

CHOOSING A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL FORMAT FOR THE
AT-RISK PREGNANT TEENAGER: IN-HOUSE PREGNANCY
PROGRAM OR IN-HOUSE PREGNANCY PROGRAM
SUPPLEMENTED WITH A VOCATIONAL-
TECHNICAL CLASS

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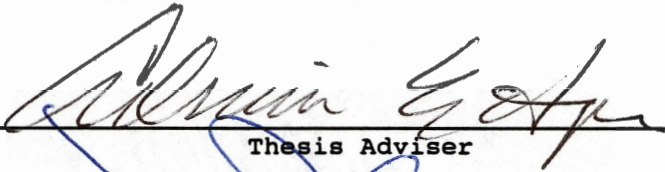
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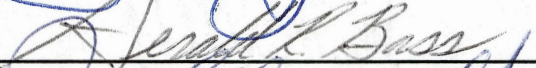
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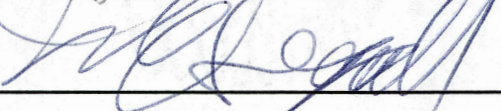
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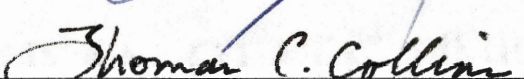


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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Here I stand at long last: at the end of the tunnel! That tiny speck of light that has dwelled at the far end of the tunnel is to be realized by this student. My vision was made keen by the coloring lent to my glasses by many special people.

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Speaking of blood, sweat, and tears . . . my gratitude extends to my colleagues and close friends, Joe Harris and Mary Redding. Their unfailing support on a daily basis proved to be invaluable in finding my way through the tunnel. The warm tinting added to my lens by these special people can never be repaid nor replaced. Others at Tulsa Vo-Tech lent their support for which I am thankful: Sharon Schaub, John Hunter, and Mark Nix, to name a few.

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Five years ago, the speck at the end of the tunnel leading to the doctoral degree seemed fraught with impossible odds. If a person is judged by the quality of their friendships, I am truly the most blessed person on earth. The support and love given to me by my husband, Robert, can never be repaid. Special thanks to him for standing by me and wiping the lenses of my glasses when traveling through the darker parts of the tunnel.

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CHAPTER I

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Poverty breeds its own alienation. The challenges to merely survive take precedence over childrearing, nurturing, and educational roles. The stress creates not only external havoc that manifests itself in problems of alcoholism, drug dependence, and other adult dysfunctions but also internal problems are experienced by the parents and then by the children. The cycle is started and, if history repeats itself, it is experienced by subsequent generations. If to that we add alienation in the school system by way of curriculum, school policies, and other repressive school practices, the confusion becomes overbearing and dropping out of school eliminates at least one avenue in the teens' life fraught with other unsatisfactory happenstances (Mokler, 1986, p. 67).

This opening paragraph of a research article about Navajo Indians and their high school dropout rate, illustrates how the cycle of poverty, once it begins its spiral, is difficult to stop. According to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (cited in Mokler, 1985), one out of every four students drops out of school before graduation. The reasons students drop out of high school are many and include: poor grades, retention in a previous grade, low scores on reading achievement tests, non-participation in extracurricular activities, poor rapport with teachers, parents who do not support the student staying in school, and parents who have not completed high school themselves (Massey & Crosby, 1982; Curtis, 1983; Self, 1985). But, one of the major reasons for young girls leaving high school is pregnancy (Jackson, 1987).

Hodgkinson (1985) states that every day 40 teenage girls give birth to their third child. The children of these girls are highly susceptible to being born premature, thus increasing the likelihood of being faced with learning disabilities once they are in school. This converts to about 700,000 babies of the almost 3.3 million births a year that are greatly assured of being either educationally retarded or "difficult to teach" (Jackson, 1987).

The teenage mother is not the only individual directly affected by her dropping out of school. Most pregnant teens choose to have their baby and opt to keep their child following birth rather than pursue an alternative, such as adoption. Because the child does stay with the teenage mother, the child must also face the consequences of any action taken in regards to remaining in school or dropping out. Young mothers are at-risk, and, by virtue of their age and inability to financially support their children, make their offspring at-risk as well.

Half of these mothers never complete high school. This makes them unable to adequately participate in the labor market. Those who may be able to work are faced with low wages and have limited resources for quality care of their children. Many resort to welfare. It is estimated that teenage pregnancies cost the American taxpayers over 16 million dollars a year in welfare costs alone (Wetzel, 1987).

Following her pregnancy, the teen may overcome great odds and manage to obtain a job and become self-supporting. However, the average difference in lifetime earnings between high school dropouts

and high school graduates is \$215,000 (Jackson, 1987). Lost income to the dropout pregnant teen is not the only problem she or society, as a whole, faces. Because these teens make less in taxable income, the government's agencies are able to collect less in taxes. Multiplied over the years, it is estimated that the states will be collecting \$71 billion less in taxes per year due to the reduced incomes made by these teens. Twenty percent of our nation's teenagers are living in poverty and another 28% are living in near poor families. The teen parent, with her lessened ability to obtain a self-supporting job, adds to these dismal statistics (Jackson, 1987).

Over the course of a dropout teens' lifetime, projected losses in tax revenue average \$58,930 per dropout. The estimated cost of keeping each of these students in school was \$3,859 per year. In addition, states would have realized a savings of \$652 million in social expenditures related to crime, welfare, incarceration, and unemployment costs. This lends further credence to the fact that every dollar invested in educating potential dropouts will result in a much greater return on the investment. This investment in human capital should yield substantial short- and long-term results visible in taxable incomes for today as well as in the future (Robeldo, 1986).

Statement of the Problem

For the pregnant at-risk teen, the typical and traditional strategy designed to ensure her successful completion of high school

is the in-house "academic" formatted program. This program affords the teen the opportunity to complete her academic program in conjunction with parenting and childcare instruction. Nationally, most school districts rely on this method of instructional delivery for pregnant teens.

In Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, an innovative alternative program is providing at-risk pregnant teens an option to the traditional "academic" school day, a vocational\technical program of study. Students attend the traditional program designed for pregnant teenagers for half of the school day and a vocational\technical school for the remaining half.

The choice of programs is up the student, but which one should she choose? In addition to ensuring her completion of high school, which program can help her become a self-supporting parent and keep her off the welfare rolls? Also, given the additional costs associated with providing an alternative supplemental vocational/technical program, does this program provide for these girls and their children in ways that the traditional academic format does not? Would they recommend that others consider this option? If so, why?

Theoretical Framework

From a theoretical perspective, research is needed which will provide possible answers to questions posed by educators dealing with the at-risk pregnant teen. For some, the most important question is: "What can the educational institution provide, by way

of programs, that will increase the chance of the pregnant teenager successfully completing high school?"

In the 1950s, Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, developed a theory about the hierarchy of human needs and motives (Rubinstein, 1975). This hierarchy is comprised of five levels of needs:

1. Physiological needs: needs for survival, hunger, thirst, air.
2. Safety needs: needs to feel secure and safe, out of danger.
3. Love needs: needs for affiliation, acceptance and belongingness.
4. Esteem needs: needs for achievement, approval, competence, recognition.
5. Self-actualization needs: needs for self-fulfillment and realization of one's own individual potentialities.

Those needs that are lower in the hierarchy must be fulfilled before higher needs become dominant as motivators. In any environment the lower needs will tend to dominate behavior and be the focus of a person's life. As the lower needs are met, the higher-order needs of the hierarchy become goals and motivators of behavior and modifiers of individual values.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs seems a simplistic theoretical stance for researchers of the at-risk pregnant teenager to assume. However, it is abundantly clear to those dealing with these students that the first level of needs, the physical needs of the mother and

her child, must be met before higher needs can be addressed. A mother who is hungry and has no financial means of supporting her child will not worry about her love, esteem and self-actualization needs or those of that child until they have been fed.

Hopefully, this research in the area of the at-risk pregnant teenager will clarify the best educational format for her to take. The reality of the most successful format for insuring successful completion of high school lies in the perception of those actually accomplishing this task. Analyzing the perceptions of the pregnant teenager who has achieved graduation should offer future at-risk pregnant teenagers a possible blueprint to the most successful route to high school graduation. It is imperative that these teenagers achieve the minimum of a high school graduation in order to secure that first step into the work force. High school graduation does not guarantee the graduate an independent, self-supporting avenue. However, graduation from high school is one of the necessary steps to being granted a "foot in the door" in a constantly changing high-tech work force. That entry will allow the teenager the opportunity to develop into an independent, self-supporting member of society which is one of the ultimate goals of education.

Margaret Hudson Project

The at-risk student and that student's characteristics have been fundamental in determining the focus of this study. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has arrived at the following definition for the at-risk student:

At-risk children and youth are individuals whose present or predictable status (economic, social-cultural, academic, and/ or health) indicates that they might fail to successfully complete their secondary education and acquire basic life skills necessary for higher education and/or employment. More specifically, children and youth may be deemed at-risk if:

- A. They are a member of a household or family whose income is at or below the poverty level under criteria used by the U.S. Bureau of Census; or
- B. They have not made substantial progress in mastering basic skills that are appropriate for students of their age; or
- C. They have grades that consistently indicate major underachievement; or
- D. They have been retained in a grade for one or more years; or
- E. They have been a school dropout or have had excessive absences during a school year; or
- F. They have been determined to be at-risk based on assessment by school staff familiar with the students' health, social, or family status as these influences may be impairing the students' success in school. Influences may include, but are not limited to, the students' use of alcohol or drugs, pregnancy, or attempted suicide (Lamphier, 1989, p. 17).

From the broader category of "at-risk," this study will narrow its focus to the at-risk pregnant teenager. This female teenager was from 12 to 20 years old, had attended public school in the Broken Arrow School district, and was a participant in the Broken Arrow chapter of the Margaret Hudson Program.

Program Requirements History

The prerequisites for this program were that the student attend a Broken Arrow Public School, have written notification from a physician stating that she is pregnant, and voluntarily agree to

be enrolled in this program in lieu of the traditional program she was enrolled in prior to becoming pregnant. Emergency transfers to the Broken Arrow School district have been accepted from Coweta, Catoosa, Union, Jenks, Bixby, and Owasso School districts.

The Broken Arrow Margaret Hudson Program is the only satellite of Tulsa's Margaret Hudson Program. It was founded 10 years ago and is currently operating out of a church in the community. The person who started the Broken Arrow chapter is its current assistant director, JoAnn Beirig. Executive Director, Jan Figart, is at the Tulsa site. This study will focus only on the Broken Arrow site; the Tulsa site does not have the vocational/technical school segment offered as a part of their option for pregnant teenagers.

