In a study by Pilat (1997), the teen mothers similarly exhibited courage and resilience as they “came daily to school carrying their books, babies, bottles and childcare paraphernalia, hoping to complete high school and go on to college or to become gainfully employed” (p. 104). In this study, young mothers also spoke of managing conflicts with peers and the drama in school. Similar findings were noted by Victor (1995) who recounted that many of the teen mothers in her study knew each other in high school or knew of each other. She describes the peer conflicts, “Remnants of shifting alliances, rumors, and cliques surfaced slowly and suddenly in the group” (p. 49). In this study, staff attributed the conflicts between teen/young mothers to rumours, gossip, and jealousy over boyfriends. Elkind (1984) explains that adolescent youth face new challenges in their social relationships. He utilizes the term “peer shock” to describe the different challenges adolescent youth face in their social relationships—challenges due to betrayal, exclusion, and disillusionment (p. 81).

Discourses of ‘Stigma’ and ‘Infantilization’

The findings of the present study reveal that the discourse of ‘stigma’ resonated as a common theme throughout the data. The literature reveals the variability in the definition of the

concept of stigma. In his classic book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Goffman (1963) described stigma as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” and that reduces the bearer “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). Subsequent definitions in the decades that followed attempted to locate stigma within a social context. Crocker, Major & Steele (1998) indicate that “stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (p. 505). Link and Phelan (2001) propose that “stigma exists when interrelated components converge” (p. 2). They employ the term stigma “when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows them to unfold” (p. 2). Throughout the scholarly literature researchers acknowledge that teen/mothers have been perceived in stereotypical ways and subject to subtle or overt forms of discrimination (Kelly, 2000; Pillow, 2004; Lutrell, 2003), and are also at-risk of internalizing these negative stereotypes. The findings of the present study indicate that the teen/young mothers and the staff are aware that as a group ‘teen mothers’ are stigmatized by society due to negative stereotypes of age, morality (sexuality out of control), single status, and welfare dependency. An examination of the perspectives of the staff indicated that they were saddened by the stigma experiences of the teen/young mothers, An examination of the interviews with the young women revealed that they were acutely aware of the stigma of being a young mom. Most of the teen/young mothers in the study related their experiences of stigma in society, in public places such as malls, grocery stores, parks, and while traveling on the bus, which for most women was their only means of transportation. They reported that the stigmatizing experiences, especially on the bus, were stressful. They felt they were under constant scrutiny. It is quite possible that this heightened awareness caused them to internalize the ‘gaze’ of the public and to be self-

conscious. Not all instances of conflict on the bus could be interpreted to be a result of stigma. As a staff member and some young women point out, the buses are crowded and the strollers do block the aisle and inconvenience the commuters who may be anxious about entry into and exit out of the bus. In a study by Connerty (2004) in a Canadian city, similar findings were reported by pregnant and parenting young women in a school-linked program in which the young women related that they encountered difficulties traveling by bus and they routinely faced instances of stigmatization.

A study by Victor (1995) reports similar findings on the stigmatizing of teen mothers. She provides an example of the discrimination she observed firsthand against teen mothers. She had accompanied the teen/young mothers and their children to a fast-food restaurant and personally witnessed the customers at the restaurant staring at the teen mothers with obvious disapproval. This example is similar to the instance described by Denise, a support worker, in the present study. She was standing at a bus stop with several teen/young mothers and observed that people driving in cars were slowing down and staring at the teen/young mothers with babies. Victor further reported that young women in her study complained about the condescending treatment by members of the medical profession and representatives of social service agencies. The results of the present study, in contrast, revealed that though the teen/young mothers sometimes resented the close monitoring of their lives, and some complained that the rules should be more flexible; overall they felt quite respected and supported by their teachers, the support workers as well as the counselors.

The six dimensions of stigma identified by Jones et al. (1984) are helpful for exploring the reasons the teen/young mothers experienced stigma. I suggest that three dimensions: “concealability”—the extent to which the stigmatizing characteristic is necessarily visible,

“origin” of the stigmatizing mark – the person’s responsibility for creating the mark, and “disruptiveness “— the degree to which the stigmatizing characteristic interferes with the flow of interactions and communication (p. 24), are applicable to the experiences of the teen/young mothers in the present study.

In the present study, the young age (a visible stigma that is not easily concealed) of the young mother emerged as one of the primary reasons for the hostility, by the public, towards the pregnant and parenting young women. Previous research demonstrates that in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the most prevalent stereotype about teen mothers found to circulate in public discourse was the stereotype of “babies having babies” (Luker, 1996). This “discourse of infantilization” Clark (1994, p. 33) calls our attention to the age bias and “how it permeates our thinking, intersecting with gender, race, and class.” Clark further questions whether the “discourse of infantilization” allows us to dismiss young people as being immature and incapable of independent decision making, eclipsing other distinctions. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, adolescence came to be viewed as a separate distinct phase of life. Pregnancy and motherhood were considered to be the domain of adult women and pregnant teenagers were perceived to have strayed into a sphere meant solely for adult women (Phoenix, 1993). Even though two-thirds of the births to teenagers in Canada and the U.S. happen to women aged 18 to 19 (Rhode & Lawson, 1993), which is considered to be the age of a legal adult, the “kids having kids” talk is a recurring stereotype applied to all young mothers. The reflections of the staff in this study indicated that in direct and subtle ways the teen/young mothers received messages from the public at large that they were too ‘young’ to be responsible mothers.

In the present study, the teen/young mothers felt stigmatized because of their age, since the young age of the mother was used to link the teen mothers to negative stereotypes of teen

mothers as immature, irresponsible, and dependent. Similar findings were documented in a study on the autobiographical narratives of teenage mothers by Kirkman, Harrison, Hillier and Pyett (2001), in which the teen mothers felt they were judged and condemned for ruining their lives at a young age and for being too young to be able to look after a baby. The findings from this study suggest that the discourse of infantilization also carried implications of irresponsible mothering, as was seen in the case of Bianca whose crying baby was seen as a sign of incompetent or inadequate mothering though in this scenario 'young' Bianca was performing the expected responsible task of breastfeeding, a fact that went unnoticed. Age is often a criterion used in making decisions about which people will make good parents. In fact, as Phoenix (1991) argues, young people, especially the 18-19 year olds, are not too young to be adequate parents. In the present study, a notable comment is made by Jill, who wonders if older women are ever singled out for criticism because of their alleged irresponsible mothering.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, early childbearing and childrearing were acceptable within the framework of marriage. Though societal attitudes towards marriage are more liberal in the current climate of the twenty-first century and single parenting is more accepted, the teen/young mothers in the study were still more often stigmatized when they traveled alone than when they traveled with their partners as a 'couple'. This was evident in the examples of Reena and Katie who were treated quite differently traveling with their male companions and Susan whose wedding ring elicited acceptance of her mothering status. Discourses of immoral, unwed mother were evident in Jill's comments that people assumed that her teen mother status meant that she was a loose character. Kelly (2000) highlights this aspect when she writes, "The prevalent double standard...still places the onus on women to manage sexual and reproductive choices" (p. 28). The sight of pregnant and parenting young women

exposes female sexuality and as Pillow (2004) states, “the pregnant teen body is a site of debate, alarm, fear, scorn, and shame” (p. 10). A pregnant or parenting young woman is a visible sign of sex: “it converts private behavior into public behavior” (Nathanson, 1991). In the present study, the stigmatization of the young women in the context of their perceived single status is an indication that their single status had implications related to societal expectations of the sexual boundaries for women. Discourses of immorality were attached due to their single status and age.

Interventions for Teen/Young Mothers

The second research question addressed in this study asks, “How do frontline professional staff intervene, to assist the teen/young mothers with the competing demands of schooling, mothering and work/life preparation?” This study focuses on the multifaceted interventions designed to provide comprehensive supports for the teen/young mothers through school-linked integrated programs. The findings of this study reveal that the school-linked integrated programs offered at the Centres assist pregnant and parenting young women on social assistance to earn a high school diploma with the goal of achieving economic self-sufficiency. These goals largely reflected the context of larger neo-liberal discourses, whereby teen mothers are constructed within discourses that privilege worker citizenship over maternal citizenship. On the one hand, the programs supporting *pregnant* young women placed an emphasis on motherhood through the prenatal and postnatal parenting programs, as well as allowed some flexibility with schooling, yet, on the other hand, the programs supporting *new mothers* placed more emphasis on schooling, supporting the children through daycare. Some staff questioned the reasons for requiring the new mothers to be in school as opposed to at home spending time raising their child. The strong emphasis on self-sufficiency through education/work reflects the

emphasis placed on the value of work or economic autonomy as opposed to the value of mothering within the current neo-liberal framework.

This section explores the educational environment to examine how the ‘neo-liberal’ discourses along with competing ‘risk’ discourses impact the interventions provided within alternative sites. In the present study, the model of education utilized for the education of teen/young mothers in separate settings is similar to the educational model in schools described by Pillow (2004). The educational model at the Young Moms Centre that provided full-day regular schooling appeared similar to the educational model described by Pillow as the “pregnancy as a disability” model. Pillow maintains that since school policies generally offer accommodations only to ‘special’ or ‘disabled’ students (p. 101), pregnant and parenting young women had to be identified as being disabled or inadequate in order to receive supports in separate environments; however Pillow argues that schools also used that logic to justify practices of separation and exclusion, isolating the young women from traditional mainstream schools. In the present study, full day regular schooling for young mothers was provided under the section 23 (formerly section 20) day treatment clinical programs. In Ontario, school boards in partnership with social service, health, and other community based agencies provide services with a therapeutic and educational component for troubled children and youth, under the Ministry of Education Section 23 Ministry General Legislative Grants. While providing much needed services, the provision of educational programs within a framework of services to learning and behaviour disordered youth in care and/or treatment, custody and correctional facilities constructs all pregnant and parenting women as problems. The findings of the present study indicate that though the young women certainly needed extra assistance, characterizing the teen/young mothers as individuals that were troubled and in need of therapeutic interventions

may serve to highlight the deviancy and further stigmatize them. Pillow (2004) discusses how schools deem that pregnant/mothering students have special needs by identifying them as disabled, untouchable, or deficient. The pregnant/mothering student with “special needs” is then separated from the regular school environment. Pillow (2004) argues that the “pregnancy as a disability/disease feeds into contamination discourses, furthering ideological practices of separation and exclusion”. Throughout the scholarly literature, experts question whether alternative programs can provide services and supports for pregnant/parenting teens equivalent to mainstream education and also debate whether they further contribute to contamination discourses (Kelly, 2000; Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004; Shavers, 2005).

