

**The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System:
Redeeming the Second Chance to Complete
Secondary Education**

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CONTENTS

List of Tables	iv
Abstract	vi
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Abbreviations	x
Definition of Key Terms	xi
CHAPTER 1	1
Introduction	1
Research questions	3
Aims and objectives of the research	4
Purpose and value of study	4
Positionality	12
CHAPTER II	14
Literature Review	14
Teen Motherhood	15
Education	25
CHAPTER III	40
Methodology	40
Specific type of qualitative research	47
Location of the project	49
Sample	49
Sampling	51
Method of data gathering	54
Data Analysis	62
Ethical issues	65
Reflexivity	69
CHAPTER IV	74
Data Analysis	74
Descriptions	74
Themes that emerged from the various data sources.	139

CHAPTER V	149
Research Findings	149
Factors that facilitated completion.....	149
Factors that frustrated completion.....	155
CHAPTER VI.....	166
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	166
Review	166
Conclusion	167
Recommendations.....	170
Final words.....	176
Areas for Further Research	177
REFERENCES	179
APPENDIX 1.....	185
Reflectivity.....	185
APPENDIX 2	188
Sample of Consent Forms (for teen mothers).....	188
APPENDIX 3.....	189
Sample of Information Letter Sent to Project Participants	189
APPENDIX 4.....	190
Criteria for Purposive Sampling	190
APPENDIX 5.....	191
Interview Questions	191

List of Tables

Table 1: Respondent Sample	53
Table 2: Data Sources	54
Table 3: Socio-Economic Conditions of the Teen Mothers.....	112
Table 4: Data on Schools	125
Table 5: Extent of the Monitoring Received by the Teen Mothers.....	138
Table 6: Summary of Research Findings.....	165

List of Figures

Figure 1: Stakeholders in the Process of Returning Teen Mothers to the Formal School System.....	5
Figure 2: The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System in Light of National & International Objectives	8
Figure 3: Comparison between the Number of Female Adolescents and School-Aged Teen Mothers in Jamaica 2008	16
Figure 4: Comparison between the Number of Secondary School Age Cohort with Adolescents Enrolled in the Secondary School System.....	28
Figure 5: Literature Map.....	39
Figure 6: Boundary of the Case	48
Figure 7: Representation of the Research Sample	49
Figure 8: Representation of the Sample across the Years 2003 - 2007	50
Figure 9: Summary of the Process of Analysis of Data.....	62
Figure 10: Comparison between Teen Mothers in Jamaica with Teen Mothers Enrolled in the Programme.....	75
Figure 11: Comparison between Teen Mothers Placed and the Number of Teen Mothers Returned to the Formal School System.....	129
Figure 12: The Status of the Teen Mothers who were Placed by the Centre.....	130
Figure 13: Summary of the Themes.....	148
Figure 14: Comparison between Teen Mothers who Experienced Financial Constraints with Those who did not Experience Financial Constraints.....	159
Figure 15: The Millennium High School Model	173
Figure 16: Dual Components of the Programme	175
Figure 17: Suggested Indicators of the Programme's Success.....	175

Abstract

Countries across the world attend to the phenomenon of teen motherhood in varying ways and from varying points of emphases. My research focused on teen motherhood in the Jamaican context, where teen pregnancy is perceived to be a social problem. In 1978, the Jamaican Government initiated the Women's Centre Programme for Adolescent Mothers. The Programme intervention seeks to provide continued education for teen mothers during their pregnancy, and to return them to the formal school system, subsequent to the birth of their babies.

Previous research found that a significant number of teen mothers in Jamaica do not complete their secondary education after their return to school. My research contended that, with the high cost of executing the Programme, and with the benefits to be derived from secondary education, every effort should be made to ensure that the teen mothers complete their secondary education. My research therefore sought to identify the factors that facilitate or frustrate the completion of secondary education for teen mothers who enroll in the Programme and return to the formal school system.

My research found that completion was facilitated by: preparation to return to school, internal fortitude, post-placement monitoring, familial support, as well as institutional support. Completion was frustrated by: inadequate preparation to return to school, insufficient post-placement monitoring, inadequate coping skills, little or no familial support, financial constraints, domestic challenges, and a second pregnancy. My research also found a disparity between the 'pre-placement' and 'post-placement' components of the intervention.

In a timely way, my research will help to meet national and international objectives: in particular, the Millennium Development Goals; Vision 2030 Jamaica. My research amplifies the voice of teen mothers in Jamaica; it provides a platform from which teen mothers may tell their own stories; it should reconfigure the national posture toward teen mothers. The findings of my research should: offer helpful insights into the experiences of teen mothers who are returned to school; add to the body of knowledge surrounding teen motherhood; and provoke further study into the phenomenon, not just in Jamaica but also in the Caribbean at large.

Dedication

This research project is dedicated to all the teen mothers in Jamaica who hurdled their social, emotional, economic, and academic challenges. Their success is testimony of the resilient human spirit and the innate human tendency that strives toward self actualization.

Acknowledgements

When I embarked on this project four years ago, I had no idea that it would have stretched me the way it did. I am however the better for it. I could not have completed this doctoral journey without external help. I therefore take the time to thank all those who, directly or indirectly, assisted me in one way or another.

The members of my immediate family proved to have been towers of strength: my husband, Stephen, and my sons John-Mark and Jonathan. Since we all were studying at varying levels at the same time, they all helped to create an atmosphere that was both conducive and comfortable.

I owe a debt of gratitude to several members of my extended family, three of whom were also seeking to complete doctoral programmes of their own. I was inspired by my cousin, Dr. Chloe Morris, who pushed herself beyond measure and completed her doctoral programme in 2009. My sister, Amoy Rhoe, offered helpful insights into the project activities, and encouraged me along as we pledged to not leave the other behind. That my nephew, Charles Thompson, dared to have pursued doctoral studies at a very young age also motivated me to complete.

Financing this project was a major challenge for me and the escalating foreign exchange rate was very unkind. Many thanks to my sister, Lois Thompson, who put her own plans to embark on a doctoral programme on hold, in order to be of financial assistance to me. Mamie T., my ninety-three year old 'aunt', sacrificially gave of her 'widow's mite' towards my tuition fees.

The Executive Director of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF), Mrs. Beryl Weir, is thanked for her endorsement of the project, and the moral support she offered throughout. Thanks also to the WCJF staff who assisted with locating the project participants and in supplying pertinent information when needed. The project participants: the teen mothers, their parents, the school principals and the school guidance counsellors, are all thanked for their willingness to participate in the project and to tell their stories in unreserved ways:

The Sheffield staff who were engaged in the Caribbean Programme contributed immensely to the completion of my project. I entered the programme with two degrees under my belt but soon learnt that a doctoral course of study was an entirely different kettle of fish. Mine was an experience of rebirth by the time I got done my second assignment. My previous assignments helped me to have come to this final assignment with a heightened sense of scholarship.

My supervisor, Dr. Michelle Moore, unreservedly offered her time, encouragement, and invaluable insights at critical times. Her enthusiasm, energy, and effervescent spirit often pulled me out of 'sinking sand'. Thanks also to Professor Sikes, who offered needed assistance when my assigned supervisor fell ill. The staff of the local facilitating body, the International University of the Caribbean, facilitated me in various ways. Particular mention is made of Dr. Jane Dodd, who was always interested to know just how I was progressing.

It was always a pleasure to meet again with my fellow students at each Study School. Their determination to stay the course was motivating. Special thanks to Lori Stewart, whose words of encouragement energized me each step of the way.

The enabling for everything that I pursue comes from the God of my faith. My limited resources paled in light of His limitless supply. His strength was made perfect in my instances of weaknesses; all the way.

Abbreviations

ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
ESSJ	Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
GNAT	Grade Nine Achievement Test
HEART Trust/NTA	Human Employment and Resource Training National Training Agency
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
OECD	Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PATH	Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
PTA	Parent and Teachers' Association
RGD	Registrar General's Department
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WCJF	Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation

Definition of Key Terms

The term **teen mother** is used in this study, to refer to a girl between the ages eleven to seventeen, who is pregnant or who has had a baby. The designation is made since this is the age cohort that becomes the concern of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation Programme for Adolescent Mothers, the institution which is the focus of this project.

In the Jamaican context, and therefore in this research, **Secondary Schools** are also referred to as High Schools, spanning grades 7 to 11, in all cases, and including grades 12 and 13, in schools which facilitate advanced studies in preparation for tertiary level education. Students enrolled in High Schools would therefore be between the ages twelve and eighteen years of age.

The word **return** is used in my research with reference to the teen mother's returning to the formal school system after the birth of their babies.

The term **formal school system** is used in this project with reference to institutionalized learning experience at the secondary school level of education.

The word **completion** is used to mean that the teen mothers continued to the end of their secondary school experience. The term is not used synonymously with graduation, since there are those teen mothers who would have finished the secondary school experience but who would not have 'graduated' (a term which is used to mean 'attended' the graduation ceremony).

Caribbean School Education Certificate, (CSEC) is the secondary school leaving examination sat in grade 11 (5th form) throughout the Caribbean. The examination is offered as per subject for which the students are enrolled.

The **Programme for Advancement through Health and Education (PATH)** is a social safety net instituted by the Jamaican Government to offer financial assistance to persons at the lower socio-economic strata. Students from low income families may qualify to benefit from the Programme which requires that they are enrolled in and are attending school.

HEART Trust/NTA is the government agency that is primarily responsible for vocational training in Jamaica.

Baby Father is a colloquial term that Jamaicans use to describe the father of the child that a woman has by a man to whom she is not married. Quite often, there is no relationship existing between both parties outside of the child that they both share.

Baby Mother is the term used generally with reference to a pregnant woman. The term is also used by men to refer to a woman with whom they have had a child and may have continuing intimate relationship.

Cruff is the term used to derogatorily describe a person who is deemed to be unambitious. S/he may be uneducated, unemployed, and dependent on others for her/his survival.

Douching is a method of introducing water into the uterus with a hand-held device. A mythical perception is that douching after sexual intercourse will prohibit a pregnancy.

Dunce is a derogatory term that is used to describe a person who is perceived to be of academic ability that is lower than that of her/his developmental age.

A **Parish** is the name given to the geographical boundaries which divide the island of Jamaica. Altogether, the island is divided into fourteen parishes.

Partner is an unofficial, unregulated saving plan in which a group of persons engage. The plan operates like a financial corporative, with one person deciding to serve as the 'banker' who collects and disburses the funds at specified periods. The individuals in the Partner decide on the sum of money to be invested on a weekly or monthly basis.

An **Advisory Board** is one that gives general oversight to the activities of the organization but does not necessarily influence the decisions of the organization.

The word **place** is used with reference to the acceptance of the teen mothers in the respective school. A girl therefore 'takes up the place' that was granted her at the particular school.

The term **Placement Exercise** is used with reference to the process whereby the WCJF counsellors request a 'place' for the teen mothers at the respective schools.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The present rate of teen pregnancy in Jamaica is 18.5% of every live birth (RGD 2008). This was certainly not the case in the 1970s; the rate was significantly higher at 31% of all births (McNeil, no date, p. 4). This scenario was alarming since "...young mothers were likely to follow a pattern of repeat pregnancies, leading to 3-4 children by age 20" (McNeil, no date, p.4). The pattern of repeat pregnancy was highly probable since the teen mothers would naturally drop out of school. "In Jamaica, the Ministry of Education stipulates that pregnant girls drop out of school" (Barnett *et al* 1996, p.3). And then, "...only 16% of these returned to school after the birth of their child" (Olaniyi *et al* 2007, p.494). For teen mothers in Jamaica, dropping out of school on account of a pregnancy therefore meant delayed or discontinued formal education.

"Social and economic consequences assail Jamaican adolescent mothers. They are often limited economically, usually abandoned by partners, and frequently unable to complete school" (Olaniyi *et al* 2007, p.490). A report by the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF) substantiates the point that teen parenting brought with it problems of low educational achievement, low employment possibilities, and a cycle of poverty for the mother and her baby (WCJF Annual Report 2009, p.1).

In 1978, the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) addressed the problem of teen pregnancy in Jamaica and initiated the Programme for Adolescent Mothers (hereon sometimes referred to only as the Programme) which was implemented through the organization named the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF). The Programme aimed at reducing the rate of teen pregnancy and addressing the problems associated with the phenomenon (Barnett *et al* 1996, p.3). The Programme "was designed to continue the education of those girls who became pregnant while in school and to assist them in returning to the school system after the birth of the child as well as to avoid subsequent pregnancies while they were in school" (McNeil *et al* 1990, p.2).

The Programme has, over the years, been lauded for the successful execution of its mandate. It has also been recognized as being a contributing agent to the reduction of the rate of teen pregnancy in Jamaica. "The WCJF is nationally regarded as being a

best practice, and has been replicated in other Caribbean and African countries” (Barnett et al, 1996 p.4). “The real achievements of the WCJF include...the thousands of young women who have been able to achieve academic success and social advancement” (McNeil no date, p.4).

The Programme prides itself with its success which is measured primarily by:

- The number of teen mothers enrolled in the Programme
- The number of teen mothers returned to the formal school system
- The second pregnancy rate which has remained under 2% over the years
- The number of teen mothers who advance to tertiary level education spanning a wide range of disciplines (Women’s Centre of Jamaica Foundation Handbook 2009, p.7).

I agree that these are laudable indicators of success. However, there seems to be an aspect of the Programme that has not been included among its laurels; it has not been paraded before the eyes of the scrutinizing public; it has not been sufficiently interrogated. I make mention of, and call attention to, the number of teen mothers who complete or do not complete their secondary education. Research conducted by Chavannes in 1996 revealed that 46% of teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system drop out a second time. It might be comforting to point to the number of teen mothers registered in the Programme each year; it might be satisfactory to point to the number of teen mothers returned to the school system each year. It might, however, be disturbing to realize that a significant number of teen mothers may not have completed their secondary education. It seems to me, therefore, that the most critical indicator of the Programme’s success is the number of teen mothers who complete their secondary education.

It could be argued (and I would accept) that this area of my concern is not located in the mandate of the Programme.¹ I would however counter argue that perhaps it should be. For, what good would it be to expend limited resources, time, and energy to have the teen mothers enroll in the Programme, return to the formal school system, only to

¹ The mandate of the Programme is to address the problems associated with teenage pregnancy and to have the girls return to the formal school system subsequent to the birth of their babies (WCJF Annual Report 2008-2009, p. 1).

have them drop out the second time around? It cannot be enough to return the girls to school and call it done! The energies expended to have them return must equate the energies expended to have them complete. And so, whilst the girls are in school, they should be kept in continued focus. Every effort must be made to ensure that they complete. It has to be a concern of the WCJF (and the other stakeholders) that the teen mothers complete their secondary education.

My research contends that the matter of the completion of secondary education for teen mothers returned to the formal school system must be critically examined. It is with a sense of compulsion that I have therefore embarked on this research which I have entitled **“The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System: Redeeming A Second Chance to Complete Secondary Education.”**

Research questions

My project sought to answer the main question: “What are the factors that facilitate or frustrate the process of completion of secondary education for teen mothers?” This primary question generated some secondary questions:

1. What are the roles of the various stakeholders in the return of teen mothers to the formal school system?
2. In what ways do the roles played by the stakeholders facilitate or frustrate completion of secondary education for teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system?
3. What is the nature of the process whereby the teen mothers are prepared to return to the formal school system?
4. How effective is the process of preparation for the teen mothers’ return to the formal school system?
5. What is the extent of the process of monitoring that is accorded the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?
6. How effective is the process of monitoring that the WCJF proposes to offer the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?
7. What are the systemic factors that facilitate or frustrate the completion of secondary education for teen mothers?

Aims and objectives of the research

Specifically, my research set out to:

- 1) Identify the factors that facilitate or frustrate the completion of secondary education for teen mothers who have been returned to the formal school system by the WCJF.
- 2) Determine the extent to which the teen mothers are prepared to return to the formal school system.
- 3) Identify the role played by each stakeholder in facilitating or frustrating the teen mothers' completion of their secondary education.
- 4) Identify the inherent strengths and or weaknesses of the process whereby the teen mothers are monitored subsequent to their return to the formal school system.
- 5) Add to the body of knowledge related to teen mothers in the education system.
- 6) Provoke further research into the problems associated with the phenomenon of teen motherhood in Jamaica, and by extension, in the Caribbean at large.

Purpose and value of study

“The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures” (Berg 2001, p.6). The purpose and value of my research project are presented in this section, and are stated against the individual research questions that were earlier mentioned.

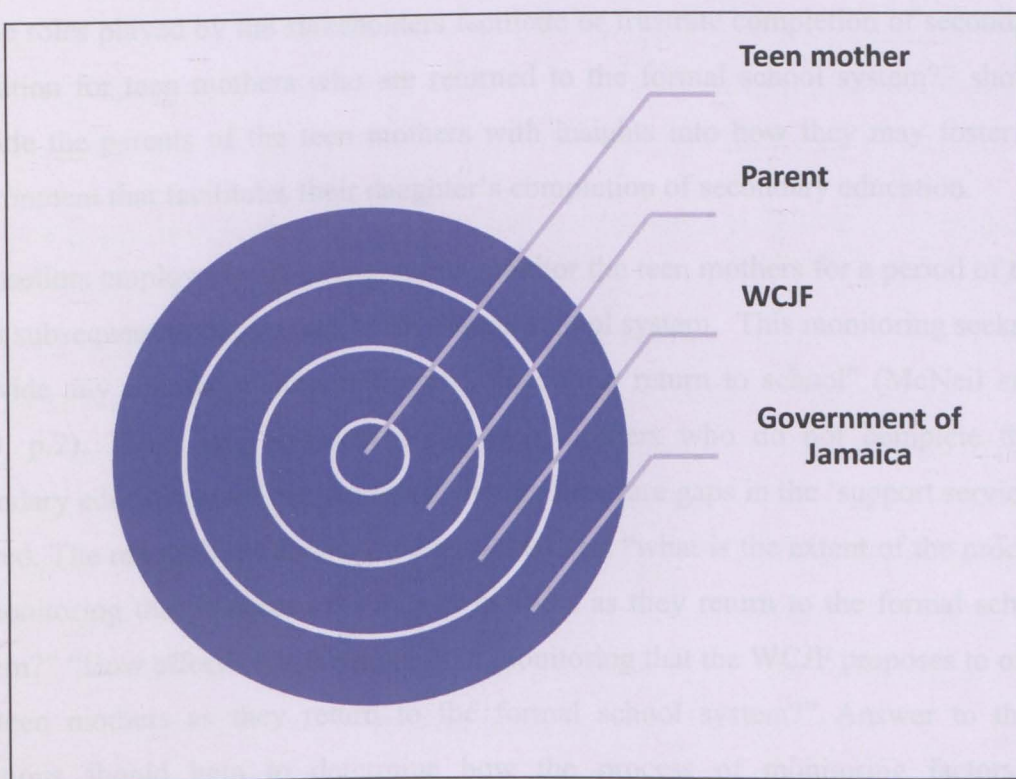
“Research is important because it suggests improvement for practice” (Creswell 2008, p. 4). My research sought answers for questions like: “how effective is the process of preparation for the teen mothers' return to the formal school system?” and, “what is the extent of the process of monitoring that is accorded the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?” I am of the opinion that answers to these questions should improve practice in pertinent areas of the execution of the Programme.

The return of teen mothers to the formal school system and their completion of the process is facilitated by several stakeholders (see figure 1, p.5): the WCJF that implements the Programme; the teen mothers themselves who must place a value on their education and accept the placement; the parents of the teen mothers who are primarily responsible for the teen mothers; the schools at which the teen mothers are

placed; and the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) that initiated and continues to fund the Programme. My research holds significance for each of these stakeholders. Answers to the question “In what ways do the roles played by the stakeholders facilitate or frustrate completion of secondary education for teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system?” will underscore and unite the individual efforts of the respective stakeholders in ensuring that the teen mothers return to school and complete their secondary education.

Figure 1: Stakeholders in the Process of Returning Teen Mothers to the Formal School System

Adapted from the Social Systems Model



Stakeholders in the process of the teen mothers' return to school include four sets of persons/institutions. As the figure shows, the activities of the other stakeholders revolve around the teen mothers, who must first be willing to return to the formal school system.

Teen mothers returning to school are not just students concerned with completing their secondary education; they are also mothers who are concerned with the welfare and wellbeing of their babies. It may be challenging for them to balance between being a student and being a parent at the same time; between doing homework and

attending to the needs of their babies. Answer to the main research question: “What are the factors that facilitate or frustrate the process of completion of secondary education for teen mothers?” should provide the teen mothers with ammunition that will aid the process of completion despite their added responsibilities.

Parents are in fact stakeholders in the process of the teen mothers’ return and completion. Several mothers of teen mothers were themselves teen mothers (Barnett *et al* 1996). Whereas parents are usually appreciative of the WCJF’s efforts to give their daughters a second chance to complete their secondary education, they too have a critical role to play. School expenses must be financed. Babies must be cared for while the teen mother attends school. Answer to the research question, “In what ways do the roles played by the stakeholders facilitate or frustrate completion of secondary education for teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system?” should provide the parents of the teen mothers with insights into how they may foster an environment that facilitates their daughter’s completion of secondary education.

Counsellors employed to the Programme monitor the teen mothers for a period of two years subsequent to their return to the formal school system. This monitoring seeks to “provide any necessary support services after their return to school” (McNeil *et al* 1990, p.2). There are, however, some teen mothers who do not complete their secondary education and one wonders whether there are gaps in the ‘support services’ offered. The research questions to be answered are: “what is the extent of the process of monitoring that is accorded the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?” “How effective is the process of monitoring that the WCJF proposes to offer the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?” Answer to these questions should help to determine how the process of monitoring factors in facilitating or frustrating return and completion.

The Jamaican society is generally unkind to teen mothers. The unkindness is likely to permeate the school environment which may prove to be unpleasant and unwelcoming to the girls. Some of the students and teachers are from the very communities in which the girls reside. It can therefore be imagined that it would not be difficult for word to get out that a particular girl is in fact a teen mother. My research proposes to answer the question, “What are the systemic factors that facilitate or frustrate the completion of secondary education for teen mothers?”

Satisfactory answer to this question should highlight those aspects of the school system that facilitate completion and would therefore be advantageous to the teen mothers as they return to school. Answer to the question should also expose, and therefore seek to correct, the gaps in the school system that frustrate completion for the teen mothers.

Anecdotal reports are that there are those school officials who subscribe to the view that teen mothers are baby mothers who do not belong in the school system since they have lost focus and will only inveigle other girls to come to a similar end. Those with this mindset, remain ignorant of the role they play in facilitating or frustrating the teen mothers' return to school and the completion of their secondary education. In bringing the role that the school plays under scrutiny and into light, I perceive that my research will expose institutional weaknesses (if they exist) and so help the schools to play a more pivotal role in assisting teen mothers to complete their secondary education.

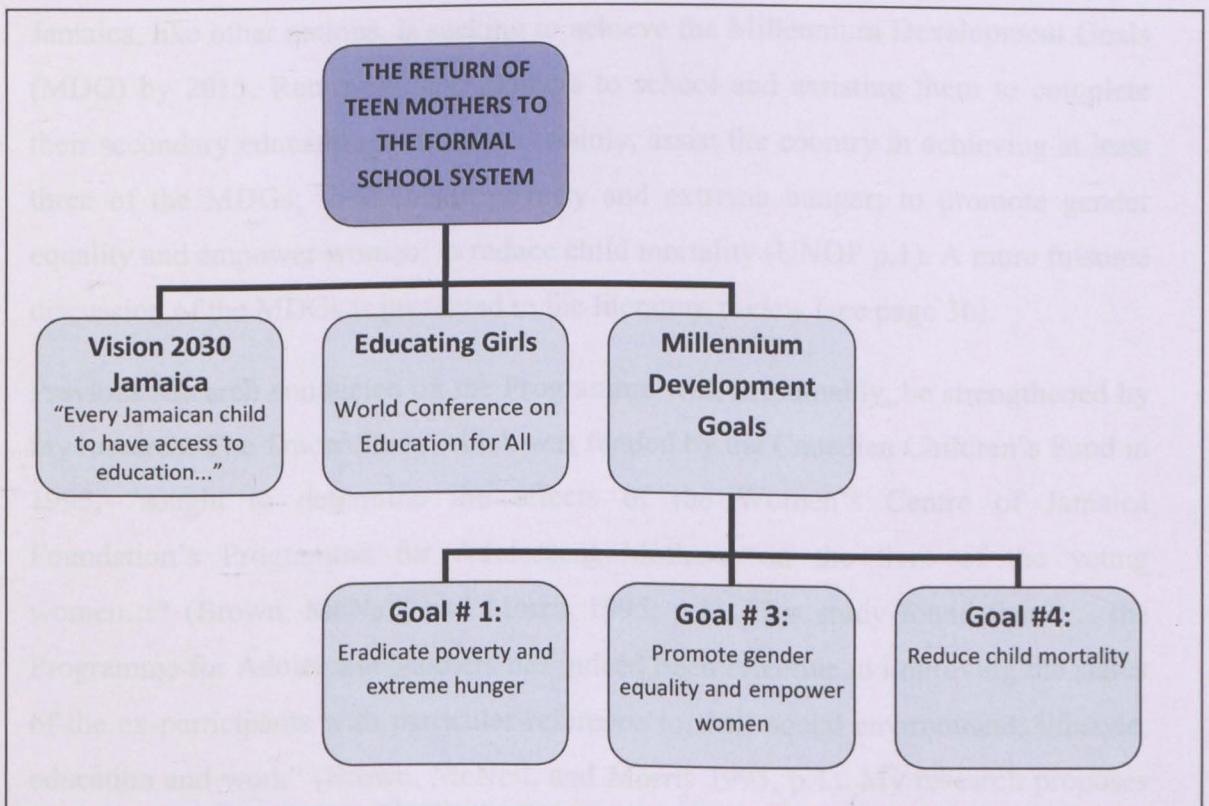
The Programme is funded by the Government of Jamaica, a critical stakeholder in the return of teen mothers to the formal school system. Each year, the Government of Jamaica provides the WCJF with a budget in excess of one hundred million dollars. This figure translates into approximately \$66,000.00 per teen mother (with an average of 1500 teen mothers annually). Considering the sizeable annual budgetary cost to administer the Programme, of what good would it be to have a teen mother register in the Programme but later drop out of school a second time? The cost of executing the Programme can only be duly justified where every teen mother maximizes the second chance to complete her secondary education. To this end, the factors that will aid this process of completion must be identified and highlighted by my research.

“Research...creates conversations about important issues when policy makers debate educational topics” (Creswell 2008, p.6). My research is positioned to influence policy surrounding the return of teen mothers to the formal school system. In 2007, the Ministry of Education (MOE) held several consultative meetings with relevant agencies and organizations as it presented its intent, and sought to garner the public's opinion, about a proposed policy which would see the mandatory return of teen mothers to the formal school system. In this regard, my research is timely; it promises to be instructive to the MOE as it concerns itself with the education of teen mothers.

My research is conducted at a time when the Government of Jamaica seeks to renew negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for funding with which to balance the fiscal budget and settle its balance of payments. At the present time within the nation, much is being said about Public Sector Transformation; much is being done towards restructuring, merging, and downsizing of Government agencies in an effort to make the Public Sector more effective and efficient and thereby meeting the conditions and conditionalities of the IMF. Every Government agency is expected to comply with these efforts. My research may provide the administrators of the WCJF (which is a Government agency) with insights into how it may internally restructure and reposition the Programme in keeping with national objectives.

My research is positioned to fulfil national and international goals (see figure 2 below). In a document entitled “Vision 2030 Jamaica” (STATIN 2009), the GOJ

Figure 2: The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System in Light of National & International Objectives



charts the course whereby Jamaica will become a developed nation by 2030. One of the objectives to this end is for “every Jamaican child to have access to education to the level that enables him/her to access further education, training and/or decent work” (SATIN 2009, p.67). My research proposes to contribute to the realization of this objective. Answer to the primary research question “What are the factors that facilitate or frustrate the process of completion of secondary education for teen mothers?” could help to position teen mothers to complete their secondary education and thus be enabled “to access further education, training and/or decent work” (SATIN 2009, p.67).

My research proposes to assist more teen mothers, if not all, to complete their secondary level education, and is therefore in tandem with international drives that advance girls’ education. According to Bellamy (2003, pp.2-3) who echoes UNICEF’s commitment to ensuring girls education, “...no girl, however poor, however desperate her country’s situation, is to be excluded from school. There is no acceptable excuse for denying her the opportunities to develop to her fullest potential.”

Jamaica, like other nations, is seeking to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015. Returning teen mothers to school and assisting them to complete their secondary education will, most certainly, assist the country in achieving at least three of the MDGs: to eradicate poverty and extreme hunger; to promote gender equality and empower women; to reduce child mortality (UNDP p.1). A more fulsome discussion of the MDGs is presented in the literature review (see page 36).

Previous research conducted on the Programme will, presumably, be strengthened by my research. The Tracer Study which was funded by the Canadian Children’s Fund in 1995, “sought to determine the effects of the Women’s Centre of Jamaica Foundation’s Programme for Adolescent Mothers, on the lives of the young women...” (Brown, McNeil, and Morris 1995, p.1). This study found that “... the Programme for Adolescent Mothers has indeed been effective in improving the status of the ex-participants with particular reference to their social environment, lifestyle, education and work” (Brown, McNeil, and Morris 1995, p.1). My research proposes to advance the findings of the Tracer Study where research findings will assist the WCJF to further “improve the status of the ex-participants” who, having completed

their secondary education, would have been empowered to increase their employment potential.

Research entitled “Recidivism Among Jamaican Teen Mothers” was conducted by Vonna Lou Caleb Drayton in 1997. One of the objectives of this research was to compare the educational attainment of girls who accessed the Programme with that of girls who did not access the Programme. The research found that girls who accessed the Programme were more likely to continue their education than those who did not access the Programme (Caleb Drayton 2000, p.7). The finding of Caleb Drayton’s research was grounded in the fact that teen mothers who accessed the WCJF’s Programme were 1.5 times (50%) more likely... to complete High School than non participants (p.34). My research should therefore complement, and in fact advance Caleb Drayton’s research. If the findings of my research position more teen mothers to complete their secondary education, then, it stands to reason that more teen mothers will be positioned to pursue advanced studies. It is in completing their secondary education that the teen mothers are most likely to pursue advanced education.

Professor Barrington Chevannes also scrutinized the Programme in a research which he conducted in 1996. “The main objectives were to report on the effectiveness of the Programme on reinstating adolescent mothers in high school and delaying second pregnancies until the completion of their high school education, and to assess its overall cost-benefit” (Chevannes 1996, p.7). The results of this research were that: “the Women’s Centre clients fetch higher pay than Controls. ...WCJF participants will wait at least 5 yrs. before a second pregnancy. ...The babies of the WCJF girls are less likely to become teen parents” (Chevannes 1996, abstract).

Chevannes’ research also found that 46% of the Programme participants did not complete their secondary level education. My research proposes to take the Chevannes report to another level. In the first place, the percentage of teen mothers who do not complete their secondary education should be significantly reduced where the findings of my research facilitate more teen mothers to complete their secondary education. Then, where more teen mothers complete their secondary education, there will be more of them who will “fetch higher pay...” and therefore become financially independent.

The cost-benefit analysis of the study conducted by Chevannes (1996) found that a saving of 7 cents to every dollar accrued to the GOJ for every girl who accessed the WCJF Programme. My research both advances and at the same time challenges the findings of this cost-benefit analysis. It stands to reason that where the findings of my research assist more teen mothers to complete secondary education, then, the overall cost-benefit that was highlighted by the Chevannes report will be increased. In the same breath, my research contends that for every teen mother who does not complete her high school placement, the 7 cents out of every dollar saving to the GOJ will be significantly reduced. In fact, I want to purport that there is a significant cost to the GOJ and the nation at large for every teen mother who does not complete her secondary education. Of course, that is another research.

My project could also provoke further research into additional areas pertaining to teen mothers. It should be interesting to investigate: the specific needs of teen mothers in school. With the gamut of information available on sexual behaviour, it should also be interesting to investigate the disparity between knowledge and practice that results in the phenomenon of teen pregnancy. From observation, the teen mothers, (at least those who access the WCJF Programme intervention) as they face the reality of their situation, seem to suddenly experience a rebirth of person that propels them towards self actualization. Many are the reports of teen mothers who, prior to their pregnancy, might not have been doing well in school. These same girls, however, ascend to places of “new heights” as they are given a second chance to complete their secondary education. This “rebirth” experience is worthy of investigation and should provide helpful insights to those who work with adolescents. Research into how teen mothers are able to strike a balance between the various roles that they are forced to play should also provide insightful information and further highlight the work and worth of the WCJF.

Research into the phenomenon of teen motherhood is an emerging field of interest in the Caribbean context. As such, there is a paucity of literature on the phenomenon within the Caribbean region on the whole, and more specifically in Jamaica. My own reading for this research led me to several writers and researchers whose focus had a North American and European leaning. However, I am of the view that the experiences of teen mothers in other cultures might be somewhat different (even if

only in part) to the experiences of teen mothers in the Caribbean. My search for contextual literature left me with undocumented information on how teen motherhood is regarded and treated with, in other Caribbean countries. My project specifically provides insight into the school experiences of teen mothers in Jamaica. I however perceive, that my research, and the possible others that it will ignite, will fill the void among available literature on problems associated with teen pregnancy; it will add to the emerging body of knowledge about teen motherhood not only in Jamaica, but in the Caribbean at large.

Positionality

I have been employed by the WCJF for the past 17 years, during which time I have served the organization in various and varying capacities. In my present capacity as Director of Field Operations, I give supervision to the Programme activities at all the sites at which the Programme is implemented.

I readily admit that I am sympathetic with the circumstances of the teen mothers. Considering the Jamaican practice of marginalizing teen mothers, I would have preferred that the pregnancies were delayed until the girls had at least completed their secondary education. However, I am of the view that teen motherhood is not anymore a dilemma than is any other situation that confronts adolescents living in Jamaica in the twenty-first century.

My calculated opinion is that teen mothers should unequivocally and unquestioningly be reintegrated into the regular school system. Yes, they made a 'mistake'; but who does not! Teen mothers should however be encouraged to delay a second pregnancy until later years. Since adolescents are sexually active, they should be educated about their choices and be allowed to exercise their freedom in the choice of contraceptive methods.

I readily embrace education for all, since, in my opinion, everyone should seek to discover the depth of his or her potential. I more so advocate education for women, where it abounds to personal growth and development and allows for a measure of economic viability and independence.

My job function with the WCJF requires me to ensure that policies are adhered to throughout. The stories of the teen mothers revealed gaps in some areas of policy adherence. As these were revealed, I sought to be as impartial as possible, in not defending the activities of the counsellors or justifying some of the actions taken. In essence therefore, every effort was made to have kept the research process and procedures independent of my relationship with the Programme. However, as Somekh and Lewin (2006, p.67 quoting Lennon and Whitford 1994, p.2) said, “Knowledge bears the mark of its producer.” And, in speaking to the matter of positionality, Somekh and Lewin (2006, p.67) points to “the implications of the researcher in the production of knowledge...” I was, therefore, fully aware that the ‘insiderness’ (Sikes and Potts 2008) of my research might have been brought to bear on the research activities; might have caused some measure of bias; might have prejudiced the findings. I have sought to address the matter of researcher’s bias in a more fulsome manner in the section entitled “reflexivity” (see page 69).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter situates my research within the framework of related literature, and focuses on two pivotal concepts which have emerged from the research title: teen motherhood and education. I have constructed a literature map (see Figure 5 on page 39) which outlines the major topics and the sub topics contained in the literature review.

Teen motherhood is part of the broader discussion about teenage pregnancy which incorporates both genders. Notwithstanding, the literature review has kept its focus on teen motherhood per se, since it is the specific and focal theme of my research. Teen motherhood is discussed in terms of prevalence; how it is perceived across cultural regions; predisposing factors, and consequences.

Education, as a concept, is discussed in terms of: the modes of education; secondary education; school dropout; parental involvement in children's education, and the importance of educating girls. There is much to be said about each subtopic of focus. However, the review limits itself to brief discussions about each. There are several other subtopics that could have been included in the presentation: globalization, lifelong learning and human capital readily come to mind. However, based on the page limitations of my report, I have taken the decision to limit the presentation to those areas that are of most direct and particular import to the topic at hand.

The literature review also gives consideration to other research projects, and theories related to my research topic. Consideration is given to research projects such as: adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH); early sexual initiation among adolescents; and parental involvement in children's education. The theories that underpin my research include: adolescent development and sexuality; attribution; cognitive behavioural theory; coping skills; cultural capital; dependence; existentialism; learnt helplessness; motivation; resilience; self actualization; self efficacy; social capital; social learning; social systems; social cognitive learning. "In some qualitative studies, researchers use the literature to support the findings. ... researchers often cite the literature at the end of the study as a contrast or comparison

with the major findings in the study (Creswell 2006, p.90). Theories relevant to my research are presented both in the Literature Review as well as in the section that presents the research findings.