Currently there are twelve people on staff. They include:

- Four full-time in-house teachers who teach traditional subjects available in the Broken Arrow School system as well as auxiliary subjects (e.g. child care, parenting, and home economics).
- Two full-time counselors. One counselor specializes in agency referrals; this involves helping the pregnant teenager deal with agencies such as the Department of Human Services. The second counselor's background is in drug and alcohol abuse.
- One Assistant Director.
- One full-time nurse (registered) who deals with the health of the teenager as well as birth control counseling.

-Three full-time care givers who take care of the teenager's child once born.

-One full-time secretary.

For the purpose of this study, "MHP" will be used to indicate the Broken Arrow Margaret Hudson Program.

Curriculum. The traditional in-house MHP format is provided by a qualified teacher and consists of classes necessary to satisfy the criteria for completion of high school in the State of Oklahoma. Electives are utilized at this site just as electives are a part of the curriculum for the Broken Arrow School district, but they are different offerings. Electives offered at MHP include, but are not limited to, classes such as Child Care, Parenting, and Home Economics.

The vocational-technical MHP format consists of classes at that site for half a day and at Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School for the other half of the day. Two tracks are being used by the student who chooses to attend the vocational-technical school. The traditional track has the student taking traditional classes at Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School such as: Business and Office, Microprocessing, Child Care, Accounting, or Medical Secretary Transcriptionist.

The other track, the non-traditional track, has the student taking a different set of classes at Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School such as: Electronics, Electricity, Machine Shop, Welding, Major Appliance Technology, Auto Body Repair, or Automotive Technology.

A Program Guide Information booklet which provides greater detail of the programs available at the Tulsa County Area Vocational-Technical School is included in Appendix A.

Objectives of the Study

Given the problem, the theoretical frame, and the MHP, the objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the students' perception of the factors affecting their successful completion of high school.
 - Compare these perceptions:
 - across students completing the traditional in-house program;
 - across students completing the in-house supplemental in-house program; and
 - between students in both programs.
 - Compare these perceptions against the needs described in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:
 - across students completing the traditional in-house program;
 - across students completing the in-house supplemental program; and
 - between students in both programs.
2. Generate advice for practice, specifically in the area of programming, based upon students' perception of their own success.

Procedures

Data Needs

Student demographics, high school completion rates via in-house pregnancy program and in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class, and perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of each educational format of the at-risk pregnant teenagers attending the Broken Arrow MHP were the data needs.

Population

The population that will be studied is all those enrolled in the Broken Arrow Margaret Hudson Program for Unwed Mothers during the 1988-89, 1989-90, and 1990-91 academic school years. The Broken Arrow site was chosen because it involved the two populations focused on in this study: pregnant teenagers attending a traditional in-house program and those supplementing their school day with a vocational-technical program.

Sampling. The in-house pregnancy program identified 102 girls who were eligible for graduation from high school during the study and seven who were eligible from the in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class. Of these 102 teenagers, 74 attended the in-house program and graduated while all seven of those enrolled in a vocational-technical class completed high school. Seven randomly selected girls from the population completing high school via the traditional in-house pregnancy program constituted one sample. The other sample was the population

of all seven girls who completed high school after finishing an in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class. These numbers made the selection from 10% of the original population and 100% from the remaining population completing high school.

Research Methods

To address the questions posed in this study, two methodologies were used: (1) a descriptive statistical review of the girls' records to determine characteristics and percentage of those who graduate using an in-house traditional or non-traditional vocational-technical approach, and (2) an interview protocol. The interview questions used are included in Appendix B.

Due to the Privacy Act of 1974, a staff member of the MHP did all the data collection involving the students. From this search, she:

1. collected specific demographic data on each student.

Specific identifying traits of the girls are enumerated in Appendix C.

2. obtained the number of students attending the MHP and the MHP with a vocational-technical class during the years 1988-91. From these numbers, she arrived at a percentage from each population who had graduated from high school. The rationale behind collecting data from 1988 on was the fact that child care facilities were not available to the students prior to that date. Data collected prior to that time would have constituted a different treatment than

those attending after child care was offered.

The second method was an interview. A list of core questions were developed to determine why the participants perceived their educational format (i.e. vocational or traditional in-house) to have been successful or not.

Data Analysis

The use of a research design that allows for flexibility in analysis is essential to qualitative research. Induction served this purpose best. Unlike deduction, which moves from general information to specific information, induction moves from specifics to generalizations. Induction "goes beyond the bounds of particulars, making assertions that presumably apply not only to its generating particulars but to all other similar particulars" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 113). The data was grouped according to like, shared characteristics that emerged.

Significance of the Study

Discovery of reasons for successful completion of high school will benefit research, theory, practice, and the training of educators.

Researchers will benefit because they will be provided with an answer to the question what educational format promotes the highest rate of pregnant teenagers completing high school: those who use solely the in-house pregnancy program or the in-house pregnancy program supplemented with vocational technical classes? After

conclusions have been drawn regarding these two educational formats, researchers can conduct further research utilizing different educational formats. Focus of the study will be on why a given format was successful in promoting completion of high school.

Theorists will benefit by the addition of evidence about the pregnant teenagers' perception of why a given educational format was a help or a hindrance to the completion of high school. Additionally, the realities of practice can help theorists in analysis and theory building. This will be accomplished by observing the patterns of responses that students say caused them to be more successful in their completion of high school.

Practitioners will benefit from the ability to be able to choose a format that will more likely insure successful completion of high school for pregnant teenagers, listen to what these teenagers have to say about their own perceptions of why a given educational format was helpful, and add to their understanding of successful formats.

Educator training programs will benefit from the change in emphasis from enrolling pregnant teenagers in any program to enrolling in a program that will promote successful completion of high school. Likewise, a benefit of understanding the importance of the pregnant teenagers' perception of the more successful format will emerge.

Reporting

This chapter has introduced the study, its importance and methods to be use.

Chapter Two will present the current literature in the area of at-risk students generally and pregnant teenagers specifically.

Chapter Three will present the data concerning pregnant teenagers attending the Broken Arrow Margaret Hudson Program with respect to the education format that has the highest success rate of completion of high school. It will also report the teenagers' perceptions of why a particular format was more successful.

Chapter Four will present the analysis of these data. Chapter Five will offer a summary, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

In testimony before the Human Resource Development Committee of the 1986 Commission on the Future of the South, Sharon Lovick, Director of the Support Center for School Based Clinics in Houston, noted the following:

The effectiveness of any effort to prevent teen pregnancy must be directed at improving or enhancing the quality of life of all young children, both younger and older adolescents, and particularly those now living in poverty. The so-called problem of teenage pregnancy in the United States is but one symptom of how we adults treat our children. Other symptoms include drug and alcohol abuse, school dropouts, school failure and delinquency (Levy, 1987, p. 14).

The at-risk student has been the focus of research for several years as educators, parents, and politicians have become increasingly aware of the societal problems associated with this population. A much neglected segment of the at-risk population, the pregnant teenager, warrants additional consideration. Little research has been conducted in this area, yet pregnancy is a viable predictor for a student becoming a dropout.

In reviewing the literature there are three areas pertinent to the at-risk pregnant teenager: characteristics of the at-risk student (gender differences and ethnic differences), characteristics exclusive to the pregnant at-risk teenager, and programs that have

proven to be successful in reducing the number of dropouts from the at-risk population.

Characteristics of the At-risk Teenager

The largest area of the literature deals with the characteristics of the at-risk student. This area is important because it encompasses the more narrow aspect of the focus of this dissertation: the pregnant teenager.

Many researchers agree on some universal characteristics of the student who is at-risk of dropping out of school (Beecham, 1980; Durken, 1981; Martin, 1981; Rumberger, 1981; Curtis, 1983; Self, 1985). Typically the dropout is 16 years of age, probably due to the law requiring that students attend school until the age of 16. The earliest age at which the predictability of at-risk teenagers occurs is in the third grade (Self, 1985). In the third grade, a student is about 10 to 12 years old. Even at this early age, it is possible to predict those students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. The earlier the identification takes place for the at-risk student, the sooner preventive measures can be employed.

In the 10th grade, 25-40% of students quit school. The research presents conflicting findings, however (Beecham, 1980; Durken, 1981; Self, 1985). Several grade levels were reported as the grade at which the majority of teenagers were likely to quit school. The tenth and eleventh grade were the grades most frequently reported as being associated with dropouts (Self, 1985).

In Beecham's (1981) study of public high school students enrolled in Leon county in Florida, 68.1% of the dropouts occurred in the ninth or tenth grade.

Grade retention and school achievement appear to be directly related to dropping out. Most high school graduates made B's while dropouts made C's and D's (Castle, 1988). Over half of the dropouts were held back a grade at least once in elementary or junior high school (Martin, 1981). In other studies, as many as 70% of the dropouts had been retained at least once and 40% twice or more (Schreiber, 1979). From this information, it is easy to establish that academic failure and retention are good predictors of at-risk students. Many education researchers are now questioning the prudence of retaining students since grade retention is so unerringly found to be a characteristic of the dropout.

The level of reading achievement is significantly lower for the dropout. When looking at the reading level of the at-risk student, it is generally below the grade level. This student could be anywhere from a few to several years behind in reading (Lay & Wakstein, 1984).

Another characteristic of the dropout is infrequent participation in extracurricular activities. They tend to be described as "loners" by their teachers and peers (Durken, 1981). The at-risk student is rarely on a sports-related team, a cheerleading squad, or any other activity associated with a group of students.

Undesirable student behavior was found to precede dropping out of school, thus making problem behavior a characteristic found in the potential dropout (Massey & Crosby, 1982). The behavior problem carried over into the relationship these students had with their teachers. They did not get along well with teachers in their entire school careers. It is easy to see why behavior problems would frequently be reported in association with the at-risk student. The inability or unwillingness to get along with one's teacher would make a working relationship difficult.

Absenteeism is also frequently associated with the at-risk student (Massey & Crosby, 1982). Many dropouts had problems with attendance. Their absenteeism was significantly higher than that of their high school graduate counterparts. This characteristic figured into why at-risk students were likely to have lower grades, be retained more often, and have difficulty in getting along with teacher(s).

One Los Angeles study (Los Angeles School District) found that almost half of the parents of dropouts in the school district encouraged their children to drop out of school. Another 25% of the parents were indifferent towards their children dropping out of school. Ultimately, fewer than half of the parents encouraged their children to stay in school. Parents of dropouts range from those unemployed or working in unskilled or non-skilled jobs to parents employed to professional, managerial, clerical, or sales work. In one study, 536 Kentucky High School students and dropouts were studied in hopes of differentiating between dropouts and those

choosing to remain in school, "persisters" (Martin, 1981). Parents of dropouts were found to have lower educational levels and occupations status than the persisters. These parents also tended to be divorced with greater frequency than those of the persisters.

In Martin's 1981 study, fathers and mothers of dropouts ranked lower than the parents of students remaining in high school on the Duncan's Occupational Status Scale. Most of the parents never completed high school themselves (Curtis, 1983). This could lend to the higher dropout rate of the dropouts' parents. Those not graduating from high school are less likely to achieve a satisfactory job.