Though the teen/young mothers in the present study were provided with an education in alternate sites at the three multi-service Centres, which could not replicate the services offered at a regular high school, the findings from this study suggest that despite many limitations of material and human resources, the staff at the three multi-service Centres made every attempt to provide an education comparable to the mainstream schools. Although some beneficial features of a regular high school such as a library, a wide selection of courses, fully equipped laboratories, and so on were missing at the alternate sites, other features such as the small teacher-pupil ratio, the close attention that the teachers provided, the daycare supports, and opportunities to meet other young women in similar situations were features that helped the teen/mothers re-engage in education. What’s more, I sensed that almost all of the staff interviewed in the present study truly believed in the mission of the programs and felt that the schools were helping the young women move towards achieving self-sufficiency. This aspect was similar to findings by Shavers (2005) where the administrators strongly believed that the alternate programs were meeting the educational and personal needs of the students.

My observations indicate that in many respects the education and support that the young women received at the Centres was probably better than a regular high school as it was more tailored to the needs of the young women and their children. Further to this point, several teen mothers in a study by Victor (1995) stated that they enjoyed being in a separate teen mother program that allowed them the opportunity to share experiences about pregnancy, motherhood and childrearing with other mothers in similar situations. The support among peers was evident to me during my participant observations. Besides sharing stories about mothering, I also saw them helping each other with school work. On one occasion, one of the young women even volunteered to baby-sit, while I conducted an interview with the mother (her friend).

The perception of the staff that the teen/young mothers were a vulnerable group susceptible to many risk factors led them to regard the young women as a group that required substantial protection and support. All the staff spoke extensively about the kinds of interventions in place to assist the teen/young mothers. In the present study, it is evident that the staff concerns for the teen/young mothers were grounded in genuine concern about the harm and danger to the young women for a host of reasons. Despite the 'humanistic' concern of the staff for the immediate welfare of the teen/young women, it was clear that the staff also viewed the impact of the young women's circumstances on not only the young women themselves but more importantly the impact on their children.

When teen mothers are defined by "at-risk" behaviours, the question is often one of how to regulate, police, house, educate, and employ them or to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviours (Kelly, 2000). The focus is then on deficits in the young mothers rather than on the context of their lives or the reform initiatives. Mirianne and Young (2002) use the concept of boundary to look conceptually and methodologically at the socially constructed relations

between teen mothers and the welfare state, and between teen mothers and the community. The authors identify how the boundaries of welfare reform can be nurturing or restricting. An analysis of the findings of this study provides insights into how a neo-liberal social welfare framework shaped the interventions designed for the young women. The Centres encouraged and supported the young women to complete their high school, a mandatory requirement for 16-17 year olds. The emphasis on schooling and work/life preparation was to help the young women to be independent in the future. There was compelling evidence in the data that the staff went over and beyond their job requirements to help the teen/young mothers. Because the staff considered the teen/young mothers as a vulnerable, marginalized group, they felt strongly compelled to advocate on their behalf, in interacting with the LEAP caseworkers, the CAS workers, the police, the courts, schools and other outside agencies. This advocacy role sometimes put them in an awkward position when it involved making judgments about deserving versus undeserving cases, making decisions around the authenticity of the requests to LEAP workers or determining the truth behind a narrative in a crisis or emergency situations. Quite often, the support workers would end up carrying out a lot of the 'work' of these outside agencies, which evoked mixed reactions. Often, the staff would use a common sense approach in dealing with issues, putting a humanitarian face to policies that could otherwise be punitive or restrictive.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration

The third research question addressed in this study asks, "How does collaboration take place among frontline staff within school-linked integrated service settings to enhance the success and well being of pregnant and parenting young women?" The present study focuses on the notion of school-linked integrated services, suggested to be an effective holistic approach

aimed at addressing the complex needs of the students at-risk (DiCecco & DiCecco, 2006). In the case of high-risk children and youth, it was recognized that since the problems they face are complex, any coordinated efforts require collaboration between diverse human service providers in health, education, social services, mental health and so on (White and Wehlage, 1995).

The study investigates the need for collaboration within school-linked integrated services. The perspectives of the front line staff at the Centres highlight the fact that the teen/young mothers face many social, emotional, physical, psychological, and economic challenges that can not be addressed by one individual or group and therefore require a collaborative approach. The findings from this study suggest that the frontline staff believe that forging collaborative relationships is beneficial in the context of service provision, as outlined below.

Need for Collaboration

Specific Populations, Diverse Needs. Teen mothers on social assistance have needs unique to their situation of being pregnant or parenting and therefore their needs have to be addressed differently. In Ontario, social welfare policies initiatives support the provision of an array of services and educational opportunities for these young women. The findings of the present study reveal that the Centres attempted to address the varied needs of the pregnant and parenting young women as well as their children through effective partnerships between the multidisciplinary staff at the Centres. The findings further suggest that the staff at the Centres were in agreement that a useful strategy to address the multiple, complex needs of the teen/young mothers is a strategy of collaborative partnerships. A substantial literature exists that supports a similar view. Pilat (1997) and Intrilligator (1994) note that the expectation that any one individual or service provider can meet all the needs of teen/young mothers is unrealistic and concur that there is a need for collaboration. Whitaker and King (1994) posit that schools, public,

and private agencies must work together to address the significant problems facing families and children. "Schools alone cannot solve the ills of society just as human service agencies alone cannot resolve these difficult problems" (Liontos, 1990, p. 12). Melaville and Blank (1991), in a discussion of schools implementing service provision programs, state that if service providers viewed their clients as "whole individuals, rather than fragmented consumers of service, the efforts to meet their needs are likely to be far more successful" (p. 8). In sum, the present study adds support to the existing literature and provides strong evidence that a single group cannot adequately address the diversity of needs. Hence, a holistic, multidisciplinary, collaborative approach that provides a supportive web of services is required to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable populations, in this case, that of pregnant and parenting young women.

Team Approach. Pilat (1997) describes how collaborative relationships provide a support system for the service providers themselves and help them to cope with the demands of the job such as the "flux and change of clients, new regulations, and other circumstances" (p. 105), findings also confirmed by the current study in which the staff at the centres rely on one another for advice and support to solve the day to day issues of the teen/young mothers. As Denise, a support worker, states "I take a lot of things to my team; I think that's a real bonus here, and that we have a really strong team." This statement reflects the feelings of most staff at the centres in the present study. They feel that being a part of a team provides them with additional support and helps them to cope with stressful aspects of the job. Interestingly, Pilat (1997) relates that in her study, the teachers working with the population of teen/young mothers were dealing with a population with unique needs and did not have much in common with teachers in mainstream schools. They therefore lacked the support network available among teachers from mainstream schools. The staff perspectives of the teachers in the present study indicate that, though teachers

could depend on each other and staff from other disciplines within the centre, they felt a sense of isolation from mainstream teachers and traditional schooling. It seemed as if the onus was on the teachers and the centre staff to be innovative and resourceful to meet the needs of its students. It was evident that more supports from the school boards would be welcomed in the area of programs, guidance, and the provision of material resources.

Common Goals. Collaboration results from people and groups coming together from different backgrounds and disciplines to achieve common goals (Whitaker and King, 1994). In the present study, the reflections of the staff interviewed at the three Centres indicate that they strongly believe in the goals of the Centres and are committed to working with one another as well as with professional staff from external agencies to meet those goals. According to Whitaker and King (1994), service providers will buy into a shared vision if “a framework has been established to promote trust and respect among the participants” (p. 21). Thus, if all the stakeholders do not share common goals, then collaboration will be difficult.

Factors that Supported Collaboration

Leadership. Throughout the scholarly literature related to school-linked services, researchers have found strong evidence that suggests that insightful leadership is a vital ingredient in collaborative endeavors. Strong leaders strive to create the best environment in which clients can receive services (Cibulka, 1996; Mawhinney, 1996). The results of a study by Pilat (1997) on effective service delivery systems point to the importance of strong leadership for successful service provision. Specifically, the ability of a leader to bridge organizational and disciplinary boundaries through personal contacts and professional expertise was found to be critical in the effective delivery of services to parenting teens. This was similar to the findings in the present study in which exemplary leadership provided by the senior administrators at the

three centres was a key factor in the success of programs for pregnant and parenting young women. It also resonates with Volpe's (2000) point that "strong leadership consistently plays a role in the maintenance and evolution of programs" (p. 6). In a study of School Based Youth Services in New Jersey, USA, Knowlton & Tetelman (1994) report that competent site directors were critical to the success of the programs. They further state that "site directors must have personal qualities consistent with the broad-based, unusual and demanding position they are assuming. They must be the type of person who will not be defeated in the face of multiple difficulties...who can communicate with all sectors of society" (p. 122). In the present study, one of the most successful aspects of the leadership displayed by the administrative staff, the directors in particular, was their ability to communicate with people at different levels and lobby the public and the government for support of the programs. Intrilligator (1994) states, "Collaborative units require director persons who are comfortable with exercising leadership in a highly political, ambiguous environment where the need to provide vision to the collaborative enterprise is as important as the ability to administer daily operations" (p. 39).