The literature review draws on current material and on the work of individuals having a voice of authority on the topics that are of interest to my research. The presentation leans heavily on material posited by European and North American writers and theorists. “Theories of economics, sociology, government and education developed by Europeans and North Americans ... are influenced by these theorists’ social context and milieu” (Miller 1990, p.25). Miller therefore contends that social phenomena should be examined contextually. I adopt the stance taken by Miller. Hence, although the literature review spans the international context, it specifically makes reference to the Jamaican context in instances.

Teen Motherhood

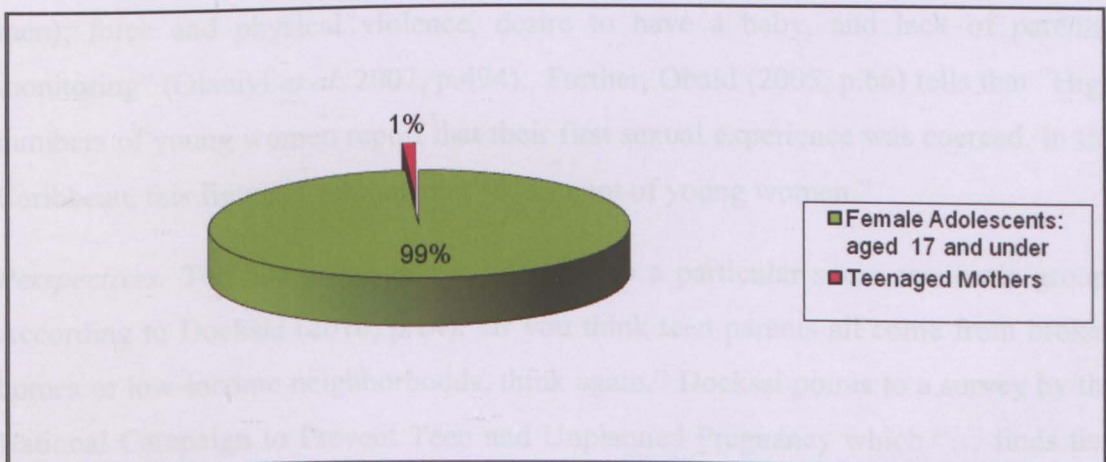
Prevalence. Teen motherhood is a phenomenon that cuts across cultural and socio-economic barriers. The fact is that adolescents are sexually active. It is highly probable that sexual activity will result in a pregnancy. It follows naturally, therefore, that adolescents will become pregnant, especially if they fail to use, or if they misuse a contraceptive method. In the United States, 800,000 to 900,000 adolescent girls who are 19 years of age or younger become pregnant each year resulting in the highest adolescent pregnancy rate among developed countries (Sieger and Renk 2007, p.567). Tripp and Viner (2005, p.590) report that, “The United Kingdom has the highest rate in Western Europe and is lower only than Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine in Europe as a whole.”

Lauglo (2008, p.7) reports that in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), “... 25% of young women are mothers before they are 20 years old ...” Speaking of the Caribbean region, Caleb Drayton (2002, p.151) quotes Jagdeo as having said that, “early sexual activity and early childbearing are solid features of the adolescent landscape in the region.” According to Rickets and Anderson (2009, p.9), “Historically, the Caribbean has had high levels of teenage fertility and although the rates have fallen significantly in the period 1997 to 2002, the rate is still too high.” In

Jamaica, "... 12% of the female population aged 15-19 years is sexually active, and 12% of the female population aged 15-19 has had 2 or more pregnancies" (PAHO 2007, p. 452).

The Reproductive Health Survey Jamaica 2008 (Planning Institute of Jamaica 2010, p.88), reveals that there has been a decline in adolescent fertility in recent years. According to the report the fertility rate for adolescents in the 15-18 age group dropped from 79 births per 1,000 in 2002 to 72 births per 1,000 in 2008. The Registrar General's Department (RGD) reports that according to their 2008 statistics, 18% of live births are to adolescent mothers; a far cry from the 31% of the 1970s. Of the 300,345 adolescent females in Jamaica in 2008 (STATIN), the RGD reports that 2,989 were teen mothers who were 17 years of age and under; the age group that is of interest to my research. This, of course, is a mere 1% of the female adolescent population (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Comparison of the Number of Female Adolescents with School-Aged Teen Mothers in Jamaica 2008



For the purposes of my research, the school age group has been confined to the 17 and under age cohort. Most 18 year olds would have graduated or are about to be graduated from school.

Teen motherhood has been attributed to the fact of early sexual initiation. "Globally, early adolescent sexual activity and teenage pregnancy remains a recurring public

health issue. ... early teenage sexual activity is associated with a higher likelihood of subsequent unprotected sex and multiple sexual partners, putting adolescents at risk” (Olaniyi *et al* 2007, p. 494). Caleb Drayton (2002, p. 151) observes that “Caribbean society does not frown on premarital sex” Like their peers in other parts of the world, adolescents in Jamaica are also involved in early sexual initiation. The Reproductive Health Survey Jamaica 2008 (2010) reveals that 26% of women and 47.4% of men within the 15-17 age groups have had sexual intercourse. The Survey further reveals that 11.9% of women had their first sexual act at age 15 and under; 50.3% had their first sexual experience age 17 and under. For men, 34.7% had their first sexual experience at age 15 and under while 67.4% had their first sexual experience at age 18 and under. Another study also revealed that “the average age for sexual interaction was 15.8 for females and 13.5 for males (PAHO 2007, p.452).

Early sexual initiation is explained on several grounds. “Findings from qualitative studies confirmed that a combination of individual and family level factors is associated with early sexual activity” (Olaniyi *et al* 2007, p.494). More specifically, “Early coitus for girls has been reported to be associated with sex in exchange for money to meet economic needs, exploitation by male relatives, sexual curiosity, seeking fun and pleasure, love and affection, pressure (from boys, peers and adult men), force and physical violence, desire to have a baby, and lack of parental monitoring” (Olaniyi *et al.* 2007, p.494). Further, Obaid (2005, p.66) tells that “High numbers of young women report that their first sexual experience was coerced. In the Caribbean, this figure is estimated at 48 per cent of young women.”

Perspectives. Teenage pregnancy is not akin to a particular socio-economic group. According to Docksai (2010, p.14), “If you think teen parents all come from broken homes or low-income neighborhoods, think again.” Docksai points to a survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy which “... finds that teen parents represent every socioeconomic and demographic category: 41% of US teen parents come from homes at or above 200% of the federal poverty line, and 70% were raised in two-parent homes” (Docksai 2010, p.14). Docksai goes on to say that, “the majority of Americans think *teen pregnancy* is some other group's problem, that it appears to be poor people and girls from single-parent homes” (2010, p.14).

It is understood that teen motherhood, is not regarded or responded to in the same way across countries. “For African American adolescents...pregnancy and parenting may be viewed as a rite of passage to adulthood...and adolescents may gain status by becoming mothers” (Sieger and Renk 2007, p.569). In the United Kingdom, “Many young mothers and fathers themselves express positive attitudes to parenthood and mothers usually describe how motherhood makes them feel stronger, more competent, more connected, and more responsible” (Duncan, Alexander, and Edwards (2010, p. 4). Tripp and Viner (2005, p.590) write saying, “It is important to recognize that for some young women, particularly from certain ethnic or social group, teenage pregnancy can be a positive life choice. Rates of teenage pregnancy within marriage are high, for example, in some South Asian ethnic groups in the United Kingdom.”

Sieger and Renk (2007, p.569) cite work done by Pines, (1993) in making the point that “... some researchers believe that adolescent pregnancy can be viewed as adaptive if it facilitates the normal developmental changes of puberty.” Sieger and Renk (2007, p.569, referencing Stevens 1994), go on to say that, “... in certain ethnic groups, adolescent pregnancy may serve as a means to gain status, solidifying networks, and become independent and responsible.” It is also noted that, “For many young mothers and fathers, parenting seems to provide the impetus to change direction, or build on existing resources, so as to take up education, training and employment” (Duncan, Alexander, and Edwards 2010, p. 4). In a positive way, therefore, “Teenage parenting may be more of an opportunity than a catastrophe” (Duncan, Alexander, and Edwards 2010, p. 4).

“Although parenthood can be a positive and life enhancing experience for some young people, it may also bring a number of negative consequences for young parents and their children” (Swan et al 2003, p.2). “Adolescent pregnancy and parenting often has been viewed as maladaptive, as it may be associated with negative behaviours (e.g. failing to seek medical attention, dropping out of school, falling into negative emotional states” (Sieger and Renk 2007, citing Szigethy and Ruiz, 2001).

Jamaica is among the countries that view teen motherhood in a negative light. Teen mothers are regarded with impunity by the society at large. Words like: rude, unambitious, and careless, are only some of the negative words often used to describe teen mothers in Jamaica. The Education Act stipulates that teen mothers are not

allowed to remain in school while they are pregnant. “A student of a public institution who becomes pregnant shall be excluded from attending the institution during the period of pregnancy ...” (MOE 1980, p.21, Section 31).

Predisposing Factors. Notwithstanding the varying perspectives on teen motherhood, it would be helpful to give consideration to some of the factors that predispose adolescent girls to becoming pregnant. Inadequate information is one such factor. It is believed that teenage pregnancy is likely to result where adolescents are inadequately informed about their reproductive health issues. Cobbs note that “Most adolescents are surprisingly misinformed about their own reproductive capabilities” (2001, p.257). Cobbs goes on to say that, “Some surveys have shown that as many as two-thirds of adolescent girls believe it isn’t necessary for them to take any precautions because they are too young to get pregnant or because they have not had intercourse enough times to become pregnant” (2001, p.257-258). Tripp and Viner (2005, p.590) assert that “Having sex for the first time at an early age is often associated with unsafe sex in part through lack of knowledge, lack of access to contraception, lack of skills and self efficacy to negotiate contraception, ... or inadequate self efficacy to resist pressure.” Obaid reports that “Both adolescent boys and girls who engage in sexual activity often begin with little knowledge of sexuality, reproductive health, safer sexual practices, or their right to refuse and to abstain” (2003, p.19).

In the Jamaican context, myths about pregnancy abound and give support to the belief that some adolescents are inadequately informed about reproductive health issues. For example, it is believed that having sex in the sea cannot result in a pregnancy. Or, having sex standing up cannot result in a pregnancy. There are still others who think that applying homemade remedies like douching after sexual intercourse can prevent a pregnancy.

Another predisposing factor surrounds cultural responses to ASRH issues. “Cultural and social gender norms often restrict adolescent girls’ access to basic information and knowledge and prescribe an unequal and passive role in sexual decision making. This undermines their autonomy and exposes many of them to sexual coercion and abusive relationships...” (Lauglo 2008, p.8).

A pregnancy is likely to occur where adolescents refrain from using a contraceptive method, or where the method is used incorrectly. With reference to the American context, Cobbs (2001, p.257) notes that “More than a million adolescent girls become pregnant every year. Most of them do so unintentionally. One might think that early sexual activity among adolescents would be accompanied by an equal sophistication concerning contraception, but data suggest this is not the case.” Report by PAHO indicates that “Nearly 90% of youth in LAC have reported familiarity with at least one method of contraception, but between 48% and 53% of sexually active youth never used contraception. Among those who had used a contraceptive method, approximately 40% did not use contraception regularly” (Lauglo 2008, p.7). The PAHO report further reveals that “45% of these pregnancies to youth in the LAC are the result of misuse or lack of contraceptives” (Lauglo 2008, p.7).

In the Jamaican context, a USAID sponsored survey of sexual behaviour among 10 to 15 year olds revealed that 34.8% of those who were sexually active did not use a method of contraception. 26% of the individuals reported that they did not know where to get a method and 1 in 10 persons said that they did not think about using a method of contraception” (Fox and Strachan 2007, p.25). The survey however reports that “81.6% of women within the 15-24 age group used a contraceptive method at first intercourse. 71.8% of men within the said age group reportedly used a contraceptive method at first intercourse” (Fox and Strachan 2007, p.25).

According to the Reproductive Health Survey Jamaica 2008 (2010, p.76) the commonly cited reasons for not using a contraceptive method were as follows: 47.8% of women and 28.7% of men said that they did not expect to have sex. 3.7% women and 11.0% men said that they could not get a method at that time of intercourse. 6.7% of women and 21.1% of men said that they did not know of any methods. 1.3% of women and 6.1% of men said that they did not know where to get a method. 2.3% of women and 0.3% of men said that their partner was against the use of a method.

It is believed that there is an existing disconnect between knowledge and practice which often results in a pregnancy among teenagers. Today, more than ever, information abounds about sexual and reproductive health and practices. Much of the information however, seems not to be translated into behaviour among adolescents. It

is important to note, however, that research findings are inconclusive about the connection between knowledge and practice among sexually active adolescents. Cobbs (2001, p.258 citing Hayes, 1987) notes that “Much research suggests that the more adolescents know about the risk of pregnancy, the more likely they are to use a contraceptive. Other findings suggest that knowledge and behaviour are unrelated.”

The geographical area in which girls reside has been cited as a predisposing factor to pregnancy. “It should also be noted that female adolescents in rural areas are more likely to become pregnant at an early age than those in urban areas, as are those who are in the lowest socio-economic level compared to the highest. These young women are generally poor, without social support networks and have little education, thus continuing the vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty” (Lauglo 2008, p.7).

Researchers have also pointed to “internal and external poverty” that predispose girls for teenage pregnancy. Auslander *et al* (2005, p.2) in reporting on a research conducted by the University of Arkansas say that “Internal poverty describes a person's lack of internal resources, such as attitudes and beliefs that attribute outcomes to individual effort, high future expectations, and few perceived limitations for life options.” The researchers also say that “Girls are more likely to become pregnant as teens if they have low educational expectations and are not confident that they'll graduate from high school. These "internal poverty" indicators are among the variables contributing most to teen pregnancy” (Auslander *et al* 2005, p.2). “In addition to low educational confidence and expectations, teenage girls who became pregnant also reported feeling that their future job choices were limited” (Auslander *et al* 2005, p.2). Swan *et al* (2003, p.1) also cite work done by Kiernan, (1995) as revealing that “young people with below average achievement levels at ages 7 and 16 have also been found to be at significantly higher risk of becoming teenage parents.”

Coles (2005, p.10) made reference to the University of Arkansas' study and identified that “Girls who ... became pregnant were likely also to experience external poverty, such as parents with lower occupational, educational, or economic status. This research finding is supported by research conducted in Jamaica by Ricketts and Anderson (2009, p.55) which found that “The time which caregivers allocated to encouraging the intellectual development of their children was clearly related to their own education level.”

Inadequate attention given to policies related to ASRH is also a predisposing factor for mention. Speaking about the high rates of pregnancy, Lauglo (2008, p.7) in a PAHO report said, “A study in 2008 found that this could be attributed to a lack of policies related to sexual and reproductive health education that efficiently respond to the increasingly lower age of adolescents’ first sexual experience.” In the Jamaican context, Aguilar and Sotelo (1997, p.140) note that “The Government provides few reproductive health programs or services specifically geared towards adolescents. Neither the National Family Planning Act nor the Revised Population Policy Statement specifically targets adolescents or articulates policy for promoting reproductive health and education among adolescents. Hence, the Government does not provide contraceptives to schools, and contraceptives thus are not available in such locations.”

The quality of parent-daughter relationships has also been studied as a factor that predisposes girls to becoming pregnant.

A study conducted by Rawlins (1984) uncovered an association between the level of parent-daughter interaction and the pregnant versus non-pregnant status of 13 to 19-year old girls living in Kingston Jamaica. Parent-daughter interaction, or the lack of it, probably operates through intervening variables to influence intercourse, use of contraceptives, or both. Interaction with the mother was also reported to be less frequent and of lower quality than that experienced by non pregnant teenagers. When a high degree of parent-daughter communication existed, topics discussed often included schoolwork, plans for the future, financial matters, politics, current affairs, sex, growing up, and pregnancy. Good parent-daughter relationships may thus not only provide the teenager with at least some of the information necessary to prevent pregnancy, but may also provide emotional support for the pursuit of their goals.

(Keddie 1992, p.874 citing a study that was conducted by Rawlins (1984))

Attention has also been turned to the educational system as being a contributing factor to adolescent pregnancy. Eggleston *et al* (1999, p.78) point out that:

Jamaica’s education system may also contribute to early sexual activity and unintended pregnancy. All Jamaican children take a placement test at the end of elementary school. Youth who perform well on this exam (about 40% of Jamaican students) attend technical high schools or academically rigorous traditional high schools that prepare them for college. Students who do not score as well on the placement exam attend “all-age” and “new secondary”

schools and have little chance of continuing their education beyond the secondary level. The type of school attended is associated with social class, with children and adolescents from the lower socio-economic strata far more likely than those from middle and upper class families to attend the all-age and new secondary schools. Students who attend these are also more likely than students at traditional high schools to suffer from low self esteem, a trait that may be related to early sexual activity and pregnancy.

Regardless of the factors that predispose girls to early pregnancy, the fact remains that adolescent girls do become pregnant. This reality further calls attention to the consequences of these early pregnancies. Attention must therefore be given to some of the consequences of teen motherhood.

Consequences. Researchers have identified a number of consequences that are associated with teenage pregnancy. Swan *et al* (2003, p.2) identify some of these problems when they say that, “Young mothers are less likely to complete their education, have no qualification by age 33, be the recipients of benefits and if employed be on lower incomes than their peers.” According to Young *et al* (2004, p.361):

Pregnancies and births to adolescents remain a serious social problem because of concerns for both the adolescent parent and the child. Potential poor outcomes for the child expand beyond infancy to include poor outcomes as the child ages even into adulthood. These include lower cognitive scores, lower educational aspirations, increased school failure, welfare dependency (as an adult), higher rates of criminality, higher rates of violent crime, and greater likelihood of becoming a teen parent. Teen pregnancy does not "cause" any of these other social problems, but research has documented a relationship between early teen pregnancy and the occurrence of many of these problems in the child's future.

According to Sieger and Renk (2007, p.570 citing work done by Borkowski *et al*), “... adolescent mothers often experience a number of problematic factors (e.g. Symptoms of depression, poor social support, instability in their environment, parenting practices which are punitive, a lack of readiness for parenting). Each of these factors is likely to promote negative consequences for parenting.” Swan *et al* (2003, p.2) contend that adolescent mothers “... tend to have lower than average birth weight, high infant mortality, live in a lone parent family; having bad nutrition, daughter may themselves become teenage mothers.”

Trip and Viner (2005, p.590) are of the view that, "... for many young women, the costs of teenage pregnancy can be very high, particularly when linked with poverty." Sieger and Renk (2007, p.570) write that "It has been demonstrated that adolescent mothers have been more likely to live in poverty, to be less educated, to experience high rates of family instability ... to hold lower paying jobs, to be single parents, and to be on welfare than are women who postpone childbearing until their twenties"

Issues such as low self esteem and low educational achievement are also brought to the fore. A study conducted by Keddie (1992, p.876) on Jamaican girls, found that "the pregnant girls were discovered to have significantly lower scores than both the control group and the norms established for the Tennessee Self-concept Guide."

Low educational achievement of teen mothers is perhaps one of the dominant concerns of researchers. According to Swan *et al* (2003, p.1), "It is widely understood that teenage pregnancy and early motherhood can be associated with poor educational achievement, poor physical and mental health, social isolation, poverty and related factors." With reference to the Jamaica situation, Eggleston *et al* (1999, p.78) make the point that:

Early childbearing is often associated with a young woman's failure to complete her education, thus limiting her future job prospects and her own and her child's economic well-being. Among adolescent females in Jamaica who gave birth before their fourth year of secondary school, fewer than one-third returned to school after the birth of their child. Adolescent sexual activity and pregnancy in Jamaica have been thought to be associated with poverty, low educational levels, the absence of male role models in the home and a social context of conservative sexual ideals that coexist with tacit approval of early childbearing.

Theory of Adolescent Development and Sexuality. Teen motherhood can be better understood in light of the theories of adolescent development and adolescent sexuality. According to Auslander *et al* (2005, p.2) "Adolescence generally is defined as the period between ages 10 and 20 and typically is divided into three phases: early (ages 10 to 14), middle (ages 15 to 17), and late (ages 18 to 20)." Of course, in the period of adolescence, changes occur in the physical, cognitive, social and psychological spheres. These changes significantly impact the lives of the adolescents.

“The physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes ... enable teens to achieve intimate relationships and to establish their identities as sexual and romantic beings” Auslander *et al* (2005, p.2). Santrock (1995, p.349) purports that “A host of psychological changes accompany an adolescent’s physical development.” These psychological changes are seen in their relations with parents and peers. “Relationships with parents take a different form, moments with peers become more intimate, and dating occurs for the first time, as does sexual exploration and possibly intercourse” (Santrock 1995, p.348-349). It is this sexual exploration in which adolescents engage that sometimes result in a pregnancy. Since “Adolescents ... engage in intercourse at earlier ages today than in the past ...” (Cobbs 2001, p. 237), it is not surprising to see a thirteen or fourteen year old pregnant girl.

Although adolescents become pregnant at an early age, and although there are consequences to be faced and endured with an early pregnancy, the education of adolescents should be kept in focus and will be the concept of interest presented in the next section.

Education

“We live in an age when there is great optimism about the power of education to influence the well-being of individuals and nations. Parents and caregivers see education as a way for their children to improve on their lives by building an understanding of their place in the world” (Lauder *et al* 2005, p.1). Further, “It is also the principle means by which young people, by passing exams and gaining credentials, can gain an advantage in the labour market” (Lauder *et al* 2005, p.1). It is little wonder, then, that education is a much talked about subject the world over. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) proffer an “Education for all” (Obaid, 2005). UNICEF points to “A World fit for Children” as it emphasizes the importance of educating children (Bellamy 2003, p.20). UNICEF also embraces the “No Child Left Behind” policy (Bellamy 2003) as it joins the other international bodies in advancing the worth of education for every child. Stromquist (2006, p.968) speaks of education as being “a social good open to all.” The mantra of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Jamaica is “Every child can learn; every child should learn.” Since, according to

Lauder *et al* (2006, p.973) “Education is considered a universal right”, it will be helpful to at least understand what is education.

Definition. Definitions of education are wide and varied. Examination of the various definitions has the potential to consume much of the space allocated in this review to the discussion on education. Since the definition is not critical to the development of this section, it will only be briefly presented. According to Durkheim (2006, p. 76), “The word “education” has sometimes been used in a very broad sense to designate the totality of influences that nature or other men are able to exercise either on our intelligence or on our will.” Durkheim (2006, p.76) quotes John Stuart Mills as having said that:

Education is all that we ourselves do and all that others do for us to the end of bringing us closer to the perfection of our nature. In its most widely accepted sense, it includes even indirect effects on the character and faculties of men produced by things having quite a different objective: by laws, by forms of government, the industrial arts, and even by physical phenomena, independent of human will, such as climate, soil, and locality.

However, education does not happen in a vacuum or with no end in mind. As Durkheim explains, “In order that there be education, there must be a generation of adults and one of youth, in interaction, and an influence exercised by the first on the second” (Durkheim 2006, p.76). Durkheim also contends that “the end of education is to develop, in each individual, all the perfection of which he is capable” (2006, p.76). Okoh (p.203 quoting Max Weber) adds that “... education is a source of economic growth only if it is anti-traditional to the extent that it liberates and stimulates as well as informs the individual and teaches him how and why to make demands upon himself.”

Whiteman (2001, p.36) points to the impact that education is to have on the society and on individuals within the society and says, “Education must seek to preserve the value system to which the broadest cross-section of the population subscribes. It must also allow for challenges to existing frames of references, encourage people to be futuristic in their thinking, and prepare them to function in a rapidly changing social and economic environment, heavily influenced by global action, global trends.”

Modes of Education. It is widely believed that there are three modes of education: formal, informal, and non formal education. There are those who hold to the belief that “there are no definitive or clear-cut boundaries between these three modes of education and, consequently, both overlapping and interaction may occur” (Tuijnman *et al* 2002, p.97 citing Coombs and Ahmed). Brief mention will be made of each mode in the ensuing paragraphs.

Tuijnman *et al* (2002, p.97) cites Coombs and Ahmed as having said that:

Formal education is the highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university. Informal education is the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play; from the example and the attitudes of the family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Non formal education is any organized, systematic, education activity carried on outside the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children.

No doubt, there is a place for all three modes of education. It is however the formal education that is of interest to my research. With reference to formal education, Lauder *et al* (2005, p.1) says that “Education holds a unique position in modern societies because many people believe that it benefits society at the same time as meeting the aspirations of students and their parents.” With formal education, “Teachers, as they always have, hope to pass on the wisdom of generations in equipping students for the future” (Lauder *et al* 2005, p.1). Formal education is categorized into: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. However, despite the importance of the respective levels of the formal education system, it is the secondary level of the formal education system that is of interest to my research and which will be discussed in the upcoming paragraphs.

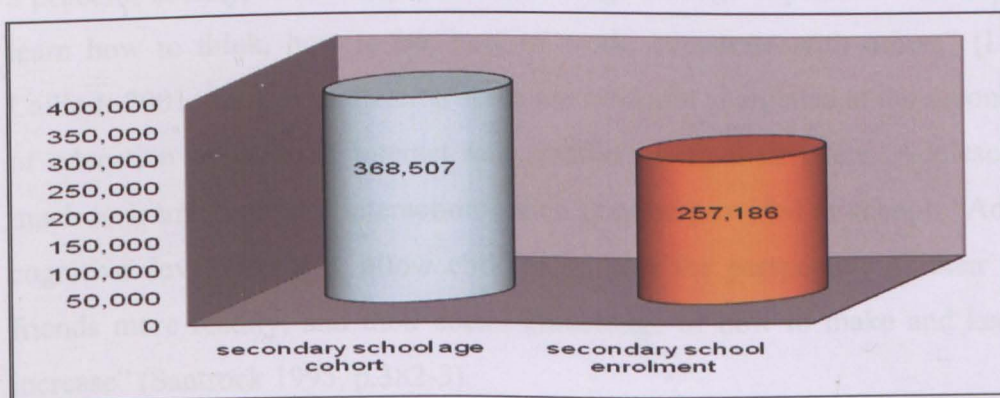
Secondary Education. Secondary education is that stage of the formal education system that enrolls children ages 12 to 18 (in most countries). “Secondary education is indeed a crucial stage for the education system” (Lewin and Caillods 2001, p.v). It seems though, that attention given to secondary education does not equate attention given to primary education. “The focus on achieving education for all after the World Education Forum in Jomtein (1990) has meant a singular emphasis on increasing

enrolment in primary schools for many agencies and developing countries” (Lewin and Caillods 2001, p.v). I am of the view that primary education sets an indestructible foundation for secondary level education. But, the efforts cannot stop there; the various initiatives should equally ensure that children advance to secondary level education, particularly in view of the reality that “... only 55 per cent of children of the appropriate age attend secondary school” (Bellamy 2004, p.14). Further, “in the developing countries ... there is poor enrolment in secondary education (Bellamy 2004, p.14). UNFPA also reports that “in many developing countries, fewer than half of the children continue as far as secondary” (Obaid, 2003, p.9).

In the Jamaican context, a total of 266,933 students were enrolled in the secondary school system in 2008/2009 (PIOJ 2010, p.22.10). The PIOJ report makes the point that the number of students enrolled in public secondary institutions evidenced a 1.6 per cent increase compared with 2007/8. “This accomplishment is in keeping with the GOJ’s target for universal enrolment at the secondary level” (PIOJ 2009, p. 22.10).

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) reports that in 2009, there were 368,507 persons within the 12 to 18 age group in Jamaica. When compared to the 266,933 of adolescents who were enrolled in the secondary school system in 2008/2009, the suggestion is that, 72 % of the 12-18 age group were enrolled in secondary schools (see figure 4 below). In the absence of statistics on drop outs from the secondary school system in Jamaica, it may be concluded that the other 28% of adolescents dropped out or were never enrolled in secondary schools in Jamaica.

Figure 4: Comparison between the Number of Secondary School Age Cohort with Adolescents Enrolled in the Secondary School System



A significant number of adolescents are not enrolled in, or, are not attending school.

Enrolment in and completion of secondary education are advocated by several persons on at least four grounds. First, according to Lewin and Caillods (2001, p.v), “it is the level at which youngsters consolidate their basic knowledge gained in primary school ...” Second, Secondary education prepares students for advanced studies. A student who has successfully completed the primary level of formal education is not ready to advance to tertiary level. The secondary level is that important go-between level at which the student learns additional skills that will better position him/her for tertiary level education. “The output of the process up to the end of secondary level is to reflect mastery of basic skills, acquisition of skills and attitudes to facilitate ongoing learning” (Whiteman 2001, p.37). Lewin and Caillods assert that “Secondary education is where the future students of higher education are selected and taught essential foundation skills” (2001, p.v.).

Piaget’s theory of adolescent cognitive development explains that students at the secondary level of education are at the stage of cognitive development that is referred to as formal operational thinking (Santrock 1995, p.351). At this stage, “their thought become more abstract, logical, and idealistic; more capable of examining one’s own thoughts, others’ thoughts, and what others are thinking about oneself; and more likely to interpret and monitor the social world” (Santrock 1995, p.351). Adolescents at the secondary level of education are predisposed to abstract, logical, hypothetical, and deductive thinking, which will be needed for tertiary level education (Santrock 1995, p.351).

Third, secondary education equips students with social skills. “It is the level at which youngsters ... acquire the common culture that will allow them to be useful citizens in a peaceful society, where they build knowledge through experience and experiments, learn how to think, how to be, how to work, cooperate with others” (Lewin and Caillods 2001, p.v.). Socialization skills are no doubt sharpened at the secondary level of education as students interact and socialize with their peers. Adolescents have much to learn from peer interaction which may be provided at school. “Advances in cognitive development ... allow children to take the perspective of their peers and friends more readily, and their social knowledge of how to make and keep friends increase” (Santrock 1995, p.382-3).

Fourth, secondary education prepares students for participation in the labour market. (Lewin and Caillods 2001, p.10). There may be those students who do not desire to advance to tertiary level education. Having completed the secondary level of education, these students will at least be equipped with literacy and numeracy skills that will position them to find employment, albeit at a certain level. This point is further strengthened by the realization that it is at the secondary level of education that children are taught vocational skills that enable them to find employment in a vocational area of choice. Bellamy (2003, p.1) summarizes the worth of secondary education in saying that, "Secondary education is essential for individual children to achieve their full potential, and for nations to advance social and economic development."

Considering the benefits to be derived from secondary education, it is appreciated that students should be encouraged to attain this level of their education. However, as will be discussed in the upcoming paragraphs, there are some children who drop out of school and thus fail to acquire secondary education.

School dropout. For those who place high premiums on the importance of secondary level education, the matter of school dropout is of major concern. Although students drop out of school at any stage, my research will be concerned with school dropout as it relates to the secondary level of education. "For many decades, dropping out of high school has been viewed as a serious educational and societal problem. By leaving high school before graduating, many dropouts take with them educational deficiencies that severely curtail their economic and social well-being throughout their adult life" (Santrock 1995, p.359). What then are the posited reasons for school dropout?

Van Dorn, Bowen, and Blair (2006, p.105, citing Nielsen, 1986) explain that "Research into dropping out can be categorized into one of three areas: drop out, pull out or pushout. Research that utilizes a dropout perspective places explanatory emphasis on students' individual attributes. Pull out theories ... assume that students engage in economic cost-benefit analysis when considering whether to stay in school. Pushout theories ... focus on school and community contexts." Santrock (1995, p.359) points out that "Students drop out of school for many reasons." Included in these reasons are: inadequate finances, truancy, peer influence, preference to work,

and pregnancy. Bellamy makes the point that, “The poorer a child’s household, the less likely the child is to attend secondary school” (2004, p.2).

A World Bank Country Study cites lack of places, social and economic pressure and quality issues as some of the reasons for school dropout in Jamaica (World Bank no date, p.28). The Jamaican public school system allows for a Junior High School which enrolls students up to grade 9. Students who are unsuccessful at the Grade Nine achievement Test (GNAT) usually discontinue the secondary level education. The World Bank Country Study Report (no date, p.28) also reveals that “many adolescents are disengaged from educational pursuits and tend to drop out before completion of the cycle”

Underachievement is another reason for school drop out in the Jamaican context. “... weaker students may feel alienated from school and school achievement and drop out to a life of antisocial behaviour. The dropping out and hence inadequate education leads to more unemployment and may be linked to participation in violence” (World Bank no date, p.27).

Pregnancy is among the many reasons for school dropout in Jamaica. I earlier made mention of the Education Act (1981) which stipulates that girls who become pregnant are not allowed to remain in school. However, the saving grace in this scenario is that pregnant girls are able to return to school after the birth of their babies. The Reproductive Health Survey Jamaica 2008 reports that “... 44 percent of women who became pregnant for the first time while in school returned to a 1-3 year secondary school programme and another 26 percent returned to a four (4) year or more secondary programme” (STATIN 2010, p.90).

Regardless of the reason for dropping out of school, it has been recognized that “Dropouts pay a steep price for leaving school without their diplomas. In terms of wages, unemployment rates, and career mobility, the grim statistics have been lamented for decades. Society also suffers in more crime and welfare, fewer tax dollars, and lower voter turnout” (Menzer *et al* 2009, p.23). Woods (1995 p.2) also observes that “... employment opportunities for them are more limited, because today’s economy requires of the labour force, increased literacy, more education, enhanced technological skills, and lifelong learning.”

Admittedly, “dropping out is a complex social problem for which there is no simple solution. Focusing attention on fixing one part of the problem calls attention to the need for solutions to many other parts as well” (Woods 1995, pg.2). Several strategies are promoted to minimize school dropout. As Van Dorn *et al* (2006, p.105 citing Richman *et al*, 2004) point out, “... protective factors for educational outcomes exist in the various social contexts of a youth’s life, including family; community, peer group, as well as within the youth, including personal characteristics, attitudes, competences, and experiences.” I want to pull the matter of the family from the above list of protective factors, and focus attention on parental involvement in their children’s education since it has a particular place of import for my research.

Parental involvement in children’s education. Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement in children’s education and their children’s academic success. With reference to work done by Henderson and Berla (1994), Berkowitz and Bier (2005 p.66) say that “the single best predictor of student success in school is the level of parental involvement in a child’s education.” Berkowitz and Bier (2005, p.66) go on to say that “The benefits of parental involvement include improved academic achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved school behaviour, greater academic motivation, and lower dropout rates.” Dearing *et al* (2001, p.653) report that “... meta-analytic reviews have repeatedly documented that children whose families are more involved in school ... display higher levels of achievement than children whose families are less involved in school.” Dearing *et al* (2001, p. 653) also agree that “... its benefits may also be realized indirectly through children’s feelings, attributes and self efficacy. Specifically, family involvement in the school may promote positive feelings and attitudes towards education as well as self-efficacy, which in turn may then promote literacy performance.”

From the perspective of Dearing *et al* (p.653) “Families may be involved in their children’s education in a variety of ways, including in the home (e.g. helping with homework) and in the school (e.g. attending open houses) as well as through parent-teachers’ communication.” Berkowitz and Bier (2005, p.66) are of the view that “Parents can also influence children’s school outcomes in ways that have nothing to do with parental engagement with school such as by setting high expectations and

being loving and supportive at home ...” Some parents are not involved in their children’s education, despite the benefits to be derived from their involvement.

Various reasons have been given for the lack of parental involvement in children’s education. Berkowitz and Bier (2005, p.68) are of the view that “parents may hold back from getting involved because they do not feel welcomed by the school. Also, parents quite often do not realize the extent of help that their children receive when they become part of the educational pursuits. For those who will listen, schools can help parents to come to terms with the need for them to get involved in their children’s education.” As Berkowitz and Bier further explain, “...schools need to help parents understand that it is part of their parental role to be involved in their children’s education” (2005, p.68).

In some instances, parental involvement decreases particularly as children enter the adolescent years. “As children get older, parent involvement decreases partially because school work gets more difficult and parents feel unable to provide assistance” (Berkowitz and Bier 2005, p.68). At this stage of development, students are ready to assume full responsibility for their progress. They are prone to think that they can manage on their own. The tendency is to stick to their peers over and against their parents. It is part of their growing up to wean themselves from parental supervision. According to Berkowitz and Bier, “a ... barrier to parent involvement, especially in secondary schools, may be students’ outward resistance to parental involvement. Older children often appear to be less welcoming of their parents in school” (2005, p.68).