Other descriptors used in reference to the dropout include (Moore, 1985; Wetzel, 1987; Miller, 1988):

- reject both school and self,
- feel insecure regarding school status,
- feel less respected than other students by the teachers because of academic inadequacies,
- feel that the teacher is not interested in the dropout or the dropouts' problems,
- frequently consider self poorly treated or unesteemed by teachers and other students,
- are hostile toward other persons, and
- have not established adequate goals.

Dropouts also tend to have more siblings and families with lower incomes (Baldwin and Cain, 1980; Rumberger, 1981; Hofferth, 1984). It is not known if these factors could contribute to a

student wanting to drop out of school. No data was available pertaining to whether the dropout left home or established an independent rooming situation. Therefore, it is difficult to assess if the at-risk student quit school and left home or quit school and set up a residence independent of their parents.

Approximately 68.7% of dropouts studied in Leon County, Florida, reported that they had sisters or brothers who quit before graduating from high school (Poole, 1981). One study reported that "children from broken families, where one or both parents are absent, may be less likely to find the support and encouragement needed to keep them in school" (Robeldo, 1986, p. 36).

Ethnic Differences

Some at-risk research also focused on racial differences (Lay and Wakstein, 1984). Fourteen self-rated abilities available from the Student Descriptive Questionnaire were used to determine characteristics associated with the dropout student. The primary focus of this study was differentiating between white and black dropouts. He found that:

- (1) a larger percentage of blacks than whites show high self-esteem at the same level of academic achievement in high school, and
- (2) the level of self-esteem among blacks depends less on academic achievement in high school than does the level of self-esteem of whites.

This finding would appear to indicate that blacks substitute alternate dimensions for self assessment; rather, their self-esteem is not based on school achievement.

In yet another study, blacks and Hispanics were studied in relation to the dropout problem (Miller, 1988). This study reported an alarming 70% of the Hispanic teenagers surveyed drop out of school or graduate minus the skills required to support a family. In using figures taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys, approximately 1.8 million at-risk Hispanic youths between the ages of 16 and 24 are potential beneficiaries of special targeted services. These young people are predominantly concentrated in five states: Texas, California, Florida, New York, and Illinois. The researcher found that the schools are made responsible for in-school youth and job training establishments dealing with dropouts. The consequences of leaving school without skills necessary to acquire employment means one of three things may happen:

- (1) the dropout is likely to resort to welfare,
- (2) the dropout may engage in illegal activities to compensate for low wage earning capabilities, and
- (3) dropouts may participate in underground economy as a means of support.

Hispanic youths were less likely than blacks to reenter school, enroll in GED classes, or participate in job training programs. The Hispanic youth under the age of 20 years makes a higher income than his white or black counterparts. This is due in part to the fact

that Hispanic youths tend to work more full- or part-time jobs. However, the earnings of Hispanics between the ages of 20 to 24 are less than the white or black youths. The High School Data and Beyond data show that non-graduate women are about four times as likely to be mothers as are young women who finish high school. Data gathered indicates that 18% of all graduates are parents, 41% of all at-risk graduates are parents, and 71% of all non-graduates are parents.

Approximately one-quarter of all Hispanic female dropouts reported that they left school because of pregnancy. Of the Hispanic mothers who are at-risk graduates and dropouts, roughly a third are not married (Dean, 1985).

Gender Differences

There was one area in the review of literature that showed conflicting findings. These findings dealt with the differences noted between males and females in the at-risk category. The majority of the research (Cendese, 1979; Rumberger, 1981; Sewell, Artis, and Manni, 1981; Self, 1985) states that most dropouts are white males. However, the statistical analyses by Curtis (1983) showed that students who had low GPAs, were behind in grade for their age and had been involved in serious discipline incidents were female and non-blacks. These two groups had a higher than average probability of dropping out.

Two findings by Curtis (1983) were somewhat misleading:

(1) girls as a group had a lower dropout rate than boys,

and individual girls with certain characteristics might be more likely than a similar boy to drop out; and (2) although the scores of blacks were similar to Hispanics, blacks were less likely to drop out. Curtis went on to report that females are not retained as often as their male counterparts, have higher GPAs, and are involved in fewer discipline incidents. However, the one prevailing factor that contributed significantly to a female dropping out of school was pregnancy.

Still addressing the issue of the at-risk teenagers' characteristics, one factor noted was in relation to males' and females' self esteem. Males, with poorer organizational skills, lower verbal abilities, and lower academic achievement ranked themselves with higher self esteem than did females with similar characteristics (Inglehart, 1987). Girls, despite higher grades, higher optimism, and conforming attitudes to school values do not construct for themselves images of their own success (Poole, 1981). This could suggest a set of gender-linked dimensions of cultural or societal expectations overlaying individual attainments, motivations, and expectations. It could also illustrate how males have a different set of criteria from which to judge self worth in relation to females. Another explanation would be that society has a different set of criteria to judge males' and females' worth.

For all the speculation of males and females being different, scientists do agree that the sexes are more alike than they are different (Shapiro, 1990). McCurdy (1990) reports that the most vivid distinctions between the sexes don't surface until well into

the preschool years. For instance, if faced with a room full of two year olds, it would be difficult to distinguish the boys from the girls unless their haircut indicated the sex of the child. By the age of four or five, children start to embrace gender stereotypes.

Characteristics of the Pregnant

At-risk Teenager

The focus of this paper is the pregnant teenager. There are some common characteristics that are shared with other at-risk students; however, some characteristics seem exclusive to this group.

The majority of the literature paints a bleak picture for the pregnant teenager and her offspring. Regardless of marital status, early childbearing is highly correlated with lower educational attainment, unemployment, and poverty-level incomes. Birth rates are inversely related to educational attainment, ranging from 16 per 100 women who had not graduated from high school to three per 100 who had completed four years of college. Current rates are highest in low-income families. They are twice as high at incomes under \$10,000 compared to incomes of \$25,000 to \$29,990 of income and five times as high as those with incomes over \$35,000 (Wetzel, 1987).

In 1981, in Cook County, Illinois, a longitudinal study of mothers under 18 years old who were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was made. A total of 1,898 adolescent mothers were interviewed from the fall of 1981 to the winter of

1982. The following conclusions were made:

- (1) 20% of the mothers had graduated or gotten a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), 8% were still in school, 72% had dropped out;
- (2) 49% had a second child while another 7% were pregnant with their third child;
- (3) 10% had never been married and only 5% were currently married;
- (4) 25% had held a job since their first pregnancy and only 50% had ever held a job;
- (5) 88% were still on AFDC;
- (6) 75% said their last pregnancy was unplanned and 28% reported using birth control when they got pregnant last; and
- (7) the primary sources of support for the mothers were their families (Mosena, 1986).

AFDC is a program that provides grants of financial help and medical care to dependent children and to the families or other adults taking care of them. Many of the recipients are young unmarried mothers. This system of assistance may need to be reviewed if Mosena's findings are in any way indicative of the program as a whole. Financial support, it appears, is designed as a temporary or short-term way to allow the mother to provide the basic needs to her children. The statistics reported, however, show that AFDC is used as a long-term cure. It is not a solution;

rather, it is a problem in itself. It represents a vicious cycle of a mother receiving financial assistance and remaining on that assistance indefinitely.

Relative to the past 30 years, pregnant teenagers are less likely to get married. In 1984, 57% of teenage births were to unmarried mothers, compared to 17% in 1960 (Lay & Wakstein, 1984). This trend, coupled with the high separation and divorce rates among those who marry young, means that large numbers of young women are both single and mothers - - a combination that often cripples their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency. It becomes increasingly obvious that this specialized segment of at-risk teenagers faces a difficult time in overcoming some inherent obstacles. Not only does the mother have herself to care for with no employable skills, she also has the responsibility for a newborn child.

Giving birth to additional children can prove to be a pivotal factor in a teenage mother's ability of being able to complete high school and no longer be dependent on public assistance. In 1985, in the United States, reports based on large-scale surveys indicated that about one out of five teenage mothers--regardless of ethnicity--became pregnant again within 12 months of delivering her first child (Mosen, 1986). Analysis of data available concerning teenage mothers indicates that the birth of a second child contributes to financial dependency directly by lengthening the time of the mother's reliance on AFDC and indirectly by interfering with school and delaying her entry or reentry into the paid labor force (Testa, Lawlor and Richman, 1985). Previous research has found age

at first birth to be a determining factor in both number and timing of subsequent births among adolescents (Mosen, 1986). Women who begin childbearing early subsequently bear children more quickly, have a larger number of children, and have more unwanted and out-of-wedlock births than women who postpone childbearing (Hofferth, 1984).

Research substantiates that students from poor families, regardless of race, are three to four times more likely to drop out of school. Children and mothers in a teen pregnancy situation are more likely to be poor, thus the child is poor, and the cycle is perpetuated. The percentage of unwed teenage mothers has risen, especially among poor youth. In 1985, 30% of the family households headed by youths had incomes below the poverty level. More than half of all youths are still living at home. Seventy-five percent of family households maintained by women under 25 were living in poverty (Jackson, 1987).

The pregnant teenager faces multiple obstacles. As a group, teenage mothers complete fewer years of school, have larger families, and are less likely to be married to their child's father. They are more likely to live in a neighborhood they describe as undesirable and to receive welfare. They are also more likely to worry about money and less likely to feel positively about their own lives and about having children again (Moore, 1985). The children, in the final analysis, are at-risk. Another study found that the children of early childbearers do less well than the children of older mothers on a variety of measures of academic achievement and

school performance. Children of teenage mothers are less likely to obtain a high score on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, more likely to be behind the modal grade for a child of their age, less likely to be described as adjusting well to school or as doing well in school by either their parent or their teacher (Peck, 1987).

Programs for the At-risk Teenager

Review of the literature finds reports of programs designed to keep the teenage student in high school. As states have increasingly raised their standards for high school students to complete graduation, the number of dropouts has risen sharply. The State of Florida found this to be the case when it implemented its at risk program (Hofferth, 1984).

Studying the issue of increased dropouts produced the following recommendations to be used when raising educational standards for high school students (Lay & Wakstein, 1984). Educators must increase clarity of goals, organization of curriculum, opportunities to learn, quality of instruction, and opportunities to demonstrate competence. Instead of relying solely on weekly or bi-weekly tests, it was more effective to test after the concept had been studied. This approach insured success of the student and also increased the opportunity of students to demonstrate what has been learned. One final point is assuring staff communication and collaboration (to chart student success and keep apprised of students' progress).

In another study, O'Connor (1985) identified 10 characteristics common to successful dropout intervention programs:

1. Systematic identification of youth-at-risk: One must be able to identify the at-risk youth if precautions are to be implemented. Once the student has been properly identified, a sound program focused on keeping the student in school should be implemented.