Structures and Processes. At all the three centres, the staff were supported in their collaborative efforts in various ways. Specific opportunities and time were provided so that staff could work collaboratively. Concrete strategies were devised to create and maintain collaborative relationships, which supported the service providers. An example of the negative impact of inadequate support for the staff on service delivery is evident in a study by Pilat (1997), in contrast to the present study where most staff felt quite supported by the Centres. Programs that support their professionals will be more likely to retain personnel who can support clients (Pilat, 1997). Lack of space for individual and group counseling affected service delivery, as did lack of office space for private phone consultations and writing reports (Pilat, 1997). In contrast, in the

present study, staff reported having ample working space and privacy when required to effectively carry out their jobs.

Challenges of Collaboration

Confidentiality Issues. Resolving confidentiality issues in sharing client and family information has been identified as one of the important factors that pose a challenge for the successful implementation of collaborative school-linked service efforts (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1995). The findings of the present study reveal that tensions arise regarding the issue of confidentiality in dealing with the sharing of information in the context of school-linked integrated services due to various factors. One factor is the difficulty achieving a balance of professional discretion and shared decision making. Pilat (1997) explains how professional difficulties between staff can lead to staff members feeling isolated and frustrated. She cites an example from her study of confidentiality issues that prevented a counselor from sharing information with a teacher regarding a student with serious social problems. The teacher who had been making special arrangements for the student was frustrated when the student dropped out of school. She believed that the counselor had deliberately withheld information about the student and she felt insulted that the counselor did not trust her. The findings from the present study reveal similar tensions experienced by the counselors and the support staff who have to use their discretion in deciding what information should be shared and what should be kept confidential. On the other hand, staff such as Teacher Paul reported the difficulty he had in acquiring information about the teen/young mothers from their previous schools due to confidentiality issues, “one main concern is privacy, you’ve got to prove who you are – that adds a layer of complexity to the process [of accessing information about a student].”

Another factor related to the issue of confidentiality is the fact that “human service professionals are usually bound both by legal duties and professional norms of confidentiality in relationships with clients” (Manley-Casimir and Hall, 1994, p. 72). The findings of the present study highlight the dilemma of the staff on the one hand to maintain the confidentiality of the teen/young mothers who share with them private information and on the other hand to fulfill their legal obligation to report that information if they perceive a threat to the safety of the mother or the child. Bok (1988) writes that information disclosed by a client to a professional pertains to “the innermost, the vulnerable, often the shameful” aspects of one’s life. The staff in the present study reveal that building relationships of trust with the teen/young mothers took time as they were reluctant to share any information. This reluctance may be due to the fact that many teen/young mothers believed that their behaviours and actions were under constant scrutiny, the eyes of many people prying into their lives. Also, most teen/young mothers lived with a fear of losing their baby, if they were reported. In fact during my interviews with the teen/young mothers I sensed the caution and apprehension in answering some of questions, in spite of my assurance about the confidentiality and purpose of the interview. Greenberg and Levy (1992) note that “it is possible to develop means of exchanging information that are effective and practical on a wide scale, while still respecting legitimate rights to privacy” (pp. 1-2), yet if the present study is any indication, accomplishing this feat seems quite challenging in practice.

Lapses or Failure to Communicate. The findings of Shaver, Golan and Wagner (1996) on collaborative ventures suggest that “good working relationships and smooth functioning at the collaborative level were critical to effective operations at the service delivery level. Also, “when collaboratives function well, service providers can cut through the red tape that often accompanies service provision” (p. 374). They found a reciprocal relationship between shared

authority and good working relationships. In the present study, staff strongly believed that communication was a key factor in facilitating collaboration. The staff recognized that their work required them to be in constant communication with staff members within the centre and beyond and worked hard to establish and maintain good working relationships.

Professional Staff with Varied Levels of Training and Divergent Goals. Throughout the scholarly literature, experts acknowledge the problems of professional training differences and the need for negotiating of new roles and relationships between educators and other client service personnel (Kirst, 1991; Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Dryfoos 1994). These findings are similar to the findings of the present study which clearly demonstrates that different professional training creates challenges for staff as they attempt to communicate across disciplinary boundaries with staff from other professions within their own agency or organization and with those from other agencies and organizations. In the present study, the Director Elizabeth explains that one of the challenges of collaboration for members of the multidisciplinary team with different levels of education, experience, and salary is to accept each other as equals at a discussion table.

According to Manley-Casimir and Hall (1994) collaboration can also be problematic because it “require[s] new modes of working between and among professionals from a wide variety of disciplines, occupations, ideologies and practices – professionals whose roles in the past have not necessarily required the extent or kind of close cooperation and collaboration essential for effective implementation of school-linked services” (p. 64). In the present study, Becky states very clearly that she has a different training and background compared to the teacher that she was paired with, and hence they did not agree on many issues. Becky compares her relationship with her teacher partner to that of a married couple, pointing out that in a collaborative venture, both parties should “agree to disagree and try to move forward”. When staff involved in

collaborative endeavors hold conflicting values and differing professional ideologies, Gray (1985) suggests that it is important to have an open discussion and “to search for a common way of framing the problem” (p. 925). Scott (1993) emphasizes that the key to accepting difference is acknowledging the multiple realities of individuals, that is the various players in the service system who bring to the process their own personal and professional experience, knowledge and values. The findings of the present study indicate that staff from different disciplines with differing professional ideologies attempted to recognize diverse viewpoints; however, it was not always easy. This suggests that there may be a need for open communication and dialogue among the staff, findings similarly documented by Scott (1993), who suggests, “making these differences overt can create space for the negotiation of difference” (p. 5).

In her study of service provision for teen mothers, Pilat (1997) reports that “difficulties between professionals within a single organization were a significant part of the frustration felt by service providers” (p. 78) and suggests that professional training programs of service providers be utilized to raise issues of interdisciplinary tensions. In the present study, Director Elizabeth emphasized that professional development days are utilized for training and in-service programs for the multidisciplinary teams. At the regular multidisciplinary meetings, important information is shared on topics that affect the work of staff, so that everyone is well-informed about relevant issues such as changes in confidentiality rules, occupational health and safety, updates on the curriculum and so on. Basically it also provided an opportunity to clarify differences on issues. In order to be effective in supporting the needs of youth, Pilat (1997) recommends that service providers learn to iron out differences in their interaction with staff within and outside their organizations. In an examination of the interpersonal, inter-organizational and inter-professional transactions that made collaboration difficult, Scott (1993)

posits that the barriers lead to a sense of powerlessness and a belief in the futility of one's actions and a state of despair, findings similarly documented in the present study. Scott further suggests that the first step towards addressing this despair is the recognition that interagency collaboration is structural, not personal. In sum, the present study adds support to the existing literature and provides compelling evidence that professional differences and diverse orientations, if not addressed, hinder collaboration.

A Synthesis of the Elements of the Conceptual Framework

A critical evaluation of the discourses surrounding teen/young motherhood in the present study reveals that it is viewed as problematic through interrelated dominant discourses of risk and welfare dependency. The findings of the present study demonstrate that these prevailing social and political discourses are reflected in policy decisions and governmental objectives of economic growth through higher education and increased female workforce participation, which in turn influence service provision and practices. As seen in the findings of this study, an integrated collaborative approach to service provision, involving schools, social, health, and counseling services is utilized to achieve goals of self-sufficiency, to break the cycle of welfare dependency and to optimize the future for pregnant and parenting youth.

These varying discourses and the related outcomes (interventions) are major forces that shape the actual experience of being pregnant as a teenager. This is significant for the teen/young mother in this study because education and labor market participation are increasingly emphasized as mechanisms of social inclusion within policy and government discourses. The young women in this study are at a clear disadvantage as they attempt to meet the demands of education and workforce participation while simultaneously raising their children, within a neo-

liberal context that privileges worker citizenship over maternal citizenship. Important aspects of the findings are the discourse of motherhood as positive as well as the discourse of resilience, including the resistance of the teen/young mothers to stigmatizing and marginalizing experiences. These latter discourses that capture the thoughts and feelings of the teen/young mother highlight their perspective and present an alternative discourse of teenage motherhood. The findings of the study also provide insights on the range of interventions that developed within the context of the social and political discourses. For instance, a discourse of risk results in interventions such as addictions counseling, schooling programs, prenatal and postnatal workshops, smoking cessation workshops, and so on, to minimize the risk factors. In order to address a variety of needs, it is imperative and beneficial that staff adopt a collaborative approach.

An analysis of the discourses around the pregnant and parenting young women on social assistance in the present study highlight the current social and political imperatives that construct teenage motherhood as problematic and draws our attention to the shifting normative perceptions of motherhood. An exploration of the multiple discourses on teenage motherhood demonstrates how the discourses indicate the shifts in dominant systems, political interests, social norms, and cultural values that are in turn reflected in public policies and practices. The interrelation between the three elements of the conceptual framework is therefore clearly visible in the outcomes of the dominant and the marginalized discourses that govern the subject of the teen/young mother in contemporary Canada. Thus, we see how the three elements of the conceptual framework, namely, the constructions of teen/young mothers, interventions, and collaboration are linked and related to each other.

Implications of the study

The context of school-linked integrated service programs within which young pregnant and parenting women are educated is a complex environment. An analysis of the discourses within the context of school-linked integrated services for these young women reveal how various interweaving discourses collide and impact provision of services. It provides a glimpse into how policies at the macro level impact human interaction at the micro level as each day brings fresh challenges and new needs that demand attention.