In their research entitled, ‘Parenting In Jamaica’, Ricketts and Anderson (2009, p. XIII) made reference to work done by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) Texas (2003) which revealed that parental involvement leads children to:

- ✓ Earn higher grades and test scores, and enrol in higher level programs,
- ✓ Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- ✓ Attend school regularly
- ✓ Have better social skills, show improved behaviour and adopt well to school
and

✓ Graduate and go on to post secondary education (SEDL 2003).

In relation to the Jamaican situation, research conducted by Ricketts and Anderson (2009) found that “there was limited interface between caregivers and the school system with regard to providing support for the education of children and the extent of this involvement varied positively with income status.” Ricketts and Anderson also found that “the practice of having regular discussion with the school with regard to the progress of children was not widespread” (2009, p.XIV).

Parental involvement in children’s education is supported by Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital which contends that “... scholastic yield of the educational qualification depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family.” The theory favours “... a break with the presuppositions inherent both in the commonsense view, which sees academic success or failures as an effect of natural aptitudes, and in human capital theories” (Bourdieu 2006, p. 106).

Parents should play a positive and practical role in their children’s educational development. I want to think that school, child, and parent form a partnership that should work to the success of the child’s educational pursuits. However, I also want to think that children themselves, in particular older children, have a personal role to play in their educational journey. They owe it to themselves to attend school with regularity; to complete assignments and to do so with diligence. They owe it to themselves to remain in school and to complete.

Educating Girls. If education is a human right, then it is also the right of every girl. “In 1990, the World Conference on Education For All held in Jomtien, Thailand, recognized the chronic neglect of children’s right to education in the poorest countries, especially the neglect of the rights of girls which, under structural adjustment in the 1980s, was exacerbated rather than mitigated by international intervention and concern” (Bellamy 2003, p.20). No doubt, the Conference would have drawn attention to the importance of educating girls. Consequently, there has been much attention given to the matter of girls’ education. The views of writers on the topic surround the benefits to be derived from educating girls. These benefits revolve around: the mother herself, her offspring, and the nation in which she resides. Some of these views will be expressed and expanded in the following paragraphs.

Girls themselves benefit from having an education in several ways. Summers (no date, p.7) says that “When girls are educated they have economic opportunity.” An education presents girls with economic viability and marketability. Economic opportunity for educated girls also creates for them a sense of independence. Bellamy (2003, p.17) contributes to this thinking and says that, “It allows women greater control of their lives and provides them with skills to contribute to their societies. It enables them to make decisions for themselves and to influence their families.” On the other hand, “When girls are not educated, their labour has little economic value outside the home” (Summers no date, p.5). It is for this reason that uneducated girls are often forced to accept low paying jobs which fetch very little financial returns.

“Education saves and improves the lives of girls and women” (Bellamy 2003, p.17). Uneducated women are sometimes dependent on their spouses for their economic survival. It is often because of this dependence that some women remain with their spouses even in the face of domestic violence. “Although gender-based violence affects women of all classes, poverty and lack of education are additional risk factors” (Obaid 2005, p.70). As a solution, Bellamy (2003, p.14) advocates that education “... improves her prospects of being able to support herself and have a say in her own welfare”

Health wise, girls’ education augurs well for their offspring. Herz (1991, p.1) is of the view that “Educated parents have healthier children.” According to Bellew *et al.* (1992, p.i) “The more educated a population’s women are, the fewer children they have, and the ones they do have are healthier.” As Summers (no date, pp.7, 8) explains, “Educated girls chose to have fewer children and can invest more in the health and development of each child. ... Kids are more healthy as mothers channel more of their income to expenditure on children.”

Since educated mothers value the importance of education, they will invest in their children’s education and will pass the value of education on to their children. Summers (no date, p.5) notes that “Children of educated girls are more likely to be educated themselves.” Summers strengthens the point in saying that “Their daughters and sons have expanded horizons and often they escape from poverty” (no date, p.7). According to Herz (1991, p.5) “educated parents have more educated children.” On the other hand, uneducated girls “... have more children than they really want and are

unable to invest heavily in each child. Poverty is perpetuated” (Summers no date, p.5). Bellamy points to a recent study conducted by UNICEF and says that “One of the clearest findings from a recent UNICEF analysis of household data from 55 countries and 2 Indian states is that children of educated women are much more likely to go to school, and the more schooling the women have received, the more probable it is that their children will also benefit from education” (Bellamy 2003, p.18).

Educated mothers are better able to protect their children. According to Bellamy (2034, p. 14), “Educating a girl dramatically reduces the chance that her child will die before age five. Bellamy (2003, p.15) concludes that “... girls continue to lose out on the benefits that an education affords. As a result, the children whose lives would have been saved if their mothers had been educated continue to die.”

The impact that the girls’ education will have on their offspring has implications for national development. Bellamy makes the point that “If educated girls become mothers, they are much more likely to send their children to school, thereby passing on and multiplying benefits both for themselves and society in a positive, intergenerational effect” (2003, p.18). Koffi Annan is heard to have said that, “There is no tool for development more effective than girls’ education” (Bellamy 2003, p.vii). According to Bellew *et al* (1992, p.i) “20 years of research has established that the economic and social benefits of women’s primary and secondary schooling are far reaching.” In the same vein, Summers (no date, pp.1, 2) argues that “Over time, increases in girls’ education have the potential to transform societies.”

In 2000, countries the world over adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) with objectives to be met by 2015 (UNDP p.1). Educating girls covertly aids the achievement of at least three of the MDGs: Goal number 1, which seeks to: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Goal number 3 which seeks to: Promote gender equality and empower women; and Goal number 4 which seeks to: Reduce child mortality. Bellamy (2003, p.15) asserts that “Investing in girls’ education today ... is a strategy that will jump-start all other development goals” Bellamy (2003, p.15). Obaid (2005, p.85) adds that “There is ample evidence of the multiplier effects of investing in gender equality and women’s empowerment. ... Targeted investments – in the education, reproductive health, economic and political rights of women – can catalyse progress on poverty reduction, sustainable development and lasting peace.”

“Educating girls is much more effective in generating social benefits (Summers no date, p. 8). “Social benefits of education include the link to reduced fertility (World Bank p.27). “Educating women reduces fertility” (Summers no date, p. 14). Herz and Sperling citing Klassen 1999, add that “when women gain four more years education, fertility per woman drops by roughly one birth, according to a 100-country world Bank study. Summers (no date, p.14) also makes reference to another study and says that “a 65-country analysis finds that doubling the proportion of women with a secondary education would reduce average fertility ratio from 5.3 to 3.9 children.” “The expansion of female secondary education may be the best single policy for achieving substantial reductions in fertility (Summers citing Subbarao and Raney 1999).

With a reduction in fertility rates, there will naturally be a reduction in population growth. According to Herz (1991, p.2), “Educating women slows population growth. Education creates new opportunities that compete with childbearing and child care, so women tend to opt for smaller families.” Reduction in population growth has its own sets of benefits, in particular, reduction of poverty. Herz (1991, p.2) goes on to say that “by educating its women, a country can reduce poverty, improve productivity, ease population pressure, and offer its children a better future.”

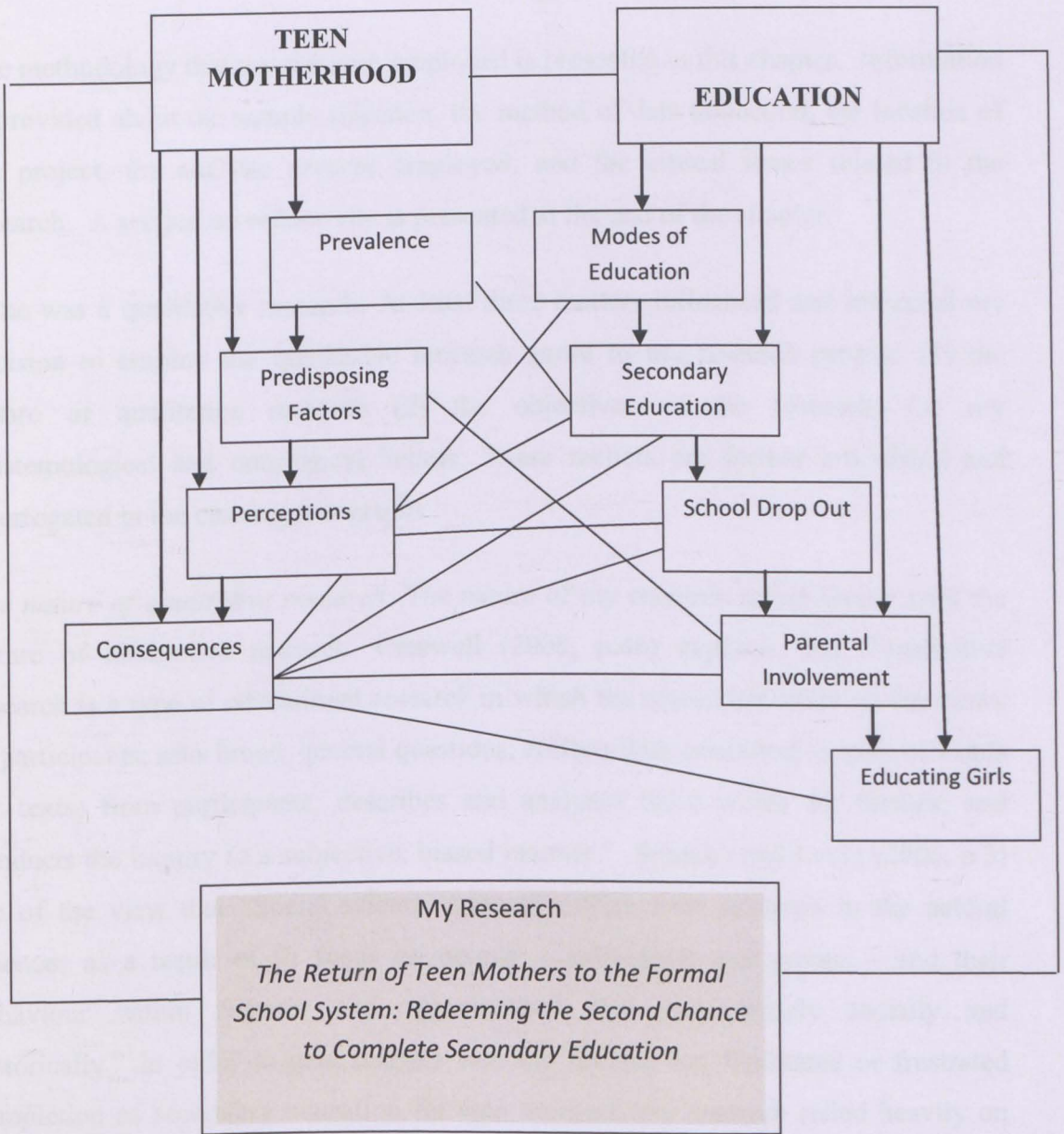
In summary, basic education is important for girls. “Once she misses her chance to attend primary school, she also loses out on secondary education and beyond. The price of losing two school years would be catastrophic to any child but is even higher for a girl - and it will be paid not only by the girl herself but also by her family, her society and her country” (Bellamy 2003, p.15). Summers concludes that “... investment in girls’ education may well be the highest return investment available in the developing world” (no date, p.2).

A review of the literature points to early sexual initiation among teenagers as the primary reason for teen motherhood. Some countries regard teen motherhood with favour. On the contrary, the phenomenon is regarded with impunity in the Jamaican context where pregnant girls drop out of school. Of course, teen motherhood is only one of the reasons for school dropout. Notwithstanding, every effort should be taken to ensure that children remain in school and complete their secondary education and thereby lay the foundation for advanced levels of education.

The initiative of the Government of Jamaica to have teen mothers return to school, signals the Government's buy in to the benefits to be derived from educating girls. So, although girls who become pregnant drop out of school, affording them a second chance to complete their secondary education is a step in the right direction, for the teen mother, for her offspring, and of course, for the nation at large. Intellectually, the teen mother who completes her secondary education is positioned to pursue advanced education and so maximize her potential. The educated teen mother is equipped to guide the educational journey of her offspring thus presenting the other generation with opportunities that might not have been available for the previous generation. Economically, the educated teen mother has increased earning power, and is so able to meet the needs of her family. Socially, she is empowered to contribute to the development of the country in which she resides. Globally, she is armed with the resources she will need to find her place in the international labour market. Politically, educating teen mothers is in keeping with the intent of a country seeking to break the brow of poverty and, as in the case of Jamaica, seeking to become a developed nation by 2030.

The benefits of having teen mothers return to school and complete their secondary education can hardly be refuted. If dropping out of school retards the growth and development of teen mothers; if the education of girls ensures the education of her offspring and thereby ensures a better quality of life; then it follows that the role of every stakeholder should be galvanized and every effort should be garnered to ensure that teen mothers who drop out of school redeem the second opportunity to complete their secondary education.

Figure 5: Literature Map



The literature map outlines the interconnectedness of the major topics: teen motherhood and education, with the subtopics that are of concern to my research.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The methodology that my research employed is presented in this chapter. Information is provided about the sample selection, the method of data collection, the location of the project, the analytic process employed, and the ethical issues related to the research. A section on reflectivity is presented at the end of the chapter.

Mine was a qualitative research. At least three matters influenced and informed my decision to employ the qualitative research genre to my research project: (1) the nature of qualitative research (2) the objectives of the research; (3) my epistemological and ontological beliefs. These matters are further articulated and interrogated in the ensuing paragraphs.

The nature of qualitative research: The nature of my research found favour with the nature of qualitative research. Creswell (2008, p.46) explains that “Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or texts) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.” Somekh and Levin (2006, p.3) are of the view that “Social science research differs from research in the natural sciences as a result of its focus on people – individuals and groups – and their behaviour within cultures and organizations that vary widely socially and historically.” In order to gain insights into the factors that facilitated or frustrated completion of secondary education for teen mothers, my research relied heavily on the views of the various project participants.

Somekh and Levin (2006, p.3) make the point that “There is an unpredictability in the behaviour of human beings ...” This ‘unpredictability’ of behaviour holds true for the behaviour of teen mothers who were the focus of my research. Whereas the unpredictable behaviour of the teen mothers as they return to school may not have been adequately quantified by the throes of quantitative research methodology, it would have been better qualified with the methodology afforded by qualitative research.

Qualitative research methodology gives voice to each stakeholder. With the qualitative approach, “the key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives, not the researcher’s” (Merriam 1998, p.6, making reference to Sherman and Webb (1988, p.7). The teen mothers’ return to the formal school system is an experience that is lived by the teen mothers themselves. The experience carries with it a particular story, infused with specific issues and associated problems. I am of the view that the experience of returning to the formal school system is best told by the teen mothers who had that experience. As experienced or skilled as the researcher may be, s/he cannot relate or replicate the teen mothers’ experience. At best, the researcher can only try to enter into that reality and endeavour to understand it through the eyes of the teen mothers themselves. The most the researcher can do is to facilitate the telling of that experience through the face-to-face interviews of qualitative research methodology.

“Perspectives are captured in face-to-face interviews” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, p.56). Qualitative research favours the use of face-to-face interviews as a data gathering tool. My research determined that the use of face-to-face interviews was the best strategy by which to gain the perspectives of the teen mothers as well as that of their parents and the school officials.

“Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings” (Berg 2001, p.6). My research was interested in the various social settings that surrounded the teen mothers’ return to school: the Centre, their homes and the schools. Quantitative enquiry would not adequately provide perspective about these points of interest of my research; a qualitative research methodology however would, since “Qualitative researchers ... are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth” (Berg 2001, p.7).

“All types of qualitative research are based ... on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (Merriam 1998, p.6). No doubt, the teen mothers have the ability to influence the outcome of their experience, thus constructing their own realities. The nature of qualitative research, with its embrace of varying realities, provides the space wherein the researcher may examine the way in

which the teen mothers constructed their reality without the interference or influence of the researcher. Further, “in qualitative research, “what is being observed are people’s constructions of reality – how they understand the world” (Merriam 1998, p.203).

The objectives of the research. My research was interested in the experience of the teen mothers as they returned to the formal school system. This objective was fostered by the nature of qualitative research which “implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Merriam 1998, p.6 making reference to Sherman and Webb (1988, p.7).

The experience of the teen mother’s return to the formal school system is ‘created’ by the systemic whole comprising: the teen mothers, their parents, the WCJF, and the accepting schools, as well as the Government of Jamaica. As one of its objectives, my research sought to examine this system as a collective whole; a process which is privileged by qualitative enquiry. Merriam (1998, p.6) explains that “In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts ... qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole.” Berg (2001, p.7, citing Mills, 1959) makes the point that, “If humans are studied in a symbolically reduced, statistically aggregated fashion, there is a danger that conclusions - although arithmetically precise - may fail to fit reality.”

My research was not interested in quantifiable data: how many teen mothers completed secondary education; how many teen mothers had a particular kind of experience as they returned to school. On the contrary, my research was interested in the nature of the experience that the teen mothers had as they returned to school; how the various stakeholders contributed to this experience; how the various contributions impacted the teen mothers’ experience. The experiences of the teen mothers’ could not have been captured through the lenses of a microscope or through the processes that are facilitated by a laboratory. The experiences could however have been satisfactorily captured through the ‘lenses’ of the participants as they were interviewed. Somekh and Lewin are of the view that “Human experience is characterized by complexity, and social science researchers need to resist the temptation to impose unwarranted order through the application of ‘one size fits all’ theories” (2006, p.3).

As another of its objectives, my research sought to influence the decisions of policy makers interested in having teen mothers returned to the formal school system. Marshall and Rossman make the point that "... policymakers and practitioners are sometimes unable to derive meaning and useful findings from experimental research ..." (1999, p.207). On the other hand, the human element in qualitative research puts policy makers in contact with the very persons for whom policies are established. With qualitative research, policy makers are privileged with a better understanding of the very ones for whom policies are intended. Marshall and Rossman are of the view that "... one cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions - their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds ..." (1999, p.56).

My beliefs. "All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p.22). The writers go on to say that "qualitative researchers are guided by "principles which combine beliefs about ontology... epistemology... and methodology ... These beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it" (2005, p.22). I construe the voice of the teen mothers, as presented in my research, to be a credible source from which knowledge may be gleaned and insight gained into their experiences as they return to school. According to Chase (2005, p. 661), "... the stories people tell constitute the empirical material that interviewers need if they are to understand how people create meanings out of events in their lives."

My decision to fashion my project in accordance with the qualitative genre was made notwithstanding the criticisms levelled against qualitative research, some of which surround matters of reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalizability, and quality. Merriam (1998, p. 205) explains that "reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results?" However, "Reliability is problematic in the social sciences simply because human behaviour is never static" (Merriam (1998, p.205).

Merriam (1998, p.206) cites Lincoln and Guba as having said that "the term reliability in the traditional sense seems to be something of a misfit when applied to qualitative research." Lincoln and Guba, cited by Merriam (1998, p.206) "suggest thinking about the "dependability" or "consistency" of the results obtained from the data. That is,

rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable. The question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected.”

Merriam (1998, p.207, citing Lincoln and Guba 1981) suggests the use of three strategies which will help to determine consistency between data and findings: (1) investigator’s position: “The investigator should explain the assumptions and theory behind the study, his or her position vis-à-vis the group being studied, the basis for selecting informants and a description of them, and the social context from which data were collected (Merriam 1998, p. 206-7 citing LeCrompte and Preissle, 1993). (2) Triangulation: “Especially in terms of using multiple methods, of data collection and analysis...” (3) Trail: “Just as an auditor authenticates the account of a business, independent judges can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher. I took the liberty to have employed the use of these three strategies in my research.

“Internal validity addresses the question of how research findings match reality” (Merriam 1998, p.201). The questions asked are: “How congruent are the findings with reality? Do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring?” (Merriam 1998, p.201). In addressing the question of validity in qualitative research, it is helpful to be mindful of the fact that “One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research. Assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the “reality” from which they were derived is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity” (Merriam 1998, p.202).

Merriam therefore (1998, pp.204-205) suggests six strategies to help in the determination of whether the research findings are congruent with the realities of the researched in social science research. (1) Triangulation: using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings. (2) Member checks: which see the researcher “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are

plausible.” (3) Peer examination: “asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge.” (4) Researcher’s biases: “clarifying the researcher’s assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study.” (5) Participatory or collaborative modes of research: involving participants in all phases of research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings. (6) Long-term observation: at the research site or repeated observations of the same phenomenon-gathering data over a period of time in order to increase the validity of the findings.” The first four of these strategies were employed for the purposes of my research.

Generalizability, another area of contention, concerns itself with “the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (Merriam 1998, p.207). As Merriam points out “... the issue of generalizability centres on whether it is possible to generalize from a single case, or from qualitative inquiry in general, and if so, in what way?” (1998, p.208). Although this is a legitimate concern, “the production of generalizable knowledge is an inappropriate goal for interpretive research (Merriam 1998, p. 210, citing Erickson 1986). “Part of the difficulty lies in thinking of generalizability in the same way as do investigators using experimental or correlational designs” (Merriam 1998, p.207). Somekh and Lewin (2005, p.33) enter the debate and say that case study research “privileges in-depth inquiry over coverage: understanding ‘the case’ rather than generalizing to a population at large.”

Merriam draws on the work of several writers and suggests four alternate ways of conceptualizing generalizability in the context of social science research. (1) Working hypotheses: by which the researcher is advised to pay the most earnest attention to the context of the phenomenon being studied. “When we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion” (Merriam 1998, p.209, citing Cronbach 1975). (2) Concrete universalities: which advocates that “In attending to the particular, concrete universals will be discovered. The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (Merriam 1998, p.210, citing Erickson 1986). (3) Naturalistic generalization: “drawing on tacit knowledge, intuition, and personal experience, people look for patterns that explain their own experience as well as events around the world around them. ‘Full and thorough knowledge of the particular’ allows one to see similarities “in new and foreign

contexts” (Merriam 1998, p.211 citing Stake 1978, 94, 95). (4) Reader or user generalizability which “involves leaving the extent to which a study’s findings apply to other situation up to the people in those situations. It is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?” (Merriam 1998, p.211 citing Walker 1980).

In addressing the matter of generalizability, Merriam suggests the use of three strategies: (1) The use of rich, thick description; “...providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and hence whether findings can be transferred.” (2) Typicality or model category, which is “... describing how typical the program, event, or individual is compared with others in the same class, so that users can make comparisons with their own situations” (Merriam 1998, p.211 making reference to work done by LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). (3) Multi-site designs which is “using several sites, cases, situations, especially those that maximize diversity in the phenomenon of interest” (p. 212). The first two strategies were applicable to and were employed by my research.

Experimental inquiry argues in favour of the element of objectivity in research. This, it says, can only be achieved through a distancing of the researcher from the process. However, qualitative research defies this call for objectivity which is premised on distance. “This notion of distance fails to take into account the rigor of the hermeneutical understanding of the way meaning is prescribed in the act of being in the world, the research process, and objects of the research. This absence of hermeneutical awareness undermines the researcher’s quest for a thick description and contributes to the production of reduced understandings of the complexity of social life” (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005, p.318-319, referencing Paulson, 1995; Selfe & Selfe, 1994).

The issue of quality is brought into focus by some of the detractors of qualitative research. Somekh and Levin (2006, p.3) address the issue of quality in saying that, “Quality in social science research rests upon the persuasive power of its outcomes and therefore, fundamentally, upon how it uses language to construct and represent meaning.” Somekh and Levin (2006, p.4) are also of the view that “Fundamental to the achievement of high quality is the preparedness and ability of social science researchers to critique their work and reflect on how it could have been done

differently, and whether that might have changed the outcomes and, if so, how. Reflexivity, not recipes, is the hallmark of the good social science researcher”

Specific type of qualitative research

Specifically, my project is a case study. A case study is one form of qualitative research which “is conducted so that specific issues and problems of practical concern can be identified, and explained” (Merriam 1998, p.34). Further, “Case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a *single unit* or *bounded system* such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community” (Merriam 1980, p.19 referencing Smith 1978). Somekh and Lewin (2006, p.34 citing Parlett and Hamilton, 1972) also add to the understanding of case studies in saying that case study ... is particular, descriptive, inductive and ultimately heuristic – it seeks to ‘illuminate’ the readers’ understanding of an issue.”

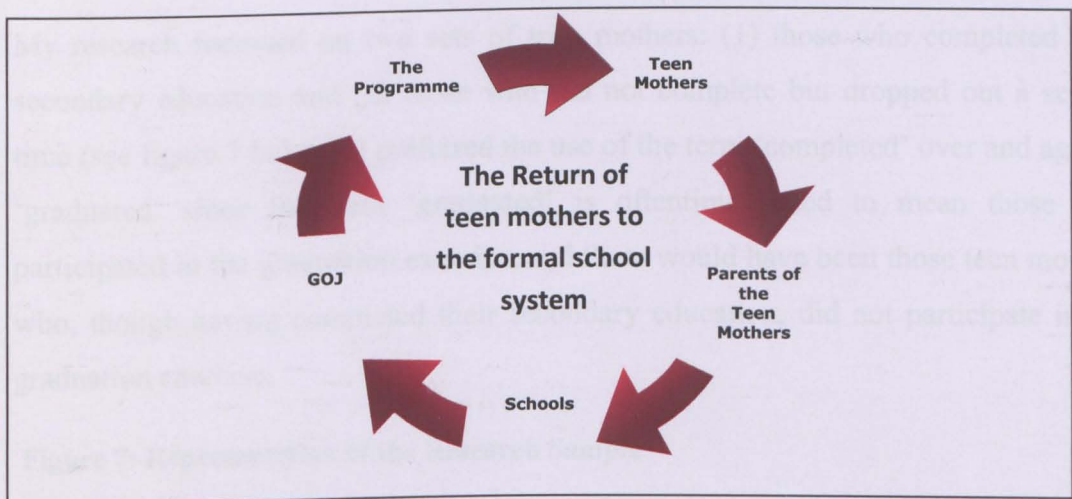
Boundaries of the case. Somekh and Lewin (2006, p. 34) point to the importance of identifying the boundaries of the case to be studied. “Drawing boundaries around a phenomenon under study is not so easy.” Therefore, “... case studies need to pay attention to the social and historical context of the action, as well as the action itself” (Somekh and Lewin 200, p.34 making reference to work done by Ragin and Becker 1992).

My qualitative case study research generally focused attention on the Programme of the WCJF as practised at The Centre. However, the specific case surrounded the aspect of the Programme that seeks to prepare the teen mothers to return to the formal school system and subsequently monitor them for two years. The process of returning to school engages the efforts of several stakeholders, all of whom became part and parcel of the case study. It was The Centre that prepared the teen mothers for the return to school and monitored them for two years subsequent to their return. The role played by The Centre could have facilitated or frustrated completion and therefore had to be studied. It was the teen mothers who had the experience of returning to school and who were monitored in the subsequent years. Their actual experiences were of paramount interest to the case. The parents of the teen mothers partnered with

The Centre in having the teen mothers return to school; the parents were part of the decision making process in terms of the school of choice; the parents were responsible for their daughters as they returned to school. The role played by the parents could have facilitated or frustrated completion. The stories of the parents therefore had to be included in the boundary of the case.

The teen mothers had to contend with school officials, teachers, and fellow students as they returned to school. The role played by the schools as well as the teen mothers' relationships with the teachers and students might have facilitated or frustrated completion. The schools were thus included in the parameters of the case. The boundaries of the case are outlined in figure 6 shown below.

Figure 6: Boundary of the Case



There are some inherent strengths and weaknesses of case studies as pointed to by Somekh and Lewin (2006, p.33). “The strength of case study is that it can take an example of an activity – ‘an instance in action’ (Walker, 1974) – and use multiple methods and data sources to explore it and interrogate it. Thus it can achieve a ‘rich description’ (Geertz, 1973) of a phenomenon in order to represent it from the participants’ perspective.” On the other hand, “The weakness of a case study is that it is not possible to generalize statistically from one or a small number of cases to the population as a whole even though many case study reports imply that their findings are generalizable” (Somekh and Lewin 2006, p.33-34).

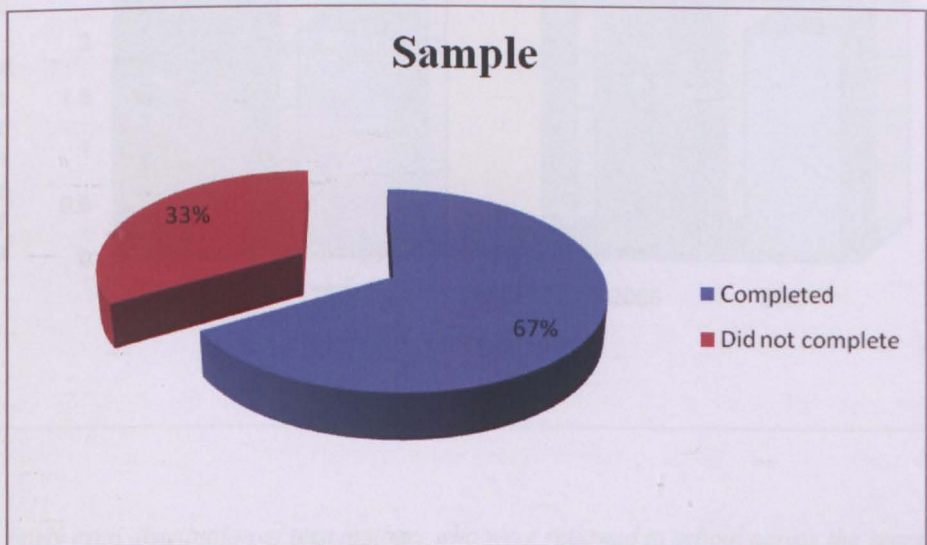
Location of the project

The WCJF Programme is implemented island wide in seven main centres and six outreach stations. Undocumented knowledge is that any one site is a microcosm of the whole Programme which boasts uniformity and similarity of practice across the various sites. It is thought that whatever was found in this one centre could safely be said to be a reflection of the practice of the WCJF as a whole. With this knowledge, I located the project primarily in one of the seven main centres. The choice of The Centre was made based primarily on the extent of its reach which extends to four parishes. This centre would therefore have provided the research with participants from diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Sample

My research focussed on two sets of teen mothers: (1) those who completed their secondary education and (2) those who did not complete but dropped out a second time (see figure 7 below). I preferred the use of the term 'completed' over and against 'graduated' since the term 'graduated' is oftentimes used to mean those who participated in the graduation exercise, and there would have been those teen mothers who, though having completed their secondary education, did not participate in the graduation exercise.

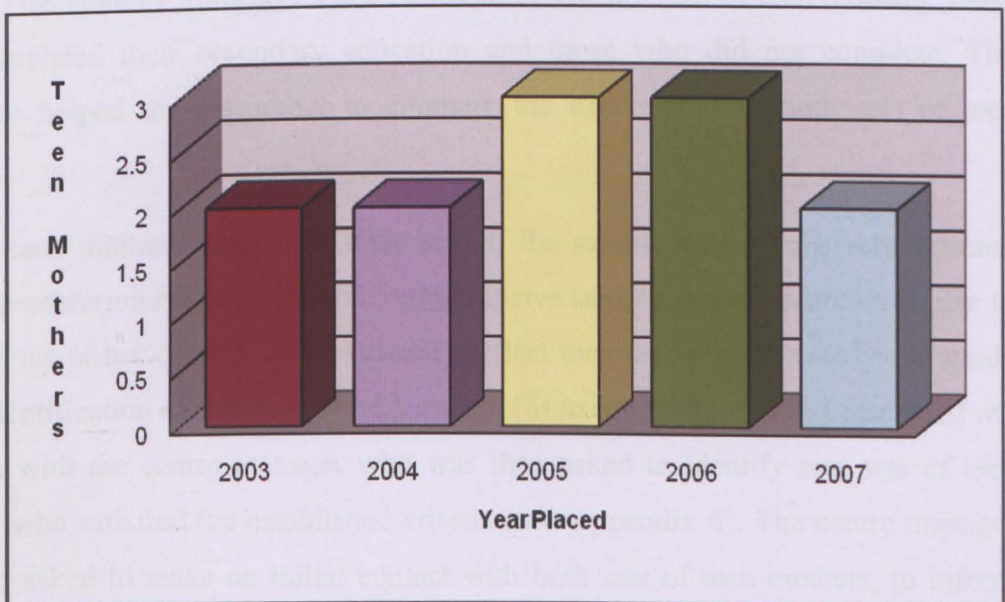
Figure 7: Representation of the Research Sample



The research sample included the following:

- ✓ Teen mothers who were returned to the formal school system between 2003 and 2007. This time frame was considered on the bases that: (1) these teen mothers would have completed their placement by the time of my research; (2) their stories would be current. (3) it would not have been difficult to make contact with these teen mothers. See figure 8 below for a distribution of the sample across the years considered by the research.
- ✓ The parents of the teen mothers, since it was perceived that their stories would also give perspective to the experience of the teen mothers' return to school.
- ✓ School counsellors/principals at the schools at which the teen mothers were placed. In some instances, the school principals were the ones interviewed, since they were more so instrumental in having the girls returned to their schools.

Figure 8: Representation of the Sample across the Years 2003 – 2007



There was a fairly even distribution of teen mothers who were returned to school across the years.

Sampling

I employed the techniques of purposive sampling (also called purposeful sampling) in selecting the sample for my research. “In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell 2008, p.214). “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Merriam 1998, p.61 quoting Patton 1990).

Two variations of purposive sampling were specifically used in the sample selection: typical sampling and maximal variation sampling. Typical sampling was used in selecting the site to be studied. “Typical sampling is a form of purposeful sampling in which the researcher studies a person or site that is “typical” to those unfamiliar with the situation” (Creswell 2008, p.216). The Centre is one of seven main centres at which the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers is executed. It typifies the execution of the Programme in all the WCJF sites.

Maximal variation sampling was used in selecting the teen mothers. “Maximal Variation sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristics or trait...” (Creswell 2008, p.214). This strategy allowed for the selection of the two sets of teen mothers: those who completed their secondary education and those who did not complete. The technique helped the researcher to compare the experiences of both sets of teen mothers.

For the teen mothers who were interviewed, the sample was purposively selected using a predetermined set of criteria. “In purposive sampling, the researcher is able to establish his or her criteria which “directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases” (Merriam, 1988, p.61). I discussed my research with the centre manager who was then asked to identify two sets of teen mothers who satisfied the established criteria (see Appendix 4). The centre manager was also asked to make an initial contact with both sets of teen mothers, to inform them about the research, and to solicit their participation. This initial step was necessary since it was perceived that there would have been those who satisfied the criteria but who might not have been willing to participate in the project. The names

of the teen mothers who expressed a willingness to participate in the project were then given to me, at which time I also made personal contact with the prospective participants. The project was fully outlined to each person who was again asked whether she would participate and also have her parent(s) participate in the project. Although the teen mothers indicated that they would be willing to have their parents participate in the project, the parents were also contacted and their own willingness secured. Date and time were then arranged for the interviews with those who expressed their and their parents' willingness to participate in the project.

The principals and counsellors included in the project were those at the schools attended by the teen mothers. Information letters and Informed Consent forms were sent to these schools, and permission sought to have each participate in the project. The school principals and or counsellors were asked to sign and return the consent forms.

The final selection of project participants (see table 1 on page 53) constituted:

1. Teen mothers who were scheduled to have completed placement by 2008.
2. Teen mothers who were accessible; that is, those with whom it was possible to make contact.
3. Teen mothers who were willing to participate in the project.
4. Teen mothers who were willing to have their parents participate in the project.
5. Teen mothers whose parents gave permission for them to participate in the project.
6. Parents who themselves were willing to participate in the project.
7. Teen mothers and their parents who signed and returned the consent form.
8. Schools attended by the teen mothers.
9. School principals and or counsellors from the schools at which the teen mothers were placed.

Table 1: Respondent Sample

TEEN MOTHER	AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW	TYPE OF INTERVIEW	PARENT INTERVIEWED	SCHOOL OFFICIAL INTERVIEWED	TEEN MOTHERS' ACHIEVEMENT	
Arlene	20	Face-to-face	Mother	Counsellor	Completed	
Kelly	23	Face-to Face	Mother	Not Interviewed	Completed	
Tiffany	21	Face-to-Face	Mother	Counsellor	Completed	
Adassa	21	Face-to-Face	Father	Not Interviewed	Completed	
Kadeen	21	Face-to-Face	Parent(s) not interviewed	Not Interviewed	Completed	
Patient	22	Face-to-Face	Mother	Principal		Dropped Out
Nelly	21	Face-to-Face	Mother	Counsellor		Dropped Out
Maud	19	Face-to-Face	Grand-mother	Principal		Dropped Out
Valerie	20	Face-to-Face	Parent(s) not interviewed	Not Interviewed		Dropped Out
Patsy	20	Face-to Face	Mother	Not Interviewed	Completed	
Elaine	21	Face-to Face	Foster Mother	Vice Principal	Completed	
Raphalia	20	Face-to-Face	Parent(s) not interviewed	Not Interviewed	Completed	

The interviews conducted with the teen mothers were done face-to-face. The interviews conducted with the parents and the school officials were conducted over the telephone; this being the most convenient means of conducting the interviews.