2. Sound organization: There should be a game plan used to insure the at-risk teenager does not drop out of school. The game plan should involve the teachers working with the at-risk student, the principal, the counselor, as well as the parents. Everyone will need to be involved in order to insure the success of the intervention.

3. Proper staff selection: The staff should be well trained in dealing with the at-risk teenager. An instructor should be aware of different teaching approaches that address the varied learning styles of this teenager. Seminars, conferences, and classes are offered addressing the needs of the at-risk student. Many school districts have implemented different programs that are aimed at reducing the number of dropouts each year. Becoming familiar with these programs, their successes and failures, will be advantageous to those dealing with these students.

4. Team approach: The left hand should know what the right hand is doing. The counselor, administrator, and all instructors should be aware of the progress of each student. Situations can arise suddenly that will affect the student. All concerned staff members should be kept apprised.

5. Specific focus: The focus should be to make the educational experience of the student as positive as is possible.

6. Careful student selection: Use a reliable instrument to identify the at-risk teenager.

7. Respected institutional role: The school should be viewed in a positive and respected light. This will magnify the student's positive experience in relation to attending school.

8. Administrator flexibility: The at-risk student has not been successful in a traditionally more rigid place of learning. Flexibility allows the administrator to better meet the needs of the at-risk youth.

9. Community involvement: It is important that the student feel an "ownership" to the school. This is more easily attained if community involvement takes place.

10. Substance abuse awareness: Many at-risk students attempt to "escape" by means of substance abuse. This abuse may come in the form of alcohol, as well as other drugs. Substance abuse of any kind adds to the likelihood of dropping out. It is difficult to attend class if substance abuse is present.

Verifying that these ten characteristics are part of any program involving an at-risk student is significant. It does not matter what approach is utilized, these characteristics should be an integral part of the program (O'Connor, 1985). The units may appear to be simplistic, but they are paramount to assuring the success of any at-risk program.

The Atlantic Community College in New Jersey established a Youth Corps program that illustrates the important link between earning and learning. It serves out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 25. It was developed by the state to combat unemployment and illiteracy. Participants are exposed to comprehensive educational and vocational experiences, including significant contact with caring adults. The participants who were tested after completing 100 hours of the program showed a general improvement in grade equivalency levels ranging from 0.01 to 2.00 (Jackson, 1987).

Some dropout prevention programs focus on minorities. One such program, the Job Training for the Disadvantaged, set up by IBM includes nine major community training centers for Hispanics. The centers are located in urban areas with high unemployment and provide free job training for individuals unable to afford commercially available programs. Those who graduate from the centers have a job placement rate of more than 86%. Drawing from corporation records, IBM presents the following figures (Miller, 1988):

- The average cost per job placement was \$3,332; the average salary earned by participants after placement was \$12,025. This makes for an average net gain of \$8,693 per placement, or a 261% return on investment.
- The estimated total amount returned to governments in income and payroll taxes from the trainees equalled \$13,937,500.

-The estimated total amount of after-tax income, i.e. money returned to the economy, equalled \$39,046,300.

-The United States public's total net gain equalled \$49,974,400: public assistance savings, plus taxes returned to the government, as well as money returned to the economy, minus the cost of training.

The Los Angeles school district adopted a demonstration program called Focus on Youth that has produced drastic reductions in dropouts in 15 elementary, junior and senior high schools in low-income minority areas (McCurdy, 1990). A four-year evaluation showed that the dropout rate of its students was cut to about 10% compared to the district's overall 35% dropout rate. The academic achievement and attendance of students in the program also improved more rapidly than that of other students. The team of professionals participating in the program was comprised of teachers, principals, counselors, school psychologists, parents, and social service agency representatives.

Coordinators help set up the program and train team members in "case management" techniques. Once the student has been identified as a potential dropout, school counselors set up the teams and meetings with students on an individual basis. A wide variety of public and private social service agencies are available to the students to provide family and pregnancy counseling, job training and placement, crisis intervention, tutoring, health and child care, and other assistance. Upon meeting with the team, many teenagers reported that it was the first time in their life that they felt

supported by someone. At the high school level, teams achieved their best success in discouraging dropouts by securing part-time jobs for the students (Landsdorf, 1979).

Research bears out that students behind in their grade placement are characterized as being at-risk. Ninety males who were from two to three years behind expected placement in at least one academic subject participated in a tutorial method of instruction for one hour weekly over a six-week period. These groups focused on academic remediation, desensitization of negative emotional reactions, and the development of appropriate classroom behaviors. Differential levels of reinforcement encouraged the subjects to approach more difficult tasks. Results on tests of academic achievement, behavior, emotional functioning, and reaction to reading failure showed that significant gains were made (Dean, 1985). The one-on-one involvement appeared to help in the remediation of the participants. Moreover, learning to cope with stress in a positive manner enabled the teenagers to become successful in a larger number of educational activities.

One program set up specifically for pregnant or parenting teens reported success. It was described as a counselor/advocate program that helped keep those students in school. The program helped coordinate education, health and social services for students on a more personal level, informing them about daycare options, mental health counseling and how to attend school part-time. The report found 50% of the students involved in the counselor/advocate program maintained or improved their attendance. Eighty percent of the

pregnant and parenting teens stayed in school compared to 60% nationally. This project was based on a three-year pilot program conducted at high schools in Milwaukee. It tested the theory of designating one person in the school building to help pregnant and parenting students receive the support and services to remain in school (Children's Defense Fund, 1984).

At the middle school level, many dropouts reported stress as being a contributing factor to dropping out of school. A school in South Carolina implemented a stress reducing program of relaxation exercises during home room or group guidance period at the beginning of the school day. Typically, the home room period at the middle school level is about 20 minutes in length, designed for the purpose of checking attendance and developing self awareness, self esteem, communication, and decision-making skills in students. Teachers received training in a three-day workshop before the program was implemented. Audio-taped exercises removed much of the dependency upon the personality and teaching skills of the teacher. Wrist temperature proved a good measure of the relaxation state of each student. By taking pre- and post-temperature readings, the researcher measured the change in body temperature. This was an indicator of the development of the skill of eliciting the relaxation response at will. As a result of the relaxation training, middle school rural children showed effective changes. The experimental group had fewer discipline referrals to the office of the principal. In addition to improving problem behaviors, girls improved their self-concept scores as a result of the relaxation

training. When compared to the control students, the experimental group had a higher mean on all subscales except teacher affiliation, although none of these differences were significant for the group as a whole (Matthews, 1989).

Research also verifies that inclusion of vocational-technical training and experiential learning in the curriculum is important to a successful dropout prevention program (Peck, 1987). A vocational-technical training program addresses a hands-on approach that some at-risk teenagers are able to utilize with success. Each at-risk student has a different set of problems. Regardless of the curriculum, the organization of a program must provide for individualization of assessment, remediation, and training to focus on particular needs. Many researchers (Landsdorf, 1979; Cendes, 1979; Hamilton, 1984; Hanaken, 1987; Peck, 1987) feel that programs which offer vocational-technical training as the focus of the educational setting have the greatest degree of success. In one study (Landsdorf, 1979), New York City evaluated schools whose programs met the specifications for reducing dropouts. Alternative education programs that teach marketable skills and are comparable with real work situations was one characteristic that was listed as being necessary to ensure a successful dropout prevention program. significant for the group as a whole (Matthews, 1989).

Vocational programs are reported to have been a success in preventing teenage dropouts. Wittenberg (1988) noted in Ohio a cooperative work experience program, called the Occupational Laboratory Achievement Program, which met with much success. The

program was essentially an in-school sheltered workshop aimed primarily at disadvantaged teenagers who had lost interest in school or were underachieving in their school studies. This program was based on a open-entry/open-exit concept which permitted students to move out of the sheltered workshop into the regular programs whenever they had made the necessary adjustments. Basic manipulative skills involving both hand and machine processes were taught on a rotating system which gave each student an opportunity to perform all tasks during the school year. The students spent one and a half hours per day in related instruction which consisted of both general and directly related subject matter:

1. The general lessons focused on topics such as orientation to the world of work, employer-employee relations, human relations, personal hygiene, the free enterprise system, and job application; and
2. Directly related lessons were correlated with production processes and included such topics as blueprint reading, shop mathematics, and assembly line techniques.

To meet the requirements for high school graduation, students completed the day's schedule by taking two required academic subjects (English and History). The program was judged to be a success due to the positive ratings received from employers who hired the former students, the limited number of job turnovers and terminations, referrals back to the sheltered workshop, and high incidence of high school diploma attainments.

Self (1985) reviewed the research literature from 1975-1983 on strategies for effective dropout prevention programs. He concluded that current research literature suggest that key dropout intervention strategies are:

- individualized instruction;
- teaching basic academic skills, focusing on reading;
- teaching career maturity; vocational education;
- improving student-teacher relationships;
- group counseling;
- helping students develop a positive attitude toward school;
- and
- getting students involved with extra-curricular activities.

The South has a very high rate of teenage pregnancies.

Consequently, some schools in the South are establishing on-site clinics as part of the solution to the rise in the birthrate among 15-19 year olds. These clinics attend to the health needs of pregnant teenagers in comprehensive ways that are more affordable, accessible, and appropriate than traditional health care facilities.

Research was conducted studying small, medium, and large sized school districts. Data suggest that medium-sized school districts require the greatest assistance. The fact that there are not enough preventive programs was stressed throughout the report. Instead, school districts are more prone to institute a program for the teenager once he or she has quit high school (Roid, 1987). A great need exists for preventive measures to be implemented at an earlier

age, thus reducing the number of dropouts in a given school district.

Summary

Research confirms that the at-risk pregnant teenager stands to have a life fraught with financial, emotional, and social obstacles. She does not face these difficulties alone; rather, she is accompanied by her child who begins life with this shared tragedy. What a legacy for a mother to present her child!

Maslow, in his definition of our hierarchy of needs, presents a theoretical framework intertwined with the pregnant teen's needs also. The lower needs presented in the hierarchy, such as food and shelter, must be met before the higher needs can be attempted. Graduation from high school has proven to be essential in assuring that the pregnant teenager be given an opportunity to meet her and her child's basic, lower needs. Is Education's goal to provide for only the lower needs or to reach beyond this limit to the higher needs of man?

Whatever Education's goals may be, it must minimally insure the pregnant teenager be able to enter the work force upon completion of high school. The pregnant teenager is at-risk and requires Education's special attention in order to graduate. Alternative educational programs are paramount in our schools to decrease the dropout rate. As educators and concerned citizens interested in seeing all pregnant teenagers overcome the at-risk barriers, these programs must be explored, assessed, and implemented. Determining

factors that decrease the at-risk factors in school systems should be one of Education's primary goals as we face an ever increasing complex and high tech work force.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine if at-risk pregnant teenagers were more likely to complete high school if attending solely an in-house pregnancy program or an in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class and why, in their opinion, this was possible. This chapter presents the data supporting the avenue used that had the highest percentage of those graduating from high school. Presented as well are perceptions (the "why") the at-risk pregnant teenager had regarding the success of their self-selected educational format in attaining completion of high school.