The findings of the study have important theoretical implications. The results of the study clearly demonstrated that dominant discourses play an important role in influencing the life experiences of the teen/young mother. Feminist poststructuralist theory offers a useful framework for understanding how the present day social, historical and political discourses shape the expectations of women's normative behavior and actions. It allows us to question taken for granted assumptions underlying dominant discourses. It is evident that experiences of the young women are indeed contingent on the social and political discourses that define the 'problem' of teen motherhood and the appropriate interventions. The shifts in discourse over time are clearly seen.

The findings of the study have important implications for research and practice. The present-day positioning of the young women in the study as future educated income producing workers is evident. While the goals of economic self-sufficiency and independence are laudable, attaining these goals may not be easy. In this regard, the findings of this study indicate that the young women were generally well supported in achieving the goal of high school completion; however the supports end at the age of twenty-two. Further research over a longer time period is needed to learn how these young women fare in postsecondary education or in the world of work

after leaving the Centres and whether the goal of self-sufficiency and independence are attainable in the absence of long term supports. Perhaps there could be a gradual transition and easing of support or the supports offered could be extended over a few more years. When the young women fail in achieving the desired goals and outcomes, the findings of this study suggests the problem may not be one of individual maladjustment and failure, but a reflection of social issues such as limited access to resources, different life paths or possibilities, alternate values and so on. The findings of the present study thus have implications for policymakers, social workers, counselors, and educators who respond and intervene to ameliorate the negative consequences of the risk factors, to proceed with caution in their assessment of the problem and in devising subsequent interventions.

The concerns over teenage motherhood are articulated in the present study through interrelated discourses of risk and welfare dependency. For the teen/young mothers in this study, there were implicit as well as explicit expectations of participation in education or work as a requirement for social assistance. This expectation is based on the notion that the education of the pregnant mother is interrupted by the birth of a child. However, it is evident that most of the young women in this study had already been excluded from educational success, as most of them had dropped out of school prior to the pregnancy. It draws our attention to the fact that motherhood was actually a factor that motivated the young women to reengage in schooling. Motherhood not only provided an avenue into maturity and adulthood, but was also a very positive life experience for the young women. These findings have implications for educators and counselors to use this opportunity as a springboard to help the young women successfully reintegrate into school. Though this study specifically examined the context in which 'at-risk' young pregnant and parenting young women attempt to re-engage in schooling, the study has

implications for the larger population of 'at-risk' students within mainstream schools, and especially the growing numbers of students who are disengaged with schooling in inner-city schools. Further research to understand why students feel disenfranchised and disillusioned with school, eventually dropping out would be useful in designing prevention and intervention strategies. The findings of this study thus have implications for educational institutions seeking to keep disadvantaged youth engaged in learning and to support needs of diverse learners. Further examination of the circumstances under which disadvantaged young women make choices might shed light on the opportunities or lack thereof that exist in society for young people.

The findings of the study have practical implications for the education of the young mothers. Because of the complexities surrounding teenage motherhood, it is essential to provide a schooling environment that respects the varied life experiences of the young women. An emphasis on the strengths of the young women rather than the deficits, recognition of their resiliency and a focus on what the students need to do to develop intellectually and socially is essential for their success. To this end, the teacher as a mentor is of deep importance. It is through interaction and emulation with caring adults that marginalized youth will learn not only educational and occupational skills but also skills for meaningful citizenship. The results of the study demonstrate that the school-linked integrated programs at these Centres were quite successful in addressing the needs of pregnant and parenting young women. The intervention programs at the three Centres can serve as successful models for addressing the needs of 'at-risk' students in alternate as well as mainstream schools.

In the context of school-linked integrated services, the findings of the present study revealed that collaboration was viewed as essential as it provided new insights and solutions

from multiple viewpoints, something that perhaps groups working independently may find hard to achieve. The team approach was found to be helpful not just in problem solving but also as a source of peer support. Leadership provided by the senior administrators at the centres appeared to be a critical piece in motivating individual groups to work collaboratively by providing structures and processes for collaboration. For instance, time for collaboration was set aside within the schedules of the staff. Professional development days were utilized for team-building, information and planning. This has implications for policy makers, social workers, counselors and educators interested in adopting a collaborative approach.

Limitations of this study

This study has several limitations, which must be identified. It represents the voices of teen/young mothers and the frontline staff only within the context of school-linked integrated programs. The sample of participants therefore only included individuals who were linked to those programs. The teen mothers who may have been in regular high schools, the teen mothers out of school or those who had already completed high school weren't in the sampling frame for the study. Further study is needed that focuses on teen/young mothers in those social contexts, thereby shedding further light on the specific barriers that they encountered in their lives as they transition into their roles as young mothers. Also, the teen/young mothers who came forward to be interviewed might be representative of young women who were actively engaged in education and hence their perspectives may vary from those who may not have been successful and may have been reticent to participate in research. In addition, other teen mothers who had already completed high school and are now post-secondary students or mothers in the workforce will undoubtedly have still other stories to tell us. Although the teen/young mothers mentioned the

partners in their lives and the Centres were to some extent attempting to draw the fathers or partners of the young women into programs, this study did not pursue the perspectives of the young men. Although some research is being done on young fathers, they are generally a neglected group. Research on the subject of the father's experiences and involvement in the lives of the young women would certainly be helpful, not just in understanding the young men, but also in understanding how their presence or absence impacts the lives of the young women.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has attempted to frame the present study within the existing scholarly literature indicating where there is support for the existing findings, where gaps or inconsistencies exist, and what new knowledge this inquiry has provided.

An analysis of the perspectives of the staff and the teen/young mothers within the context of school-linked integrated service provision provides a glimpse into the dominant discourses around teenage pregnancy and parenting. Discourses of risk, resilience, stigma, and infantilization surfaced as dominant discourses that characterized the pregnant and parenting young women. Though it was daunting for the teen/young mothers to challenge the powerful prevailing discourses, it was clear that they made attempts, in various ways, to resist the stigmatizing stereotypes of the irresponsible, bad teen mother by embracing the discourse of motherhood and also attempting to reengage in education with the hope of a better future life for themselves and their children. The dominant discourses also reveal that discourses of love, desire and the sexuality of the young women are eclipsed. The interviews with the staff revealed the complexities of service provision as they struggled with the tensions of supporting the teen/young mothers on the one hand and enforcing rules and regulations that were punitive in

nature, on the other. Through collaboration, many staff felt that not only did they derive support in addressing the complex, multifaceted needs of the young women; they also believed that a joint approach was in keeping with the philosophy and goals of the Centres to provide comprehensive support to the teen/young mother and her child. However, it was evident that having a desire to work collaboratively did not always translate into a smooth delivery of services and many tensions and contradictions, as highlighted in this study. The barriers to collaborative practice identified in this study were similar to those outlined in the literature on coordinated service provision, indicating a need for support to forge effective and meaningful partnerships.

The findings discussed in this chapter have contributed to a deeper understanding of the three research questions of this study and the themes that emerged from the findings of the study have been examined in relation to the discourses within the broader body of scholarly literature on pregnant and parenting young women. The discussion also focused on the interrelationships among the three elements of the conceptual framework and highlighted important implications and limitations of the study.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Adolescent women today encounter a different set of norms from previous generations about what matters socially. In North America in general and Canada more specifically the boundaries in the sexual spheres are being constantly redefined, and the new generation of young women are more exposed to issues of sex in the context of seeking love, romance and relationships. They have to derive meaning from the veritable explosion of sexually related information and messages on the Internet, television, film, and in various other cultural representations. Yet, this increased knowledge is linked to a lot of confusion as young women weigh their many alternatives and life-options within a sexually oriented climate and culture. With these kaleidoscopic variations in apparent choices, there is increasing pressure on women as they make decisions about their futures.

The present study has explored the every day realities of the lives of the pregnant and parenting young women. One of the important questions that emerge through the findings within debates about whether and how the young women should be supported is the question of what is the right age to be a mother. What age *is* ideal for mothering? There appear to be no simple answers. Moreover, this is a question that seems to cross the age and class divide. The age issue also raises more questions about the expectations of motherhood for women. Women of all ages are challenged as they respond to the societal expectations and demands of motherhood. While teen mothers on social assistance are viewed as too young to be mothers, poor working women in their twenties also face barriers due to the lack of quality, accessible, affordable childcare, and due to inadequate labour market earnings. For more privileged women, balancing education, careers and family can also be challenging at any age. Besides the social perspective, women are

constantly reminded from a medical and clinical perspective of their ticking biological clock.

Older women who may choose to have a perimenopausal birth are also morally condemned. To sum up, mothering is a challenge at all ages and there is no 'right' age to mother; hence all women who choose to mother deserve to be respected, empowered, and supported.

In the present study of pregnant and parenting young women on social assistance within the context of schooling, it is clear that most of the young women experience a constellation of mixed feelings and emotions as they move into their new roles as mothers or to-be mothers. Within the dominant discourses, the choices of the pregnant and parenting young women are constructed within discourses of risk, resilience, stigma, and infantilization. What is largely missing from the discourses are the stories of the young women seeking love and romance within relationships and searching for fulfillment of their sexual and reproductive desires, all of which are basic human needs irrespective of the class, race or the age of the woman. While many of us may question why young women, and especially those already living in poverty and difficult life situations, would complicate their lives by having children, it is important to not be judgmental. One has to reflect on the choices and alternatives for these young women. Do they have 'real' choices? What are the alternatives that society presents to them? By opting for motherhood at a young age, disadvantaged young women are often perceived as making poor choices, in contravention to current social norms of the right time to be mothers; yet the available life choices for women from low socio-economic backgrounds seem to provide little reason to embrace the norms of the dominant culture. Further examination of the circumstances under which disadvantaged young women make choices might shed light on the opportunities or lack thereof that exist in society for young people. More research that explores this aspect of 'choices'

and ‘individual responsibility’ among less privileged young women might reveal important aspects of the decision making process within the context of available opportunities.