Method of data gathering

My research incorporated the use of two primary methods of data collection: interviews and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources (see table 2 below) served the objectives of the research, provided answers for the various research questions, and thus served as a means of triangulation.

Table 2: Data Sources

Research Questions	Data Sources			
	Parents	Schools	Files	Placement Book
Main Research Question: What are the factors that facilitate or frustrate the process of completion of secondary education for teen mothers?"	/	/	/	
Question 1: What are the roles of the various stakeholders in the return of teen mothers to the formal school system?	/	/		
Question 2: In what ways do the roles played by the stakeholders facilitate or frustrate completion of secondary education for teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system?	/	/		
Question 3: What is the nature of the process whereby the teen mothers are prepared to return to the formal school system?	/		/	
Question 4: How effective is the process of preparation for the teen mothers' return to the formal school system?	/			
Question 5: What is the extent of the process of monitoring that is accorded the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?	/	/		/
Question 6: How effective is the process of monitoring that the WCJF proposes to offer the teen mothers as they return to the formal school system?	/	/	/	/
Question 7: What are the systemic factors that facilitate or frustrate the completion of secondary education for teen mothers?	/	/	/	/

As Creswell purports, “triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals ... types of data ... or methods of data collection ... in qualitative research” (2008, p.266). Stake (2005, p.453) advocates the use of triangulation and explains that “triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation.”

Interviews. Individual interviews were used as a critical data collection strategy and were conducted with the selected teen mothers, their parents, and the principals/counsellors at the schools at which the teen mothers were placed. The interviews were conducted over a one month period. Each interview was contained within a one hour timeframe. It was perceived that the teen mothers would have been comfortable with interviews as a method of data collection. “Some adolescents may feel more comfortable with their peers in a focus group interview, whereas others may prefer the intimacy of one-to-one interviews” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, p.116).

Somekh and Lewin (2005, p.33) state that “interviews offer an insight into respondents’ memories and explanations of why things have come to be what they are, as well as descriptions of current problems and aspirations.” Merriam (1998, p. 72) assert that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate.” As Eisner (1998, p.183) quite simply says, “We need to listen to what people have to say about their feelings, their lives.”

The use of interviews as a primary method of data collection allowed the teen mothers to give voice to their experience, without the “representation or re-presentation” of the researcher.² I am of the view that the extent of the discrimination that has been levelled against teen mothers in Jamaica seems somehow to have silenced their voices. They have been judged and sentenced as being persons without ambition or ability. They have been relegated to a place of insignificance and inferiority. The individual interview therefore positioned the teen mothers on a platform from which they could have told their untold stories; it provided the microphone by which their

² The concept (representation or re-presentation) is borrowed from Spivak in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2006, p. 28.

silent voices were amplified. The interviews set the stage from which disenfranchised teen mothers were re-enfranchised, thus being able to project themselves as equally important members of the Jamaican society. Gilligan (1993 p.xvi) makes the point that “To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person.” Guba and Lincoln 2005, p.209) advocate “... letting research participants speak for themselves.”

According to Chase (2005, p.661) “To think of an interviewee as a narrator is to make a conceptual shift away from the idea that interviewees have answers to researchers’ questions and toward the idea that interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own.” Gilligan (1993,p.2) is of the view that “... the way people talk about their lives is of significance, ... the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act.” Richardson and Adams St. Pierre (2005, p. 961) espouse the view that “We are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodernist climate, a time when a multitude of approaches to knowing and telling exist side by side. ... any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the “right” or privileged form of authoritative knowledge.”

The teen mothers were the first set of participants to be interviewed. The interviews sought to investigate the nature of their respective experiences as they returned to school, and the factors that facilitated or frustrated the process (*main research question*). Interview questions were therefore geared towards the separate groups. The interview questions are displayed in Appendix 5. The individual interviews all took place at The Centre over a two-week period and were conducted in a quiet, private space in one of the counselling offices. The teen mothers attended at the mutually agreed on scheduled time. They attended with a sense of confidence, assurance, positivity, and yet anticipation. This was not surprising, since the girls were returning to what I will describe as ‘their place’. It was at The Centre that they accessed the intervention, were fed, counselled and guided when they were pregnant. It was there that their self esteem was resuscitated and their sense of person restored and returned to them, if these were lost. It was there, at The Centre, that the teen mothers regarded as being their second home.

My research sought to have interviewed the parents of the teen mothers; nine parents were interviewed. Three parents were not interviewed due to the difficulty of securing

a suitable time. Telephone interview was the mode used with seven of the parents since this was most convenient for them. Two parents opted to have accompanied their daughters to the interview and had their interviews conducted face to face, immediately following the interview with their daughters. Seven of the parents interviewed were mothers; one was a grandmother and the other was a father. Interviews with the parents primarily sought to determine the role that they played in the process of return (*research questions 1 & 2*). Interview items were thus concerned with matters of support provided by the parents of the teen mothers, and the extent to which the parents were involved in their daughter's school life.

The interviews with the school officials were conducted after those conducted with the parents. The interviews were conducted with the principals or the counsellors from the schools at which the teen mothers were placed. The decision as to who was interviewed was generally made by the principal. Seven school officials were interviewed since it was impossible to make contact with three of the schools and it was impossible to arrange a mutually convenient time with the other two school officials. Although face to face interviews would have been preferred, the interviews were conducted by telephone which was the most convenient mode for me and the school officials.

Interviews with the school principals and or counsellors sought to determine the role of the school in the return process (*research questions 1, 2, 5, 6*). This set of interviews were concerned with matters related to: the orientation process that was afforded the teen mothers in the respective schools, support provided by the school counsellors, attitude of the school personnel towards the teen mothers, awareness of difficulties that the teen mothers might have encountered, extent of assistance rendered where needed, and levels of confidentiality and anonymity that was afforded the teen mothers. The interview questions primarily sought to examine the teen mothers' return to school from the perspective of the schools (*See Appendix 5, p. 153, for the questions used in this set of interviews*).

I was aware of the limitations of telephone interviews. "One drawback of this kind of interviewing is that the researcher does not have direct contact with the participant. This causes limited communication that may affect the researcher's ability to understand the interviewee's perceptions of the phenomenon" (Creswell 2008, p.227).

Although there are limitations to telephone interviews, these limitations were not considered detrimental to the research process.

All three sets of interviews were of the structured and unstructured nature. “In structured interviews, the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of pre-established questions ...” (Fontana and Frey 2005, p.702). Structured interviews were deemed fit since I needed to have had all the participants supply answers to those questions which related to experiences that were common to all (Questions such as, ‘to whom or what would you attribute the completion of your secondary education?’). An interview guide, which “is nothing more than a list of questions you intend to ask in an interview”, (Merriam 1998, p.81), was prepared and used as a guide for the interviews.

I was however mindful of the limitations of using structured interviews throughout. As Merriam (1998, p.74) points out, “The problem with using a highly structured interview in qualitative research is that rigidly adhering to predetermined questions may not allow you to access participants’ perspectives and understandings of the world. Instead, you get reactions to the *investigator’s* preconceived notions of the world.” The greater part of the interviews was therefore unstructured in nature. For qualitative research, Merriam points out that “... the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam 1998, p.4). Fontana and Frey add that “The unstructured interview “can provide greater breadth ... given its qualitative nature” (2005, p.705).

Open-ended interview questions were preferred and used in all the interview sessions. “In qualitative research, you ask open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings (Creswell 2008, p.225). Furthermore, “An open-ended response to a question allows the participant to create the options for responding” (Creswell 2008, p.225).

Creswell (2008, p.226) is of the view that “Interviews in qualitative research have both advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages are that they provide useful information when you cannot directly observe participants, and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information.” Creswell also observes that “the most time-consuming and costly approach is to conduct individual interviews” (2008, p.226). Another disadvantage is the fact that interviews provide only information “filtered” through the views of the interviewer ...” (Creswell 2008, p.226). Whether this is a disadvantage may however be argued, since the interview seeks to gather the perceptions of the interviewees.

I incorporated several measures to ensure that the interviews elicited maximum responses from the participants. The questions were worded in a way that would have been easily understood by the participants. I was careful to avoid ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions. Use was made of what Merriam (1998, p.77) describes as being Hypothetical, Devil’s Advocate, Ideal Position and Interpretative questions.

The interviews were all captured by handwriting. This was particularly the method of choice for the teen mothers based on the realization of the very sensitive nature of their experiences. It was perceived that tape recording the teen mothers’ stories might have been distracting, and in some cases, might have been threatening, thus reducing the quality and quantity of the data given by the participants. The decision to handwrite the interviews conducted with the parents and the school officials was taken primarily due to the fact that these interviews were conducted with the use of the telephone and my limited technological prowess prohibited my connecting the telephone to the tape recorder. Abbreviations were used in some instances; participants were asked to repeat responses where I thought the content of what was said escaped me. In all the instances, my ability to take copious notes and to speed write proved to have been advantageous. At the end of each interview, I reread the notes, completed abbreviated words and sentences, and ensured that the sense of what was said was captured. I was satisfied that this method of gathering the data did not compromise the content of what was said.

The interviews were recorded in the vernacular which ably conveyed the thoughts and feelings of the participants. I was conscious of the poststructuralists’ view that “language is an unstable system of referents, thus it is impossible ever to capture

completely the meaning of an action, text, or intention” Denzin and Lincoln (2005, page 27). It is also thought that “Language does not “reflect” social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality. Different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one’s sense of self – one’s subjectivity – is construed” (Richardson and Adams St. Pierre 2005, p.961).

Document Analysis. The teen mothers are prepared for their return to the formal school system and are monitored for two years subsequent to the placement. A counselling curriculum is used in the process of preparation. The names of each teen mother returned to school are kept on record at The Centre. The records bear information which point to whether the teen mothers are monitored. Details of the monitoring process are also entered into the file of each teen mother. All three documents served as a further source of data collection. The documents were analysed and the data provided were used to corroborate or disprove the stories told by the project participants in the individual interviews.

The Counselling Syllabus. The basic syllabus used by The Centre for the counselling component of the Programme is a two-paged document which outlines pertinent counselling topics. Several other counselling materials which have been prepared by various other agencies are also extensively used. In addition, presentations made by various resource persons are incorporated into the counselling programme to augment the efforts of the counsellors. The research project however focused primarily on the basic syllabus, since this is the material used by the counsellors in preparing the teen mothers to return to school. The syllabus was examined for:

- ✓ Content
- ✓ Relevance to needs of teen mothers
- ✓ Specificity
- ✓ Scope
- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Contextuality
- ✓ Structure

✓ **Simplicity**

The Placement Records. The Centre has, among its documents, a book in which it records the names of the teen mothers who are returned to school. I was particularly interested in the comments made about each teen mother, as these would give general insight into the efficacy and extent of the monitoring process. Comments supplied specific information as to:

- The school at which each teen mother was placed
- Dated home or school visits administered to each teen mother
- Whether the teen mother completed or dropped out
- Problems that the teen mother might have had

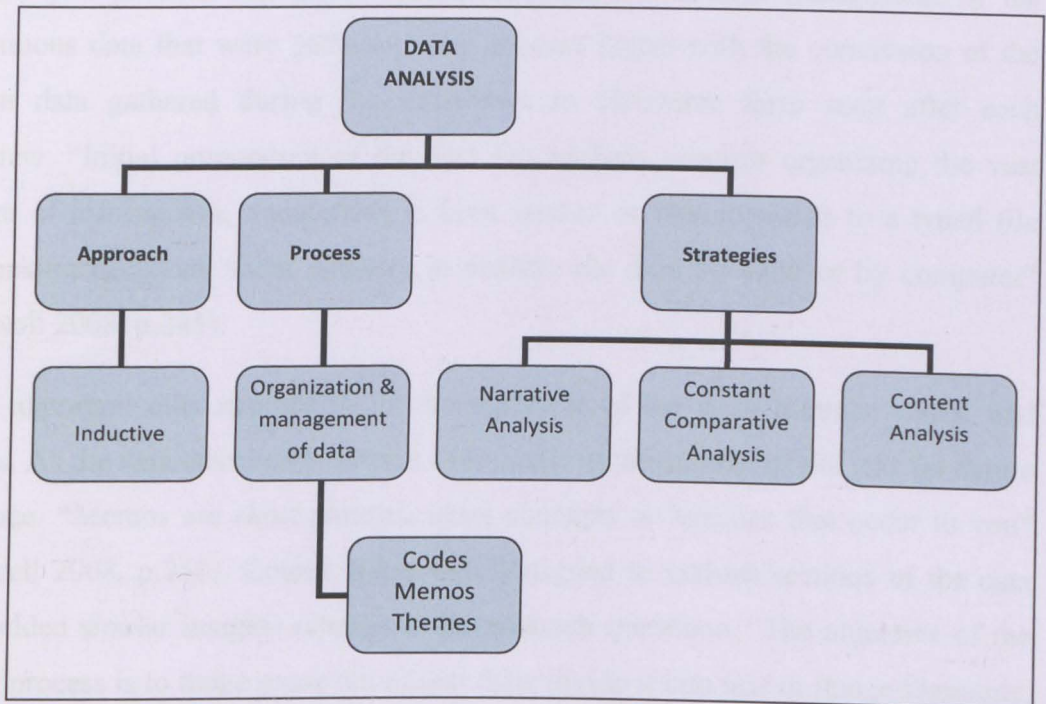
The Files of the Teen mothers. An individual file is kept of every teen mother registered into the Programme. The file contains personal information, notes of the individual counselling sessions as well as other information pertinent to the teen mother. The files are updated periodically, even after the teen mother has been returned to school. Files were examined for seven of the teen mothers. The Centre was unable to provide me with the files of three of the teen mothers. The files were included in the data gathering process since they would supply data relative to the monitoring process. They were examined for data relative to:

- The school at which the teen mother was placed
- Whether the teen mother began attending school
- Visits made to the teen mother's home or school subsequent to the placement
- The dates the visits were made
- Whether the teen mother was experiencing difficulties
- The intervention administered to address the problem(s) experienced by the teen mother
- Whether the intervention (or the lack of it) contributed to completion or drop out
- How the teen mother was progressing at school
- Whether the teen mother had completed her secondary education

Data Analysis

This section outlines the analytic process that was observed by my research. The process is summarized in figure 9 given below.

Figure 9: Summary of the Process of Analysis of Data



Analysis of the data incorporated: a specific approach, a definite process, and three strategies.

The analytic process of my research was guided by the principle that “The right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (Merriam 1998, p.15). This being the case, analysis is usually an ongoing process throughout the research. “Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed” (Merriam 1998, p.162). Merriam (1998, p.163) therefore concludes that “qualitative research is not a linear, step-by-step process.”

The process of data analysis as an activity of my research began with the first set of interviews conducted with the teen mothers and their parents. Each set of data was constantly read and reviewed as recommended by Creswell (2008, p.244) who says

that “qualitative researchers analyze their data by reading it several times and conducting an analysis each time.” Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.154) make the point that “the analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to these data, and openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life.”

The analytic process was aided by careful organization and management of the voluminous data that were gathered. This process began with the conversion of the written data gathered during the interviews to electronic form soon after each interview. “Initial preparation of the data for analysis requires organizing the vast amount of information, transferring it from spoken or written words to a typed file and making decisions about whether to analyze the data by hand or by computer” (Creswell 2008, p.245).

Three important aids assisted in the management of the data: memos, codes, and themes. As the data were read, memos were made in the column of the text for future reference. “Memos are short phrases, ideas concepts or hunches that occur to you” (Creswell 2008, p.250). Colour codes were assigned to various sections of the data that yielded similar insights relative to the research questions. “The objective of the coding process is to make sense out of text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes ...” (Creswell 2008, p.251). Similar colours were grouped and named. Subsequently, a list was made of all the code words. The list was reviewed and reduced as similar codes were converged and those that became redundant were discarded.

The codes that were decided on were then used to identify the salient themes. “Themes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database” (Creswell, p.252). Themes were arrived at through what Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.154) referencing Patton (1990) calls inductive analysis “where the salient categories emerge from the data.” Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.154) refer to these derivations as being indigenous typologies which are “... those created and expressed by participants and are generated through analyses of the local use of language.”

The organized data were then subjected to in-depth analysis which was aided by the use of three analytic strategies: narrative analysis, constant comparative and content

analysis. Narrative analysis was used to treat with the stories told by the participants in the individual interviews. "Narrative analysis in the human sciences refers to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form" (Riessman 2005, p.1). Merriam (1998, p.157) explains that with the use of narrative analysis, "emphasis is on the stories people tell and on how these stories are communicated" With this analytic strategy, I paid close attention to what the interviewees said as they related their experiences of return to school. Riessman categorizes this as being the thematic approach of narrative analysis. The thematic approach is useful for ... finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report (Riessman 2005, p.3).

The constant comparative method of analysis also proved quite useful in my research. "The basic strategy of the method is to constantly compare. The researcher begins first with a particular incident from an interview ... and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances" (Merriam 1998, p.159). Somekh and Lewin (2005, p.35) point out that "it is always helpful to compare and contrast across cases...and investigate the range of possible experience within a programme." Merriam (1998, p.159) observes that "... the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research." With the use of the constant comparative method of data analysis, I made comparisons among the stories told by those who completed their secondary school education. I also made comparisons among the stories told by those who did not complete. Further, I compared the stories told by those who completed with the stories told by those who did not complete, as I looked for similarities and differences in the accounts.

Content analysis is implicit in any qualitative research since "it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analyzed" (Merriam 1998, p.160). "The raw material for content analysis may be any form of communication, usually written materials ..." (Marshall and Rossman 1999, p.117). Probably the greatest strength of content analysis is that it is unobtrusive and nonreactive: It can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way" (Marshall and Rossman 1999, p.117). Content

analysis was particularly applied to the documents from which the research sought to have gathered data: the counselling syllabus, placement records, and the files of the teen mothers.

The research activities involved were carefully guided by issues of ethicality. These are presented in the upcoming section.

Ethical issues

“As a result of its focus on people, ethical issues are centrally important in social science research” (Somekh and Lewin 2006, p.3). Glesne & Peshkin (1992, p.124), agree and say that “... ethical dilemmas defy easy solutions.” There is something of caution about these statements which required that I treaded likewise cautiously as I embarked on this research project. Attention was given to matters of: permission, access, privilege, duty, assessment of risk, informed consent, sensitivity, deception, taking sides, compensation, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and bias.

The WCJF, which is an agency of the GOJ, falls under the umbrella of a Government ministry. The organization is headed by an Executive Director who is responsible and accountable for all the Programme activities. The Executive Director is answerable to the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry. However, the Programme activities are guided by an Advisory Board³ which is appointed by the Minister. Permission to engage The Centre and Programme participants in the study was sought from the Executive Director who subsequently informed the PS and the Advisory Board of the study and its intent. The manager and counsellors employed at The Centre were also informed of the intent and scope of the study.

The schools at which the teen mothers are returned are headed by principals who often are the ones with whom the WCJF counsellors liaise in order to secure a place for the teen mothers at the respective schools. Through a written information letter, the principals were informed about the project and their permission sought to engage

³ An Advisory Board oversees the operations of the organization. Its roles and responsibilities differ from that of a Supervisory Board which gives direct supervision to the daily operations of the organization, and influences the decisions that are made.

the school in the project by way of interviewing themselves or the counsellors, if preferred.

The research took advantage of the benefit of access afforded an insider research. My job functions allow me the privilege of visiting all the centres and outreach sites periodically. This privilege provided me with ease of access to The Centre. Notwithstanding, I sought to have my visiting The Centre for the purpose of the research cleared with the Executive Director and also with the centre manager. This way, a mutually convenient time was set at which to conduct the interviews without disrupting the schedule of the Programme activities.

It is my portfolio responsibility to scrutinize all the documents pertinent to the execution of the Programme activities at all the sites. I am also privileged to access the individual files of all the Programme participants. However, I was careful to inform the Executive Director and the centre manger that examination of the counselling curriculum, the placement records, and the teen mothers' files was part and parcel of the research activities. I thus sought and secured permission to examine these documents, and to use information gleaned in the project report.

I was careful to secure the consent of each participant (teen mothers, their parents, as well as the school principals and counsellors) to engage in the research process. Everyone was required to read and sign an informed consent form. The forms detailed the research activities and what was expected of the participants. Especially in the case of the teen mothers, the importance and relevance of the forms was explained. Instructions were given as to how to complete the forms. On receiving the completed forms, I reviewed each with the respective participants, and confirmed their consent to participate in the project. "Although informed consent neither precludes abuse of research findings nor creates a symmetrical relationship between researcher and researched, it can contribute to the empowering of the researched" (Glesne & Peshkin 1992, p.111). However, "through informed consent, potential study participants are made aware (1) that participation is voluntary, (2) of any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being, and (3) that they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study" (Glesne & Peshkin 1992, pp.111-112).

In conducting the interviews, I was aware of and sensitive to the possibility of discomfort that could have come to the teen mothers as they relived their experiences. Lines of questioning were therefore discontinued where discomfort and unwillingness to divulge were perceived.

Some of the teen mothers and their parents attended the interviews, anticipating that there were tangible benefits to be derived from their participation. To clarify possible misconceptions, and mitigate perceptions of deception, I was careful to point out that there would be no real benefit accruing to the teen mothers or their parents for having participated in the project. Their only benefit would be the satisfaction of knowing that other teen mothers would benefit from their experiences.

Care was taken to ensure that the place at which the interviews would have been conducted would have been convenient and conducive to the participants. They were therefore asked to tell where it was that they would have preferred to have the interviews conducted. Consideration was given to the convenience of time for the parents and the school officials. Interviews were therefore scheduled for the most convenient times so as not to be intrusive. Each participant was thanked for having afforded me their time.

The teen mothers and their parents (those parents who were interviewed at The Centre) incurred cost for transportation as they attended the interviews. Transportation cost was therefore calculated and reimbursed to the teen mothers and their parents. They were asked to sign a form indicating that they received this reimbursement. The Centre also incurred cost to make initial contact with the teen mothers by telephone. This expense was also reimbursed.

I was well aware that the stories shared by the teen mothers and their parents were private and personal. The matter of privacy was therefore of utmost importance, and was duly taken into consideration with respect to the space in which the interviews were conducted. The interviews were therefore conducted in a room that was detached from the main activities at The Centre.

“Participants have a right to expect that when they give you permission to ... interview, you will protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity. To protect their anonymity, researchers use fictitious names, and sometimes change descriptive

characteristics such as sex and age” (Glesne & Peshkin 1992, p.117-118). Care was therefore taken to ensure that the identity of the teen mothers, their parents, the schools they attended, the principals and counsellors of the schools was not easily identified. To this end, each project participant as well as the schools that they attended was anonymized with the use of assigned pseudonyms. It was this pseudonym that was used in the reporting procedure and in fact, throughout the research document. To ensure anonymity of the parents, school principals and the school counsellors, I referred to them as ‘the parent’, ‘the school principal’, or ‘the school counsellor’ respectively.

“Gaining trust is essential to the success of the interviews and once it is gained, trust can still be very fragile” (Fontana and Frey 2005, p. 708). I counted it a privilege to have been made privy to the participants’ stories and carefully guarded the trust that was placed in me. The principles of confidentiality were therefore always observed. The stories told by the participants were converted to electronic form on a computer which is accessed with the use of a password. Later, the coded data (the process of coding the data is described in the section which presents the Data Analysis) were printed and stored along with other documents pertinent to the research process in a paper folder only accessible to me. At the end of the research process, I chose to keep the data as a personal property. I was confident that issues of confidentiality would not be compromised since the responses of the participants were labelled using the pseudonyms assigned to each participant (inclusive of the schools the teen mothers attended).

The issue of confidentiality also concerned the examination of the teen mothers’ files. I was aware that the counselling notes contained in each file were guarded by the ethical practices observed by The Centre. Yet, the files were considered to be a valuable source of data and would have been advantageous to the research efforts. I therefore took the decision to include the data supplied by the files into the research process, however being absolutely careful to report the findings using the pseudonyms assigned each teen mother.

The WCJF executes its mandate through seven main centres and six outreach stations island wide. My project was however located at one of the main centres. I did not think it fit to have the selected centre identified since the findings of the research

might, in some instances, be discomfiting. I therefore referred to the selected centre as 'The Centre'. I was also conservative with the description of The Centre in a bid to further provide anonymity.

Despite the application of ethical issues to the research process, I was aware that there would have been questions surrounding the quality and soundness of the research. Against the background of this awareness, I observed the principles of reflexivity as reflected in the following section.

Reflexivity

"Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the "human as instrument ..." (Guba & Lincoln 2005, p.210). According to Somekh and Lewin (2006, p. 4), "Reflexivity...is the hallmark of the good social science researcher." With reflexivity, "social science researchers ... critique their work and reflect on how it could have been done differently and whether that might have changed the outcomes and, if so, how." Since the researcher, of qualitative studies, is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, "the investigator is left to rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of the research effort' (Merriam 1998, p. 42). Somekh and Lewin (2006, p.17) are of the opinion that "we are part of the social world we are studying and that the researchers' own interpretative processes and authorial position need to be taken account of."

Having completed this research, it is incumbent on me to engage in the process of reflexivity and examine at least three areas relative to this research project: my motives for having engaged the process; the methodology employed and the possible biases that might have been brought to bear on the research process.

My motives. Of course, I had to conduct a research project so as to complete the requirements for my doctoral degree. But, why an insider research when it positions me to be criticized for 'washing dirty linen in public'? Why an insider research when it brings into question the quality of my own performance as Director of Field Operations giving oversight to the WCJF's Programme activities? Why an insider research when it is so intently criticized as being potentially biased?

Somekh and Lewin (2006, p. 43) make the point that "... there is the presumed power, social status and knowledge of the researcher that may be used to manipulate the interview. There is the agenda of concerns that the interviewer may impose upon the interview which may prevent the interviewers raising the concerns of their own lives." Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 111 quoting Merriam, 2001) make the point that, "... being an insider means easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues and most importantly be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study." As I conducted the research, the challenge for me was not to be untruthful but rather to be too critical and unfeeling. It was not hard to disrobe myself of my WCJF garb, and look critically at the findings. In fact, were there negatives found, or gaps in the Programme, it would have been a reflection of my own work as supervisor of the Programme activities at The Centre.

The research drew on information contained in the teen mothers' files as a corroboratory data source. On the basis of confidentiality, an insider would have easier access to these files than would an outsider. My research also depended heavily on the sensitive stories told by the teen mothers. In my opinion, the girls might have been comfortable relating their stories to an insider who was in some way a part of their story. They might also have been comfortable relating their stories to a researcher who was of the same gender as they. Fontana and Frey (2005, p.710) note that "Gender filters knowledge." Also, "... the sex of the interviewer and the sex of the respondents make a difference because the interview takes place with the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones" (Fontana and Frey 2005, p. 710).

It is also my view that, as an insider, matters of trust would not factor during the interviews; at least not largely. The teen mothers could afford to be open and honest; and this would abound to the benefit of the research. The researched can, if they want to, conceal undesirable facts from outsider researchers. But the insider already knows the corners; knows where to locate pertinent information; knows where the truth is not altogether being told. I want to think too, that the insider has the added confidence of her colleagues which will aid the research process.

"A criticism often levelled at inside and insider research concerns the extent to which it can be considered to be 'objective' and hence 'reliable' and 'valid' according to so

called scientific criteria” (Sikes and Potts 2008, p. 8). Being mindful of this criticism, I was careful to divorce myself from my role as employee to the WCJF and adopt an outsider stance. Hence, I approached the data gathering process from the standpoint of an outsider devoid of any knowledge of the Programme and its operation. This was particularly true as I examined the various Programme-related documents which would have offered insights into the process of the teen mothers return to school.

I disagree with those who say that “... insiders are too close to the culture to ask critical questions” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 111). I am of the view that a researcher bent on obtaining correct information, bent on finding answers, bent on effecting change, would of necessity remove all hindrances and get the work done. I further believe that research is not about parading skills and abilities; it is not about protecting turf. On the contrary, research is about improving practice; about initiating change such as will abound to the betterment of human life and living; about inviting those on the outside to see the world of those on the inside; about improving the lives of people and helping them find a more comfortable space in the world in which they live.

My research was informed by the Chevannes research of 1996 which found that 46% of the Programme participants do not complete secondary school. To put it mildly, this statistic is outrageous! But, it has not attracted the attention of outsiders who admire the work and adulate the worth of the WCJF; outsiders who expend public purse to offset the cost of executing the Programme. Outsiders are more interested in the other more public aspects of the Programme. But, of course, an insider who is bent on improving practice would be interested to know how to minimize this percentage. Outsiders are content to know that the Programme is being successful in returning thousands of teen mothers to the formal school system. But, the insider remains discontent until all the teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system do in fact redeem this second chance.

Like the rest of the world, Jamaica is reeling from the effects of the global recession. The time is right for all of us to evaluate our performances and to see where the gaps are with a view to becoming more efficient and effective in our undertakings. The WCJF has recently celebrated thirty years of existence and contribution to nation building. It can continue to glory in its past achievements and by that become

complacent; or, it can opt to examine and explore new frontiers in keeping with its mandate, but which position its constituents to become better citizens. It can settle into 'maintenance mode' for another thirty years, or it can improve practice and become more relevant to the changing times.

Bias. Based on the foresaid, it is clear that I have some biases from which this research have not gone unaffected. First and foremost, I want to identify the bias of wanting to see the WCJF Programme advance. It is not a negative though; for this very bias aided the research process: it mitigated my concern with and about the possible criticisms of my colleagues; it resisted the temptation to not uncover and bring to the fore some blatant shortcomings of practice at The Centre.

I readily admit my bias towards the education of women. I embrace the view that women must be financially independent and viable. They must be sufficiently positioned to take care of their families if their partners refuse to or are unable to be supportive. It is my view that education empowers women to become financially independent. It is advantageous that teen mothers must complete their secondary education and become financially empowered.

Generalizability. As I reflect on the methodology that I employed in my research, I call attention to two areas: the site at which the research was located, and the sample size. In terms of the former, I could have chosen to include in the project, all the WCJF sites instead of only one. This inclusion would have opened up for scrutiny, the more general practice of the WCJF Programme across the island. Examination of the practice at The Centre might not altogether reflect the practice at the other sites. Findings may therefore not be true of or applicable to all the sites. Recall though, that I earlier mentioned that The Centre was typical of the other WCJF sites. Also, barring the marginal differences occasioned by the human element, the WCJF informs that the practice at one site bespeaks the practice at the other sites. Against this background, and also in light of what the literature postulates about generalizability, the respective sites are at liberty to extrapolate from the findings and recommendations whatever may be applicable and relevant to their specific situations.

Sample size. In terms of the sample size, the voices of twelve teen mothers may be construed as being non-representative of a wider cross section of teen mothers in the

island. I could therefore have expanded the sample size to include several other teen mothers and by extension, additional parents and schools. I would however contend that the experience of returning to school has an element of particularity that may also reflect an element of generality. The point is that, in the Jamaican context, there are elements of similarities between the experience of teen mothers who return to school in the one parish and of those who return to school in the other parish. The research findings may therefore be advantageous to teen mothers in general; others may be able to identify with and benefit from the experiences of the teen mothers as shared in the report. “Although no qualitative studies are generalizable in the statistical sense, their findings may be transferable” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, p. 43).

Looking back over the research process, I am satisfied that its ‘insiderness’ did not compromise its quality; that the methodology employed adequately delivered the stated objectives of the research. I am satisfied that the research, on the whole, will serve a useful purpose to the research community, to the WCJF, to the teen mothers, to the parents of the teen mothers, and to the nation at large.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected throughout the research process. “The analysis of qualitative data allows researchers to discuss in detail the various social contours and processes human beings use to create and maintain their social realities. This is not to suggest that qualitative methods are without methodological rigor” (Berg 2001, p.7). The chapter includes descriptions of the various elements of the research, as well as presentation and discussion of the themes that emerged from the data. “A description is a detailed rendering of people, places or events in a setting of qualitative research. In providing detailed information, description can transport the reader to a research site or help the reader visualize a person” (Creswell 2008, p.255).

Descriptions

This section constitutes descriptions of:

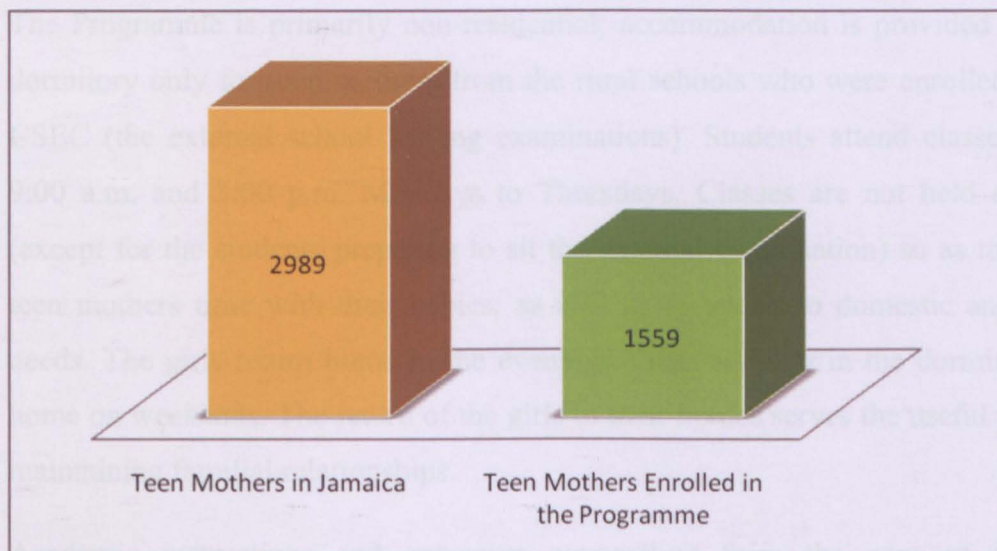
- The WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers
- The Centre at which the project was located
- The teen mothers
- The interviews conducted with the teen mothers
- The parents of the teen mothers
- The interviews conducted with the teen mothers’ parents
- The interviews conducted with the school principals and school counsellors
- The counselling syllabus
- The placement records kept by The Centre
- The individual files of the teen mothers

Description of the Programme.

A description is given of the Programme so as to set the broader framework for the specific centre at which the project was located. The Programme for Adolescent Mothers enrolls girls who are seventeen years and under, since these girls would be within the school age and thus eligible to be returned to the school system. “The Women’s Centre of Jamaica Foundation ... is a Government Agency which is mandated to assist girls 17 years and under, who have dropped out of school due to a pregnancy (Annual Report 2008 -2009, pp.1, 3).

It is not mandatory that teen mothers enroll in the Programme. As figure 10 below reveals, only a fraction of teen mothers in Jamaica enroll in the Programme.⁴ The RGD reports that there were 2,989 adolescents (17 years and under) who were pregnant in 2008. In the same year, the WCJF reported an enrolment of 1559 teen mothers.

Figure 10: Comparison between Teen Mothers in Jamaica with Teen Mothers Enrolled in the Programme in 2008



The number of teen mothers aged 17 and under, far outweighs the number of teen mothers who are enrolled in the Programme.

⁴ It is not mandatory for teen mothers to enroll in the Programme. Some pregnant girls therefore opt not to enroll.

The annual subvention which the Programme receives from the GOJ is used to underwrite both a capital and a recurrent budget. Budgetary items include: salaries for full time as well as part time members of staff, utilities, meals for the teen mothers, (the girls receive at least one cooked meal daily) student welfare (transportation and other welfare needs). The WCJF also initiates interim fundraising activities by which additional funds are raised to supplement the government allocation.

“Although the Programme started with one centre ... it has since expanded to seven (7) main centres and eight outreach stations island wide” (Annual Report 2008–2009, p.1). The outreach sites are usually established in the parish neighbouring the main centre to facilitate those girls who are unable to attend the main centres, primarily due to distance. The main centres are served by a centre manager who gives general oversight to the Programme activity at the given location and at the outreach site (if there is one). Each centre is staffed with two counsellors, three Trades and Service Staff (who attend to the care of the teen mothers’ babies and prepare the meals for the teen mothers) and two watchmen/caretakers.

The Programme is primarily non-residential; accommodation is provided in a small dormitory only for teen mothers from the rural schools who were enrolled to sit the CSEC (the external school leaving examinations). Students attend classes between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays. Classes are not held on Fridays (except for the students preparing to sit the external examination) so as to allow the teen mothers time with their babies, as well as to attend to domestic and personal needs. The girls return home in the evenings. Girls residing in the dormitory return home on weekends. The return of the girls to their homes serves the useful purpose of maintaining familial relationships.