Population

A sample of students was drawn from two sources: (1) pregnant teenagers who were eligible to graduate after completing an in-house pregnancy program, and (2) those eligible to graduate after completing an in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class, each during the 1988-91 school years. The MHP identified 95 seniors from the in-house pregnancy program and seven seniors enrolled in the in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class during this time. Of the 95 teenagers using the in-house pregnancy program, 74 graduated.

A sample of 10% of these students was made. All seven attending the program supplemented with a vocational-technical class completed high school. Because this population was so small, all seven were included in the study, however, two girls could not be contacted. The total sample was 12.

Girls attending the Broken Arrow chapter of the Margaret Hudson Program for Unwed Mothers were chosen because of the vocational-technical class option available at that site. The years 1988-91 were selected because child care became available to MHP students at the beginning of the 1988 school year. Prior to that time, students had to provide their own child care; it was not offered through the school system. Restricting the population to years subsequent to 1987 controlled for this difference in programming.

Due to the Privacy Act of 1974, a staff person from the Broken Arrow chapter of MHP randomly contacted teenagers from each population to obtain permission to participate in the study. Each teenager was interviewed either in person or by telephone. All responses were audiotaped for further analysis.

Data Reports

Demographic Information

Combined student in-take forms at MHP provide a profile of each pregnant teenager: she is a 17-year-old senior, white, and a single parent. This student is the oldest in birth order in the family with her family comprised of both parents in the home or a step-father living with her mother. The primary source of income

for the pregnant teenager at MHP is her parents. The girls being interviewed, however, came from varied backgrounds and could have been the girl next door.

Sample. During the time demographic information was obtained from the sample population, each teenager had characteristics very similar to the general population at MHP. She was 17 to 18 years old, white, and usually the oldest in birth order in the family. Her family was comprised of both parents in the home or a step-father who lived with her mother. The primary source of income was her parents. However, there was one characteristic where the two populations differed significantly: while the general population at MHP was predominantly single, the majority (65%) of teenagers in the sample were married.

Because this study was a follow-up involving a sample of those MHP students who successfully completed high school, the interview occurred an average of two years after the teenager was pregnant and had attended MHP.

The following four scenarios illustrate the range and diversity of students in these programs. Two attended solely the basic program and two supplemented their school day with a vocational-technical class. Pseudonyms will be used in place of the students' names.

Clarissa. She was a 17-year-old senior who enjoyed the extracurricular activities in her home high school. Her family was a traditional one. Her mother taught senior high literature in an

area high school, her father was self-employed, and she had a younger sister whose five year age difference resulted in an affectionate yet distant relationship. Both of Clarissa's parents were shocked about her pregnancy. Clarissa had always been an obedient child, an honor student throughout school, and was active in her church choir. She even described herself as "not the type to get pregnant before being married."

She married the father of her baby who was also a senior at the time of the pregnancy. Both sets of parents were supportive, providing necessary finances for their children's separate residence and happily babysitting whenever necessary due to school work.

Clarissa's teachers at MHP were very supportive of her staying in high school and provided classes that helped in her understanding the development of a baby through the 12th month of life. She classified her home high school as "okay" but disliked the cliquishness prevalent there. To be popular, one must wear the right clothes and run around with the right students. MHP students were helpful to Clarissa remaining in high school. They have a common bond, pregnancy; and thus share problems encountered during pregnancy. She has remained friends with three of the students she met through the MHP and they get together as often as possible.

Three years after MHP, Clarissa and her husband are still married. Jack works part-time at a local hardware store and attends classes at a local private university where he is studying pre-med classes. Clarissa is thankful for the bookkeeping class she took in high school because it enabled her to keep books in her father's

office. She plans to go to college, a goal she has had since grade school, as soon as Jack finishes medical school. Clarissa and her baby, Jacqueline, do not see much of Jack right now because he is busy working and taking classes at night school. However, all of his spare time is spent with Clarissa and Jacqueline; she believes they are a very happy family.

Susan. Her background is somewhat different. She is the first person in four generations to graduate from high school. Everyone in her family thought she would quit school if she did not terminate her pregnancy. Her mother even encouraged her to get an abortion, knowing how difficult it was to finish high school once pregnant. Her mother was able to draw from her personal experience; she was pregnant with Susan at the age of 16. She dropped out of high school once her pregnancy became obvious to her classmates and teachers. However, her mother went back to school three years after Susan's birth and obtained a Grade Equivalency Diploma (GED). She repeatedly told Susan how hard it was to achieve goals when getting pregnant so young in life. It's true that currently she makes a fair living keeping books for a prominent lawyer in a small, rural community, but it would have been easier if there weren't a child to worry about.

Susan's parents were divorced when she was only 13 months old. After seeing her mother marry three times, Susan feels her mother is the only person who has been constant in her life. She found out about the classes at MHP her junior year during an in-service they put on for her class. She is glad she decided to go the basic

program format of high school because the MHP is what she lists as a direct cause of her graduating from high school. Without the support she received from fellow students and teachers, she feels she would never have completed school.

Susan decided not to marry the father of her baby boy, Jason. Jason is a bright two-and-a-half year old, dark haired, dark eyed boy with a broad smile and outgoing personality. Jason's father sees him about twice a week for a few hours each visit. Susan's boyfriend readily accepts Jason and Jason even calls him "Daddy" when they are together. Luckily, her boyfriend's family also accepts Jason in their lives. They regard themselves as grandparents and babysit as frequently as Susan's mother. She plans to marry her boyfriend in a couple of months if "things continue to go well."

Adrienne. Adrienne is enrolled in a cosmetology class. Her son, David, was born in 1989 when Adrienne was a senior in a rural school located 25 miles outside the metropolitan area. The only difficulty Adrienne experienced while attending MHP was the lack of honor classes which she had taken at her home high school, prior to the pregnancy. The smaller class sizes restricted the number of classes offered, causing MHP's curriculum to preclude any advanced placement classes. Adrienne's goal was to attend a local private university noted for its engineering classes. She knew their curriculum would require higher level mathematics classes and was disappointed to find out that MHP did not offer these. She was able

to work out a compromise with her home high school instructor helping her complete requirements for a calculus class. The high school teacher tutored her after school to ensure Adrienne receiving credit for the class.

Adrienne made a few friends at the MHP but felt that she was closer to her friends at her home high school. She is currently meeting goals set in high school as she enters the second year of the engineering program. She did not marry John, the father of her baby, and describes him as "incredibly selfish and immature." She explains that John chooses to spend what little money he has on himself while seldom providing things for their child. She is appalled that he can think of buying himself an expensive pair of tennis shoes while their baby needs clothes. She is thankful that her parents are financially able to be the sole providers for her and her child, supporting her staying in college until she has completed requirements for an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering.

She is considering switching to a business area as her engineering classes get steadily more difficult. She realizes a decision must be made at the conclusion of the current semester if she is to maximize the time she has left in college by not taking unnecessary classes. She is confident that she can make the right decision and supports the theory that a "person can do anything she wants to when she works hard enough." Adrienne's parents take care of the baby while she is in class and she is looking forward to

getting a degree and being able to support herself as well as her child.

Angela. Angela also attended a vocational-technical class. She took a drafting course which she admitted enjoying much more than classes offered through her home high school. The instructors were supportive, the goals in class were readily attainable, and the students were present because they wanted to be there. When finding out about her pregnancy, Angela's family was especially supportive of her remaining in high school. Her mother was pregnant with her at the age of 16 and encouraged her to do whatever was necessary to graduate from high school. She attended a small, rural school located 20 miles outside the metropolitan area and described it as "real laid back." She found the MHP teachers more willing to take time in class to explain things than their high school counterparts.

When people found out about Angela's pregnancy, she was surprised to find the loss of many of her friends. "Maybe they thought my being pregnant would rub off on them!" she laughed. She realized that many of her friends' parents discouraged their daughters from remaining friends.

At the age of 18, Angela found herself to be the mother of twin baby girls! She married the babies' father and appreciates her mother baby-sitting whenever needed. Her husband drives a truck during the week and plays in a band on the weekends. She credits MHP and vocational-technical classes for teaching her to set goals. Both institutions required students to set daily, weekly, and yearly goals. Her current goal is to wait until her daughters are

attending first grade and begin working on a degree in education. In the meantime, she keeps books for her husband's band, does some graphic designing on a consultant basis, and remains busy caring for her twin daughters who are now approaching their third birthday.

Student Perspectives

The responses given by students during the interview process indicate that they have distinct perspectives about school and variables that enabled them to complete high school after teenage pregnancy. When reporting data, pseudonyms will be used. Students will be identified by the program enrolled in while attending MHP. Students attending solely the in-house pregnancy program will be identified as [basic]. Students supplementing their in-house pregnancy program with a vocational-technical track will be identified as [vo-tech]. The following clusters of data emerged from the interviews:

1. Perspectives about Relationships
2. Perspectives involving Educational Programs
3. Perspectives concerning Goals

Perspectives About Relationships. Both groups reported the relationship with their mother as being the most significant. They felt more moral, financial, and emotional support from their mothers. Three of the students came from families where their mother became pregnant prior to completing high school. Marsha's [basic] mother became pregnant with her when she was 16 years old. After finding out Marsha was pregnant her senior year in high

school, her mother urged her to get an abortion. She counseled her on how difficult it would be to complete high school with a baby. Now "Grandmother" is glad her daughter ignored her earlier abortion suggestions and plays an active role in her granddaughter's life.

Girls from both programs also reported that their child brought their families closer together. Donna [vo-tech] knew her parents loved her and her sister, yet they were non-demonstrative towards them, choosing to keep a distance while their daughters were growing up. Once Donna's son was born, this all changed. Her mother, father, and sister openly display their love for Sean by hugging, kissing, and holding him. They all try harder to avoid confrontations now that Sean is born. Donna agrees that her son has brought the entire family closer.

Peers played an important role in these teenagers' perspectives. Several reported support from their friends during their pregnancy. However, girls were surprised when their pregnancy caused them to lose friends. Many of the parents of their friends wanted them to end the friendship with the pregnant teenager. Marilyn [basic] reported shock at losing her very best friend, Linda. Upon hearing of Marilyn's pregnancy, Linda's parents forbade her to continue the relationship she and Marilyn had had since they were in second grade. Marilyn felt betrayed when Linda honored her parent's request to sever ties. They remain friendly, but see each other only by happenstance now.

Educational Perspectives. Perspectives in this category can be divided into those involving high school, MHP, and vocational-

technical classes. The majority of girls reported feeling high school was too big and anonymous to foster close relationships with the teachers and fellow students. Even teenagers attending some of the smaller, rural schools felt their high school classes were too large for effective learning to take place. Many teachers in the high school setting did not know their students' names due to the large number of students they saw each day.