In the context of schooling, the findings of this study point to the marginalized and alienated status of young women who are disengaged with schooling. Most of them had dropped out of school before their pregnancy or at the onset of the pregnancy. As a society, this issue of vulnerable female students leaving school is not a question we can afford to take lightly. The implications of young disenfranchised students are tremendous for the present and future generations. We have to reflect on the question of whose values and aspirations the schools are representing which result in many young women (and young men), largely from low socio-economic backgrounds, being disillusioned and discouraged by school. How can the aspirations of adolescents be increased and how can those aspirations become plausible? In this regard, one of the findings of this study point to the role of the caring staff that helped make a difference in the lives of the young women, a finding similarly documented by Ferguson, Tilleczeck, Boydell and Rummens (2005), in a report on early school leavers, submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. These findings have implications for educational institutions seeking ways to keep young people engaged in school. It also has implications for policy makers and school administrators in terms of encouraging teachers to be student mentors and advocates.

“Motherhood is something all women are expected to do, but only in the ‘right’ social, economic and sexual circumstances” writes Bailey, Brown, Letherby and Wilson (2002, p. 102). In the case in which a young, poor, pregnant woman seeks to parent, might it not be in the interests of society to respect and support this choice, to provide assistance to the young women and her child, so that the young women can be empowered in mothering? Grace (2006) argues that when mothers fail to fulfill their dual roles of mothering and working, “this lack of balance”

is viewed as an “individual problem rather than a social problem” (p. 313). She argues for a valuing of mother’s work, especially with young children, stating that “it is extremely difficult for a mother with a young child to earn sufficient labour market income”, emphasizing that “looking after children is not ‘doing nothing’” (p. 320) and in fact is a public benefit, a benefit to the whole community. I suggest that if teen mothers from low socio-economic families are not viewed as ‘problems’, but rather as young women experiencing problems at a difficult phase of their lives much like an adult in difficult circumstances, there is hope that these young women will have an opportunity to experience successful life outcomes and emerge as stronger and capable women, realizing their full potential and capabilities.

Though there seems to be more acceptance of single parenting, teen mothers who are single parents continue to be targets of stigmatizing stereotypes. Schools mostly provide education for teen mothers in separate settings. The numbers of teen mothers in the general population compared to the number of teen mothers enrolled in schools speaks of the invisibility of the teen mothers. As the director Elizabeth remarked, “Last year, there were 700 pregnancies of girls between the age of 12 and 19 in this region. There were 232 live births to teenagers...I have to ask, where the others [pregnant/parenting young women] are?” Additional research should be undertaken that examines the lives of young mothers, who are not in school, or who returned to regular schools after the birth of their child. This would provide a more comprehensive picture of the diversity of the life experiences of teen/young mothers.

Meanwhile policy makers and educators continue to resist engaging in a dialogue about the sexuality of young women and men and the related implications and consequences, probably due to fears of exacerbating the issue. However, these attitudes result in a denial of a reality that allows misconceptions around issues of sexuality to flourish as well as preventing an

examination of the type of education that could be provided for pregnant and parenting young women. It is also a lost opportunity to engage in healthy, meaningful discussions around issues of sexuality as well as to use pregnancy as a springboard for re-engaging in education.

Despite many constraints of funding, organization, and staffing, it was evident that the three multi-service centers in the study were consciously striving to support the needs of the pregnant and parenting young women by empowering the young women to face many formidable life obstacles. The sensitivity and respect of the staff in intervening in the lives of these young women demonstrated the ingenuity and the common sense approach of the staff in dealing with the real life problems of the young women. The nurturing and advocacy roles of the Centre staff clearly seemed to extend beyond formal policy expectations and mandated requirements. Middleton (2006) argues that “They [poor women] have much less control over their lives, and the decisions within them, than women who have the means and resources to mother without governmental assistance” (p. 77). Though the teen/young mothers sometimes feel overwhelmed at being under the ‘gaze’, they also appreciate the support they receive. For many of them, the Centres represent ‘home’, a place of comfort and safety. The service providers at the three Centres constantly struggle with the tensions that they have to manage: they provide incredible supports and build safety nets to protect the young women, yet at the same time the staff are required to monitor and regulate the lives of the young women. They have a moral and legal obligation to report troubling evidence. They also have to simultaneously build trust and are sometimes compelled to betray that trust in the interests of the child and at times in the interest of the young mother herself. Addressing the complex needs of the pregnant and parenting young women would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of the multidisciplinary staff, who provide a web of support for the young women. Also, the Centres in

the study would not thrive without the energy and the enthusiasm of the leaders of the organizations. They appear to have the vision and the dedication to move their organizations forward.

The great Renaissance thinker, Erasmus reminds us, “The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth” (cited in Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002), p. xii). It is my strong belief that education is an important way of empowering mothers. O’Reilly (2006) questions why “mothers’ demands for more time, money, support, and validation are only responded to when they are seen as benefiting children” (p. 328). She utilizes the metaphor of a mother on an aircraft putting on her own oxygen mask before she assists her child as part of airline safety procedure to argue that empowered mothers will make better mothers. The education of young mothers can provide a conscious strategy to bring about change in the lives of the teen/young mothers and in the lives of their children. The questions raised by the issues above are complex and require thought and reflection. Foucault’s post-structural theory of discourse reminds us of the shifting historical, social and political factors that shape the lives of the young mothers. Quick solutions will only provide band-aid responses and an oversimplification of a very complex issue. A broader vision that takes into account the overall impact of the factors affecting disadvantaged pregnant and parenting young women is required. The changes we seek for the future must relate to the diverse aspirations and desires of all women irrespective of age, class, race, socio-economic status, and their choices regarding motherhood or nonmotherhood.

APPENDIX A: Interview guide for student and staff interviews

Interview guide for student interviews

1. Can you tell me what life is like for you as a young mother who is also attending school?
2. Can you describe a typical day for you, beginning when you get up in the morning, your morning routines, and your day at school, your after-school routines? [participant will be asked to explain in greater detail the different routines]
3. Can you talk more about some of the everyday challenges that come with being a mother and also student? Can you tell me more about these? For example, can you give me some everyday examples? And some particularly difficult times? And times when things go well. (e.g., doing homework and looking after the baby)
4. Can you tell me more about your life here at school? [Ask about typical day]
5. [If LEAP is mandatory for the participant]: Because you are under 18, LEAP is mandatory if you are on social assistance. What is it like to be required to participate in LEAP? For example, would you be in school if LEAP didn't require you to be in school? [If LEAP is voluntary for the participant]: You are over 18 and so LEAP is not mandatory for you. But you have decided to participate in it. What are some advantages to being in LEAP?
6. As a LEAP participant, you come into contact with many different individuals who are linked to the program in some way [name the different service providers at the school] Can you talk about how you see their roles and responsibilities [explore each one in detail]. What difference, if any, do they make in your life here at school? In your life beyond the school?
7. Can you talk about how each of them sees YOUR role and responsibilities [explore each one in detail]. How do they see your role and responsibilities AS A STUDENT?
8. In your view, in what ways do you feel really supported here? [Encourage details, specific interventions, and anecdotes]. In what ways do you feel really as a student?
9. It can be difficult, maybe even impossible, for someone else to REALLY understand what it's like to be in someone's shoes.
 - a. Can you talk about some of pressures you feel in your life that others here at school might not really understand? Can you talk about times when some staff members' expectations don't take into account what is really happening in your life?
 - b. Can you talk about how these pressures and expectations affect you as a student?
10. Can you talk about the ways that the school tries to support you so you can stay in school.
11. School XX operates in a particular way to help young mothers stay in school. How different is this school from more typical high schools? [Explore if participant has any past experiences with other schooling contexts, e.g., correspondence school, regular high school, adult high school].
12. What are your hopes and plans for the immediate future? For example, do you want to stay in school? hope to complete high school? Why do you feel it's important/not important to stay in school? If you were to complete your high school education, how might that be helpful to you? Or not particularly helpful to you?

13. Do you have any hopes or plans after high school? Can you tell me more about them? Do you anticipate any challenges that might make it hard to carry out those plans? If so, have you considered how you might deal with those challenges?
14. Do you see yourself in the workforce one day? If so, what kind of work do you think you might do?
15. Even though LEAP seems to be mostly about attending and staying in school, there's also the "earning" and "parenting" side of the program. What have been your experiences with those other sides of the program?
16. In what ways, if any, have these types of experiences been helpful? And not helpful.
17. How might programs that support teen moms to complete their education be improved? What specific changes or enhancements would help teen moms balance their parenting responsibilities with their schooling responsibilities?
16. If you cannot meet the requirements of the program and are asked to leave the program, what are your options?

Interview guide for teacher interviews

1. Tell me what is it like to be a teacher in a special program for teen mothers? Please provide me with examples of your daily activities.
2. Describe your workday. (Participants will be requested to show other settings in the school where different activities take place).
3. One of the goals of the LEAP program is preparing them to be economically self sufficient. How do you help students to plan their future pathways and meet those goals?
4. What curriculum do the students follow in this program? How is the schooling organized (in terms of semesters?) How many credits can the girls obtain in one year?
5. How do most students fare on an average in keeping up with the schoolwork load? What help or support is provided to students who have difficulty with schoolwork? (Are there any special needs students, how are their needs met?)
6. Very often, one finds students getting frustrated with their schoolwork or the program itself and may look to drop out. How do you deal with situations/events like that and what are the most common reasons why students are not successful and want to drop out of the program?
7. How many students graduate from this program and how many drop out? What steps/measures are taken to encourage students to stay in school?
8. Social service agencies also provide support to these students. Do you work with caseworkers or do they function independently? If you do interact, what kinds of interaction take place?
9. Are extra curricular activities like sports, music or drama offered in the program?

or are there any outings or field trips planned?