Academic instructions and extensive counselling form the core of the taught curriculum at the WCJF sites. Part time teachers are employed to the Programme to offer instructions in core subject areas: English language, mathematics, social studies, and integrated science. The teen mothers are engaged in group and individual counselling sessions which are conducted by a cadre of trained counsellors employed on a full time basis at each WCJF site. Counselling sessions seek to address developmental issues and topics pertinent to Adolescent Reproductive Health. A primary component of the counselling programme is the preparation of the teen

mothers to be returned to the formal school system. Home visits are made when warranted, and are particularly useful when girls fail to attend the centres for extended periods of time and are at risk of dropping out of the Programme.

The policy of the Programme is that the teen mothers receive contraceptive counselling and a method prior to their return to school so as to delay a second pregnancy. The desire of parents and the teen mothers is taken into consideration regarding the choice and use of a contraceptive method. The parents are required to sign a contraceptive consent form, which authorizes the WCJF to introduce the teen mother to contraception and to take her to the health centres for the method. Those who initiate this activity and make the visit to the health centres on their own are required to present the health card indicating the method received.

Counselling is also extended to the parents/guardians of the teen mothers who are required to accompany the girls to the intake interview. Parents are often disappointed by the pregnancy of their daughters. It is not unusual for parents to 'throw out' their daughters when the pregnancy becomes known. Through counselling sessions, and ongoing parents' meetings, the parents are brought into a partnership with the WCJF and are helped to: realize that there is hope for the teen mother; support the teen mother during the pregnancy; make the necessary plans for the birth of the baby; decide on the school at which the teen mother will be placed after the birth of her baby; devise a plan whereby the baby will be cared for while the teen mother returns to school. The fathers of the teen mothers' babies (colloquially called 'baby fathers') are also counselled through a counselling programme specifically designed to help them explore personal development and sexual and reproductive health issues. The 'baby fathers' are encouraged to be as supportive as possible; as is allowed by the family of the teen mothers. They are also encouraged to develop a positive relationship with the child.

The teen mothers are allowed to take their babies to the centres where trained caregivers attend to the needs of the babies while the girls attend classes. There is no

cost to the teen mothers for this facility which also facilitates the mother/child bonding process and the strengthening of parental practices.⁵

On average, the teen mothers spend two terms at the respective sites during which time they would have had their babies. The majority of the teen mothers are subsequently returned to the formal school system through what has been termed the 'placement exercise'. For various reasons, inclusive of age and or academic ability, some of the teen mothers are placed in other training institutions, primarily the National Training Agency (Heart Trust/NTA).

The Education Act (MOE 1981, p.21) stipulates that teen mothers have a right to education and should be returned to school. Against this background, the placement exercise has been endorsed and strengthened by the regional offices of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The assistance of Education Officers is therefore sought where it proves difficult to have a student returned to the formal school system. The counsellors are sometimes told that "there is no space at the school for baby mothers", or that "this school does not accommodate teen mothers since they are 'big women' and they will encourage undesired behaviour among the other students." Reports from the centre managers are that the intervention of the Education Officers usually results in secured placements. Placements are also secured through the MOE, where the teen mothers are successful in the sitting of the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT).

On average, the WCJF enrolls 1,500 teen mothers each year. "Eligible adolescent mothers are referred to the WCJF by teachers, nurses, doctors, government agencies and word of mouth" (Chevannes 1996, p.90). They are given a least one cooked meal for the day. For many of the girls, this may very well be the only meal that they would have had for the day. Several of the girls are from low socio-economic circumstances and unfavourable living conditions. The centres are regarded as home; a place where they are listened to and their emotional needs are met; a place of help and hope.

⁵There are those teen mothers who practically live on their own and do not have the guidance as to how to care for their babies. The Centre therefore takes the time to teach these girls the needed parental skills.

The Programme has enrolled in excess of thirty-eight thousand teen mothers since its inception in 1978 (WCJF Annual Report, 2008-2009 p.2). Beyond the experience at the centres, the teen mothers often joyfully return to the centres or outreach sites in their uniforms, applauding the Programme and expressing gratitude for being given a second chance to return to school. Those who go on to tertiary level education, also return to 'report' on their academic successes. "The WCJF is nationally regarded as being a best practice, and has been replicated in other Caribbean and African countries" (Barnett et al, 1996 p.4). "The real achievements of the WCJF include ... the thousands of young women who have been able to achieve academic success and social advancement" (McNeil no date, p.4).

Description of The Centre.

A description is now given of The Centre, the site at which the research was located. The Centre is one of seven main centres under the WCJF umbrella and is located on the outskirts of a suburban section of the island; about three miles from town centre and a quarter of a mile from the main road. Apart from the sign at the entrance, The Centre is easily recognized by the typical WCJF colours in which it is painted. The main building is an old residential structure that has been converted to facilitate a main administrative office, a classroom, a kitchen, adequate dining area, a day nursery, and a watchman's quarters. The interior is attractively painted with bright, contrasting pastel colours and is conducive to study and counselling.

The premises allow for adequate parking space and limited recreational area for the teen mothers. Group counselling sessions are sometimes held on the neatly manicured front lawn where shade is provided by a large fruit tree. The Centre enjoys a close working relationship with the members of the immediate community, members of corporate society, and the various organizations and agencies. The typical WCJF Programme activities are executed at The Centre by the staff which includes: the centre manager, counsellors, ancillary staff and watchmen.

Description of the teen mothers, their parents, and the individual interviews.

This section provides detailed descriptions of: the teen mothers, their parents and the interviews conducted with each individual. Table 3 on page 111 presents an overview of the socio-economic status of the teen mothers. The centre manager and counsellors were informed about the interviews and had assisted in making the arrangements to have the teen mothers attend the interviews. The interviews did not interfere with the regular days' activities. The teen mothers simply came and left, remaining long enough to greet the staff with whom they were well familiar, and bring the staff up to date with their present status.

For the most part, the teen mothers all seemed to have had a good grasp of the English Language. Some however spoke in the vernacular during the interview. Some of the parents also spoke in the vernacular. The participants' stories were written as spoken.

Interview with Valerie. Valerie has a beautiful face but seems quite economical with her smile. She presented as being a pensive young lady who had been hardened by the throes of a difficult life. Valerie enrolled in the WCJF Programme in 2005 and was returned to high school in 2006. She did not complete. Valerie dropped out of school a few months after she had returned to school.

Valerie attended the interview on schedule and willingly told her story. She interchanged a measure of Standard English with the vernacular as she spoke, pointing to the challenges that confronted her and which resulted in her dropping out a second time. Valerie's story revealed that she was faced with much social instability. At one stage she lived with her mother, but mother soon went away. "My mother wanted me to stay with my father, but I did not want to stay with him since he used to beat me ... I lived with my grandmother, then my father's friend; but she run mi from di house (she ran me away from the house). One day I went to school and returned. I looked after my daughter and myself to go back tomorrow. The lady had two sons and I didn't bathe them. She therefore said I cannot manage, since I only looked after my daughter." Valerie eventually went to live with her child's father who offered her a measure of support. "I went to live with my baby father ... he paid for day care for her (the baby) ..."

Attending school was made difficult by the circumstances that confronted Valerie. On a typical day after returning from school, "I wash the dishes, my uniform, since I had only one uniform, wash the baby's things, do my homework and study." Having to care for her baby also compounded her circumstances as she returned to school. "It was difficult going to school and caring for the baby. I had to wash, cook, pick up the baby. My friends asked how I managed and said that they would mad" (... and said that they would not have been able to cope).

Valerie had managed to keep her status as teen mother away from the knowledge of the other students. "The school did not know that I had a baby; except my form teacher, the guidance counsellor. I was comfortable at school."

Valerie dropped out of school a second time "because I was on the injection and bled a lot. The clinic switched me to the pills to stop the bleeding. My mother said I should stop taking the injection so a did stop (and so I stopped). I got pregnant and went to school till about five months." Valerie's second pregnancy was due to mishaps with her contraceptive method. Since the Centre should have been monitoring her placement I asked her to tell why it was that she did not return to the Centre to report on the problem that she was experiencing. Her answer to this question was that "I did not return to the Centre to talk about the problem that I was having with the method since they said that the second pregnancy was purpose. Also, I was too old to return to school after the baby."

Valerie reported that "I was not on a method before I returned to school. The Centre did not take me to the clinic. An appointment was made but I do not know what happened. I did not get to go. I later went to the clinic by myself."

Valerie indicated that she was determined to continue her education despite her second drop out. "I need to get a job so that I can work and go to evening classes. I am thinking of doing early childhood. I want to be a teacher." Her circumstances are still not the ideal. "I cannot sit and plan with my baby father. I am unhappy with him. He has some ways that I don't like." Her sense of ambition is remarkable. "I regret that I dropped out of school. If I did not drop out, I would have some subjects by now. I would have graduated this year." She also has a positive sense of self. "I think I am pretty. I do not want to be a pretty dunce."

Interview with Patsy. Patsy's brilliant smile is the first thing that greeted me as I met her. She exuded self confidence which was evident in her gait and self presentation. Patsy became pregnant in 4th form (grade 10) and dropped out of school. She attended The Centre in 2006 and was returned to high school in 2007, the same year in which she graduated. Patsy lived with her mother, siblings and her baby. She spoke with a sense of determination about her plans to become a paediatrician. She is presently studying in a tertiary level institution.

Patsy attended on schedule for the interview. By her confident attitude she made it clear that she had a story to tell. She spoke freely throughout the interview and insisted that I recorded the fact that it was during her first year at her new school that "I made my mark". She went on to tell that "I came first in the class and got the highest grade in Home Economics. I was soaring to new heights. I was always in the top three."

Patsy attests to have been adequately prepared for the return to school by The Centre. "They taught me how to attire myself for class setting; encouraged me a lot; reminded me that I have potential like anyone else. They said that I made a name for myself at The Centre and could make a name anywhere else. And I did."

Patsy tried to have kept the fact that she was a teen mother her own business while she was at school. "The counsellors told us not to tell anyone at school that we had a baby." The fact however soon became known. "No one knew that I was a teen mother until the last year. A teacher saw me with the baby one day on the bus and the baby said, 'mommy, who is that?' Some girls must have found out since they were close to that same teacher and they began to give me attitude." She however said that the discovery did not matter to her. "It did not matter to me that they knew. I was performing above their level."

Patsy was favoured by positive and consistent familial support. "I received a lot of support from home. I lived with my mother. She helped to care the baby since she was not working." Despite this support, it sometimes became difficult to care for the baby and attend school. "Things became hectic later when my mother began to work. I had to find somewhere to leave the baby."

Interview with Patsy's mother. I spoke with Patsy's mother by telephone and gathered that she has four children. She works as a security guard with a local firm but finds the time to ensure that her children are given a sound education.

Patsy's mother said that she deeply regretted her daughter's pregnancy particularly because she herself was a teen mother and was hindered by it. She however knew that Patsy would do well in school and so offered her all the support that she needed. Patsy's mother said that she assumed responsibility for Patsy's baby "so that Patsy could have had the time to study. You have to say that is my baby. I took him and did everything for him. He is just like my own." Patsy's mother said that things were not easy for her as a single parent "but I had to work hard for my children."

Interview with Kelly. Kelly carried a serious, if not sad countenance into the interview. She however spoke freely and volunteered added information relative to the questions asked. Kelly dropped out of school in 2002 when she became pregnant as a result of having been raped. At the time of the interview, it seemed that Kelly was still bothered by the circumstances of her pregnancy as she said, "I do not really love the baby. I do not have a great love for him." She attended The Centre in 2002 and was returned to high school in 2003. She described herself as being an ambitious person and said, "Once I set my mind to something, I like to finish it. I want to make something good of myself that is why I try to stay in school after I have my child."

Returning to school was hard for Kelly. She struggled with poverty and said, "Lots of days I did not have any money to go to school, and I had to borrow. Sometimes I did not go at all." She admitted that, "sometimes I felt like giving up. I would sit down thinking that it is the end of the world." There were days when the toss up was between buying lunch for herself or saving the money to care for the baby's needs. "Some days I had to use my lunch money to buy food and pampers for the child." Kelly really tried hard to have remained in school although she faced several challenges. She found alternate ways to cope with her financial situation. "I had sex sometimes when I had to get money for the child. I went to my baby father but he did not give me anything. I had to find other means to get it." Kelly hung her head, looked at the ground and paused as she made this revelation. It was apparent that Kelly did not want to talk further about this. As if to close the subject, she simply

said, "I did it often. I regret having to do it to get money." I was careful not to pursue this seemingly sensitive subject.

She spoke of the inconvenience at home. "It was a one bedroom apartment and I shared the room with my brother." Although there were some negative situations that confronted Kelly, there also seemed to have been a positive support system that helped her continue her education. This included her father who sometimes offered financial assistance; her pastor's wife who encouraged her: "The pastor's wife encouraged me to return to school. She told me that it was not the end of the road. The baby's godmother also supported me. I also got emotional support from some of my friends, the counsellors at the Women's Centre and my mother."

Kelly spoke highly of The Centre and said that, "they would let me know that I would have a second chance to complete my education. They made me feel better and that there was hope for the future." Kelly explained that, "without the support, I would not have returned to school. Maybe I would still be sitting at home and I would not have wanted that."

Despite the struggles that confronted Kelly, and despite the encouragement she received from the staff at The Centre, she did not return to The Centre to talk about her problems. When asked why she did not share her problems with the staff, she said, "I felt ashamed to come to them for money. Although I knew that I could have come to them."

Kelly defied the odds set against her. She completed her secondary education and graduated from high school with passes in three subjects in the external school leaving examination. Kelly reported that she was pursuing a career in Teacher Education at a college in the parish.

Interview with Kelly's Mother. Kelly's mother seemed to be a pleasant woman who had a positive outlook on life. She seemed to be conversational by nature and volunteered information about her situation. Her voice reflected care; concern; desire for the best for her daughter.

She had two children, Kelly being the girl and the younger child. Kelly's mother only achieved primary education and wanted better for her daughter. She found employment at a children's home. Her salary is augmented by her backyard farming.

I spoke with Kelly's mother on the telephone since we could not easily arrive at a mutually convenient time and place at which to conduct the interview. I began the interview by reiterating the purpose of the research and confirming that she had signed the consent form and was therefore willing to participate in the project. To 'ease' her into the interview questions, I first asked her about the circumstances of her daughter's pregnancy. In response to this question, "How did you feel about your daughter's pregnancy?" this mother said, "I felt very bad since she was young and I was not looking for that. I was stressed out. Not feeling too good about it at all. I went on bad and cried a lot. I don't think that I did have any more tears left to cry how a did go on." (I felt very bad since she was young, and I was not expecting that. I was stressed out; I did not feel good about it at all. I behaved badly, and cried a lot. I do not think that I had any tears left.)"

As I listened to the mother recount her experience, the pain seemed to have been transmitted through the telephone lines. I allowed her to express herself until she was satisfied. She seemed almost to have breathed a sigh of relief and a measure of joy seemed to have returned to her voice when I asked "How did you feel about her coming to the Women's Centre?" To this the mother replied saying, "Feeling happy but I still felt bad; but was happy that she could go back to school." (I felt happy, but I still felt bad; but I was happy that she could go back to school).

Kelly's mother was reflective as she spoke. It seemed that she had a story that she wanted to tell, even if her answers did not directly correspond to the question asked. She might also have answered in terms of how she had interpreted the question. To the question, "How important is completing schooling to you?" she said, "All of my labour spent on her; I would have money but I did spend all on her to send her to school. And I needed her to have education to help herself."

Although Kelly's mother was glad that she completed high school, she was unhappy that Kelly was unable to attend the graduation ceremony. "She neva did get to graduate. I did not have any money at the time; it was coming in slow. And by the

time it come een; di time pass when everything should go een. But she did finish, but neva get to graduate because of financial problems. But she pass, I believe some subjects well. And she is now going to" (She was unable to graduate. I did not have the money at the time. At the time, I had very little money. However, she completed high school. Although she finished high school, she was unable to graduate because of financial problems. However, she passed several subjects. She is now attending ...)

Kelly's mother attested to Kelly's sense of ambition when she said, "During the pregnancy she wanted to go back and do something. She was stressed out but she had a good intention." The question was asked, "Who helped you with her when she went back to school?" To this the mother responded, "Well I tink that I was going mad and I decided she had to go back to school. I went to the baby father's mother and she started har off. I was behind helping her. But then, I did not want to have anything to do with them. Dem a nuh good people. I felt I could kill anybody. Mi did go on bad and people say that I was disgracing the bwoy. Then I was working and that helped." (I think that I would have gone mad. I decided that she had to return to school. I went to the mother of the baby's father and she offered some assistance. I was helping from behind. Later, I did not want to have anything to do with them. They are not good people. I felt that I could kill somebody. I went on badly and people said that I disgraced the boy. I later gained employment; that helped.)

Kelly's mother was supportive of her daughter as she returned to school, but spoke of the financial difficulty she had. "I pay di school fees and everything; pay for subjects when she went back to school. It was hard and every time I have to start over; I cannot explain. She got free scholarship and would keep her in school for 5 years. Don't know how I have tears left. All of it cried over her. (I paid the school fees and everything. I paid for the subjects when she went back to school. It was very hard. I had to start all over; I cannot explain. She got a free scholarship and that would have kept her in school for five years. I do not know how it is that I have any tears left; I cried it all out over her)

Kelly's mother was not very educated. "I just went to primary school. I lived with my grandmother and left in primary school. But I did not have anyone. I had to go to work. Mi neva get a good education." (I only went to primary school. I lived with

my grandmother and left in primary school. But I did not have anyone. I had to go to work. I did not get a good education.) The lack of education that this mother suffered, prompted her to do everything she could possible to help her daughter to complete her secondary education. “Mi did want har to have it. Mi did see the ability what she did have and ambition that I see in her.” (I wanted her to have it. I saw the ability and ambition that she had.)

Mother described a typical day for Kelly when she returned to school. “She wake up and feed di (the) baby then I tek (take) care of the baby; bathe him and feed him and have him for the day. In the evening she would hold him and so on; but I had the responsibility. He was my baby. She was young. I love her. I love the baby.”

I gathered that there was a team effort approach to helping Kelly as she returned to school. “I helped her. We live beside my aunt ... she would help her too. I did send the baby to nursery. When we moved, A mek she put him in nursery. I take him in the mawning and collect him in the evening. Him have asthma and because a di asthma, if it get rainy, my aunty would keep him.” (I helped her. We lived beside my aunt; she also helped her. I sent the baby to the nursery. When we relocated, I allowed her to take him to the nursery. I took him in the mornings and collected him in the evenings. He has asthma and if it rained, my aunt would collect him.) The aunty could not have kept the baby on a more permanent basis because, “She had other grand children staying wid har.” (She had other grand children staying with her) Kelly’s father however did not play a positive role in all of this.

Regarding the baby’s father, Kelly’s mother said, “I did not want anything from the baby father and the hackling. I did not want anything from them; I did not worry with them. I keep away from them. I decided to do what I have to do and look after my daughter and grandson.” (I did not want anything from the baby’s father; and the stress of that. I did not want anything from them. I kept away from them. I decided to do what I had to do and take care of my daughter and my grandson)

The mother was not concerned about possible problems that Kelly might have had at school. When asked, she simply said, “It did not come to my thoughts since she was not going to the school where it happened. I was glad that she did not throw it away; others told her to throw it away but I said no.” (It did not occur to me since she was

not attending the school when it happened. I was glad that she did not abort the pregnancy. Although others told her to have an abortion, but I said no)

Her response to the question, “Were you aware that she was on a contraceptive method?” was, “I warned her and talk to her. I knew which method she was on; IUCD. She was not a rude child. That helped me not to disban her and to stick by her side. I knew she was not a rude child. I stick by her side.” (I warned her and spoke to her. I knew which method she was given; IUCD. She was not a rude child. That helped me not to forsake her and to support her.)

Mother reported on the extent of the assistance she received from The Centre. “They visited with her where I was living. They did not visit when she went back to school but she went by them. She had a good relationship with the counsellors. That helped.”

To the question, “What would you say helped Kelly to finish?” the mother replied, “She had ambition to go back and get something in her head. When she was little, mi used to carry her with me to days’ work and she used to say, mummy mi no waan cum wash dutty clothes like yu.” She had a desire for education. God has been on her side. I helped her all the way.” (She had ambition and went back and got an education. When she was younger, I used to take her with me while I did domestic work and she used to say, ‘mummy, I do not want to grow up to wash dirty clothes like you.’)

Interview with Raphalia. Raphalia was punctual for the interview. She bore a constant smile and her eyes seemed to twinkle with excitement. She described herself as being “loyal, honest and trustworthy.” Raphalia attended The Centre when she was sixteen years old. She completed the intervention and was returned to high school from where she graduated in 2008 with passes in five of her subjects in the external examinations. Like other adolescents, Raphalia said that she was influenced by her peers into having sex. “I got pregnant because I wanted to be like my friends. They were having sex and talked about it. They said that they could not talk with me since I was a virgin.” Raphalia lived with her mother and siblings. She was the eldest child. Her mother was very disturbed by the pregnancy. During the interview, I gathered that she was driven, mostly by the desire to make up for the disappointment that her pregnancy caused her mother. “My mother felt very bad about the pregnancy. She cried and this made me

feel bad too.” Very little information was supplied about her father. When asked about her father, Raphalia only said, “I did not have a good relationship with my father.”

Along into the interview, Raphalia reported that “some of the students knew that I had a baby. Some of them knew me before in the community. At first, it made me uncomfortable. They kept saying that I had a baby and this made me feel down.”

Raphalia enjoyed the full support of her mother and was helped financially and materially by other family members. “My mother worked as a manager at a supermarket but helped with the baby when I returned to school. She paid the neighbour to keep the baby. The neighbour later kept the baby for free. In the evenings, my mother helped so I could study. I appreciated this a lot. Other family members, my aunties and my grandmother, in Jamaica and abroad, also supported me. They send things for the baby and also send cash to help out.”

She was asked about the support that she received from her child’s father. To this she said, “He was eighteen years old. He works in a supermarket. He supports the baby and keeps the baby in the holidays.”

The Centre helped prepare her for the return to the formal school system. “The counsellors told me of the challenges to expect when I returned to school. They said that we should be positive and not tell the students that we have a baby. We were to always do good. They told me to go on a method.”

Despite the support and help she received from her family, Raphalia had her fair share of challenges as she returned to school. “The biggest challenge at school was everyone asking me if I have a baby. I told them to ask whoever told them.” A sense of ambition and purpose helped her continue amidst the discomfort. “I did not want to drop out. I wanted to show my parents that I can do it. I told myself that I am going to finish.”

Prior to her return to school, Raphalia said that, “The counsellors visited me and asked if I was on a method. But she did not check the card. I am on the injection since I cannot take the pill.” In answering the question, ‘Who helped you to make the choice of method?’ she said, “I am not sure that they gave me a choice. The

counsellors discussed the methods at the Centre. I do not remember why I chose the injection. I had side effects.”

Raphalia was asked “to whom would you attribute your success at completion?” Her answer was, “God plays a good part in my life. He helps me. He meets my needs. I go to church. My mother; she pushed me. I wanted to make her proud. The Women’s Centre; they visited me at school twice. The visits said that they were concerned and show interest in me. Church, although I did not go back to church till the baby was born.”

Interview with Patient. Patient was punctual for the interview. Her ready smile and steady flow of words pointed to a self confident young lady who was proud of herself. She attended the WCJF in 2004 and was returned to high school in 2005. Patient described herself as being intelligent, people oriented, and ambitious. According to Patient, “My greatest ambition is to have a proper education. I was born poor, grew up poor, but I am not going to die poor.”

Patient informed that she dropped out of school at grade eleven; the last grade. She explained that, “it was because of wants why I got pregnant. I only got bus fare to go to school. I did not know how I would return home from school. I did not get any lunch money neither, but I loved school.” Patient was impregnated by the man who assisted with her financial needs. “It was the first time I had sex with him that I got pregnant.”

Patient was asked whether she wanted to have returned to school. Her response was, “I wanted to return to school “because I love school very much. When I got my school package I bought my uniform fabric the same day and gave them out to the dressmaker.” She was then asked about some of the thoughts that she had as she prepared to return to school. She said, “I was thinking that the school fee would be too expensive; that I couldn’t manage.” She was from a very poor family background and was depending on external financial help. It was not forthcoming. As she said, “Then January came and the time ran out fast. I expected to get the money but it did not come.” Although Patient made the preparations to return to school, she did not actually start. She explained saying, “I did not return to the dressmaker for the uniforms since I did not pay the school fees. We did not have the money to pay the

dress maker either.” With this, she was unable to accept the placement. She did not return to school to complete her secondary education.

Although this was several years ago, it was clear that Patient still regretted having not returned to school. I noticed the frequency with which she said, “I really wanted to have gone back to school.” There was a reminiscent look in her eyes as she repeated the line. The refrain prompted some probing questions about her father and whether she could not have sought help from persons within her community. “My father is a farmer but is once a while crop come in (the crop only comes in periodically). At the time I did not have the money to return. The little money I was getting was just to feed me and the baby.”

I recalled that Patient became pregnant in grade eleven, the last regular school grade. With this knowledge, I asked her how it was that she managed financially whilst she attended school prior to her pregnancy. She explained that she benefited financially from the PATH Programme, which was a social safety net provided by the Government. “I was on the PATH programme and paid only the supplemental fees.” However, when she became pregnant, “they checked the register and found out that I had dropped out of school.” With this, the financial aid ceased. Patient ‘fell through the cracks’ of the social safety net on account of her pregnancy. She therefore did not benefit from this assistance when she returned to school.

The Centre’s monitoring programme also failed Patient. “They used to visit my home when I was pregnant and when I have the baby they would check on me. After I was placed in school, they called to say they wanted to see whether I was going to school. I told them I did not take up the placement because of the finances but they did not do anything about it.” I asked her to tell why she had not returned to The Centre to seek help and she responded saying, “At the time I thought that was it. I did not know if the Women’s Centre was able to help me. If I knew they could help I would have gone back.” The question was asked: “What lessons did you learn from your experience?” Her response, “to be outspoken; do not hide my feelings. If I had returned to speak with the counsellors, if anything could have been done they would have done it.”

Patient forsook the help of her child's father. "In answer to the question whether the baby's father helped her in any way she said, "He used to help me with the baby; he supported the baby financially, but he did not help me to go back to school. He stood by me during the pregnancy. After the baby was born, he did not give me anything since I decided not to go out with him. He still wanted me to have sex with him. He wanted me to keep him as my man (her partner). But I said that I had the baby already and did not want another one. Then he started to give me things only for the baby."

There were other girls who lived with their baby's father or continued in the relationship with them. Patient was therefore asked why she did not want to continue this intimate relationship with her child's father. To this she said, "I was determined to get on with my life. If I went down that road with him, it would have broken down my self esteem. I could not afford to come to the Women's Centre and they lift me up so much and go with him and let him break me down. If I continued with him I would turn cruff (worthless)." She said of herself, "Mi poor and boasy (I am poor, but I am proud)."

Patient spoke of her sense of determination to change the course of her life. In her own words, "I am determined not to come out like my mother. Almost everyone in my surroundings is a cruff (worthless). I am determined not to turn a cruff also."

Patient exuded much self confidence and ambition and so I asked her to tell "what went through your mind when you realized that you could not go back to school?" To this she answered, "I love school. I said I am not going to give up. Even till I die. I spend time with my baby and when he is old enough I will go back to school. Meantime, I stay at home; I do hairdressing to get money while staying home with the baby. I tell myself that I am not giving up. I was an A student."

Patient did not complete due to financial constraints. She was however very ambitious and later took the steps to continue her education. She also did not think to return to the WCJF for assistance.

Interview with Patient's mother. Patient's mother attended the interview with her. She carried a pleasant countenance and sat silently while Patient told her story. There was a look of pride on her face as she listened to her daughter.

Patient's mother herself did not complete secondary education. She is presently a domestic helper working to support herself and her other children. She wanted Patient to have returned to school and "tried to offer much support to her and give what I could give her. I wanted her to return to school." There was however disparity between desire and action. She also did not explore all the means to get her daughter back into school. In answer to the question did the church offer any kind of help?" she said, "I did not ask church for help. Once something happen to you they look down on you."

I asked Patient's mother to tell how she felt when she realized that her daughter would not be able to take up her placement. She simply said, "What to do? I did not have it."

Interview with Kadeen. Twenty-one year old Kadeen is the last of five children. She was sixteen years old when she became pregnant. "I had just a few more months to complete school when I got pregnant. I wanted to go back and get my CXC subjects" (school leaving examination). She enrolled in the Programme at The Centre and was returned to the formal school system in 2005. Kadeen subsequently graduated in 2006. She has pursued additional studies and plans to pursue tertiary level studies. Her ambition is to become a registered nurse. Kadeen has a positive outlook on the importance of education and said that, "Without an education you cannot get persons to respect you. You need education to help you to go through in life."

Kadeen was punctual for her interview. She seemed poised and confident. My first impression was that she had done well for herself. As she told her story, it was revealed that her baby died in uterus. Although she did not have to contend with a baby when she returned to school, she was faced with several other challenges. "I lived with my baby father since living at home was inconvenient. My mother sent me to live with him." The experience was disruptive for her. As Kadeen told me, "My baby father did not support me or help me. He was jealous. We had a lot of fights. He did not want me to go to school. He physically abused me and so I returned home. He wanted to be man over me too much and wanted me to be submissive even if I was not comfortable. I am not that kind of person. We had to get counselling by the counsellor."

Kadeen praised The Centre for her preparation for return to school. "At The Centre, we went into deep counselling, looking at matters such as being apart from the baby's father; being more careful. They placed me on a contraceptive method. They also encouraged me to stay focused; to be respectful and to do my best. I left the baby father with help from the counsellors." The Centre also offered her needed support through the visits that they made to her at home and at school. "The counsellors always stood behind me. They encouraged me to stay focused. They visited me at home one time. They also visited the school to check on my progress."

Kadeen was also challenged by the fact that the other students knew that she was a teen mother. "The children knew that I was pregnant. But I wanted to return. I was not concerned that they were going to bother me about it. I was only concerned with getting my subjects. I knew that I would have had obstacles but did not focus on them. I was not the first to get pregnant. If I got the chance to go back to school I told myself that I would stay focus." Kadeen also said that the school supported her a lot and that the teachers were kind to her. "They counselled me and this helped me to stay focus. I was one of the school favourites since I was so focused."

Kadeen seemed somewhat thankful that she did not have her baby when she returned to school. "I often think that if the baby was alive how I would manage to get around easily, if I would have much support for the both of us." She however thinks that she would have received assistance with the baby, were he alive. "My mother or my boyfriend's mother would have kept the baby. I would have to help out at night particularly. When I am to be studying I would have had to be looking after the baby."

Kadeen received some measure of support from family members as she returned to school. "My sister supported me a lot. She still supports me. She is happy that I will become a nurse one day. My brother-in-law also supports me. My sister said it was not the end of the road. If I stay focus I would make it. She supported me a lot. She made sure I attended school; she would tell me not to go back to the path that I was on. She also expressed confidence that I will make it. She motivates me a lot. I am the only one to have finished high school in my family. I did not have a father figure to give me financial support. I was in church when I got pregnant. My church did not condemn me at all. They told me that I should make the best of my second chance. They did not offer me financial support. I stopped going to church."

Kadeen's story seemed to have had some areas of contradiction. She spoke of good familial support coming from her mother and mostly from her sister and brother-in-law. The question is, why then was she sent to live with her child's father? I recalled that she had said that she lived with the man because it was more convenient than living at home. Despite the inconvenience, she later returned home; believably due to the abuse she suffered at the hand of her child's father. Although her sister was supportive (she said), Kadeen also pointed out that, "She did not give me any space to hang out with my friends; only with the church people."

Kadeen attributed her completion to several persons: "My mother who wanted me to accomplish from the beginning. And to myself. I am proud of myself. I told myself that I made an error and will not return there. I will not focus on the young man but on getting things for myself and on getting my subjects. I wanted to be independent and have my own money."

Interview with Maud. Maud returned to high school in 2006. She however dropped out after having attended for only nine months. From what Maud revealed, she placed a high premium on education. "I wanted to return to school and looked forward to it. I wanted to stay in school and finish my education." There might however have been a disconnect between Maud's desire and Maud's action taken towards achieving her goal of completing.

Maud pointed to her having the baby as the reason for her not completing her placement. "If I did not have the baby, I would have completed high school. If I did not have the baby, the money I spend on him could send me back to school."

Maud had the support of her family members as she prepared to return to school. "My grandmother helped me financially. My mother stayed with the baby and my grandmother brought my uniform. My uncle paid the school fees. I did not have any help from my father."

Despite the initial support she received from the various family members, Maud was faced with challenges as she returned. Financial challenges seemed to have been the most pressing challenge. In answering the question, "what challenges did you experience when you returned to school?" she had this to say, "Having taxi fare. At

one point, I did not have no financial help at all. My uncle who used to help me died. I did not even have money for the baby.”

Maud also took the steps to help herself. Here is what she said, “I sometimes worked in a bar and used the baby money to attend school sometimes.” Interesting that her child’s father did not offer any support. “Did the baby father help you in any way? “Not really. His mother helped sometimes by sending money for the baby.”

Considering Maud’s situation, I wondered whether all the possible assistance was exhausted. Mention was made of whether the church she attended was of any help to her. To this question Maud replied, “I asked a church sister once but she did not answer me. Some people told me to seek help for myself.” By this she meant that instead of asking the church for help, she was to seek help elsewhere.

I probed further asking whether there was any other source to which she could have looked for help. Maud said, “Looking back, I could have asked the MP for help.” It is customary that some politicians offer help to students living within their constituencies to offset school expenses.

At school, Maud was not presented with much challenge. “The students were nice to me. They did not bother me at all. The teachers were also nice. If I did not have the baby I would have competed.” The baby’s needs placed a dent in the finances that would have otherwise taken care of her school expenses.

Interview with Maud’s Grandmother. Maud’s grandmother accompanied her to the interview. It is the grandmother who has assumed responsibility for Maud since Maud’s mother is mentally unstable. Maud’s grandmother is semi-literate and is unemployed. She said that she struggles financially to meet the needs of her family. She is the one to whom several grandchildren look for sustenance.

Maud’s grandmother also pointed to the lack of assistance for Maud as she returned to school. “Mi neva have anybody fi help me wid har.” (I did not have anyone to help me with her.) Maud’s grandmother wanted to know if there was “anything dat uno can do fah har now.” (Whether The Centre could be of help to Maud at this stage). At that question, I asked Maud’s grandmother to tell why it was that she had not returned to the WCJF before now to report on the difficulties that she was having in sending

Maud to school. She said, “mi neva know we could a did get any help at the time.” (I did not know that we could have received help at the time).

Interview with Nelly. Nelly is a young lady of twenty-one years of age. She became pregnant at age 16, and enrolled in the Programme at The Centre. She was returned to school in 2005. She dropped out after only three months of attending. Nelly has a somewhat shy but pleasant and engaging demeanour. She told her story with a look that indicated that she was still searching for answers.

Nelly’s baby has a deformity but she is determined to care for him and at the same time help herself to move forward. She has a second baby and is helped by the man with whom she has the second child. She attended The Centre in 2005 and was returned to school in the same year. “I wanted to go back to school. I needed my subjects since that is how the system is set up. We must have subjects in order to get a job or to continue our education or get further training.” With this mind set, Nelly said that she did not have any apprehensions about returning to school. “I did not have any hang-ups about returning to school. I knew that I could do it. I had the ability.”

Nelly felt that she was adequately prepared for the return. “The Centre prepared us. They ensured that all was well for the placement.” Nelly received support from her mother in the initial stages. “My mother cared for the baby; bought uniforms and things I would need to go back to school.” Her mother was unemployed and so was able to help Nelly with the baby. Her mother however gained employment and the support she rendered was curtailed.

The support she received came from her mother alone. “The baby father did not support us at all then. I brought him to court. He said that the baby was not his and did not live up to his responsibilities.”

Nelly was determined to return to school and did not let knowledge of her status as teen mother hinder her. “I did not care whether others knew that I was a mother.” At school, she said that, Teachers treated me normally. My form teacher liked me. I came third in the class.” However, she dropped out three months after placement. As she explained, “I stopped because the baby needed attention. Keeping the baby was a problem. He was ill. I had to go to the hospital with him often. My mother had to go

to work. He had a spinal deformity and was not walking. He is still not walking although he is five years old.” It was on account of the physical incapacity of her baby that Nelly was forced to drop out of school.