Students overwhelmingly listed smaller, one-on-one classes as contributing to their success and the success of MHP. Teachers were believed to be more caring; they offered additional scholastic help during school hours rather than after school. Cheryl [vo-tech] found it easier to get the help she needed at MHP. Instead of having to wait until after school when she felt rushed, the instructor was able to help her fairly soon after she experienced difficulty with her coursework. She credits this with making her classes seem easier and improving her grades.

The vocational-technical students felt MHP and their classes at vo-tech had many of the same attributes. Classes were smaller and the teacher was able to provide more one-on-one attention to the students. The students' attendance and grades seemed to flourish under this type of system. These students also felt their teachers were more caring. The curriculum's objectives were easily discerned by the students. Marissa [vo-tech] knew that she must learn the mathematical concepts taught in the class before she would be ready to use some of the measuring devices in her drafting class. The immediacy of the concepts was made evident to the students,

consequently Marissa found the learning that followed easy and applicable to solving her classwork problems.

Perspectives on Goals. The majority of teenagers from both groups reported that their goals had remained the same. However, the timeframe for achieving these goals had changed. Most discovered having a baby made it more difficult for them to study. Many found they had to wait for their child to go to bed before being able to tackle homework assignments. Glynna [basic] said that having a baby made it "hard to focus on studying . . . rather, I find myself . . . focused on my baby and her needs." Many students planned to go to college or receive additional training but are now doing this on a part-time basis. Others are postponing it altogether until their children are older or their husbands have completed their educational goals.

Summary

The data in this chapter represent demographic information concerning pregnant teenagers attending the Broken Arrow Margaret Hudson Program for Unwed Mothers. Also presented are data reported by the pregnant teenagers involving their perspectives of variables that enabled them to complete high school.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

In its quest to provide improvement of at-risk programs, this research was designed to probe beyond "what" and encompass "why."

Two data analysis strategies were used in this study:

(1) descriptive demographic data analysis and (2) inductive interview data analysis. Theoretical interpretation of the data completes this chapter.

Demographic Data Analysis

A staff member of MHP collected demographic information which was obtained from an intake form and a social service information form filled out by the student. This restricted access information, kept on file in the main office at the Tulsa site, included, but was not restricted to, the student's age at enrollment, grade, race, marital status, composition of household, prior enrollment at MHP, primary source of income, and position in birth order.

In general, the sample of teenagers interviewed and the general population of at-risk students reported in the literature were strikingly dissimilar on a majority of shared attributes. Table I provides a comparison between the study population and the general population dealt with in the literature.

Specific analysis of the Broken Arrow demographic information yielded the following:

TABLE I
 CHARACTERISTIC COMPARISONS OF AT-RISK
 STUDENTS AND SAMPLE

At-risk characteristics	Sample	General Population
1. Repeat a grade	No	Yes
2. Low grades	No	Yes
3. No extracurricular activities	No	Yes
4. No parental support for staying in high school	No	Yes
5. Undesirable behavior in school	No	Yes
6. Less likely to be married	No	Yes
7. Additional births	No	Yes
8. 16 years old during pregnancy	No	Yes
9. 10th or 11th grade	No	Yes
10. Negative relation with teachers	No	Yes
11. Rejects self and school	No	Yes
12. No adequate goals	No	Yes
13. Larger families	No	Yes
14. On welfare	No	Yes
15. Perceived some teachers uncaring	No	Yes

Age/Grade/Ethnicity

On the average, the sample was 17 to 18 years old, white and in the 12th grade. This is not unusual as Broken Arrow is a predominantly white school district with less than 3% of the school population comprised of minorities. It is difficult to compare these MHP teens to those from the general population. The literature did not report pregnancies occurring with specific frequency relative to a certain age, grade, or ethnic background. Instead, teenage pregnancies appeared to not discriminate, appearing at all teen years and grades, irrespective of ethnicity (Matthews, 1989).

Marital Status/Pregnancies

The research indicates that many pregnant teens are single and experience more than one pregnancy. A majority of the study population, however, differed from the general population in both of these categories. The majority in the sample were married and had no prior or subsequent pregnancies. Of the 12 students interviewed, eight had married the father of their child. Mosena (1986) reports that 20% of pregnant teenagers became pregnant again within 12 months of delivering her first child. Interviews with the study population took place an average of two years after completion of high school and delivery of the first birth; only one participant had delivered another child within a 24-month period. The age of the teenagers interviewed, around 19 years, could preclude having

more than one child. An older female would have more time to have additional children; it would be more likely for a woman to have multiple births at the age of 24 versus 19 years.

Income

The pregnant teen's source of income was an area in which the sample and the general population were alike. For both populations, the primary source of income was the teenagers' parents. Because the pregnant teenager was still in high school, it is probable that she would be unable to provide for herself and a baby and thereby relied on her parents for financial support.

The study population, unlike others, relied on no local, state, or federal assistance due to pregnancy. This type of aid was not needed as the pregnant teenager was able to rely on her parents for the necessary financial support. Wetzel (1987) reports that early childbearing is highly correlated to poverty-level income; this did not hold true for the sample.

Family Composition

Moore (1985) reported that many at-risk teenagers came from broken homes. The teenagers during the pregnancy largely resided in a family where the mother lived with the teenager's father or a step-father. Once again, family composition proved to be another category for which the general population and sample were different. In the world at large, it would appear the study population came

from a family that differed from many teenagers in our nation's high schools. Single parent families are a prevalent contemporary reality.

As the majority of the study population did get married, the cycle of a single parent family had not yet begun. In fact, the family of the study population offered emotional and psychological support, along with financial aid. Being able to complete high school after experiencing a teenage pregnancy was largely due to the teenagers' families. "My mother and father supported me staying in high school and having the baby," was an often repeated statement during the interviews. Many stated that the arrival of a baby even strengthened the family unit, with the baby becoming the focal point of that family. The teenager, her mother, her father, and siblings all united to form a base of support for the baby.

Another area of family composition different in the two populations was number of siblings. Hofferth (1984) states that at-risk students are more likely to come from a family with more than three children. The study's families were predominantly comprised of only one or two children. Over 25% of the study population were only children.

Birth Order

The most common birth order for the study population was that of 1st. Being an only child was the second most common birth order for the sample. Three of the 12 teenagers in the sample had mothers who were pregnant with them before completing high school which

explains why 25% of the study population were the oldest in position of birth. At-risk teenagers are also commonly found to be the oldest child according to Rumberger (1981).

Education

Research confirms that having a child at an early age is highly related to low educational attainment (Wetzel, 1987). To date, the sample appears to have alluded this bleak prophesy. Over half of these females were attending post-secondary classes on at least a part-time basis. It is true that many had postponed their goals of attending college on a full-time basis; most felt that the needs of their children took precedence over career goals. One female from the study population, Leslie, had stopped going to a local junior college on a full-time basis just prior to the interview. Leslie said she thought going to school full-time and working part-time did not allow much time with her daughter, Cara. Her parents had become the primary care givers of Cara and this bothered Leslie. She became a part-time student and planned to finish her nursing training in three years instead of her original goal of one and one-half years.

Interview Data Analysis

Emerging categories of responses gathered from the interviews were identified and grouped into: perspectives about relationships, perspectives involving educational programs, and perspectives concerning goals. Perspectives about relationships have been

divided into the time during the pregnancy and that time following the pregnancy.

Relationships During the Pregnancy

Mother. In all instances, the pregnant teenager received support from their mothers and also reported being the closest to their mothers during this time. The mothers were reported to have offered the greatest amount of support emotionally and financially to the pregnant teenagers. The mother encouraged them to complete high school and some even played an active role in activities sponsored by MHP. An example of one activity sponsored by MHP was "Photo Day" where all family members were encouraged to bring photographs of the baby and exchange stories with the other girls and their families.

Families. The majority of girls' families expressed anxiety over the pregnant teenager not completing high school. Each family was reported to have unanimously supported the teenager staying in school during the pregnancy. Before the baby was born, this was done predominantly by giving the teenager verbal support and continued financial support. This was an area that made the sample atypical of most at-risk teenagers. The norm for at-risk teenagers is non-support from families in completing high school. At best, some families are apathetic towards the teenager graduating (Durken, 1981). This was not the case for the sample. For example, Glenda said her parents "were willing to do anything to keep me in school. They bribed me, threatened me, and bribed me some more."

Peers. Three phenomena occurred during the girls' pregnancies: (1) peer support, (2) severance of ties with other peers, and (3) establishment of new peers. Peers were perceived as supportive of the teenager's pregnancy in most instances and prior friendships continued after delivery of the baby. An exception was those who completely severed ties with the pregnant teenager after her pregnancy. The teenagers perceived this separation to be a direct cause of the friend's parents. In each case, the teenager understood that the parent of the peer was worried that their teenager would receive a bad reputation for "hanging out with a girl who had premarital sex." The girls seemed to accept these circumstances and remained friendly, but aloof, towards the alienated friend. The third instance involved the acquisition of new friends. Through MHP new friendships were developed.

Summary. During the teen's pregnancy, she remained the closest to her mother, who provided financial and moral support. The families of the teenagers supported their remaining in high school while peers also played an important role. The teen remained close to some friends acquired before the pregnancy, severed ties with other friends, and attained new friendships while at MHP.

Relationships After the Pregnancy

Mother. After the pregnancy, the teenager remained closest to her mother. Her mother continued to give emotional and financial support after the baby was born. In one instance, the mother had urged her daughter to get an abortion once she found out about the

pregnancy. After her grandchild was born, however, she established close ties with the baby and expressed regret for her original recommendation of an abortion.

Family. Most girls found they became closer to their families once their baby was born. The baby became the focal point for all members of the family. The family worked harder to maintain a more positive environment in which the baby could prosper. The presence of a baby helped even non-demonstrative parents to be more affectionate. It appeared to be more acceptable for the parent to show affection toward the baby than toward their teenage child.

Peers. Friendships changed somewhat after the baby was born. Immediately following the birth of the baby, the teenagers remained in close contact with friends from high school. One girl reported her girl friend would hold her baby while they sat and conversed with each other. However, once the baby became mobile, this arrangement became more awkward. At this stage, the baby required closer supervision which was not conducive to maintaining a conversation with another adult. That could explain why most of the teenagers developed friendships with other MHP females who had children. Conversations were more easily held between two adults when the child had a playmate. Each child entertained the other while the adults were able to continue their conversation(s).

Summary. The arrival of the baby provided strong ties for all the families. Family members reported stronger bonds once the baby

was born. Those having the baby gradually saw their friendships change as they gained friends who also had children.

Perspectives involving Educational Programs

Teenagers perceived MHP and vocational-technical classes as having like attributes which contributed to success. The positive attributes listed are those recanted by students everywhere: smaller class size; more one-on-one attention given by the teacher; the teacher seen as more caring of the needs of the student; the curriculum met the immediate needs of the student (e.g. at MHP, classes taught the teenagers how to care for their babies; at vo-tech, classes addressed concepts necessary to carry out activities in class); and students were taught to set goals. All of the attributes cited above promoted the student to be successful in class.