10. Over the past few years since you have been here, what have been the main career choices of these young women in the program?
11. Are there any school-to-work transitions programs that they can access to prepare them for the world of work? If so, can you explain how these are used with the students?
12. How do the teen/young mothers cope with the multiple demands of schooling and mothering? Could you provide some examples?
13. Teen mothers often encounter negative stereotypes in their daily life. How do they deal with the negative attitudes and stereotypes they encounter and how do they respond?
14. What specific aspects of the program do you think are really beneficial for the teen/young mothers? What specific aspects of the program would you like to see improved? How in your view can these improvements be made?

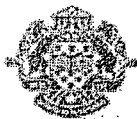
Interview guide for interviews with administrators and other service providers*

(*questions for other service providers will be based on this guide
but adapted to the specific provider)

1. Every principal has a vision for the programs in his/her school. What is your vision for this school based program for teen mothers (explore what she/he thinks are the goals, future plans, successes of the program)
2. Conflicts and discipline issues are common in high school. What are the common discipline issues that you deal with on a day-today basis when dealing with teen/young mothers?
3. Are there any special facilities provided to accommodate for the physical changes through the pregnancy of the teen/young mothers?
4. Is the community involved with the school and if so how are they involved?
5. Social service staff work to support the teen mothers too; does the school have to make provisions to facilitate this involvement? What are the challenges involved in collaborating with these other service providers, for example:
 - a. space, privacy, time, poor communication network,
 - b. tension between academic and social needs, different views on child/family protection,
 - c. clash of leadership styles, lack of leadership,
 - d. school culture that treats other service providers as outsiders,
 - e. bureaucratic tensions, unresponsive of bureaucratic structures and processes,
 - f. lack of professional knowledge outside one's area of expertise, different interpretations of client needs,
 - g. poor timing of specific interventions; difficulty in customizing interventions to individual students
6. Do you think that societal attitudes have changed with regarded to the issue of teen pregnancy? Describe these changes in terms of the schooling provided for the teen/young mothers?

7. What specific aspects of the program do you think are beneficial for the teen mothers? What specific aspects of the program do you think should be changed?
8. How do they deal with the negative attitudes and stereotypes they encounter as teen/young mothers? What kind of assistance is available for them to deal with the stress/ depression that come with being a young parent?
9. How do the teen/young mothers cope with the multiple demands of schooling and mothering? Provide any specific examples.
10. Are there any "school-to-work transition" programs that they can access to prepare them for the world of work? Describe any initiatives of the school to facilitate this transition
11. Different facets of the LEAP program cause many people to be involved in the life of the teen/young mother. (caseworker, social worker, health care staff).How are all these services coordinated to best help this population? (probe same issues as noted in item 5, framed as facilitating factors)

APPENDIX B: University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board Certificate



Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has examined the application for ethical approval for the research project **An Examination of the Provision of Schooling within the Context of High School Programs for Teen / Young Mothers (File 08-03-10)** submitted by Janice Ahola-Sidaway (PI) and Sandra Fonseca (doctoral student) of the Faculty of Education. Other investigators include Linda Davies (PI) and Julia Krane (CI) of McGill University and Margaret McKinnon (CI) of the University of Regina. The members of the REB found that the research project met appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and in the Procedures of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, and accordingly gave the research project a Category Ia (Approval).

This certification is valid for one year from the date indicated below.

Catherine Paquet
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For the Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB
Richard Clément

April 20, 2005

Date

APPENDIX C: School Board Research Advisory Committee Ethics

[Letterhead of School Board]

May 12, 2005

Sandra Fonseca

Re: An examination of the provision of schooling within the context of high school programs for teen/young mothers

Dear Ms. Fonseca,

On behalf of the [REDACTED] Research Advisory Committee, I would like to inform you that your request to conduct your research entitled "*An examination of the provision of schooling within the context of high school programs for teen/young mothers*" was approved at our meeting May 10th, 2005 for implementation in the [REDACTED] School Board. [REDACTED] The committee has decided that your revised proposal addressed the previous concerns that were raised.

Before you proceed with any aspect of this study, you must contact [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] The principals of the schools in which you have requested to conduct your research must be in agreement. [REDACTED] will facilitate this process.

Thank you for approaching the [REDACTED] area school boards as a venue for your research.

APPENDIX D: Interview Recruitment Letter for Staff



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

Faculté d'éducation Faculty of Education

INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR STAFF

Sandra Fonseca (Ph.D Candidate)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone:
Email: _____

Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway (Thesis Supervisor)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone: (613) 562-5800, ext 4079
Email: asidaway@uottawa.ca

My name is Sandra Fonseca and I am a doctoral student in Education at the University of Ottawa. I am inviting you to participate in my PhD research on the schooling of teen/young mothers. The purpose of this study is to understand issues related to the schooling of teen/young mothers from the point of view and experiences of those "closest to the action" so to speak, that is the teen/young mothers themselves and the professional staff who interact with teen/young mothers on a regular basis. The study will provide valuable information on specific points that are particularly helpful in supporting teen/young mothers in the completion of their high school education.

I would like to interview you about your perspectives and experiences as a member of the professional staff who is involved with a program aimed at helping young mothers continue with their high school education. I anticipate that the interview would take approximately one hour.

I hope you will agree to take part in this research, as your contribution is important. Your views and experiences will be useful in developing future schooling programs for teen/young mothers both in Canada and in other parts of the world.

If you are interested in participating or require more information, please indicate this on the enclosed form with attached addressed envelope and return it to me by dropping it off in the main office, or approach me directly, or send me an email at

This research is part of a larger project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, that explores the experiences of both staff and students in different organizations which serve young mothers. For your information, below is contact information for the other team members in the larger project.

Research Team Members participating in the larger project in addition to myself and Dr. Ahola-Sidaway:

Dr. Linda Davies
(Principal Investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7064
Email: linda.davies@mcgill.ca

Dr. Julia Krane (Co-investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7063
Email: julia.krane@mcgill.ca

Dr. Margaret McKinnon
(Co-investigator)
Faculty of Education, Univ. of Regina
Phone: 306-585-4501
Email: margaret.mckinnon@uregina.ca

Dear Sandra,

I have read your letter asking me to consider being interviewed as part of your study. I would be pleased to talk with you further about this possibility.

Please feel free to approach me about this issue.

Name

Signature

APPENDIX E: Interview Recruitment Letter for Students



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

Faculté d'éducation Faculty of Education

INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR STUDENTS

Sandra Fonseca (Ph.D Candidate)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone:
Email: s_____

Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway (Thesis Supervisor)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone: (613) 562-5800, ext 4079
Email: asidaway@uottawa.ca

My name is Sandra Fonseca and I am a doctoral student in Education at the University of Ottawa. I am inviting you to participate in my PhD research on the schooling of teen/young mothers. The purpose of this study is to understand issues related to the schooling of teen/young mothers from the point of view and experiences of those "closest to the action" so to speak, that is the teen/young mothers themselves and the professional staff who interact with teen/young mothers on a regular basis. The study will provide valuable information on specific points that are particularly helpful in supporting the teen/young mothers in the completion of their high school education.

I would like to interview you about your experiences as a young mother who is participating in a program aimed at helping young mothers continue with their high school education. I am particularly interested in hearing from young mothers about what it is like to be in their shoes. I anticipate that the interview would take approximately one hour.

I hope you will agree to take part in this research, as your contribution is important. Your views and experiences will be useful in developing future schooling programs for teen/young mothers both in Canada and in other parts of the world.

If you are interested in participating or require more information, please indicate this on the enclosed form with attached addressed envelope and return it to me by dropping it off in the main office, or approach me directly, or send me an email at

This research is part of a larger project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, that explores the experiences of both staff and students in different organizations which serve young mothers. For your information, below is contact information for the other team members in the larger project.

Research Team Members participating in the larger project in addition to myself and Dr. Ahola-Sidaway:

Dr. Linda Davies
(Principal Investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7064
Email: linda.davies@mcgill.ca

Dr. Julia Krane (Co-investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7063
Email: julia.krane@mcgill.ca

Dr. Margaret McKinnon
(Co-investigator)
Faculty of Education, Univ. of Regina
Phone: 306-585-4501
Email: margaret.mckinnon@uregina.ca

Dear Sandra,

I have read your letter asking me to consider being interviewed as part of your study. I would be pleased to talk with you further about this possibility.

Please feel free to approach me about this issue.

Name

Signature

APPENDIX F: Consent Form for Staff



Université d'Ottawa · University of Ottawa

Faculté d'éducation Faculty of Education

RESEARCH STUDY EXPLORING THE PROVISION OF SCHOOLING FOR TEEN/YOUNG MOTHERS

Consent letter for Professional Staff

Sandra Fonseca (PhD Candidate)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone:
Email: s

Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway (Thesis supervisor)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone: 613-562-5800, ext. 4079
Email: asidaway@uottawa.ca

I am doing interviews with staff at this school. This is part of a larger project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, that explores the experiences of both staff and students in different organizations which serve young mothers. We believe that the findings of this research have the potential to improve services for young mothers living in Canada and other parts of the world. The purpose of this aspect of the project is to explore the perspectives and experiences of teen/young mothers and professional staff on issues that impact the schooling of teen/young mothers. This research study has been approved by the [REDACTED] Research Advisory Committee and by the principal of the school. I will be asking you about your own perspective and experiences as a professional staff member who works with teen/young mothers.