I asked, “How could The Centre have helped you more?” and she said, “I did not seek help so I do not know if they could help me. They did not check to see whether I was going to school.” Considering the nature of Nelly’s problems, The Centre might not have been able to help her. She could perhaps have been pointed to a source of help. I asked her why it was that she did not return to the counsellors to share her problems and seek help. To this she responded, “I did not know that I could take the baby there. I did not tell the Centre of the problem. I did not see anyone who could help me. I was very frustrated and did not know how to get back to school. I was stressed out. The Women’s Centre brought me this far but I did not know that I could return for help.”

Although Nelly made return visits to The Centre after she returned to school, she did not share the problems that she was having with the counsellors. “I returned twice but did not tell them of the problem.” I wondered how it was that the matter of the difficulties that she experienced did not become topical while she visited at the outreach. I concluded that since the counsellors did not ask, she just did not tell. Nelly also said that she did not see anyone who could help her. “I was used to Ms. ... but I did not see her. I prefer Ms.” (name of counsellor omitted in order to conceal her identity).

Nelly could not continue in school due to the situation of her baby. She has however not lost sight of her academic ambitions. “I plan to raise chickens; throw a partner. I will later go to a training centre and do early childhood.” She was obviously frustrated with her life and desperately needed a solution. “I feel like I am wasting time. I need to do something.”

Interview with Nelly’s mother. Nelly’s mother was also interviewed by telephone. She was sixteen years old when she had her daughter. She however did not attend The Centre since, “I did not know of it at the time.” When asked about her feelings about Nelly’s pregnancy the mother said, “I felt bad and angry because she had just started school and did not have help. I did try my best. I did not want her to get

pregnant like me. I always talk to her.” Mother however “feel real good” that her daughter could have attended The Centre and return to school.

In response to the question, of what importance is education to you? Nelly’s mother responded: “Education is very important. She had the qualification. She was ambitious. She was a very bright girl. Without a good education they have to go to market or do farming. For them as young girls they will get abuse. Take up a next man. End up in a next relationship. And then is baby, baby, baby.”

Mother spoke about the support that Nelly had as she returned to school.” I do farming. I kept the baby. It was more like my baby.” The help was however short-lived for the mother’s father and uncle both became ill at the same time and demanded the mother’s attention. Nelly’s mother spoke about the financial constraints that dogged the family as Nelly returned to school: “The money was bad. My uncle got ill and died. My father got ill and died. Me look after my uncle and live with him. While he was sick and dying, my father was in the hospital and after my uncle died my father also died two months later. It brought stress on me. And she stopped.”

Nelly’s baby was also unwell and, although things became difficult for Nelly, her mother did not think to look to The Centre for help for her daughter. “We did not know we could come back and get help.” Neither did she think to seek needed assistance at the school at which Nelly was placed. “She did stop so long and did not get to go back and explain and talk to them.”

Mother was asked to tell whether the baby prevented Nelly from doing her lessons. “The baby was ill. She had to stay and look after the baby at home when I was up and down with my uncle and father when they were ill. It might bring things on her. But she did not show much of it. But it might was in her mind. I always help with the baby so he is not a trouble. No help from the father. We now thinking to send him to rehab. She does not talk about it. I spend more time to do what I can do.”

Mother was asked to tell whether there was anything that she would have done differently to ensure that her daughter completed her secondary education. She said, “I would try my best.”

Interview with Adassa. Adassa seemed to be a very confident young lady as she entered the interview. She exuded a pleasant, easy going character. It was obvious that she was proud of herself and she was eager to tell her story. Adassa attended The Centre in 2003 and was later returned to school in 2004. She completed her placement and graduated with passes in five CSEC subjects. She is presently working as a teacher's assistant while re-sitting Mathematics to qualify her to enroll in teachers' college.

Adassa seemed rather focused and spoke about the value of education. Throughout the interview, almost everything that she said was punctuated with something of her wanting to have returned to school and her love for school. When asked whether she wanted to return to school, Adassa said, "It was my suggestion that I attended the Women's Centre. I did not want to drop out of school. I think that education is the key. Without an education you would be thrown around."

Adassa came from a single parent home. She lived with her mother and siblings. Both her mother and father were upset with her about the pregnancy. She said that, "My father did not speak to me until after the birth of the baby." Adassa seemed to have enjoyed a good relationship with her father and preferred that the individual interview be conducted with him and not her mother.

In answering the question as to whether staff and students knew of her status and whether that bothered her, Adassa said, "I was eager to return to school. I had no fears about returning. I did not care what others thought." With respect to the teachers, she also said that, "I did not know if the teachers knew. They did not treat me differently from the other children. I was the top student in my class."

Adassa felt that The Centre adequately prepared her to return to school. When asked to tell of the extent of the preparation, she said, "By helping me to keep up with my studies. I was mentally prepared. They told me how to care for the baby. I had made up my mind to return to school."

Adassa was asked to tell how her parents helped her to prepare to return to school. To this she said, "They had nothing to do with it. It was all my decision." Adassa also received the support of her family as she returned to school. "My mother and sister kept the baby. My sister has her own business. I was able to focus on my lessons. My

mother took full responsibility for the child. She still lives with my mother.” Her not having to contend much with the baby left her much time within which to study and attend to her lessons.

Notwithstanding the support from her family, Adassa was faced with some challenges. “There were financial problems since there were three children in school at the same time. Most times I had only the bus fare; no lunch money. Good thing it was a shift system, but even if it wasn’t, there would be a way out.”

Adassa attributed her being able to complete her secondary education the second time around to her mother. “My mother made a big fuss about the pregnancy at first but she soon came around.” In conclusion, Adassa was careful to point out that “returning to school was a great experience for me. It was difficult to travel. But I went just the same.”

Interview with Adassa’s Father. Adassa’s father described himself as being a ‘Jack-of-all-trade.’ He said that he was a mason, carpenter, animal farmer; and he has the interest of his children at heart. He has minimal education and deeply regretted having not had a better education. “I would be better off if I had education; for I would stick to one thing to make it successful.”

This father had only positive words to describe his daughter. “She is good. Quiet, have manners. Not mixed up. Although she has friends they come together and study and so on. She is very courteous. Her friends come to her house and talk and they move good.”

Although this father was not privileged with a good formal education, he embraced the worth of an education. Regarding his daughter he said, “I talk with her and encourage her to get good education. For you know that is very important for all of them. For that is everything. In these times if you do not have professional trade, something you can do to make life better, it do not make sense.”

Adassa’s father reminisced on his own limitations and the fact that he did not have the help he needed when he was going to school. His experience seemed to have been one of the driving forces behind his helping his daughter to complete her secondary education. “I did not have someone to help me like I help her. I dropped out of

school; went back and dropped back out. I went to Secondary; is there I did end up, but I did not complete for I did live with my grandmother and she was not working. I did not have no one to help me.”

Adassa’s father was quite unhappy about her pregnancy. “I did not know until four to five months. I was very furious; because I talk to her and those things. I tell her that all will come so I was disappointed.” He however had positive reactions to the possibility of her returning to school. “I told her it is a good thing to continue and get more education to make something better.”

Adassa’s father said that he also had a role to play in his daughter’s life as she returned to school. In responding to the question, “In what ways did you help her when she returned to school?” he said, “I be there as a father. And I did try to help her to go to school. Mi and her mother; we pay the fees, sort out uniform bus fare and so on. She lived at my house.”

Adassa’s father attributed Adassa’s completion of her secondary education to a number of things: “Family support. We did encourage her not to make the same mistake. She seem to did learn from it.” (We encouraged her not to make the same mistake. She seemed to have learnt from it).

In response to the question, “how did you feel about her use of a contraceptive method?” this father said, “I did not know about that. Those things I do not check on. But I tell her that she must protect herself if she going out there.”

Regarding the help that Adassa needed with the baby when she returned to school, her father said that “Her Mother had the baby. Sometimes I am around when the mother was not there. Her bigger sister also help with the baby.”

Adassa’s father was asked to talk about the role that The Centre played in helping his daughter to complete her secondary education. To this he said, “Well they did a lot of things which I appreciated and am thankful for it. She would not be there if not for the Women’s Centre. If she did not go back to school she would not reach where she is now.”

Interview with Arlene. Arlene is an articulate, pleasant, young lady. She dropped out of school in 2002 and attended one of The Centre’s outreach sites. She returned to

school in 2003 and completed. She did the additional two years of secondary education (6th form or grades 12 and 13) due to the success in her school leaving examinations at the end of 5th form (grade 11). Arlene is presently unemployed and not attending school. She applied for entry into the University of the West Indies and was accepted. She has however requested deferral since she cannot afford the fees.

Returning to school was not an easy road for Arlene. As she said, "I was uncomfortable about having had the baby. It was a predicament. Students came and questioned me and so they knew that I had a baby. I do not know how they suspected and knew. So they came and asked me if it was true. I told them yes. I brought the baby to school."

As Arlene spoke, it was evident that her biggest challenge was the lack of support from her mother. "My mother was not there for me. She did not want me to talk to my baby father. She really cussed me out (she quarrelled with me)." Despite this shortcoming, Arlene spoke of the support that she received from others. "I got a lot of help from my sister, brother, baby father. My sister motivated me. She is older. She thinks that I am brilliant. She said that I could finish school although I got pregnant. She also offered me financial support." Arlene had much to say about her sister. "I lived with my sister while I was at the Women's Centre. I was self determined to go back to school. You have to believe in yourself. My family also believed in me."

Regarding the baby's father she said, "The baby's father took the child while I was at school. I looked for her on weekends. I also take her home with me on holidays. Her father still has her."

Regarding the treatment from the teachers, Arlene said, "One female teacher in particular said that I should not be at school; that I was given a chance and I blew it. She was one of my teachers. This made me feel down but it also motivated me. I knew that I had potential. It paid out." Unkind comments like these might only have served to motivate her for she said, "I was the most successful in my class. I did not allow the comments about me being a baby mother to affect me. I found a way to make it fun. I came first in grade 9."

Arlene testified of the preparatory work of The Centre. She said that she was prepared to return "Through the academics I received at the WCJF and the counselling also."

She also had commendations for the post placement monitoring. She said, "The Women's Centre followed up with me when I was returned to school. They visited and this helped me to know that someone cared for me. I did not visit with the centre because I was busy with my school work and my free time was spent with my daughter."

Interview with Arlene's Mother. The interview with Arlene's mother took place over the telephone. She was quite accommodating and answered each question eagerly. It was evident that this mother was quite proud of her daughter's success. She, herself had only completed grade 9 in school. Throughout the interview, Arlene's mother mostly used the vernacular.

The interview began with the mother explaining her response to Arlene's pregnancy in the first place. "I felt bad but good because she could go back to school. Mi did want har fi finish." (I wanted her to finish). To the question, "What is your level of education?" the mother replied, "Mi did not reach more than grade 9. Mi did want har to reach farther than me." (I did not reach further than grade 9. I wanted her to reach further than me)." Arlene's mother works as a domestic helper. She farms, and sells her crops in the market to meet the family's needs.

As the mother looked back at the progress that Arlene made she said, "Mi feel good ma'am. Far she did well and picked up some good subjects." ("I am feeling good, ma'am, because she did well and passed some good subjects.") Arlene's mother described her daughter with three words: "Determined. Brilliant. Ambitious."

To the question "What helped her to have done so very well?" the mother said that "She has a good head. She have some aunties who have good head as well (she is bright. Her aunts are also bright)" The mother herself offered Arlene whatever assistance she could have managed. "Mi did get the uniforms dem. She did live with har sista when she went back to school. It was nearer to the school than if she did live with me. His sister died October few weeks ago, heart attack. It was sudden." She was asked to tell why it was that Arlene did not live with her, the mother. "The school too far from where mi live. We could not afford the travel (I bought the uniforms. She lived with her sister when she returned to school. The school was nearer to where her

sister lived than it was to where I lived. Her sister died suddenly of a heart attack a few weeks ago).

The finances presented a challenge for the family. There was often no money with which to send Arlene to school, particularly for her lunch. “Wid har sister she would peel piece a pine and orange and take that for har lunch in the days. Far she neva have the money to buy lunch. Sometimes she neva eat anything.” (“With her sister, she would peel a slice of pineapple and an orange and take that for her lunch. She did not have the money with which to buy her lunch. There were times when she did not eat anything”).

Arlene’s mother attested to the fact that support also came from the family of the baby’s father. “The baby father and his father, the baby’s grandfather. The baby father took the baby from her. She hardly had anything to do with the baby. Except sometimes she would like wash the baby hair and so.”

Mother was asked to tell whose decision it was for the baby’s father to take the baby. To this she said, “Mine. Since I could not afford to look after it.” She was careful to point out that the baby’s father takes absolutely good care of the baby. When asked she said, “It cyan talk bout.” (“Words cannot express how well he cares for the baby.”).

That statement begged the question “What about the other grandmother?” To this she answered saying, “She is sickly. She is a diabetic and lives in Kingston.”

Interview with Elaine. Elaine is a soft spoken young lady. She does not know her parents. She was a ward of the state. At the time of her pregnancy, she was fostered by a lady. She was removed from this arrangement on account of the pregnancy and was returned to a Girl’s Home. While pregnant, she was again fostered by another lady whom she came to regard as her mother. Elaine dropped out of school in 2002, enrolled at The Centre and was returned to school in 2003. She completed her placement and gained passes in eight subjects in the external examinations. At present she is enrolled in a teachers’ college where she is doing a course in Secondary Education.

In describing herself, Elaine said, "You won't find me in the crowd. I do not keep friends; I do not feel sorry for myself. I think that my parents' leaving me was for the best." She wanted to become a nurse but got accepted in Teachers' College where she now attends and is in her final year. Elaine is driven by a sense of purpose. She had a positive interpretation of her life's circumstances. "If something happens there must be another way."

Considering the circumstances of Elaine's life and the fact that she completed her secondary education, I asked her why it was that some girls did not complete. In response she said, "If you do not have the support; persons to motivate you; you need to have something in life; you have to make a choice despite those men who tell you stuff; you have to make a choice."

Elaine also spoke of her faith in God. "I think that everything that happens to me is God's plan and so things will all work out for me. No matter what, as long as you have God in it, there is no need to worry; He takes care of it."

She had positive thoughts about returning to school. "I was eager to go back to school and was not anxious." The WCJF helped her to prepare to return to school. "They helped me to keep my memory active. The Centre also provided good motivational speakers that motivated us to set goals for our lives and work towards achieving our goals." She received post placement monitoring. "When I went back to school, The Centre called at home to find out how I was doing, and if I was going to school. This made me feel that I was somebody; to have persons show interest in my life and well being." Visits were also made to her home. "They spoke with my adopted mother about me. They also visited my home."

The experience of return was not difficult for Elaine. "The return to school was smooth sailing for me. I simply returned and did what I had to do." Elaine did not have responsibility for her baby when she returned to school. "There was no challenge especially since I did not have the baby. I had him some weekends or visited him at his grandmother's house. He calls me by my first name and calls his grandmother mommy but this does not bother me at all." I gave the baby to the baby's paternal grandmother. She willingly took the baby so that I could return to school. This had to be done since my mother was employed and I needed to have the baby cared for."

Elaine thinks that having the baby would have prevented her from achieving her goal. "If I had the baby with me, it would have been more pressure on me since I would have had to take him to the Day Care then pick him up in the evenings and care for him while attending to my lessons." She said that she was happy for the help that she received with the baby.

Her adopted mother was very supportive of her and helped her with her lessons. "My adopted mother paid my school fees, gave me lunch money, and as a retired teacher, helped me with my school work. She was always at PTA meetings. She spoke with my teachers to find out how I was doing." Elaine did not have any financial constraints. "I always had enough," she said.

Elaine said that the school to which she returned was also very supportive of her. "The school principal and counsellor helped me to settle in the new school. They encouraged me to focus on my lessons. They told me that students might bother me but I should not worry about what others had to say as I was there to "drink milk and not count cows".⁶ The principal, guidance counsellor and vice principal all knew that I was a teen mother. They were the ones to interview me for placement and orientation. They did not treat me differently; they encouraged me. They looked out for me because they saw my potential; not because I was a teen mother."

When asked to whom or what she would attribute her successful completion of secondary education, Elaine said, "This cannot be attributed to any one person... but to all who came to my life and contributed."

Interview with Elaine's Mother. Elaine's foster mother is a retired teacher. She assumed the role of foster parent for Elaine while Elaine was pregnant. She has assumed full responsibility for Elaine and treats her like her very own child. Elaine's mother spoke of the need "... for her to be in an environment that is conducive to learning; parents too must be willing to help their daughters and encourage them along." It is her opinion that completing secondary education is important for the future progress of the teen mothers. "There is hardly much further you can go;

⁶ An expression which is used to convey the idea of purpose and prioritizing. In Elaine's case, she was told that she was at school to pay attention to her lessons and not to be concerned with the presenting distractions.

regardless of where you are; if you want to succeed you will have to pick up the pieces.”

Elaine’s mother ensured that Elaine had the support that she needed as she returned to school. “Elaine wanted to drop out so that she could care for the baby. But I told her that I pledged to help her but I could not help her with the baby. This being the case, I arranged for the baby’s father to take the child. I called the boy’s parents and told them that Elaine had to go back to school. The boy’s mother said that she had to go to church and therefore could not take the baby; and so I resorted to threatening them. It was then that they decided to have taken the baby.”

Elaine’s mother had a say in the school to which Elaine returned. “The Centre had placed her at school X but it was going to be too costly to send her there. I therefore begged school Y to take her and they did.”

To the question, “What factors helped Elaine to have completed her secondary education this time?” the foster mother’s response was, “She did not have to contend with the baby when she returned to school. The baby would have been a distraction. I also overlooked her assignments. We worked together. And I liaised with the teachers. These girls need the help and encouragement; parents who will sit up with them while they do their homework. I never closed my room door. When she is studying, she knows that I am not asleep. I was the backative.” (I was her support).

Interview with Tiffany. Tiffany attended the interview with a rather enthusiastic spirit. She enrolled at The Centre during her pregnancy and was returned to high school in 2004. She completed in 2006. Like the other teen mothers, Tiffany too looked forward to returning to school. “I wanted to return to school. My mother insisted and I insisted.” She however had particular fears about returning to school. “Someone might say I know her and she was pregnant.” She thought herself fortunate that no one knew her at the school to which she was returned.

Tiffany felt adequately prepared for her return to school. “The classes keep you going and staying on form. They help you keep your mind open. The centre brought in motivational speakers. The academics were not motivational. But the talks were. There was this lady who came to tell us that at the Women’s Centre, she dropped out and had two babies after she was determined to go to college. This motivated me that

I still could make it. We did not have to stay at bottom. Counsellors also gave instructions regarding our return to school.”

Contraceptive counselling was an integral part of the preparation. “The counsellors were friendly. They spoke with us and told us to be on a contraceptive to prevent a second pregnancy. They also counselled us on the methods.”

Preparation also came through her home situation. “There were no obstacles. I was very prepared. Both parents helped to prepare me for school. They paid my school fees and took care of the other expenses. I was also mentally prepared; I had my goals in my mind already. My mother was very upset with me when I got pregnant because she wanted the best for me. At The Centre, speaking with other girls, I looked at life differently. Their experiences were different from mine. They asked me “Weh yu a do at Women’s Centre?”(What are you doing at the Women’s Centre?).

“My situation was different from some of the girls at the centre. Some of them were from displaced homes. My home was very supportive.” Tiffany had gone to live with one of her aunts when she returned to school. Her aunt was very supportive of her. “My aunt took me to school and picked me up in the evenings. I did not have to take the taxi.” Tiffany’s aunt used Tiffany’s experience as a learning experience for her own daughter (Tiffany’s cousin). “My aunt supported me. She also wanted her daughter to learn from my experience. Her daughter was younger.”

Tiffany was asked to talk about her use of a contraceptive method as she prepared to return to school. With a sheepish look on her face she said, “I did not go on a method. And I did not tell the counsellors that I was not on a method. I cannot remember anyone asking.”

Tiffany had praises for the post placement monitoring provided by The Centre. “They also follow up with me after I went back to school. They spoke with the guidance counsellor and asked about my performance. Once I saw the manager. There was no need to follow me up.”

It was not a secret that Tiffany was a teen mother. She said that “The Counsellor at the school knew that I was a teen mother but did not make anything of it.”

Tiffany did not have the responsibility of caring for her baby as she returned to school. "I lost the baby at 9 months while at The Centre. I was glad that I lost it." Over time, however, she was affected by her loss. "Although I thought about it one year later. My mother took pictures of the dead baby and I found them. I sometimes felt bad about my situation since I lost the baby. I did not want anyone to come and talk to me about babies. It would bring back memories." She pointed to some measure of good in not having had the baby as she returned to school. "If I had the baby it would have added more pressure on me to go back to school. The baby would have put a lot of pressure on my mother. I did not get much help from my father." There was not much help received from her child's father either. "The baby father said it was not his until after."

In answering the question, "To what would you attribute your having completed secondary school?" Tiffany said, "I had it set in my mind. I wanted everyone to say that I held up my head. I also wanted to make my mother proud. My mother tried to let us have a good education. She cried a lot when I got pregnant. I wanted to make her proud. My cousins were at school and were bright and I wanted to step up to their pace."

Interview with Tiffany's Mother. Tiffany's mother was unable to attend the interview in person. It was also difficult to schedule a date and time for the interview at her home. The interview was therefore conducted over the telephone. Throughout the interview, Tiffany's mother displayed as much enthusiasm as her daughter.

As the interview progressed, I discovered that Tiffany's mother was herself, a teenage mother. She was eighteen years old when she had her first child. She said that, in her day, they did not have the opportunity of returning to school and so she wanted her daughter to go back to school. "I did not get to do what I wanted. I had to stay home and take care of children. I did not want that for her and so I pushed her; and encouraged her. Not because she got pregnant. It is not the end. I wanted to show the community an example; that it was not the end."

In telling how else she assisted her daughter, Tiffany's mother said, "I gave her financial support. I also got someone to help care for the baby when she went to school; for I had to go to work"

Regarding the monitoring of the WCJF, Tiffany's mother said that "they did not visit." But I did want them to visit."

Table 3: Socio-Economic Conditions of the Teen Mothers

Teen Mother	Placed	Socio-economic Conditions			Achievement	
		Baby	Challenges	Support		
Arlene	2003	Baby cared for by baby father	Financial constraints	Lived with supportive sister	Graduated	
Kelly	2003	Had maternal support with the baby	Financial constraints	Supporting home environment	Graduated	
Tiffany	2004	Baby still born	No challenges	Supporting home environment	Graduated	
Adassa	2004	Parents assumed major responsibility for the baby	Financial constraints	Supporting home environment	Graduated	
Kadeen	2005	Baby died in uterus	Financial constraints	Lived with abusive baby father	Graduated	
Patient	2005	Had to care for her baby	Financial Constraints	Inadequate social support		Dropped Out
Nelly	2005	Baby had a physical disability	Financial constraints	Inadequate domestic support		Dropped Out
Maud	2006	Had to care for her baby	Financial constraints	Inadequate domestic support		Dropped Out
Valerie	2006	Had to care for her baby	Financial constraints	Lived with abusive baby father		Dropped Out
Patsy	2006	Had maternal support with the baby	Financial constraints	Adequate parental support	Graduated	
Elaine	2007	Baby given to paternal grandparents	No challenges	Adequate parental support	Graduated	
Raphalia	2007	Had maternal support with the baby	Financial constraints	Adequate parental support	Graduated	

Description of the schools and the individual interviews conducted with the principals or counsellors.

This section contains the descriptions of the schools at which the teen mothers were placed. The section also contains the descriptions of the interviews that were conducted with the school principals and or the school counsellors. The schools were included in the research for two reasons: one reason is that, collectively, the schools are a critical stakeholder in the return of the teen mothers to the school system. The manner in which the schools accept and assist the teen mothers could either facilitate or frustrate completion. The other reason is that interviews with the schools could supply data that would or would not corroborate the stories told by the teen mothers about their return to school. The third reason is that the stories told by the schools could shed light on the monitoring process offered by The Centre. Table 4 on page 125 summarizes the data on the schools.

Millennium High School. Millennium High School has an administrative staff comprising a principal, two vice principals, a bursar, and three secretaries. The academic staff has seventy-six members and the ancillary staff has fourteen members.

The principal of the school was on vacation leave at the time of the research. The information letter was therefore brought to the attention of the acting principal, who passed the letter to the senior guidance counsellor. Arrangements were made for the interview to be conducted by telephone as this would have been mutually convenient. The first scheduled time was aborted due to extemporaneous circumstances on the part of the guidance counsellor. The second schedule was also not kept. The only available time was on a Saturday, outside of the school hours. Notwithstanding, the interview was conducted as eventually scheduled and insightful data were supplied.

With reference to the process by which the teen mothers are accepted into the school, the guidance counsellor explained that relevant documentation is exchanged between the counsellors from The Centre and the school principal. These would include: the teen mother's last school report, report of her performance while at The Centre, and her birth certificate. The documents are subsequently forwarded to the guidance department where the school counsellors conduct background checks to verify the information pertaining to last school attended and address of the teen mother.

The counsellor said that The Centre and the school enjoy a facilitating relationship that sees the counsellors from The Centre making regular visits to the school to make contact with the teen mothers. The school facilitates the meeting of the counsellors from The Centre with the teen mothers to the extent that the meetings are held in the office of the school counsellor.

The guidance counsellor answered in the affirmative to the question as to whether the school monitor the teen mothers. The teen mothers receive individual counselling when and where necessary. Teen mothers are also “helped to negotiate the system.” The school environment and culture would have been unfamiliar to the teen mothers. The teen mothers are therefore assisted to ensure that they maximize their placement at the school.

When asked whether special considerations are given to the teen mothers, the counsellor said that “Allowance is given to the teen mothers who must take their babies to the day care centres and thus find it difficult to get to school on time. They are not penalized for lateness as would the other students.” No allowance is however made with respect to their school assignments which must be submitted on schedule.

The counsellor also said that, “the average teacher is not informed about the status of the girls. The form teachers are however informed since they will need to be discretionary in some instances. The teen mothers tend to confide in their form teachers to whom they usually have to give an explanation as to why they are late or tardy.” The counsellor revealed that the status of the teen mothers is not revealed to the other students since, “Students can be unkind. And we need to protect the teen mothers.”

The counsellor informed that the teen mothers usually perform well at the school and several occupy positions of leadership. When asked what might have helped the teen mothers to complete, the counsellor pointed to several factors: “She will need the support from her parents and everyone in the family. She will need a lot of help with the baby if she is to attend to her school work. Caring for a baby and attending school can pose quite a problem for her. She will also need financial help.”

The guidance counsellor also pointed to the support that the teen mother will need from the school. “The high school placement must also be appropriate or she will

become frustrated.” By this the counsellor meant that, “the teen mothers should be placed in the appropriate grade to ensure that she would have covered the prerequisite subjects to be able to move on to subsequent grades.”

With reference to the notion that it is not absolutely important for students to complete the secondary level education, the counsellor said, it is important for the teen mothers to complete their high school education for two reasons: “I believe that persons should complete what they have started, and secondly they will need the qualification.”

Success Gale High School. This school operates a morning and an afternoon shift. It is staffed by a principal and two vice principals, two guidance counsellors, and an academic staff complement of seventy-two. The student population of One thousand, four hundred and thirty-two students is distributed across both shifts. The interview was conducted with one of the vice principals.

The interviewee reported that the process of accepting the teen mothers into the school begins with the initial contact that is made by the counsellor from The Centre with the school principal or vice principal. The place is granted and the parent and the teen mother are invited into the school for a meeting with the school counsellor. This meeting seeks to ascertain whether there are any circumstances which might warrant special intervention by the school counsellor.

The school does not make it a practice to call attention to the teen mothers’ presence at the school. However, it is the teen mothers who sometimes divulge their status to teachers and students. The vice principal could not recall a situation where a teen mother complained that she was made to feel uncomfortable by virtue of her being a teen mother. The vice principal explained that the teen mothers are treated like the average student attending the school. However, if there is a special need, the teen mother is placed on the welfare programme where financial help is given and the girl is ensured her lunch each day.

The vice principal reported that the school shares a very good and longstanding relationship with The Centre. The school readily accepts the teen mothers, and the number accepted is dependent on the available space in the respective grades. “We are

about giving second chances at this school. Sometimes; they turn around, sometimes they do not.”

Counsellors from The Centre are allowed to visit the school to do follow up visits with the teen mothers; and they do. However, the vice principal was unable to speak to the frequency with which these follow up visits were done. “They used to come in and find out how the girls were getting along; whether they were sitting exam and how many subjects.”

The vice principal believes that it is very important for the girls to continue their education. “It is very key. It empowers them. We want to know that after they have had the child they can continue with their career. Some are nearing completion; some are taking their examinations; and they need to be given a second chance.”

The vice principal answered in the affirmative in answer to the question whether the teen mothers encounter problems while they are attending school. “Yes, some of them do have problems; mainly in managing between school and the baby. In some instance, the girls tell me that their parents at home will care the baby while the girls are at school. But, when they get home, the baby is dumped on them, where the mothers tell the girls that it is their responsibility; they took it on so they must tek (take) the responsibility. We care for the baby in the days, you must care for it when you come home.” These girls, she said, complain that they do not have time for themselves once they get home. They are also often very tired when they get to school and often cannot cope very well.” The vice principal was then asked whether special considerations were made for the teen mothers to which she replied that it would be left up to the respective teachers to determine whether special considerations of schedules would be given a girl who was unable to meet deadlines with her assignments.

Must Pass High School. Must Pass High School has a student population of one thousand, one hundred students. Academic instructions are provided by fifty-one teachers. The two guidance counsellors endeavour to meet the emotional needs of the students.

My initial contact with this principal was met with willingness but a measure of resistance. I had called so as to introduce her to the project and to solicit her

willingness to participate in the project. The principal made it clear that she was willing to participate in the project but was careful to point out that, “The trouble is that institutions like the WCJF needs to preach abstinence. The girls go back again and again and that is the trouble. In the past we have had girls who get pregnant a second time. There is no transformation; no new mindset and they keep on having sex and getting pregnant.” Notwithstanding this admonition, the principal agreed to a date for the interview.

On the scheduled appointment the principal indicated that she was rather busy and could not have accommodated me for an extended period of time. The interview was conducted in the shortest possible time. Adequate information was however gathered to have informed the study. The principal said that teen mothers are accepted into the school by one of two methods: “With one method, the counsellors from The Centre come in directly to me and inquire whether there is any space for the girl. The second method is by which the guidance counsellor or the principal for another school calls me to ask me to help out a girl that was good and that they know will do well. I usually do not take the girls from nearby schools though, because I do not want them to come and the other students tease them and make them uncomfortable. They sometimes disappoint me though; for they go and get pregnant again.”

When asked if she could tell whether the teen mothers from The Centre were those that got pregnant a second time, the principal said, “No the Women Centre girls are not the ones who usually get pregnant again. Those girls from The Centre usually do not get pregnant again; oh yes there was one that I can remember. But usually they do not get pregnant. The problem is that the girls do not leave the boyfriends and so they get pregnant and drop out again.”

The principal explained that the school provides special monitoring for the teen mothers. “That is left up to the guidance counsellor, although I also monitor them. I do not even tell the teachers that a girl is a teen mother. It is kept between me and the guidance counsellor. I found out that if the teachers knew, then certain opportunities that the teen mothers get they would not get it; like positions that they occupy. I really want them to do well and so we monitor them.”

In explaining the monitoring that the school affords the teen mothers, the principal said, “Well, it is mainly counselling that is offered; one on one. They are encouraged to focus on their lessons. We also speak with the parents and encourage them to help the girls. Whenever I hear teachers saying things about the girls, I will go and speak to the teacher one away.”

The principal was of the opinion that the girls should be given a second chance. As she said, “God gives all of us a second chance. I want them to be chaste.” She also explained the process by which the girls were monitored at her school.

Although the principal was aware that the counsellors from The Centre visit the school to monitor the girls, she was unaware of the specific times in which the visits are made. “No; I do not usually know; although I sometimes see them. But usually it is the guidance counsellor with whom they speak.”

From this principal’s perspective, whether the teen mothers complete their secondary education will be dependent on, “The seriousness with which they take the mistake that they made. If they embrace this second chance that they have to return to school and work well; if they let go of the past and focus on their school work. These are not poor girls you know. It is not the poor girls that get pregnant. So it is not that they need money and so on. They just need to be monitored and they will finish. Their parents should ensure that they are not continuing in the relationship with the baby father also.”

Second Chance High School. Second Chance High school is served by a principal, two vice principals, an eighty-member academic staff, eleven members of the administrative staff, and two school counsellors. The school has a student population of one thousand, six hundred and eighty-three.

The school is served by its administrative staff, an ancillary staff, and an academic staff. The principal of this school was kindly disposed to the interviews from the outset. He immediately responded to the questions and explained that his school was kindly disposed to accepting the teen mothers back in school. He is of the view that, “every teen mother deserves a second chance.”

In explaining the process by which the teen mothers are accepted into the school, the principal said that “The contact for placement is made directly to the principal. A copy of the last school report is submitted and the student is interviewed by the principal. Some of the teen mothers are passed to the counsellors.” The principal explained that he does not want the teen mothers to be marginalized, and so he does not make it known that an accepted student is in fact a teen mother. Their class mates may sometimes know, but this does not present as a challenge for the teen mothers.

In answer to the question whether the girls do complete, the principal said that the majority do very well and complete. He attributes this to the fact that the school is “student friendly” and the counsellors assist the girls where needed.

The principal was asked to tell whether special considerations were given to the teen mothers. In response he said that “The teen mothers are treated just like the average student. They can however access the welfare programme. If needs be, they are given a late pass to take their babies to the nursery or for medical care.”

The school enjoys a close relationship with The Centre. Counsellors from The Centre regularly visit the teen mothers to “check on their progress.” The school also works closely with the parents of the teen mothers in the interest of the girls.

The principal admitted that some of the teen mothers do drop out of school after they are placed. In his opinion, “Drop out will be curtailed by parental support; parental guidance is extremely important.” He was also of the opinion that the teen mothers will complete their secondary education “... if they learn from the first experience. Those who do not learn would drop out a second time.”

Opportunity Heights High School. Opportunity Heights High School is served by a principal, two vice principals, a dean of discipline, seventy-one academic staff members, and sixteen ancillary staff members. The student population is one thousand, four hundred and seventy-two.

The information letter was sent to the principal of the school and later discussed by telephone. It was difficult to schedule a time for the interview as the principal was most times out of office. I therefore requested and obtained her permission to conduct the interview with the school counsellor.

In explaining the process whereby the teen mothers are accepted into the school, the counsellor explained that The Centre submits a form with the names of the teen mothers to the school. The names are recorded in the general pool of names of new students and are submitted to the respective form teachers. With this, the teachers are not usually able to identify the teen mothers. The school is careful to conceal the identity of the teen mothers because, as the counsellor explained, “the other girls would think that it is OK to do the same thing.”

The counsellor admitted that not all the teen mothers do well or complete. Those who do well are “those who realize their responsibility and that they have to do something with their life to cope with their responsibility.” The ones that do not do well are “those who do not recognize their responsibility. Their parents assume the responsibility for the babies.”

The teen mothers are not specially monitored at this school and no special provisions are made for them. “They are treated as regular students”, the counsellor informed.

In responding to the question of whether the school works closely with The Centre, the counsellor said, “Yes. They do visit the school but they do not speak with the teen mothers. They are usually in class at the time.” With this response, the counsellor was asked to tell whether the counsellors from The Centre then discussed the girl’s and their progress with her. To this she responded “No.” I therefore asked, “What was it then that they speak about when they visit?” The counsellor explained saying, “They usually talk about careers.”

I again asked the counsellor whether the counsellors from The Centre speak with the teen mothers when they visit the school, and again she said, “No. They do not usually talk about the girls. As a matter of fact, some of the girls prefer to put the past behind them. They do not want to talk about it.”

The counsellor was asked to describe the challenges that the teen mothers experience as they return to school that would cause them to drop out a second time. To this she responded by saying that “Some of them have challenges with their baby fathers. They think that if they support the baby, then the mother also benefits. The girls leave their babies at The Centre and they collect the babies in the evenings. They do not

want the other students to see them with their babies. Some also do not want to return to school.”

I then asked, “Are you saying that some of the girls are forced to return to school and that is why they drop out a second time?” To this she responded, “Yes; of course! Some of them are slow learners and should be sent to other institutions for skills training.”

New Leaf High School. New Leaf High School has a population of one thousand, one hundred and eleven students. The principal is the head of the institution and he is assisted by the various members of staff. The administrative staff comprises four persons, inclusive of principal and two vice principals. The academic staff comprises forty-eight teachers and the ancillary staff of fourteen persons. There are two guidance counsellors serving at the school.