Class Size. Small class size supported the teenagers and allowed them to have questions answered and solutions provided.

Attention. Though teenagers reported many of their home high school teachers did not even know the students' names, blame was not placed on the teacher. Rather, the teenagers felt the largeness of the classes contributed to making it difficult for the teacher to learn the names of all students. Understanding why a problem existed did not make the student accept the condition any more readily, however.

More Caring. The teenagers felt modifications were made at MHP and vo-tech when necessary. For instance, MHP was more understanding of a teenager experiencing morning sickness than instructors at her home high school. She still had to make up work missed when ill, but because empathy had been expressed by the instructor, the teenager did not mind completing assignments. This type of accepting environment enabled the teenagers' grades to improve. Feelings of acceptance and affiliation with the class were increased at MHP and vo-tech.

Curriculum. A theme that was repeated throughout the interviews was "we were all in the same boat." It would appear students are able to overcome even obstacles such as pregnancy when placed in an environment where people have like conditions and coursework meets their needs.

Also, the common experience of pregnancy caused some of the negative attributes to be reduced. Teenagers were not as likely to stress the importance of wearing designer clothes at MHP as they were at their home high schools. Students accepted each other more readily because of the shared circumstances. "No one was any better than any one else; we were all pregnant, so no fingers were being pointed." Shared characteristics also made cliques disappear. Teenagers at MHP and vo-tech were usually in one large group rather than several smaller, splintered groups in evidence in high school.

Table II compares characteristics found in successful at-risk programs with aspects of those reported as being present in the MHP.

TABLE II
 COMPARISON OF CHARACTERISTICS COMMON IN SUCCESSFUL
 INTERVENTION PROGRAMS TO BROKEN ARROW MHP

Characteristics of successful program	MHP
1. Identification of students	Yes
2. Sound organization	Yes
3. Proper staff selection	Yes
4. Specific focus	Yes
5. Team approach	Yes
6. Careful student selection	Yes
7. Respected institutional role	Yes
8. Administrator flexibility	Yes
9. Community involvement	No
10. Substance abuse awareness	Yes

*(Moore, 1985)

Identification, a noted attribute in a successful program, was simple as MHP had required a physician's verification of the female's pregnancy. MHP had incorporated sound organization, proper staff selection, and curriculum that met the immediate needs of the students. A team worked with each girl. Programming was flexible and substance abuse awareness was incorporated in counseling. Community involvement was the only characteristic missed. Because of the characteristics present at MHP, it can be viewed as a successful program for increasing the probability of its students completing high school.

Perspectives Concerning Goals

Once the baby was born, most of the teens found their education goals had to be accomplished on a part-time or postponed basis. These young mothers altered their career goals in order to satisfy the needs of a new baby. In cases where the teenager married following her pregnancy, her husband's career goals superseded those of her own. Time became a critical factor after the teenager delivered her baby; time became very restrictive once the baby was born. Before, the teenager had been able to study during the time immediately after school up until time to go to bed. This changed with the arrival of the baby. The teenager was unable to study until the baby had been put to bed for the evening.

The neophyte mother also found it difficult to focus on studying (or other things) when her baby was crying. As the child became older, the mother found it less necessary to immediately meet

the needs of the baby. The baby's crying became less urgent in terms of immediate satisfaction for the baby. For instance, as time progressed, the mother found it acceptable to feed her baby five minutes after crying began, rather than immediately, which was the time she attempted when the baby was first born.

The sample appeared to be very focused when discussing the birth of her baby. Each teenager addressed the prospect of having a baby with a positive outlook. Not once did a teenager express doubt that she would be unable to have the baby. One girl stated that it was not hard for just teenagers to have babies; instead, it was equally difficult for anyone to have a child. She felt being a teenager made it no more difficult to have a baby than would be experienced by a married mother in her mid-twenties.

Theoretical Interpretation of the Data

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow accounted for the characteristics that are inherent in everyone. He suggested that our needs arrange themselves in a hierarchy from the basic biological needs to the need for self-fulfillment, representing the highest development of the human personality (Coleman, 1974). This hierarchy has five levels: physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization needs. The needs at the lower levels must first be met before gratification of higher needs can be attempted. For example, if a person has no food or does not foresee getting food in the near future, she is not going to worry about fulfilling her

esteem needs. The hunger needs must be addressed first.

It is important to note that the teenager's family was the most successful in meeting her needs of food, safety, and acceptance. This could be the pivotal reason for the sample successfully completing high school. If intervention of the family in fulfilling these needs had not occurred, completion of high school would have been difficult, if not impossible.

When these survival needs had been met, the teen could then strive to satisfy her needs for achievement, approval, and recognition. At MHP, the pregnant teenager was surrounded by other pregnant teenagers. "We were all in the same boat," was a repeated statement throughout the interview process. It was in this environment that the pregnant teenager no longer felt alienated or "different." At MHP she became another student who shared the same circumstances as her new peers. Her needs for affiliation, acceptance, and belongingness were readily met at an institution designed to meet the needs of a pregnant teenager. The commonality of pregnancy proved to be a strong bonding agent for these females as many have continued friendships initiated at MHP.

A large number of the sample reported achieving some of the higher level needs through their babies. As an example, during the interview Cindy described her baby as "a miracle." Her son was born with a heart defect which caused her to accrue huge medical liabilities. An inheritance she had received from her late father and many hours at her job as a graphic artist helped pay the hospital bills. Prior to having her son, Cindy felt she was an

average, fairly unmotivated teenager who had trouble setting goals. When her son was born with medical problems, she discovered that she was able to do something many perceived as impossible for someone her age: provide for her son so that his medical needs were met.

With the arrival of the baby, a refocusing in the family occurred. The baby became the focal point of the teenager and all of her family. For the first time in most of these teenagers' lives, another person's needs had top priority. The needs of the babies came first with the teenager placing their needs and goals secondarily. The teenagers quickly discovered that career goals set prior to having a baby had to at least be postponed. Post secondary training that would have been completed in two years before the baby was born, took considerably longer to finish while caring for and satisfying the needs of a baby. In the instances where the teenager got married, she further placed her goals after those of her husband's. The teenage mother decided to pursue her career goals after her husband's goals had been met and their child was older. At this point, it was reasoned, the child would require only part-time day care.

Summary

Other than the characteristic of being pregnant, the study population had no other attributes that would link them to being what the literature would term as "at-risk." These females had the support of their families, both emotionally and financially, to stay in high school and have their babies. As a whole, their grades were

above average, they enjoyed participating in extracurricular activities, they were very goal oriented, and had good self concepts. "Pregnancy" was the only characteristic the study population shared with the at-risk characteristics of the general population.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION/IMPLICATIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTARY

At-risk teenagers continued to be a major concern to educators in the 1990s. There has been extensive research in the area of the at-risk teenager, as a whole (Hofferth, 1984; Mosena, 1986; Peck, 1987; Wetzel, 1987; Shapiro, 1990), but very little dealing with the at-risk pregnant teenager specifically. Programs that enhance the probability of the at-risk pregnant teenager completing high school are paramount to lowering the number of dropouts from our school systems. However, researchers and theorists had offered little in the way of practical advice for accomplishing such a task.

Summary of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if at-risk pregnant teenagers were more likely to complete high school if attending solely an in-house pregnancy program or an in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class. After establishing the success rates, the perceptions of why the at-risk teenager was able to succeed at their self-selected educational format were analyzed.

Data Needs and Sources

The demographics, percentage of those completing high school via in-house pregnancy program and in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class, and perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of each educational format of the at-risk pregnant teenagers attending the Broken Arrow MHP were the data needs.

A sample of students was drawn from pregnant teenagers who were eligible to graduate after completing solely the MHP and those eligible to graduate after completing MHP with supplemental vocational-technical classes during the 1988-89, 1989-90, and 1990-91 school year.

Data Collection

To address questions posed in this study, two strategies were used:

(1) a study of the pregnant teenagers' records to determine characteristics and the percentage of those who graduate using an in-house traditional or non-traditional vocational-technical approach, and

(2) an interview to examine the teenagers' perception of why their program was successful in promoting completion of high school.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

A qualitative research design that utilized induction was employed. Induction moves from specifics to generalizations and

allowed for flexibility within the research design. Inferences were made from the data collected in the study and the data were grouped according to like, shared characteristics that emerged.

Summary of Demographic Information

The sample was comprised of pregnant teens who were 17 and 18 years old, white, and in the 12th grade. This teenager was married and had no subsequent births. Her primary source of income was her parents, and her family consisted of a mother, father or stepfather, and one or two siblings. She was the oldest or only child in her family and over half of the sample attended post-secondary classes on at least a part-time basis.

Summary of Interview Data

The interview was conducted to examine why a particular educational avenue was perceived to be the most conducive to promoting completion of high school: in-house pregnancy program or in-high pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class. Emerging categories of responses gathered from the interviews were identified and grouped into three perspectives: relationships (during and after the pregnancy), educational programs, and goals.

Perspectives About Relationships

Relationships played an important role in the sample's life.

During the pregnancy. In general, the following was found to be present during the pregnancy:

- The mother was the most important person to the pregnant teenager during her pregnancy, giving her emotional as well as financial support,
- Most families expressed anxiety over the teenager completing high school, while all families supported completion, and
- Peers were perceived as supportive unless the peer's parents advocated a severance of friendship due to the teen's pregnancy.

It is important to note that very little was reported about the pregnant teenager's relationship with the father of her baby. In the cases where the teen married the father of her baby, it was described as "an okay relationship; we are happily married." In the instances when the teen did not marry the father of her baby, there was a poor relationship or the absence of a relationship between these teen parents.

After the pregnancy. In general the data revealed:

- Mother was still perceived to be the most important person to the teenager,
- The baby became the focal point in the lives of their mothers,

- Families became closer as the baby provided a bond for all family members, and
- Peers changed when the baby became mobile, with the teenager becoming closer to other women with children.

Perspectives Involving Educational

Programs

Data involving educational programs revealed:

- Teenagers perceived MHP and vo-tech classes as having like attributes which contributed to completion of high school: smaller class size, more one-on-one attention by the teacher, teacher seen as more caring, the curriculum met the immediate needs of the student, and students were taught to set goals, and
- Teenagers appreciated the shared bond of the students at MHP: their pregnancy. Like conditions and problems were discussed among the students which strengthened the bond to MHP.