If you are interested in talking to me about your views and experiences, I will arrange an interview that will take about one hour. This interview will be arranged at your convenience and at a time that minimizes disruption of your daily routines and responsibilities. I promise to protect your privacy. Your real name will never be used, and every effort will be made to be sure that no identifying details are made available to anyone inside or outside the school. The study is for research purposes only.

In order to ensure accuracy, I will be audio taping your interview. When the research is complete, the tape will be erased. Only the members of the research team will have access to the tape-recorded material. All audiotapes and hard copies of interviews will be kept in locked cabinets at the university and at the home office of the researcher; and computer files will be kept on hard drives of team members' private computers.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and with no adverse consequences. While we are talking, if you do not want to answer any particular question, you may refuse. You have the right to stop the interview at any point, if you wish, without any penalty. Also, if you feel you need any counseling support you may contact the University of Ottawa's Centre for Psychological Services at (613) 562-5289.

Any information about your rights as a research participant may be addressed to Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 160, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you may keep.

If you have any questions about the conduct of the research project, you may contact me, Sandra Fonseca, any time at 562-5800, ext 4079. or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway at (613)

Research Team Members participating in the larger project

Dr. Linda Davies
(Principal Investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7064
Email: linda.davies@mcgill.ca

Dr. Julia Krane Co-investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7063
Email: julia.krane@mcgill.ca

Dr. Margaret McKinnon
(Co-investigator)
Faculty of Education, Univ. of Regina
Phone: 306-585-4501
Email: margaret.mckinnon@uregina.ca

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989.

I understand this consent form and agree to be interviewed.

Participant's Name (please print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Name (please print)

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX G: Consent Forms for Students under 18yrs & 18yrs or Older



Université d'Ottawa - University of Ottawa

Faculté d'éducation Faculty of Education

RESEARCH STUDY EXPLORING THE PROVISION OF SCHOOLING FOR TEEN/YOUNG MOTHERS

Consent letter for Participant Under 18 Years Old

Sandra Fonseca (PhD Candidate)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone:
Email: :

Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway (Thesis supervisor)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone: 613-562-5800, ext. 4079
Email: asidaway@uottawa.ca

I am doing interviews with students at this school. This is part of a larger project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, that explores the experiences of both staff and students in different organizations which serve young mothers. We believe that the findings of this research have the potential to improve services for young mothers living in Canada and other parts of the world. The purpose of this aspect of the project is to explore the perspectives and experiences of teen/young mothers and professional staff on issues that impact the schooling of teen/young mothers. This research study has been approved by the [REDACTED] Research Advisory Committee and by the principal of the school. I will be asking you about your own perspective and experiences as a teen/young mother.

If you are interested in talking to me about your views and experiences, I will arrange an interview that will take about one hour. This interview will be arranged at your convenience and at a time that minimizes disruption of your daily routines and responsibilities. I promise to protect your privacy. Your real name will never be used, and every effort will be made to be sure that no identifying details are made available to anyone inside or outside the school. The study is for research purposes only, and no results whatsoever will be placed in any school records. Students under 18 years old may only participate with written permission from their parent or legal guardian/representative.

In order to ensure accuracy, I will be audio taping your interview. When the research is complete, the tape will be erased. Only the members of the research team will have access to the tape-recorded material. All audiotapes and hard copies of interviews will be kept in locked cabinets at the university and at the home office of the researcher; and computer files will be kept on hard drives of team members' private computers.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and with no adverse consequences. While we are talking, if you do not want to answer any particular question, you may refuse. You have the right to stop the interview at any point, if you wish, without any penalty. You will receive \$15 to help compensate you for your interview time given to this research. Also, if you feel you need any counseling support you may contact the University of Ottawa's Centre for Psychological Services at (613) 562-5289.

Any information about your rights as a research participant may be addressed to Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 160, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you may keep.

If you have any questions about the conduct of the research project, you may contact me, Sandra Fonseca, any time at _____ or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway at (613) 562-5800, ext 4079.

Research Team Members participating in the larger project

Dr. Linda Davies
(Principal Investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7064
Email: linda.davies@mcgill.ca

Dr. Julia Krane Co-investigator
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7063
Email: julia.krane@mcgill.ca

(Co-investigator)
Faculty of Education, Univ. of Regina
Phone: 306-585-4501
Email:
margaret.mckinnon@uregina.ca

Dr. Margaret McKinnon

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANT UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989.

I understand this consent form and agree to be interviewed.

Participant's Name (please print) Participant's Signature Date

As the parent or legal guardian/representative for (name of participant) _____

I understand this consent form, have discussed it with her. and give my permission for her to be interviewed.

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian/Representative (please print) Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian/Representative Date

Researcher's Name (please print) Researcher's Signature Date



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

Faculté d'éducation Faculty of Education

RESEARCH STUDY EXPLORING THE PROVISION OF SCHOOLING FOR TEEN/YOUNG MOTHERS

Consent letter for Participant 18 Years of Age or Older

Sandra Fonseca (PhD Candidate)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone:
Email: :

Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway (Thesis supervisor)
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
Phone: 613-562-5800, ext. 4079
Email: asidaway@uottawa.ca

I am doing interviews with students at this school. This is part of a larger project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, that explores the experiences of both staff and students in different organizations which serve young mothers. We believe that the findings of this research have the potential to improve services for young mothers living in Canada and other parts of the world. The purpose of this aspect of the project is to explore the perspectives and experiences of teen/young mothers and professional staff on issues that impact the schooling of teen/young mothers. This research study has been approved by the [REDACTED] Research Advisory Committee and by the principal of the school. I will be asking you about your own perspective and experiences as a teen/young mother.

If you are interested in talking to me about your views and experiences, I will arrange an interview that will take about one hour. This interview will be arranged at your convenience and at a time that minimizes disruption of your daily routines and responsibilities. I promise to protect your privacy. Your real name will never be used, and every effort will be made to be sure that no identifying details are made available to anyone inside or outside the school. The study is for research purposes only and no results whatsoever will be placed in any school records.

In order to ensure accuracy, I will be audio taping your interview. When the research is complete, the tape will be erased. Only the members of the research team will have access to the tape-recorded material. All audiotapes and hard copies of interviews will be kept in locked cabinets at the university and at the home office of the researcher; and computer files will be kept on hard drives of team members' private computers.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and with no adverse consequences. While we are talking, if you do not want to answer any particular question, you may refuse. You have the right to stop the interview at any point, if you

wish, without any penalty. You will receive \$15 to help compensate you for your interview time given to this research. Also, if you feel you need any counseling support you may contact the University of Ottawa's Centre for Psychological Services at (613) 562-5289.

Any information about your rights as a research participant may be addressed to Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 160, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you may keep.

If you have any questions about the conduct of the research project, you may contact me, Sandra Fonseca, any time at _____ or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway at (613) 562-5800, ext 4079.

Research Team Members participating in the larger project

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(Principal Investigator)
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Dr. Julia Krane (Co-investigator)
School of Social Work, McGill
Phone: 514-398-7063
Email: julia.krane@mcgill.ca

(Co-investigator)
Faculty of Education, Univ. of Regina
Phone: 306-585-4501
Email:
margaret.mckinnon@uregina.ca

Dr. Margaret McKinnon

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANT 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER

The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989.

I understand this consent form and agree to be interviewed.

Participant's Name (please print)