Efforts to secure a schedule with the principal of this school proved futile. I therefore capitalized on the permission that was given for me to have conducted the interview with the school counsellor who consented to participate in the project. The counsellor was given the information letter and questions entertained. The counsellor was then asked to read, sign and return the consent form. This done, a convenient time for the interview was arranged and kept.

The counsellor explained the process by which the teen mothers are accepted into the school. “Contact is made from the Women’s Centre directly with the principal or vice principal who then forwards the documents to the guidance department. The needed paper work is done and the teen mother is accepted into the school.”

As to whether the teen mother is subjected to an interview, the counsellor said, “No; this is not a requirement; at least not in a rigorous sense.” An interview is not required because, “We know of the situation. We know that they are out there and we do want to assist.”

When asked whether the teachers knew about the teen mothers’ presence in the school the counsellor said, “The Grade 10 teachers who are the vocational teachers would know. The girls tend to be particularly close to the vocational teachers. But we cannot

tell the grade 9 teachers. Not that they would tell others, but we really want to keep the matter as private as possible.” (The counsellor chuckled as she made this point)

The school implements certain measures to protect the teen mothers’ privacy. “The files of the guidance department are kept under lock and key. Their information is only shared with the principal or vice principal. Sometimes though, their business is already known by other children who live in their communities. And these children come to school and tease the girls. They blurt out the girl’s business to the other students in a setting in which it should not have been said; maybe in a large class setting. ‘yu know sey da girl deh have waah baby?’ (did you know that that girl has a baby?) This is very frustrating for the girl. I know of one instance in particular where this happened to one of the girls and I had to work hard with the girl to help her to cope with the situation. I went and spoke to the class about it; helped them to empathize. I told them that hers was a case of carnal abuse and if anything they should be angry with the adult who did that to her. It could also have been them.”

The counsellor admitted that this situation could have caused the girl to have dropped out of school. “Yes. She got so frustrated.” She also admitted that there were several teen mothers who dropped out of school a second time.

When asked whether there were any other factors that might cause a teen mother to not complete her secondary education the counsellor said, “Finances; getting to school. Or she might not be able to cope with the pressures of motherhood at that age. The baby might want all of her attention and she has no time for her school work. A second pregnancy sometimes cause some of them to drop out.” I pressed for further insight into this question and she went on to say, “Lack of support at home; emotional support is needed from those at home.”

The reverse question was asked: What are the factors that might cause the teen mothers to complete? In answering, the counsellor said, “The support that they receive from home; if they are driven and internally motivated. The encouragement that they also get from school”

The school does not give special considerations to the teen mothers. However, “They are given tips as to how to cope with being a mother and getting their school work done.” Special counselling sessions are arranged if needed. Also, “financial help is

given occasionally; for you know that we could not sustain this kind of help. But, there are those who are in need of help with like exam fees; we also lend a listening ear; both the counsellors and the other teachers.”

I asked whether special consideration would be given where a teen mother was unable to complete an assignment on schedule. The counsellor explained that “That would be left to the particular teacher to determine.”

The counsellor was asked to tell whether the teen mothers completed their secondary education at that school. Her answer was, “Oh yes! Several of them do.”

The counsellor was asked whether the counsellors from The Centre visit the school to monitor the progress of the teen mothers. Her answer: “Yes. The counsellors do visit; especially one counsellor. She makes regular visits with the girls or else she calls me to find out how they are doing. She usually calls to say that she is coming.”

The counsellor asserted that it is important for teen mothers to complete their secondary education. She had this to say about persons who did not agree with this position: “They need to have their heads examined.”

The counsellor had more to say about the teen mothers completing their secondary level education. “It is important for the families to become more involved with the girls; they need to encourage and motivate them to continue with their education. Some think that because this has happened they are women and so they are not supervised. But supervision is important.”

Clear Vision High School. The one thousand, eight hundred and sixty student population of Clear Vision High School is served by three guidance counsellors, a principal and two vice principals, a ninety-one member academic staff, and a twelve-member ancillary staff.

The interview was conducted with the principal of the school who explained the process whereby the teen mothers are accepted into the school. “The Women’s Centre staff presents a case for the girls with me, the vice principals, and the counsellors. I usually meet with the parent and the intended student. Her school record is requested and information concerning her performance at the WCJF.”

The teen mothers are required to attend the regular orientation day along with the other new students. “The teen mothers are not singled out. They are treated as the other students. The other students are not told that they are teen mothers.” The principal explained that the status of the teen mothers is kept private “Because I do not want it known that we are harbouring teen mothers at this school.” The teachers also are not informed about the presence of the teen mothers. “Not all teachers know; only the form teachers since there may need to be special consideration given to the teen mother at a given time and the form teacher would then know how best to handle the situation; or the school nurse for that matter. The other teachers may behave differently towards them. There could be a slip of a remark that might not be helpful for the girls.”

Regarding special considerations for the teen mothers, the principal said, “No special consideration is given to them except where there is a special situation, for example, if she has a medical condition that would need to be monitored. In terms of her school work, she is not specially monitored. She is treated as the other students. She is a student; the other circumstances become known to us.”

The principal is aware that the counsellors from The Centre make regular visits to the school to monitor the teen mothers. “They usually inform us whenever it is that they are planning to visit.”

With respect to factors that would cause a girl to drop out of high school a second time, the principal said that would be dependent on “... whether she continued in the behaviour that contributed to her pregnancy in the first place.”

From the principal’s perspective, whether the teen mother completed her secondary education would be dependent on “Guidance from the Women’s Centre and her school counsellor. The student herself would need to have self determination. She must tell herself that I need to move on. The teen mother’s success will be dependent on the role played by the school, the home, and the child.”

Table 4: Data on Schools

Teen Mother	Placed	Data on Schools				Achievement	
		School Attended	Official Interviewed	Gender	Supportive		
Arlene	2003	New Leaf	Counsellor	Female	/	Graduated	
Kelly	2003	Full View	Not Interviewed			Graduated	
Tiffany	2004	Millennium High	Counsellor	Male	/	Graduated	
Adassa	2004	Life Long Learning High	Not Interviewed		/	Graduated	
Kadeen	2005	Youth Friendly High	Not Interviewed			Graduated	
Patient	2005	2 nd Chance High	Principal	Male	/		Dropped Out
Nelly	2005	Opportunity High	Counsellor	Female	/		Dropped Out
Maud	2006	2 nd Chance High	Principal	Male	/		Dropped Out
Valerie	2006	Intentional High	Not Interviewed		/		Dropped Out
Patsy	2006	Globalized High	Not Interviewed		/	Graduated	
Elaine	2007	Successvale High	Vice Principal	Male		Graduated	
Raphalia	2007	Must Pass High	Not Interviewed			Graduated	

Description of the counselling syllabus, placement records, and the counselling files

The WCJF Programme of intervention has a counselling component which exposes the teen mothers to a wide range of topics. Through this counselling programme, the teen mothers are:

1. Counselling towards personal growth and development
2. Prepared for the return to the formal school system
3. Monitored and provided with a support system after they have returned to formal school.

My research was primarily concerned with the aspect of the counselling programme that:

1. Prepares the teen mothers to return to the school system and
2. Monitors the teen mothers over a two-year period, once they returned to the school

This section provides a description of the process of preparing the teen mothers for return, and the process by which they were subsequently monitored when they return.

Descriptions are therefore given of:

1. The counselling syllabus
2. The placement records
3. The files of the teen mothers.

The Counselling Syllabus. The syllabus presented was contained in two separate documents. The one was the official document that was prepared by the WCJF and used at all locations. I chose to refer to this document as the 'official' syllabus, since it is the 'official' document provided for use at The Centre. I refer to the second document as the 'supplemental' syllabus, since it was developed by The Centre where, as the centre manager indicated, the need for same was identified. Separate descriptions are given of each document.

The official syllabus was contained on a five-page document. The document was devoid of an official heading, a rationale, an overarching goal and specific objectives. The document contained ten major topics, as listed below:

- ✓ The Individual
- ✓ Human Growth and Development
- ✓ Human Reproduction
- ✓ Common Sources of Sexual Anxiety
- ✓ Sexual Intercourse and its Consequences
- ✓ Venereal Diseases
- ✓ Interpersonal Relationships
- ✓ Family and Marriage
- ✓ Population Dynamics
- ✓ Rights and Responsibilities

Each major topic was subdivided into subtopics. For example, the major topic 'Intercourse and its Consequences', was seen to have been subdivided into subtopics which include: Responsible Attitudes to Sexual Involvement; Decision-making about Sexual Involvement; Where to Seek Guidance; Emotional Implications of Sexual Involvement; Overcoming Societal/Peer Pressures.

These topics may be described as being general topics that focused attention on issues pertinent to the adolescent stage of development. The topics also zeroed in on issues relative to teen pregnancy. The centre manager reported that the topics served as a guide to the counsellors who are expected to develop and deliver group counselling sessions. The efforts of the counsellors are complemented and augmented by resource persons from other organizations as well as by several other curricula which have been prepared by various bodies.

The supplemental curriculum provided by The Centre was contained in a one-page document. There were five general topics, each having its own 'general objective':

- ✓ Preparing for the Initial Contact
- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ Dealing with Conflicts
- ✓ Personal Hygiene

✓ Decision Making.

Each general topic was broken down into at least three, and at most seven subtopics. For example, the topic 'Preparing for the Initial Contact' was subdivided into: Telephone Courtesies; Preparing for Interview with Principal; Dressing Appropriately; Common Courtesies; Interview Tips. These topics and subtopics clearly addressed the matter of preparation to return to the formal school system.

The Placement Records. The Centre is expected to report on the number of teen mothers returned to the formal school system quarterly and annually. Information surrounding the return of the teen mothers to the school is contained in a designated book kept at The Centre.

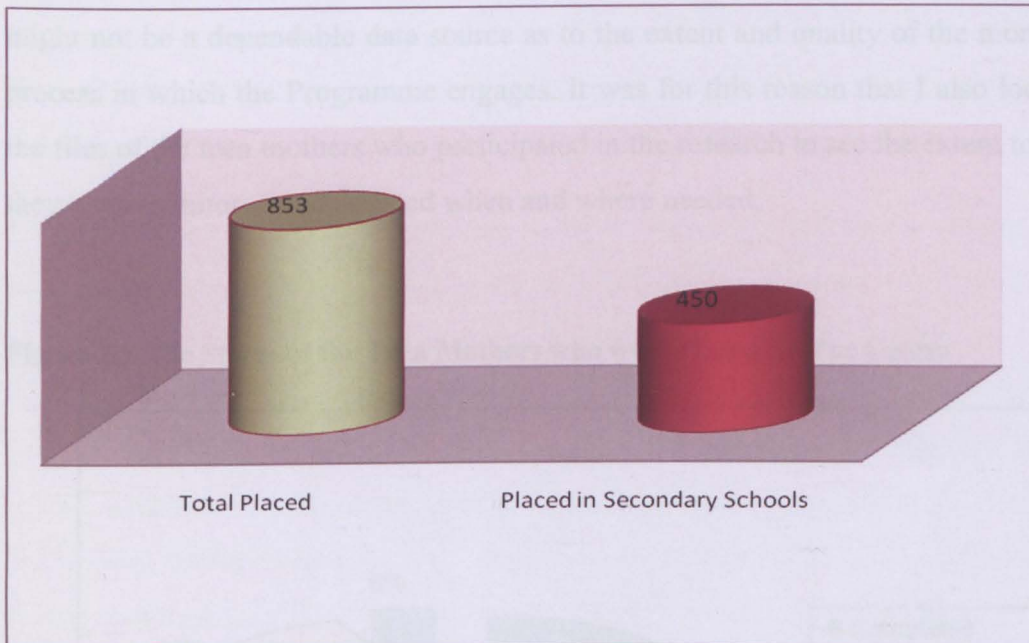
The placement records at The Centre were contained in a 8.5" x 14" note book which was ruled to contain the following information: name of teen mother, school at which she was placed, and general comments as to visits made and progress. No space was provided for the signature of the counsellor who visited the teen mother and therefore entered the notes surrounding the visit in the book. The ruled spaces were limited, and therefore were not designed to carry a huge amount of information. Comments were generally single phrased; for example: 'visited at school, doing well', 'graduated', 'placed 1st in class'; 'did not take up placement'; 'prefect'; 'doing well'; 'unable to make contact'; 'now attending college'.

The records contained in the placement book showed that between 2002 and 2008, The Centre placed a total of eight hundred and fifty-three teen mothers. Of this number, four hundred and fifty teen mothers were returned to the secondary school system (see figure 11, p.129); the others were placed in training institutions of varying nature, if the teen mothers were past the school age or were not academically inclined.

The records contained in the placement book also revealed that two hundred and thirteen of the teen mothers completed high school, while sixty-eight dropped out. Twenty-three of the teen mothers were still in school. The records however could not tell whether one hundred and forty-six of the teen mothers completed or dropped out of their placement. I therefore simply chose to refer to these teen mothers as being unaccounted for. The fact that some teen mothers are unaccounted for will, of course, render the data technically inaccurate since these 'unaccounted for' teen mothers

might either have completed or have dropped out (see figure 12 on p.130 for the status of the teen mothers).

Figure 11: Comparison between Teen Mothers Placed and the Number of Teen Mothers Returned to the Formal School System



Only a fraction of the teen mothers who are placed are returned to the formal school system.

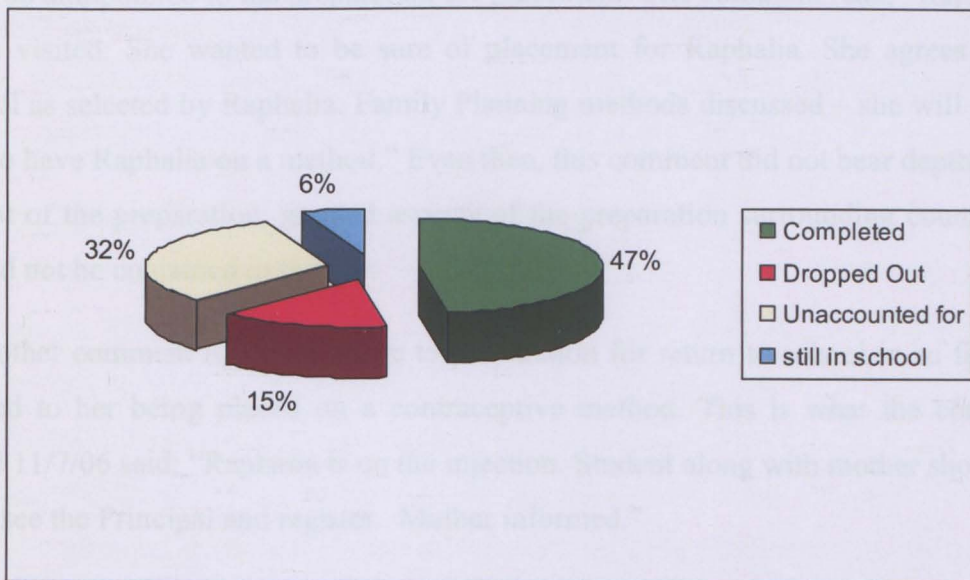
The comments given in the placement book indicated that the information was gleaned on the teen mothers through direct contact or indirect contact. One comment given said, “Patsy said that she was ...”, revealing that the counsellor had actually visited and had spoken with the teen mother. In another instance, however, the comment made was that “the counsellor at the school said that”, suggesting that the information gleaned about the teen mother was done through the counsellor and not through direct contact with the teen mother.

Whereas some of the names had comments written in the space provided in the book, there were several that had no comments. It was for this reason that it could not be ascertained whether respective teen mothers completed or did not complete the

placement. This could be taken to mean one of two things: that the teen mother was not monitored through visit or enquiry, or that the monitoring was not recorded.

The notes did not reveal the particular problem with which a teen mother might have been faced, the intervention rendered and the outcome. Notwithstanding, it is appreciated that the placement records would not necessarily be the place for these detailed comments. It was therefore concluded that, by itself, the placement record might not be a dependable data source as to the extent and quality of the monitoring process in which the Programme engages. It was for this reason that I also looked to the files of the teen mothers who participated in the research to see the extent to which they were monitored and assisted when and where needed.

Figure 12: The Status of the Teen Mothers who were Placed by The Centre



The teen mothers' individual files

A file is kept on each student enrolled in the Programme and should be able to supply insights into the extent of the monitoring that each girl received as she returned to school (see table 5 on page 138). A description is given of the file data of seven of the teen mothers who were individually interviewed. The Centre was unable to locate the files of five of the teen mothers. The description is preoccupied with the post-placement file notes. Also included in the description here, is the treatment accorded each file. It was often necessary to revisit the content of the individual interviews conducted with the teen mothers for purposes of comparison or corroboration.

Raphalia's File. Raphalia returned to school in September 2006. She completed and so graduated in July 2008. There were only two comments made on Raphalia's file that spoke to her return to the formal school system. The first comment was made on 22/6/06 and pointed to the preparation for placement. The comment read, "Raphalia's mom visited. She wanted to be sure of placement for Raphalia. She agrees for X school as selected by Raphalia. Family Planning methods discussed – she will decide and to have Raphalia on a method." Even then, this comment did not bear depth of the extent of the preparation, granted aspects of the preparation surrounding counselling would not be contained in the file.

The other comment made reference to preparation for return to school in so far as it related to her being placed on a contraceptive method. This is what the comment dated 11/7/06 said: "Raphalia is on the injection. Student along with mother should go in to see the Principal and register. Mother informed."

Barring these two comments, Raphalia's file bore no post-placement notes, although she was in school for two years. It could therefore be deduced that she was not monitored for the two years of her being in school post intervention or that the information gleaned was not recorded. Her pre-placement records did not point to family or personal issues that could have threatened her return to school. It might therefore have been assumed that she would have done well and did not need to be monitored. Of course, this is mere conjecture and so I returned to the comments she made during the individual interviews for closer examination and analysis of her situation.

It might be concluded from the paucity of notes in Raphalia's file that she was not subjected to the monitoring process. This conclusion was borne out by my check with the placement record which also bore no indication of a visit being made with Raphalia whether at home or at school. Did the counsellors determine that Raphalia did not need to be monitored because of the strong familial support that she enjoyed? How would they have guaranteed that this familial support was sustained for the duration of her time at school? Could it be that Raphalia was monitored but the process was not recorded? Did she benefit from the monitoring process at all? Unanswered questions based on the paucity of information in her file.

Valerie's File. The first post-placement notes recorded in Valerie's file were dated 12/9/06 and said, "Spoke with the guidance counsellor ... she stated that Valerie has commenced school." Another visit was made to Valerie's school one year later as indicated by notes dated 8/10/07. These notes said: "School visited. Spoke with Guidance Counsellor. She is attending school." These were the final notes contained on the file. Knowing that Valerie had dropped out of school, I thought that reviewing the pre-placement notes would have offered some further insights.

Valerie had enrolled in the Programme 8/9/05 and had received individual counselling which monitored her general progress and ensured that she was on a contraceptive method. It was her father who visited The Centre 23/3/06, six months after registration, and informed that "the relationship with he and Valerie's mother is broken and for that reason he has asked a female friend to be Valerie's guardian. He said that Valerie can be rude and does not get on well with her mother." This story was later disputed by the mother who was called in for counselling. The file notes on the mother's visit were that "the mother said that Valerie behaves fairly well and claimed that their relationship is good."

One sign of pending challenge was seen in the pre-placement file notes dated 23/3/06 which stated that, "the father will be responsible for finances but is unsure at the moment who will keep the baby." This was a sure amber light that Valerie could be presented with trouble post-placement. I would therefore have expected that her counsellors would have seen to the crossing of this hurdle and whether it was presenting a problem when she returned to school. However, as indicated, the notes did not speak to this issue.

Valerie's file notes did not speak to the issue revealed by Valerie during the individual interview, that her time at school was indeed fraught with difficulties. In telling her story, Valerie had pointed to instability when she returned to school. She said, "I lived with my grandmother, then my father's friend. She later ran me from the house. She told lies on me and wanted me to leave. She would tell my father the lies on me and my father would beat me. She said that I carried men to her house. My father just worked top side the lady's house. He would believe her and did not want to hear my side of the story. I then returned to live with my grandmother."

Valerie told of having had problems while she returned to school; but, judging from the file notes, this was not known to The Centre. "It was difficult going to school and caring for the baby. I had to wash, cook, pick up the baby. My friends asked me how I managed and said that they would mad." During the interview, Valerie spoke at length about the problem that she was having with her contraceptive method. Yet, there was no indication in the file notes regarding this problem.

Although there were two school visits done, the contacts were made with the school counsellor who might not even have had much knowledge of Valerie or detailed information about her situation. It was not enough to know she was attending school. It was not enough to have spoken to the counsellor whose workload often does not allow them to give adequate attention to each student. Considering that there were signs of difficulties, the monitoring process should have been more intense and mindful, and the notes in her files should have borne records of the attention and assistance given.

Although this is conjecture, were the contacts made with Valerie herself, she might have brought her contraception problem to the attention of the counsellor from The Centre, with whom she would have been more familiar and comfortable.

One thing that is clear though, is the fact that the notes corroborated Valerie's story that there were problems in the home in which she stayed and that there was much instability in her social situation. This existed and was known before she was placed. Yet the post-placement intervention did not seek to investigate the extent to which these circumstances were impediments.

Maud's File. There were no post placement notes in Maud's file. The only notes that referred to her placement said, "She gained a place in school. Her sister was informed via telephone."

And yet, there was an abundance of pre-placement notes which outlined several problems that this teen mother faced and which would have posed as impediments to her return to school. In one entry, it was noted that, "Her family is very poor. She wants to become a nurse and wants to achieve well because she says that her family is very poor. Thinks if she achieves she could help her family members especially her mother financially. Says at times the situation is very bad. They have no food."

Notes dated 1/2/06 also revealed that, "Maud came in today to say she needed baby pampers. She said that she was in need because she was not getting paternal support." The Centre knew of the situation surrounding Maud's life and should have put a safety net in place for this teen mother.

I gathered from Maud in the interview that things were extremely bad for her when she returned to school. Here is what she said in answer to the question, what challenges did you experience when you returned to school? "Having taxi fare. At one point I did not have no financial help. My uncle who used to help me died. I did not even have money for the baby." If I did not have the baby, the money I spend on him could send me back to school." The notes in Maud's file corroborated her story as told in the individual interview.

Patsy's File. The file of this teen mother bore post-placement notes given on three occasions. The first was dated September 6, 2006 and stated that, "Patsy is attending school and has settled in quickly. The second note was dated July 2007 (nine months later), and indicated that, "she completed grade 10 and came 1st in class." The third comment was dated October 10, 2007 (three months later) and simply said, "School visited. Attending and doing well."

Although the notes indicated that Patsy was monitored while she returned to school, the extent of the monitoring could not be ascertained. The notes also did not indicate whether she had completed. The notes left to me to determine that 'doing well' meant that she was not faced with significant challenges such as would put her at risk of

dropping out. Reference to the interview notes revealed that Patsy in fact completed in July 2008, a year following the date when she was last monitored.

The file notes did not speak to the factors that contributed to her doing well and whether there were any factors that might have impeded her performance. It was from the interview notes that it was gathered that Patsy in fact was privileged with strong familial support which must have aided her performance. "I lived with my mother. She helped to nurture the baby since she was not working." The interview notes also revealed that Patsy was in fact presented with challenges whilst at school. She said that, "Things became hectic later when mother began to work. I had to find somewhere to leave the baby." Also, "The baby became ill. He was breathing short. Some days I had to take him to the doctor." These were not borne out in the file notes. Perhaps they were not viewed as significant enough to have presented as threats.

During the interview, in answer to the question "to whom or what would you contribute your success at completing school?" Patsy cited The Centre. "The Women's Centre; they called and checked on me when I was at school. Visited school to see how I was doing."

Adassa's File. This file contained two post-placement entries. The one dated January 15, 2004 said, "Student visited at school. Student is attending and is doing very well." The entry stated that, "Student informed us that she was successful in 7 CXC subjects and will be going to college." The second entry was made after she had finished her placement and returned to The Centre to report on her success at her external examinations. In fact therefore, there was only one post-placement entry made in this file.

As with the other files, I was not content to learn that the teen mother was "doing well". I therefore returned to the pre-placement notes to see what other information could have been gleaned. One entry was particularly insightful where it said, "Student concerned she might have to stop coming as her mother could not afford the expenses. Student was offered an extra day's assistance from the centre as she is a promising student." This comment seemed to have suggested that this teen mother might have had financial difficulties returning to school. Yet, from the file notes, the monitoring process did not address this issue.

As with the other teen mothers, I returned to the interview notes to gather more information, to determine whether both sets of notes corroborated, and to gather additional data. It was here seen that Adassa testified to having had serious challenges when she returned to school. Yet, the monitoring process had not captured same or offered any assistance. In answer to the question: “What were some of the challenges with which you were confronted?”, she said, “There were financial problems since there were three children in school at the same time. Most times I had only the bus fare; no lunch money. It was difficult to travel.”

The Centre might have missed the challenge that Adassa encountered since the counsellor’s visit to the school was to dialogue with the counsellor and not the teen mother. When asked “What support did you receive from The Centre when you returned to school?” Adassa said, “The counsellors visited my school while I was there. They spoke with the guidance counsellor. I think; I am not sure. My thinking was that they had already done their part by placing me back in school. I would not hold it against them for not following up with me.”

Nelly’s File. Nelly had returned to school September 2005. The only post-placement related comment made in her file was dated August 10, 2005 and said, “Student was encouraged to work hard and do well in school.” Considering the date, the comment must have been made prior to her assuming the placement. In which case, there really was no post-placement comment on Nelly’s file.

Checks with the pre-placement comments revealed that Nelly was faced with many challenges: “The baby father not owning baby who is ill and in and out of hospital. She has taken the case to court. She also does not have a good relationship with her mother and step father. The court ordered the father to pay all medical expenses and give her \$1000.00 weekly.” Bearing this background in mind, this teen mother was clearly at risk of not completing the placement. I would have thought, therefore, that The Centre would have given particular attention to the monitoring of this teen mother. She did not complete her placement.

During the interview, Nelly had said, “I dropped out because the baby needed attention. He was ill. I had to go to the hospital with him often. My mother had to go

to work. The baby father did not support us at all then. The Centre did not help much.”

Arlene's File. Pre-placement notes said, “She seems to have some issues but is not willing to open up. Student was reassured and the counselling process will be followed up. Seemed depressed about something.”

Arlene's file had post-placement notes dated January 24, 2004 which said, “presently attending school.” This comment which was given within the very month that she was placed, did not indicate whether a home or school visit was done. Five months later, another comment said, “Received report that she came first in class. Said she is doing well. Continued to do well.” Again, there is no indication as to whether this information was gleaned through a home or school visit; through contact with the teen mother or with her counsellor. The final comment indicated that, “She passed 5 CXC subjects. Graduated June 2006. Not able to get to the bottom of her problems.”

I returned to the interview notes and saw that, although the file notes did not indicate this, Arlene was fraught with difficulties as she returned to school. Here is what she said during the interview, “I was uncomfortable about having had the baby. It was a predicament. Students came and questioned me and so they knew that I had a baby. I do not know how they suspected and knew. So they came and asked me if it was true. I told them yes. I brought the baby to school. One female teacher in particular said that I should not be at school. I was given a chance and I blew it. She was one of my teachers. This made me feel down but it also motivated me.” The challenge that she faced escaped the attention of the counsellors at The Centre.

Table 5: Extent of the Monitoring Received by the Teen Mothers

File	Status	Monitored		Challenges				Assisted	
		Home visit	School visit	Yes	No	Known	Unknown	Yes	No
Arlene	completed		✓	✓			✓		✓
Kelly	completed			✓			✓		✓
Tiffany	completed		✓		✓				
Adassa	completed		✓	✓			✓		✓
Kadeen	completed	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Patient	dropped out		✓	✓		✓			✓
Nelly	dropped out			✓			✓		✓
Maud	dropped out			✓			✓		✓
Valerie	dropped out			✓			✓		✓
Patsy	completed		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Elaine	completed	✓			✓				
Raphalia	completed			✓			✓		✓

Themes that emerged from the various data sources.

There were several themes that emerged from all the data sources. It was therefore necessary for me to treat with them in terms of minor and major themes (Creswell 2008). Minor themes were therefore submerged under seven major themes: Preparation for return, Internal Fortitude, Monitoring, Familial Support, Institutional Support, Financial Constraint, and Domestic Challenges (see figure 13, p.148). The themes are presented in this section and are substantiated with quotations from the project participants.

Preparation for return

This theme was construed in terms of the extent to which The Centre prepared the teen mothers to return to school. This preparation included: academic instructions, counselling, and the contraceptive methods that the girls received prior to their return.

Academic Instructions. The teen mothers indicated that The Centre prepared them to return to school. Valerie pointed out that, “They gave us notes in the classes ...” Patient also said, “The Centre picked up where we left off academically; they helped us to continue where we left off.” Adassa said that The Centre prepared her to return to school “by helping me to keep up with my studies. I was mentally prepared.” Arlene said that she was prepared to return to school by “the academics I received and the counselling also.” Elizabeth said that “they helped me to keep my memory active.” For Tiffany, “the classes keep you going and staying on form. They help us keep our mind open.”

Counselling Session. The teen mothers spoke of the extent to which The Centre prepared them to return to school by way of the counselling sessions. Kelly explained that “they would let me know that I would have a second chance to complete my education. They made me feel better and that there was hope for the future. Without the support, I would not have returned to school. Maybe I would still be sitting at home and I would not have wanted that.” According to Kadeen, “We went into deep counselling looking into matters such as being apart from the baby’s father, being more careful.” Patsy said, “They encouraged me a lot. They said that I made a name for myself at The Centre and I could make a name anywhere else.” According to Kelly, “The Centre motivated us; pushed us. They told us that it was not the end of

our life; we could start over.” Raphalia’s experience was that “the counsellors told me of the challenges to expect when I returned to school.” Patient said, “They helped me emotionally. They tell us all the positives to make you think high of yourself. When I got pregnant, I thought low of myself because of what people said. Coming here, my self esteem improved. I no longer cared what others said.” For Elaine, “The Centre also provided good motivational speakers that motivated us to set goals for our lives and work towards achieving the goals.” Tiffany confirmed that the “The Centre brought in motivational speakers. Counsellors also gave instructions regarding our return to school.”

The topics presented in the counselling syllabus corroborated what the teen mothers said about the level of preparation they received by way of counselling. The syllabus included topics such as: contraception, relationships, self esteem, and the initial interview, to name a few.

Contraceptive Methods. Preparation of the teen mothers to return to school included their being placed on a contraceptive method. Kadeen said that “They placed me on a contraceptive method.” According to Raphalia, “The counsellors discussed the methods with me.”

Some of the girls were not on a method as they returned to school. Tiffany said, “I did not go on a method. And I did not tell the counsellors that I was not on a method. I cannot remember anyone asking.” Valerie admitted that, “I was not on a method before I returned to school. The counsellors did not take me to the clinic. I later went to the clinic by myself.” Valerie however had trouble with the method of choice and became pregnant a second time. She dropped out.

Internal Fortitude

This major theme had several sub themes: the teen mothers’ mental preparation, ambition, career goals, initiative, self motivation, and determination, resilience and coping skills, self efficacy, positive perspective on life, personal belief in God.

Personal Ambition and career goals. For the most part, a sense of ambition pervaded the stories that the teen mothers told. Several of them, including those that had dropped out, indicated the desire to pursue further studies. Patient had dropped out the second time but she was determined to make the most of her life. “I am determined

not to come out like my mother. Almost everyone in my surrounding is a cruff. I am determined to not turn a cruff also.” Patient did much to advance herself and announced her plans to do CXC’s and then a course of study in Business Administration. Adassa said that, I did not want to drop out of school. I think that education is key. Without an education, you would be thrown around.” Her father also shared her sentiments about the benefits of having a good education. He said, “I told her it is a good thing to continue and get more education to make something better.” Kadeen said, “I would not focus on the young man but on getting things for myself and on getting my subjects. I wanted to be independent and have my own money.” Although Patient dropped out, she said, “My greatest desire is to have a good education. Because, I was born poor, grew up poor, but I am not going to die poor.” Raphalia was possessed by a sense of ambition. “I did not want to drop out. I told myself that I was going to finish.” And she did.

There were those teen mothers who had a career goal in mind even before they became pregnant. The pursuit of this goal seemed to have provided them with a focal point which helped them to complete. For some of the teen mothers, particularly those who dropped out, the goal of a career was long term. Patient had dropped out due to financial reasons. But she was determined to pick up the pieces. “I love school. I said I am not giving up. Even till I die. I spend time with my baby and when he is older I will go back to school. Meantime I stay at home; I do hairdressing to get money while staying at home with the baby. I tell myself that I am not giving up. I was an A student.” Tiffany declared that, “I had set my goals in mind already.”

Initiative. Instead of depending on others for their wellbeing, some teen mothers took the initiative to get ahead with their lives. According to Adassa, “It was my suggestion that I attended the Women’s Centre.” Some of the girls who reported having not been taken to the clinic for their contraceptive methods, also reported having taken the initiative to have the method. Patsy said, “I went on the injection on my own. I wanted the implant but it scared me in that I would have to get a slit and it was done in Kingston.”

Self Motivation. It was apparent in the interviews that motivation was a topical issue. Some of the girls waited for others to tell them what to do. Others knew what they had to do. This was evident among the girls who attended school despite militating

circumstances. Nothing was going to stop them from attending; from doing well, and from completing. According to Elaine, "I simply returned and did what I had to do." Tiffany's motivation was based on the fact that, "I wanted everyone to say that I held up my head. I also wanted to make my mother proud."

Determination. Several of the teen mothers were determined to complete their secondary education with the second chance that they were given. Although Patient dropped out, she spoke of a sense of determination. "I am determined. I would not stop until I get where I want to be." Kelly had financial difficulties and was faced with the possibility of dropping out a second time. She was determined to complete, and resorted to an unconventional means of financing her school expenses and care for her baby. "I had sex sometimes when I had to get money for the child. I went to my baby father but he did not give me anything. I had to find other means to get it. I did it often." Adassa also was determined to complete her secondary education. "There were financial problems. Most times I had only the bus fare; no lunch money; But I went just the same." Kelly said, "Once I set my mind to something, I like to finish it. I want to make something good of myself that is why I try to stay in school after I have my child." The principal of Clear Vision High School agreed that for the girls to complete this second chance, "The student herself would need to have self determination. She must tell herself that I need to move on."

Resilience and Coping skills. Majority of the teen mothers were faced with one challenge or another as they returned to school. It was a spirit of resilience that helped them to overcome their challenges and complete their secondary education. Elaine said, "I knew that I would have had obstacles but I did not focus on them." For Arlene, "I did not allow the comments about me being a baby mother to affect me. I found a way to make it fun." For Adassa, "It was difficult to travel; but I went just the same." Some of the other teen mothers did not have the skills needed to cope with their challenges; they fell prey under the circumstances. Nelly admitted that, "I was very frustrated; I was stressed out." Nelly dropped out.

Self Efficacy. The teen mothers spoke pleasantly and positively about themselves. Patsy was eager to tell that, "I came first in the class and got the highest grade in Home Economics. I was soaring to new heights." Patsy also insisted that I recorded the fact that it was during her first year of returning to school that "I made my mark."

Kadeen boldly said, "I am proud of myself. I told myself that I made an error and will not return there." Adassa thinks that she is a very bright girl. Kadeen thinks that she is a pretty girl, and she does not want to be a "pretty dunce." Even the teen mothers who did not complete demonstrated a sense of pride about themselves as they spoke. Patient did not complete secondary school but she said of herself, "Mi poor and boasy." (I am poor, but I am proud).

Positive Perspective on life. The teen mothers had varying perspectives on life. Elaine was of the view that "everything that happens to me is God's plan and so things will all work out for me. I also think that everything would work out for me although I had the baby." Kadeen said, "I was not the first to get pregnant. If I got the chance I would stay focused." Adassa said, "I did not care what others thought. Students asked if I had a baby and I told them yes. Community persons talked but I was not ashamed of my baby. He was not a mistake." Adassa also said, "There were financial problems, but there would be a way out." According to her, "Everyone has a point where they fall. What matters is what you do after you fall." Although Patient dropped out, she had a positive outlook on life. When asked whether she had any regrets about having dropped out of school she said, "I do not have any regrets. What pass and gone, pass and gone. I have to make the best of the present and the future."

Belief in God. Some of the teen mothers spoke of their faith in God which helped them through difficult patches. According to Raphalia, "God plays a part in my life. He helps me; He meets my needs." Elaine made the point that, "I think that everything that happens to me is God's plan and so things will all work out for me."