Perspectives Concerning Goals

Additional information concerning goals indicated:

- Perspectives involving time changed after birth of baby. Needs of the baby came first as the teenager saw her personal time decreasing in order to meet these needs,
- Career goals established before the teenager's pregnancy became secondary. In all instances, the needs of the baby superseded those of her own. In instances where the teen

married, her career goals were further placed behind those of her husband's, and

-All teenagers were very focused concerning the birth of their baby. Positive attitudes were in evidence.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings of this study lead to three main conclusions:

Conclusion #1:

The students attending MHP are not at-risk. Their characteristics are atypical of at-risk pregnant teenagers in the general population. Those traits found to be dissimilar included: age, grade, marital status, number of pregnancies, family composition, and familial support toward completion of high school. The effectiveness of the program may be due to those population characteristics and not the program. A number of reasons for the disparate characteristics are possible.

The first is that possessing one at-risk attribute is not enough to qualify for being at-risk for dropping out of high school. In this study, the only characteristic the overwhelming majority had for being at-risk was pregnancy. Most of the sample's characteristics did not match those of their general population counterparts.

The second may be that teenagers attending a voluntary in-house pregnancy program might not share the characteristics of pregnant teenagers opting to remain in their home high school. Reasons

governing why a teenager chooses an in-house pregnancy program could preclude her from having other at-risk attributes. The study population was very focused, goal oriented, and intent upon having a baby. Further research in the area of the at-risk pregnant teenager remaining in the home high school situation is needed.

Conclusion #2:

The program format with the student success rates (in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class) cannot be credited with the pregnant teenagers completing high school. Instead, the characteristics of the study population could explain why completion of high school occurred. The intent of this study was to determine which educational format was more conducive to promoting completion of high school: in-house pregnancy program or in-house pregnancy program supplemented with a vocational-technical class.

Conclusion #3:

The third conclusion of this study involves the needs identified in Maslow's Hierarchy and is applicable to the sample. The parents of the sample provided for the pregnant teenager's basic physiological and safety needs. Because these two essential needs were being met by the teenager's parents, she was able to attend high school and be provided with the opportunity to satisfy higher needs such as acceptance and affiliation. Should the essential two lower needs not be satisfied, the teenager would be

forced to meet these needs herself in lieu of attending high school.

Recommendations and Commentary

Discovery of the educational format that promotes the highest success rate of high school and why that format was perceived to be the most successful benefits research, theory, and the training of educators.

Research

Additional research needs to be conducted in the area of the at-risk pregnant teenager. This study has merely opened a door to reveal a chasm that exists in education relative to being able to effectively deal with at-risk pregnant teenagers. Unfortunately, too many of these teenagers drop out of high school. With them they take their children, who, in turn, become at-risk for dropping out of high school. This legacy can be altered by examining programs that can be implemented into our school systems which successfully encourage graduation from high school.

It is true that there are factors affecting the pregnant teenage population that we, as educators, can not control. However, devising an educational format conducive to promoting successful completion of high school is within our grasp. Identifying traits inherent to successful at-risk programs is paramount to decreasing the number of pregnant teenage dropouts. Specifically, more research is needed in the area of the pregnant teenager who chooses to remain in her home high school rather than attend an in-house

pregnancy program. This study identified these two populations as having unlike characteristics, therefore additional research is necessary in order to determine if their needs are different.

Practitioners

Practitioners can benefit from the information gathered in this study in choosing the appropriate educational format that will be more likely to promote successful completion of high school. Characteristics of those programs can be implemented in other programs having at-risk pregnant teenagers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The parents of the pregnant teenager met the physiological and safety needs of these girls; in many cases, they were even able to meet some of the teenager's love needs. MHP also met some of the teenagers' needs; needs for affiliation, acceptance, and belongingness were met through programs and peer support. Even esteem needs were addressed in this program; achievement, approval, competence, and recognition, which are all part of esteem needs, were realized in this educational setting. Together MHP and parents helped these teens realize their needs.

However, if the lower needs of the teenager and her baby are not met, high schools are not afforded the opportunity to provide needs found at Maslow's higher levels. The study population's families were able to meet these lower level physiological and

safety needs. But what about the pregnant teenager whose family is unable or unwilling to meet these essential needs? In order to meet the special needs of the pregnant teenager, our school systems may need to address the lower level needs of those who require its intervention. In providing physiological and safety needs, high schools will be given the chance to satisfy the higher level needs of love and esteem. Without providing these lower level needs, our school systems are merely housing students who will never gain the legacy of becoming nurturing, independent members of society.

Take a moment to reflect back to a teenager from the population, Adrienne. Of the girls interviewed, she was the only one whose goals for the future are being met now. Her family was the most able, or willing, to provide Adrienne with the opportunity to pursue college on a full-time basis. All others in the sample who required additional education or training in order to fulfill long-term career goals were having to do so on a part-time or postponed basis. Adrienne's family more than adequately met the lower level needs of her and her child, David. Her parents provided day care for their grandson while Adrienne attended classes at a private university. They also were able to pay for Adrienne and David's living expenses which freed her from needing a full- or part-time job. Instead of having to attend college for 6-8 years on a part-time basis, Adrienne will be able to possibly strive for the highest levels in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in another two years. In satisfying her physiological and safety needs, Adrienne's parents enabled her to pursue her educational goals.

One of the goals of Education is to provide students with the ability to become independent and contributing members of society. Parents and educators must form a partnership to ensure that at-risk teenagers' needs are met so that graduation from high school ensues. Adrienne's legacy to David will be a safe, secure, loving home where his role model is an independent and self-reliant member of society. Let this be the legacy we as educators and parents provide for all the Davids and Adriennes in our school systems today.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

MARGARET HUDSON PROGRAM TRADITIONAL AND
NON-TRADITIONAL VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION COURSES

Traditional

The pregnant at-risk teenager who decides to attend this school is counseled prior to being enrolled in class. This is done to insure that the student's skill level and needs will be met in the program to which she is assigned. Students are counseled in both the traditional and non-traditional programs available.

The traditional vocational classes the at-risk pregnant teenager may have chosen include:

Computer applied accounting. Students are provided with skills necessary to qualify as a full-charge bookkeeper in a small company or as an accounting clerk in a larger organization. Students study the concepts of double entry accounting, payroll, and payroll tax preparation, business machine math, preparation of individual tax returns, and production typewriting. The skills are practiced both manually and through micro-computer application. Skills are developed which could permit the student to obtain advanced placement in college.

Banking and financial services. Students are prepared for entry level positions in banks, savings and loans associations, credit unions and other financial fields. Skills are developed by operating the various machines used in financial offices.

Business and office. An individualized program is offered and uses the controlled-entry/open-exit concept of training. The courses teach the basic knowledge and skills necessary for office jobs and are also designed to upgrade existing skills levels. Courses include: typewriting, business math, business English, 10-

key by touch, filing, spelling, machine transcription, word processing, bookkeeping, shorthand, job conditioning, communications, microcomputer applications, and professional development.

Medical secretary transcriptionist. This program introduces students to the duties, skills, and responsibilities of a medical secretary. The course includes medical terminology and abbreviations, medical forms, transcription of case histories, introduction to insurance coding, and other medical documents keyed into word processors.

Health occupational area. These programs include specialization in the area of: advanced paramedical programs, allied health careers, dental lab, dental office assistant, medical office assistant, nurse assistant, nursing options, practical nursing, radiologic (x-ray) technology, or surgical technology.

Non-traditional

The federal government, which provides monies for students to attend vocational-technical school, has started placing an emphasis on the non-traditional programs available to women. The rationale behind this focus involves the attempt to enable women to break the cyclical poverty that exists when women enroll in traditional programs that pay at, or barely above, minimum wage. This salary does not allow women to ever get out of the poverty cycle. Rather they continue to be dependent on welfare to meet both their own and

their child's basic needs. In a non-traditional program, the student is trained in a vocational typically dominated by men and which pays well above minimum wage. The State Department of Vocational-Technical Education encourages young women to pursue this avenue in hopes that with a higher paying job, they will be able to become truly self-supporting.

The non-traditional classes available to the at-risk pregnant teenage students include the following:

Welding. This program allows the student to develop experience and skills in all phases of the welding trade. Students develop competence in the areas of the welding trade. Students develop competence in the areas of oxyacetylene cutting, plasma arc cutting, shielded metal-arc welding (SMAW), gas metal-arc welding (GMAW), automatic cutting equipment, arc-air cutting and weld testing.

Machine tool operator. Classes are designed to prepare students with the skills necessary to function in today's machine tool industry. Instruction in the use of hand tools, related mathematics, blueprint reading, metals and materials and layout procedures are included in the program. Machine operations are performed on the drill press, engine lathe, milling machine, and grinding machine. Basic computerized control (CNC) milling and turning are also included.

Automotive technology. This program is designed to train students to service and repair passenger and light commercial vehicles with gasoline engines. Students diagnose and restore the vehicle to proper operating condition. Automotive mechanics may

specialize in one of the following areas: brake repair, front end repair, tune-up, and electrical service.

Electronics. This program provides an introduction to the fundamentals of electronics, theory of electricity and electronic devices, circuits, and the use of testing and measuring instruments. The program is designed to prepare students for immediate entry into an occupational field related to electronics or further formal education.

Electrical technology. This program provides students with skills, technical knowledge, and work habits necessary to succeed in the construction and industrial fields. Practical experience is gained by students working on houses and buildings constructed in the field.

Major appliance repair. Training is provided in the service and repair of appliances such as washing machines, clothes dryers, dishwashers, electric and gas stoves, refrigerators, and microwave ovens.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Describe the type of classes you had in school when you were pregnant.
 - Was the program you attended a traditional in-house program or did you go to a vocational/technical school for half a day?
 - (If the student attended vo-tech, ask: What class did you take at vo-tech?)
2. What did you like about the way your program was set up?
 - Tell me why you liked those things.
3. What did you like least about the way your program was set up?
 - Tell me why you think those things were not good.
 - Tell me how those things could be improved or eliminated.
4. Have there been any people who have been supportive of your staying in high school?
 - Who are the people who supported your remaining?
 - What did they do to make you want to remain?
 - Who has not been supportive of your remaining in high school?
5. How do you feel about going to high school? Do you like it?
 - List the things you liked about high school.
 - List the things you did not like about high school.
6. Once the baby was born, did s/he pose any additional hardships to remaining in high school?
 - What was good about having the baby?
 - What was not good about having the baby?
 - What, if anything, would you have done differently?
7. How did others feel about your having a baby?
 - List some people who felt this was about your having a baby.
 - Why do you think they felt this way?
8. Can you give me some background information on your family?
 - How was it when you were growing up?
 - Who lived at home with you when you were growing up?
9. What is the relationship status between you and the father of your baby? (Married, divorced, living with, dating, not dating).
10. How did having a baby affect your goals for the future?
 - What changed?

VITA

Stacy L. Lee

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: CHOOSING A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL FORMAT FOR THE AT-RISK PREGNANT TEENAGER: IN-HOUSE PREGNANCY PROGRAM OR IN-HOUSE PREGNANCY PROGRAM SUPPLEMENTED WITH A VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL CLASS

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