Participant's Signature

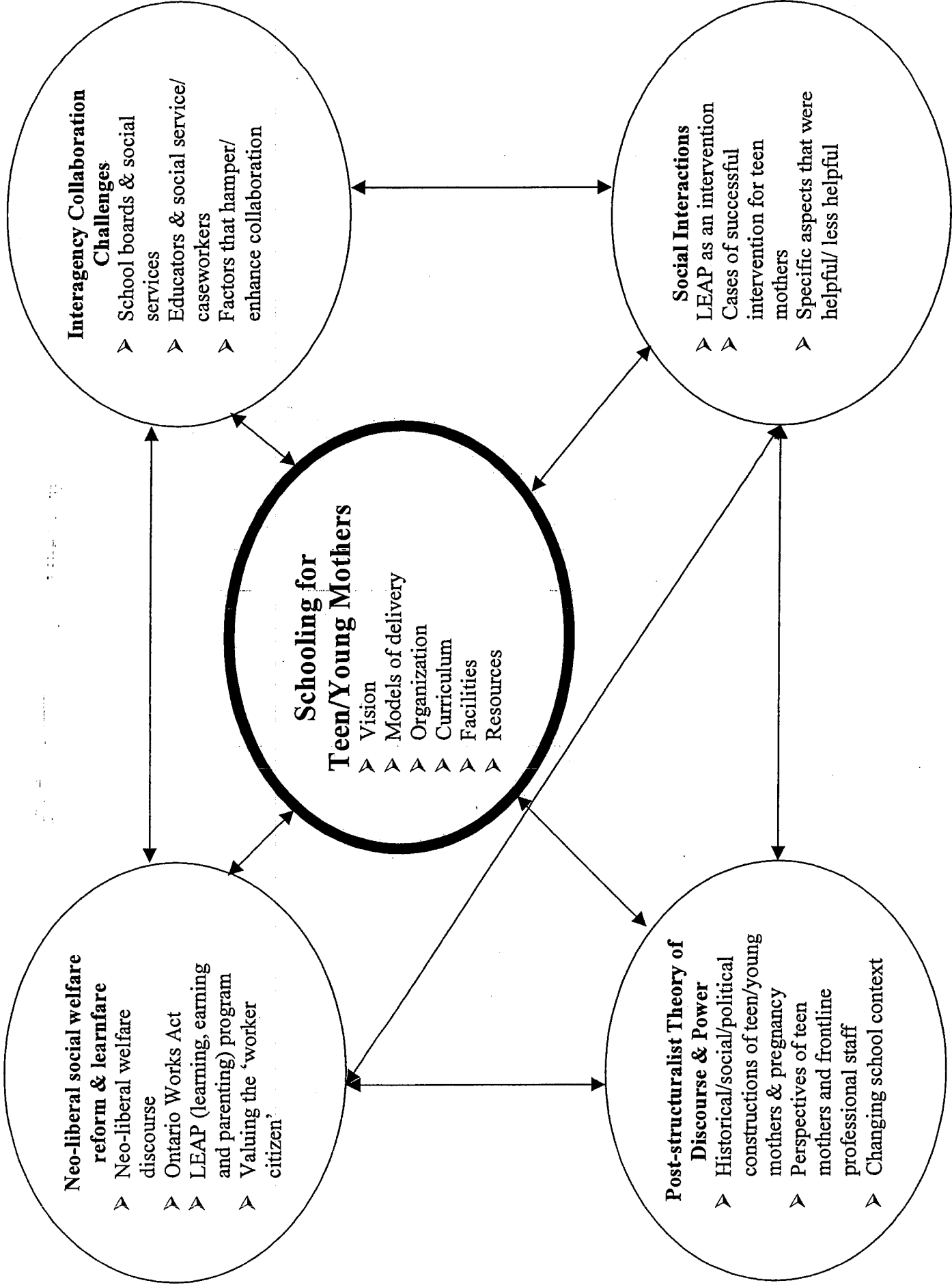
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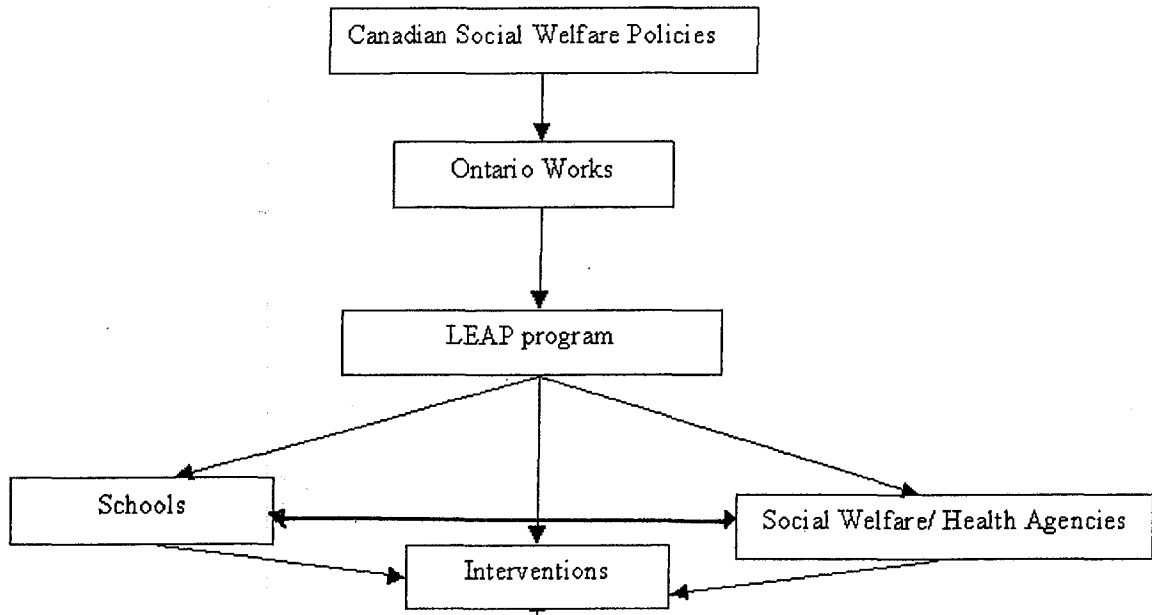
Researcher's Name (please print)

Researcher's Signature

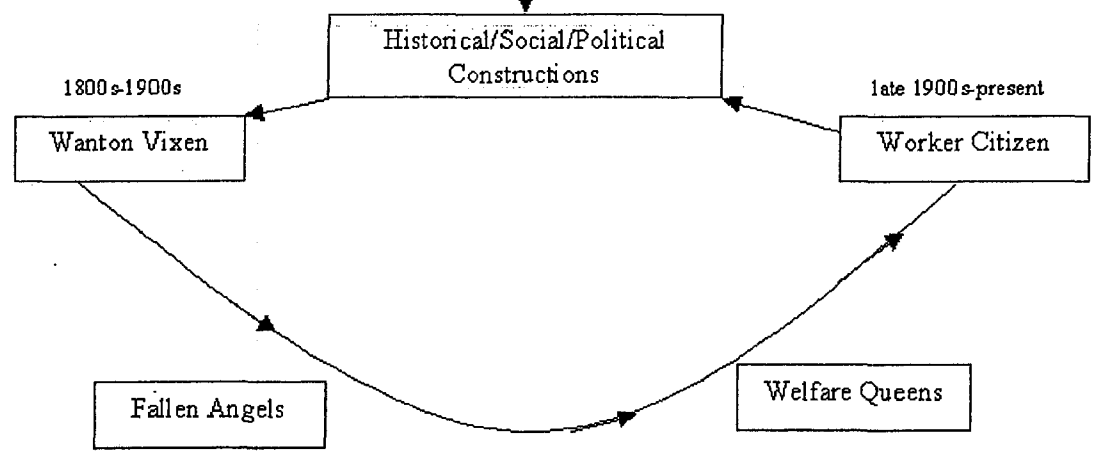
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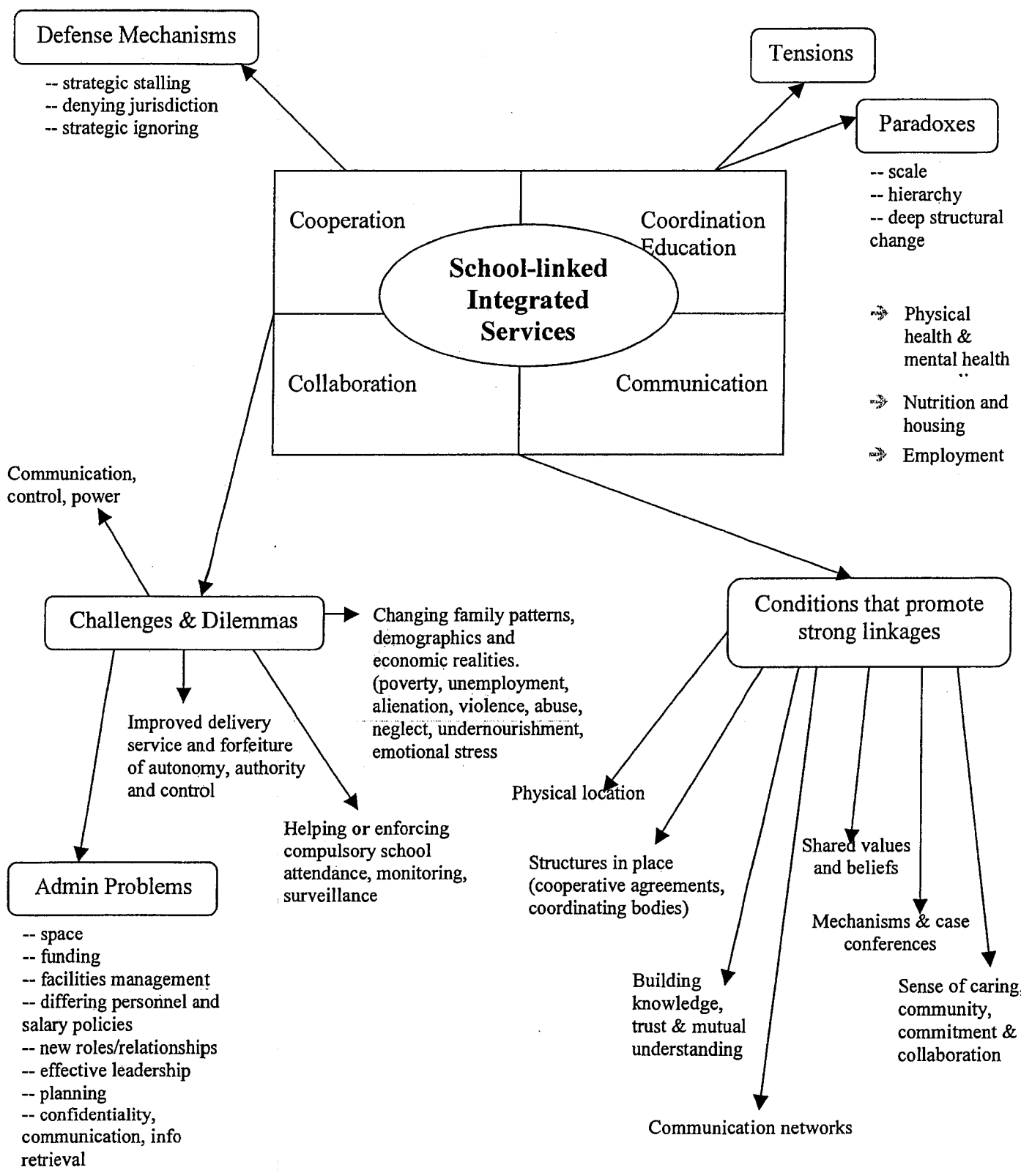
APPENDIX H: Concept maps





The Schooling of Teen Mothers





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