Monitoring

Several of the teen mothers were monitored by the counsellors from The Centre when they returned to school. Elaine's story was that, "When I went back to school, The Centre called at home to find out how I was doing and whether I was attending school. This made me feel that I was somebody. I cannot recall seeing the counsellors at school. They however spoke to my adopted mother about me." For Tiffany, "They also follow up with me after I went back to school. They spoke with the guidance counsellor and asked about my performance. Once I saw the manager." For Arlene, "They followed up with me when I returned to school. They visited me and this helped me to know that someone cared for me." Kadeen's story was that "the

counsellors always stood behind me. They encouraged me to stay focussed. They visited me at home one time. They also visited the school.”

The schools confirmed that the teen mothers are monitored through school visits. The counsellor from New Leaf High School said, “Yes. The counsellors do visit; especially one counsellor. She makes regular visits with the girls or else she calls me to find out how they are doing. She usually calls to say that she is coming.” The principal of Second Chance High school reported that “The school enjoys a close relationship with The Centre. Counsellors from The Centre regularly visit the teen mothers to check on their progress.”

Institutional Support

As a major theme, institutional support in the data sources is presented as coming or not coming from: the schools, churches, or a Government based financial safety net.

Schools. Some of the schools made special provisions for the teen mothers. The counsellor from Millennium High School said, “Allowance is given to the teen mothers who must take their babies to the day care centres and thus find it difficult to get to school on time. They are not penalized for lateness as would the other students.” The principal from Second Chance High School said “If needs be, they are given a late pass to take their babies to the nursery or for medical care.”

Other schools, like New Leaf High, were careful to introduce the teen mothers to the welfare programme through which they could receive meals without cost. The majority of the schools spoke of the care they took to conceal the status of the teen mothers. The principal of Must Pass High said that she protected the teen mothers from the unkind comments of some teachers.

The support given by the schools was endorsed by some of the teen mothers. Elaine said that, “The school principal and counsellor helped me to settle in school. They encouraged me to focus on my lessons. They told me that students might bother me, but I should not worry about what others say as I was there to drink milk and not to count cows.” For Kadeen, “The teachers counselled me to help me to stay focussed. I was one of the school favourites.”

Institutional support was however lacking in some schools. Arlene said that “One female teacher in particular said that I should not be at school. I was given a chance and I blew it. This made me feel down.” During the interview, the counsellor from Opportunity Heights High actually said that the teen mothers should not be in school. The principal of Clear Vision High also said “... I do not want it known that we are harbouring teen mothers at this school.”

Churches. Some of the girls were members of a church. However, some of the churches were not supportive of the teen mothers. In Kelly’s case, “I was a member of a church when I became pregnant. I left the church. Some persons said that I was going to church and pregnant and not married.” The Pastors’ wife however provided a measure of support for Kelly: “But the Pastor’s wife encouraged me to return to school. She told me that it was not the end of the road; she gave me money also to help me out.” Maud’s experience was that, “I asked a church sister once (for financial assistance) but she did not answer me. Some people told me to seek help for myself.” Patient’s mother had this to say: “Once something happen to you, they look down on you. They run you out instead of bringing you in.”

Familial Support

This was another major theme. It presented positively as well as negatively. There were those parents and other members of the extended family that supported the teen mothers as they returned to school. This support took various forms. In some instances, the parents assumed responsibility for the babies so that the teen mothers could pay more attention to their school work. In other instances, the parents simply offered needed encouragement to the teen mothers, or demonstrated their belief in them and in their ability to succeed. This was of invaluable assistance to the teen mothers.

According to Patsy, “I received a lot of support from home. I lived with my mother. She helped to care the baby since she was not working.” Raphalia said, “My mother worked as a manager at a supermarket but helped with the baby when I returned to school. She paid the neighbour to keep the baby. The neighbour later kept the baby for free. In the evenings, mother helped so I could study. I appreciated this a lot. Other

family members, my aunties and my grandmother, in Jamaica and abroad, also supported me. They send things for the baby and also send cash to help out.” For Adassa, “My mother and sister kept the baby. I was able to focus on my lessons.”

Some of the baby fathers also provided support for the girls. In Arlene’s case, “My baby father took the child while I was at school. I looked for her on weekends. I also take her home on weekends.” Raphalia had this to say about her child’s father: “He was eighteen years old. He works in a supermarket. He supports the baby and keeps the baby in the holidays.”

Kelly’s mother was very supportive: “I paid the school fees and everything. I paid for the subjects when she went back to school. It was very hard.” Concerning the care of the baby, Kelly’s mother said, “In the evening she would hold him and so on; but I had the responsibility. He was my baby.”

On the other hand, there were those teen mothers who did not have needed familial support. At least two of the teen mothers had to see to their own living accommodation and fend for themselves. In Kadeen’s case, “I lived with my baby father since living at home was inconvenient. My mother sent me to live with him.” Valerie’s mother migrated and left her in the care of her father who passed her on to a lady friend. After a while, “she ran me out of the house.”

Financial Constraints

The majority of the teen mothers were faced with financial challenges. For Adassa, “There were financial problems, since there were three children in school at the same time. Most times I had only the bus fare; no lunch money.” For Maud, “At one point, I did not have no financial help at all. I sometimes worked in a bar and used to use the baby money to attend school.” Kelly’s story was that, “Lots of days when I did not have any money to go to school, I had to borrow. Sometimes I did not go at all.” Kelly looked to alternate means to finance her education. “I had sex sometimes when I had to get money for the child. I went to my baby father but he did not give me anything. I had to find other means to get it.” For Patient, “My mother bought my uniform material and gave them to the dressmaker. But, I did not return to the dressmaker for the uniforms since I did not pay the school fees. We did not have the money to pay her.”

Domestic Challenges

Some of the teen mothers were faced with insurmountable domestic situations. For Nelly, "...the baby needed attention; he was ill. I had to go to the hospital with him often. The baby father did not support us at all. I brought him to court. He said that the baby was not his and did not live up to his responsibility." For Maud, "My uncle who used to help me died." Kadeen's story was that, "... my baby father ... he physically abused me. He wanted to be man over me too much and wanted me to be submissive even if I was not comfortable." For Kelly, "At home, I did not have access to things children should have ... when I did not have anything to give the baby, I considered about it. Sometimes I felt like giving up; I would sit down thinking that it is the end of the world ..." For Valerie, "It was difficult going to school and caring for the baby. I had to wash, cook, and pick up the baby. My friends asked me how I managed and said that they would mad." At first, Patsy had the support of her unemployed mother when she returned to school. But, "Things became hectic when my mother began to work. I had to find a place to leave the baby. The baby became ill. He was breathing short. Some days I had to take him to the doctor."

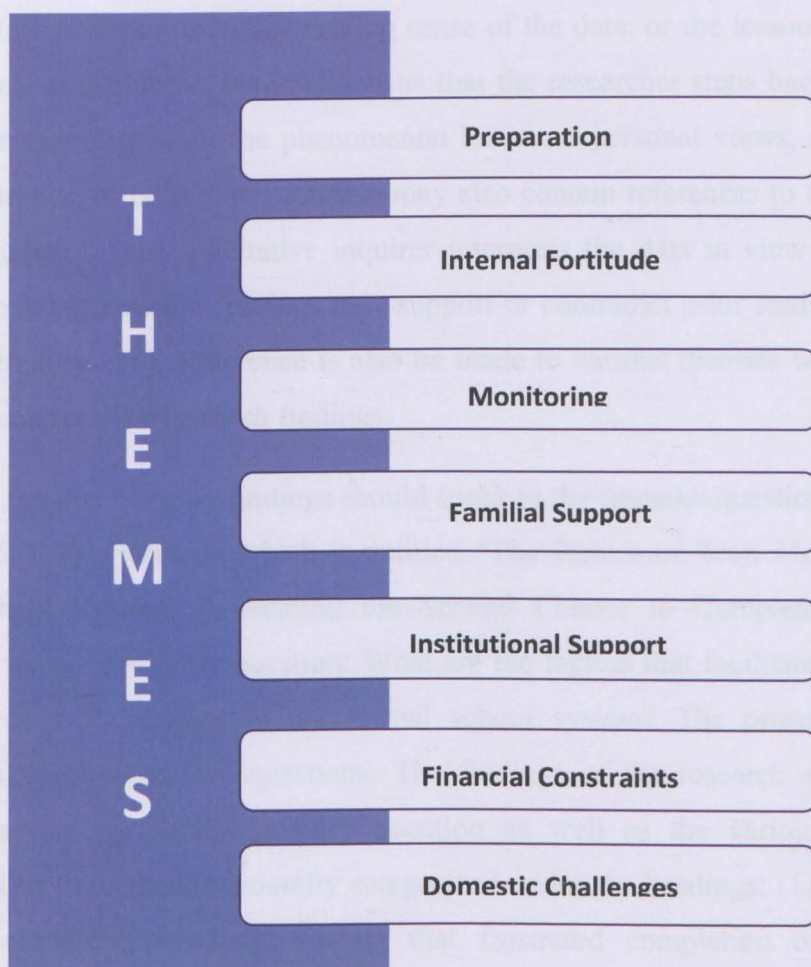
The principal from Success Gale High School confirmed that the teen mothers do have domestic challenges. "Yes, some of them do have problems; mainly in managing between school and the baby. In some instance, the girls tell me that their parents at home will care the baby while the girls are at school. But, when they get home, the baby is dumped on them, where the mothers tell the girls that it is their responsibility; they took it on so they must tek (take) the responsibility. We care for the baby in the days; you must care for it when you come home."

The Baby

For the teen mothers, having the baby or not having the baby was an issue. Those who did not have the baby said that this freed them to focus on their school work. It was Maud who said that she would have completed school if she did not have the baby. The parents of Elaine, Arlene, and Adassa assumed responsibility for the baby, thus freeing them to pay closer attention to their lessons. As Elaine said, "If I had the baby with me, it would have been more pressure on me since I would have had to take him to the Day Care then pick him up in the evenings and care for him while

attending to my lessons.” Tiffany did not have the responsibility of her baby which had died in her uterus. She said, “If I had the baby it would have added more pressure on me to go back to school.”

Figure 13: Summary of the Themes



The themes, as summarized in this figure, are presented in accordance with the discussion in this section, and not in terms of priority or significance.

Factors that facilitated completion

Preparation to return. The research found that the teen mothers' completion of their secondary education could be attributed to the extent in which they were prepared to return to the formal school system. The extent of this preparation that the teen mothers enjoyed, presented by way of the academic instructions, the counselling that

CHAPTER V

Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of my research. “The primary form for representing and reporting findings in qualitative research is a narrative discussion ... in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis” (Creswell, 2008, p. 262). A vital part of the presentation includes interpretation of the findings of my research. “Interpretation involves making sense of the data, or the lessons learned ... Interpretation in qualitative research means that the researcher steps back and forms some larger meaning about the phenomenon based on personal views, comparisons with past studies, or both. Interpretation may also contain references to the literature and past studies ... the qualitative inquirer interprets the data in view of this past research, showing how the findings may support or contradict prior studies, or both” (Creswell 2008, p.265). Reference is also be made to various theories which will be used to substantiate the research findings.

It is agreed that the research findings should speak to the research questions (Creswell 2008, p. 265). My research which is entitled “The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System: Redeeming the Second Chance to Complete Secondary Education” asked a primary question: What are the factors that facilitate or frustrate the return of teen mothers to the formal school system? The primary question generated several secondary questions. The findings of the research are therefore presented as answer to the primary question as well as the various secondary questions. The findings are generally categorized under the headings: (1) factors that facilitated completion and (2) factors that frustrated completion of secondary education for the teen mothers.

Factors that facilitated completion

Preparation to return. The research found that the teen mothers’ completion of their secondary education could be attributed to the extent to which they were prepared to return to the formal school system. The extent of this preparation that the teen mothers enjoyed presented by way of the academic instructions, the counselling that

they received while attending The Centre, and their being placed on a contraceptive method. Academic instructions helped to keep their minds occupied and abreast of the regular subjects that they would have been doing in school. This way, it was not difficult for them to continue where they left off once they were returned to school.

The topics covered in the counselling sessions also enabled the process of preparation which facilitated completion. The topic 'Attending the Initial Interview' is pertinent to the teen mothers' preparation for return to the formal school system since they are interviewed prior to admission and, to an extent, are accepted on the basis of a successful interview. Topics such as: 'Interpersonal Relationships', 'Dealing with Conflicts' and 'Decision Making' would have helped them when they returned to school and were faced with challenges particularly from their peers, some of whom would be unkind to them. The topic 'Personal Hygiene would help them to cope with matters such as breast leaks that would call undue attention to their personal lives. The topic 'Contraceptive Use and Method' would have helped them to observe healthy and helpful contraceptive practices in their attempt to delay a second pregnancy and therefore complete their secondary education. The topic 'Establishing Personal Goals' would help them to keep focussed on their career paths; several teen mothers made reference to this sense of focus with which they were endowed.

It was also found that the counselling process helped the teen mothers develop a sense of responsibility for their education as they returned to school. This sense of responsibility facilitated the process of completion where, for example, the inculcation of adequate time management skills helped them to successfully balance between the attending and demanding roles of being adolescent, student, and mother. As mother, they would be expected to attend to the needs of their child. As student, they would be expected to attend to the demands of school. As an adolescent, they also were expected to contend with and successfully manoeuvre certain developmental milestones. Proper time management would have been critical to their success at completing secondary school.

Internal fortitude. I found, through my research, that completion was facilitated by the internal fortitude of the teen mothers. First for mention is the teen mothers' sense of ambition that played an integral role in their completion. It was found that all of the teen mothers wanted to have returned to school. They all recognized the value of

completing their secondary level education; they wanted to sit their school leaving examinations. Most of the teen mothers were from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. They recognized that completion was their 'ticket to a better life'. Some of the girls spoke of the deep desire not to continue to live like others in their communities or even like their mothers who followed a particular lifestyle. Evans (1999, p.11) explains this desire to 'escape' when she says, "... where one's options for advancement are limited, one will look to education for upward mobility. The female who thinks that she is devalued by that society ... will place great importance on education and may strive to succeed at all costs."

The teen mothers also demonstrated a spirit of resilience that made them 'bounce back' from the adversity that assailed them. As it were, their focus was not on the problem, but on the solution. These girls simply found a way to complete their education. The resilience theory purports that humankind is innately resilient. They have "the ability to function effectively in the face of adversity and to 'bounce back' following significant stress" (Sarason 2001, p.22).

Self efficacy is another of the inner strengths that resided in the teen mothers. Arlene actually said, "You have to believe in yourself ... I knew that I had potential." The self efficacy theory points to "feelings of competency; individuals' belief in their abilities to exert control over their lives" (Elliott, Kratochwill, Littlefield-Cook and Travers 2000, p. 222 citing work done by Bandura 1997).

Teen mothers who completed, were particularly self motivated. These girls had a strong desire to return to school and complete their secondary education. Of course, they had challenges but they were unstoppable. With reference to the Motivation Theory, Elliot *et al* (2000, p.332) says, "Motivation is defined as an internal state that arouses us to action, pushes us in particular directions, and keeps us engaged in certain activities." Additionally, "Motivation may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic or internally oriented motivation means that students themselves demonstrate the desire to learn without the need for external inducements" (Elliot et al 2000, p.332).

Completion was also facilitated where girls took the initiative to advance their wellbeing. These girls were not waiting to be helped; they helped themselves. They

were not expecting hand outs; they used what was in their own hands. They were not waiting to be told what to do; they did what they had to do, and so they completed.

The majority of the teen mothers experienced challenges of varying nature. Those girls who were equipped with adequate coping skills were found to have completed their secondary education. "Coping refers to how people deal with difficulties and attempt to overcome them. A number of general skills are useful in handling stressful situations. These include thinking constructively, dealing with problems as they arise, behaving flexibly, and providing feedback to oneself about which tactics work in a given situation and which do not" (Sarason 2002, p.23).

My research also found that girls who completed had a positive outlook on life. It was Adassa who said, "There were financial problems ... but there would be a way out." Elaine said, "I think that everything that happens to me is God's plan and so things will all work out for me." It was the positive appraisal of their situations that helped these girls hurdle their challenges. Cognitive-behavioural theorists advocate that "... cognitive appraisals of events can affect the response to those events" (Dobson and Dozois 2001, p.5).

Monitoring process. I also found that completion was facilitated by the monitoring that the teen mothers received from the counsellors employed at The Centre. With this monitoring process, the girls were visited at school or at home. Discussions were had with the teen mothers themselves, with their parents or with their school counsellor. With the monitoring process the counsellors were actually walking beside the teen mothers, guiding them to completion; coaching them along as it were; offering encouragement and support when and where needed. What was revealing was the message of support that these visits conveyed to the girls and their parents. One teen mother said that she would have dropped out were it not for the monitoring she received. The Community-cultural theorists advocate "a natural helping network" which they say, "... may include extended family members, people in the neighbourhood, spiritual advisors, governmental officials, coaches working with youths and many other people" (Ivey *et al* 2007, p. 387).

Monitoring of the teen mothers finds resonance with a study which was conducted by Barnett *et al* (2007, p. 9,10) which compared the outcome of teen mothers who

received home visits with a control group of teen mothers who did not. This study found that “Our paraprofessional home-visiting program significantly improved adolescent mothers’ parenting attitudes and beliefs and increased school continuation ... our program significantly influenced school reentry and graduation.” Barnett’s study had high praises for the effect that support had for the teen mothers. Similarly, those teen mothers who were monitored through home visits had high praises for the process.

Familial support. The research also found that completion was facilitated by familial support. The girl’s family is one of the stakeholders in her return to the formal school system. Several of the parents recognized the value of their support to the wellbeing of their daughters and did all that they could to offer support. These were the parents who were willing to put the past behind them; to look beyond the disappointment that the pregnancy caused them; to look past the mistake that their daughters made and to look forward to maximizing the second chance that their daughters had to complete their secondary education. These were the parents who offered support by way of ensuring that educational expenses were paid; that the girls were not burdened with the responsibility of caring for the baby when lessons should be attended to and assignments should be completed. As most of the teen mothers shared, they were appreciative of the times when they were helped with the baby so that they could pay attention to their lessons. They did not construe this as irresponsibility or as abdication of their parental responsibility, but as a means to the end of assisting them to complete their secondary education.

The familial support that was afforded some of the teen mothers is supported by writers such as Dearing, Simpkins, Kreider, and Weis (2006) and Berkowitz and Bier (2005) who are of the view that parental support at home play a significant role in facilitating academic attainment (see discussion on pages 32-33). The facilitating home environment also bespeaks the principles of cultural capital which purports that “... scholastic yield of the educational qualification depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family” (Bourdieu 2006, p.107).

Familial support also came by way of encouragement. Teen mothers were encouraged to complete by the confidence that significant others expressed in their ability to succeed. Elliot *et al* (2000, p. 222 citing Schuak, 1989) explain that “Social cognitive

learning results from the interactions among behaviour, environmental variables, cognitive processing, and personal factors. These factors, especially the environment (in the form of modelling or the feedback we get from others), influence our feelings of competency on a particular task or skill.”

It is of interest too, that support also came from members of the extended family. The immediate family was not always in a position to offer needed support. However, other family members: a grandparent, an uncle, the baby father, also seized the opportunity to invest their support in this young mother’s education. Arlene’s baby father willingly took the child to live with him and relieved Arlene of that responsibility as she returned to school. She completed. Elizabeth’s baby was also sent to live with its paternal grandparents. She was thus relieved of this responsibility; she also completed.

Institutional support. Another finding of my research is that completion was facilitated by the institutional support that the teen mothers received from the schools at which they were placed. At Millennium High School, for example, special considerations for lateness were made where the teen mothers had to take their babies to the day care prior to attending school; this was facilitating. The principal of Must Pass High said that she stood as ‘go-between’ for the teen mothers since there were those “teachers who did not understand.” This was facilitating.

For the most part, the schools made it a point of duty to accord a sense of privacy to the teen mothers. To this end, their identities were kept from teachers and students. Only in cases where it was critically important were some teachers told that a particular girl was a teen mother. At Millennium High, for example, only form teachers were told since they had to be in the know in cases where permission of lateness was granted. From the interviews I had with the teen mothers, it was apparent that some of them would have been uncomfortable were it generally known that they had babies.

The research identified a facilitating networking that existed between The Centre and the schools and this networking facilitated the teen mothers’ completion. The majority of the schools said that they maintained close relationships with The Centre, knew when the counsellors were coming to visit the teen mothers, and facilitated the

process. The counsellor at Millennium High said that the school went to the extent of making the counsellor's office available to the WCJF staff to counsel with the teen mothers when it was necessary. This kind of networking finds support in the Social Capital Theory which points to "... the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships or mutual acquaintance and recognition ... which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 2006, pp.105-118).

Girls who completed were sustained by an environment that formed a facilitating hedge around them. They benefitted from the preparation and monitoring afforded by The Centre; they were sustained by their own inner strength and will; they were buoyed by the support of their immediate and extended family; they were assisted by the contributions made by the schools that they attended; and so they completed. These girls stood out in sharp contrast to those who did not complete. The factors that were found to have frustrated completion will therefore now be presented.

Factors that frustrated completion

My research found some factors that frustrated the process of completion for some of the teen mothers. By frustration is meant that the process of completion was hindered, threatened, or completely aborted, resulting in the teen mothers' dropping out. The factors that frustrated completion included: inadequate preparation, inadequate monitoring, inadequate coping skills, little or no familial support, financial constraints, lack of institutional support, insurmountable domestic challenges, a second pregnancy, and disparity with the importance placed on the pre-placement and post-placement Programme activities.

Inadequate preparation. My research found that completion was frustrated by inadequate preparation of the teen mothers to return to school. Several of the teen mothers reported having had problems when they returned to school but they did not return to The Centre for help. As they stated, they did not know that they could have returned for help. How do we account for these responses, except to say that there

were deficiencies in the process by which the teen mothers were prepared to return to school through the counselling component of the Programme? Should they not have been told that they continue to be the responsibility of the Programme after they have returned to school? Should they all not have known that they could have returned to The Centre to discuss their problems, not just their joys? If not, whither the need for the two-year monitoring of the teen mothers after they returned to school?

As a matter of policy, The Centre's counselling programme ensures that the teen mothers receive and are comfortable with a contraceptive method before they return to school; this, so as to delay a second pregnancy. My research however found that there were those teen mothers who actually returned to school without a method. They simply escaped the attention of the counsellors. The teen mothers may be careful to observe responsible sexual practices; they may be mindful to negotiate protected sex and so prevent a second pregnancy. But 'accidents' do happen. The Reproductive Health Survey: Jamaica 2008 (STATIN 2010) reported some adolescents as having said that they did not use a contraceptive method at the time of intercourse because they did not plan to have sex at the time of the encounter. It is in anticipation for times like these that The Centre is careful to ensure that the girls are on a method before they return to school. A second pregnancy must be delayed if the girl is to complete. How then, were some teen mothers returned without a method?

My research found some shortcomings with the counselling syllabus which could have contributed directly or indirectly to the factors that frustrated completion. In the first place, the unofficial presentation of the document was noticeable. I earlier described the lack in the physical layout of the syllabus. What was found was that the lack in the physical presentation of the document equalled the lack in other areas of the syllabus: content, sequence, depth, and clarity.

The syllabus was lacking in content. Although the document included a wide range of topics, it did not lend itself to issues pertaining to the return to school per se. It was for this reason that the centre manager reported that she had developed a supplemental section to the syllabus. Even with the supplement to the syllabus, there was still lack in terms of issues relevant to the return to school. I learnt from the interviews conducted with the teen mothers, that the matter of how to balance their roles of parent and student was a major concern. This was not reflected in the content of the

syllabus. The content did not also include topics like coping skills, in which some girls who dropped out seemed to have been deficient.

Examination of the document revealed that there was no noticeable particular sequence to the topics provided in the document. The topic 'Human Growth and Development' was followed by the topic 'Human Reproduction'. Of course, this might be seen to be 'picking at splinters'. But, to my mind, splinters have a way of creating disequilibrium.

Judging by the content outline of the curriculum, there was insubstantial depth in some of the topics; this could contribute to the factors that frustrated completion. Take, for instance, the general topic, 'Contraceptive Methods and Counselling'. The subtopics excluded the matter of what to do (1) if problems developed with the method (2) how to treat with the interim period between changing methods and (3) how to treat with a failed method. These subtopics may very well be treated with by the counsellors in the counselling sessions. However, this is conjecture; the subtopics may very well not be treated with in the counselling sessions!

The counselling syllabus was lacking in clarity. There was a particular vagueness about the topics. This placed the onus of interpretation on the individual counsellors. What, for example should be understood by 'Anxiety and Sex', especially in the absence of specific objectives? Of course the counsellors are trained and therefore have the ability to execute their duties with competence and professionalism. However, it cannot be that so much room is left for subjective application and interpretation; not when the girls are to be adequately prepared to be returned to school in the counselling sessions.

Lack of coping skills. The research found that the process of completion was frustrated where the teen mothers did not have the skills with which to cope with some of their situations. I highlight this finding against the background that most all the teen mothers were faced with distressing circumstances. Yet, some found a way to hurdle their challenges. Others just did not seem to have the skills needed to cope. Others just did not find it within them to explore and exploit the available resources. Maud, for example, admitted that her Member of Parliament did offer assistance to needy students; Yet, she constantly said, "I did not have anyone to help me." The

Attribution Theory explains that it is sometimes easier to cast blame than to take responsibility for our own failures (Sue, Sue and Sue 1997, p. 339). Humanistic Theories purport that “the individual is ultimately responsible for what he or she becomes in this life” (Sue *et al* 1997, p. 48).

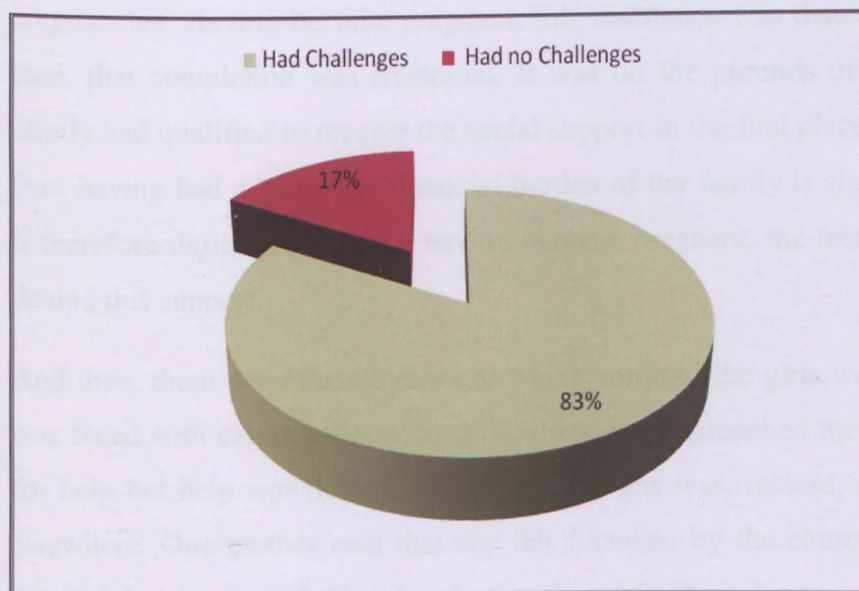
Inadequate monitoring. Another research finding is that completion was frustrated by inadequate monitoring of the teen mothers as they returned to school. In fact, some of the teen mothers were not monitored at all! With the lack of monitoring, the challenges that confronted the teen mothers were not brought to the attention of the counsellors. Hence, no remedial action could have been taken and, in instances, these girls dropped out. Tiffany’s mother said, “They did not visit; but I did want them to visit.” The only form of support that some of the girls receive comes from The Centre. If this fails them, they will fail.

Inadequate Familial support. The research found that completion was frustrated by inadequate or the lack of familial support. There were those girls whose parents abdicated their parental responsibility of providing shelter for them. In these cases, the girls had to find alternate living arrangements which were often not ideal. Two of the girls, Valerie and Kadeen, were forced to live with their baby fathers; an arrangement that was less than favourable and served as a frustrating factor. In some instances, parents offered little or no assistance with child care. These girls had to offer full support to their babies before they went to school and on returning from school. These girls admitted that it was difficult for them to juggle between being parent and pupil. Oftentimes, completing assignments proved difficult; quite often school assignments were ignored. Attending school with regularity was also challenged. This situation was compounded for girls like Nelly who had a baby who needed specialized care, or, Patsy who had to take the child to the doctor, thus missing school some days.

Financial constraints. My research found that completion was frustrated by financial constraints. This seemed to have been a factor that frustrated completion for the majority of the girls. As figure 14 on page 159 indicates, ten (83%) of the teen mothers revealed that they experienced financial constraints when they returned to school. It was challenging for these girls to finance the various school expenses: auxiliary and examination fees; uniforms; books; meals; transportation. Stromquist

(2006, p.969) notes that, "Public education at primary and secondary levels, not being free beyond tuition and the provision of some textbooks, represents high expenditure for low-income families." In addition to school expenses, the teen mothers were faced with expenses for their babies. One of the girls in fact said that it was difficult to divide the little money that she had between the baby and her school expenses.

Figure 14: Comparison between Teen Mothers who Experienced Financial Constraints with Those who did not Experience Financial Constraints



Domestic challenges. Another finding of my research is that completion was frustrated where teen mothers were confronted with insurmountable domestic challenges of varying nature. Nelly's baby had a physical disability and needed to be taken to the hospital on a regular basis. The father of the child was very unsupportive and had to be taken to the court for lack of child support. Valerie and Kadeen lived with uncaring and abusive baby fathers. Kelly had little or no food and had to turn to practices of which she seemed ashamed in order to survive. Maud's mother was mentally unstable; it was her grandmother with whom she eventually went to live. With these challenges, regular attendance at school was impaired. While other students attended to and grappled with academic concepts, these girls were distracted by and wrestled with unwieldy domestic matters that frustrated completion. As

Woods (1995, p. 1) point out, "... the issues of dropping out and dropout prevention cannot be separated from issues affecting our total economic and social structure. These issues include: poverty, unemployment, the role of family, social values ... child abuse and drug abuse."

Inadequate Institutional support. The research found that the lack of institutional support also served as a factor that frustrated completion. There were two institutions that might have offered support to some of the teen mothers but did not. The first for mention is the PATH Programme⁷ which is a financial support system through which some of the girls received financial assistance while they attended school prior to their pregnancies. Having become pregnant, this assistance was discontinued. No wonder then, that completion was frustrated. It was on the grounds of need that the girl's family had qualified to receive the social support in the first place. It stands to reason that, having had a baby, the financial burden of the family is significantly increased. It therefore defies reason that, having become pregnant, the teen mothers should be denied this support.

And then, there were the churches at which some of the girls were members. Maud was faced with extreme financial difficulties and approached the church she attended for help but help was denied. Maud said that she was, instead, told to seek the help elsewhere. One mother said that she felt forsaken by the church on account of her daughter's pregnancy.⁸ The church, the place of refuge, became the place of refusal; this frustrated completion.

Second pregnancy. A second pregnancy was another factor that frustrated completion. Although this was not pervasive, (only one of the participants) it is none-the-less a contributing factor that should not be overlooked. It is probable that a contraceptive method will fail a teen mother. It is possible that she will develop discomfort or difficulties with the method of choice. It is probable that she will become pregnant a second time and so drop out of school a second time.

⁷ The PATH is a Government funded facility by which families are given financial assistance for education and health. Continued benefit pivots on the student's attendance at school. The benefit is therefore discontinued for teen mothers who are registered as drop outs of the school system.

⁸ Some churches are not supportive of pregnancies outside of marriage and would therefore not be supportive of a teen mother.

One of my research questions asked: “What are the systemic factors that facilitate or frustrate the complete of secondary education for teen mothers?” In a subtle way, my research found that there was at least one systemic factor that frustrated completion. It presented in what I have chosen to describe as being a disparity between what I will call the pre-placement intervention and the post-placement intervention of the Programme.

Disparity between pre-placement and post-placement Programme activities. My finding was that there was clear disparity between the attention given to the pre-placement intervention of the Programme as against that given to the post-placement intervention of the Programme.⁹ The disparity was evident in the gaps which were seen in: (1) the records that were kept at The Centre: the placement records, and the files of the teen mothers; and (2) the monitoring process.

The records. The names of all the girls who were returned to school were contained in the placement book. This is a positive indication of the care accorded the pre-placement component of the Programme. However, whereas the records indicated that some of the girls had completed or had dropped out, there was no indication as to the status of one hundred and forty-two of the girls! This, to my mind, was indication of the disparity that obtained between the pre-placement and the post-placement components of the Programme. Of course, it could be reasoned that this was merely a lapse in the recording process. But, even that line of reasoning would substantiate the point about the disparity between the two components of the Programme.

The files of the teen mothers also bore evidence of the disparity between the pre and post-placement components of the intervention. In the first place, attention was drawn to the weight of the notes in the girls’ files. It was noticed that pre-placement notes in the files of the teen mothers were fulsome and detailed; post-placement notes in the files of the teen mothers were immaterial and inconsequential. In most of the files, there was an abundance of pre-placement notes pointing to the individual counselling that the girls received as solutions were sought for presenting situations. However, there was very little, if any, post-placement notes in the said files after the girls

⁹ The Programme intervention is regarded in terms of a single component. I am therefore ascribing two components to the Programme intervention for the purposes of my research.

returned to school; not even to say whether they assumed the placement and were or were not attending.

The presence of the pre-placement notes and the lack of post-placement notes is further revelation of the disparity between the quality of care that the teen mothers received pre-placement as against the quality of care that they received post-placement. The content of the pre-placement notes also underscored the fact that the girls were given better quality of care during the pre-placement component of the intervention as against during the post-placement component of the intervention. Pre-placement notes revealed that efforts were made to foster regular attendance at The Centre. In cases of extreme financial difficulties, the teen mothers were assisted with bus fares so as to encourage attendance. Those who were at risk of dropping out were visited and encouraged to continue the Programme. This same measure of diligence was however not continued when the girls returned to school, some of whom were not adequately assisted even in cases of dire need.

Monitoring. The disparity between the pre and post-placement interventions was also seen in the lack of monitoring of some of the teen mothers. Reports from some of the schools indicated that post-placement contact was not made with some of the teen mothers by the counsellors from The Centre. There were also parents and girls who said that they were not visited at school. Some said that they were visited at school but not at home; others said they were visited neither at home nor at school. It could be argued that the teen mothers were visited at home, instead of at school. Or, that, they were visited at school but not at home. Or, that the visit was done but was not recorded. Irrespective of the explanation, it is clear that there was a disparity between how the girls were treated prior to their placement as against when they returned to school.

There is the sense in which visiting at home and visiting at school offer different perspectives into the status and progress of the teen mother who is returned to school; both should therefore be done in an effort to increase the girls' chance of completing. My contention, therefore, is that post-placement intervention should be characterized by 'visible' presence of the counsellors from The Centre in the schools and in the homes.

Altogether, I found that the monitoring process was: unsystematic in its approach; it was lacking in seriousness and sensitivity. It was unsystematic in the sense that not all of the teen mothers were monitored: not at home; not at school. Further, the teen mothers did not all receive the same extent or quality of monitoring. Of course, needs would have been different. But there should have been a standard manner in which the process was executed.

The frequency of the visits was also unsystematic. Some teen mothers were visited once after placement. It may be argued that the frequency could be determined by the need. And so there was no need to frequently visit a teen mother who was not faced with a problem of a prolonged nature. It cannot however be denied that a teen mother who did not have a problem today, might have been presented with a problem tomorrow. The development of a new problem will only be brought to attention through frequency of visits. A systematic approach to the visits might serve to mitigate these issues.

There was no established period of time after the placement by which the teen mothers were visited. Further, the monitoring seemed to have been done at odd intervals: one month after the placement; two months after the placement. In one case, the teen mother was visited at school one year after she was placed. She was not monitored again although she had a whole year left in school.

Judging by the absence of pertinent records, several of the teen mothers were not monitored. This can only be interpreted to mean that the process was lacking in a sense of seriousness. The Centre could not have been serious about its promise to monitor all of the teen mothers who were returned to school; not when some were not monitored. The placement record bears a listing of the names of all the girls who were placed, as well as the school and the grades in which they were placed. The records also make allowance for remarks to be made about the place and date of a visit, and of the status of the respective teen mothers. However, in some instances, no remarks were made beside some of the names. Some of the teen mothers and their parents also revealed that they were not visited. Kelly's experience was that, "they did not do any home visits when I was in High School." Tiffany's mother said, "They did not visit. But I did want them to visit" (They had not visited; but I wanted them to have visited).

Lack of seriousness was also evident in the case where the teen mother dropped out, but the notes in her files indicated that she was, “attending and doing well.” Seriousness was lacking where it was found that the monitoring process often was content to liaise with the counsellors who then supplied second hand information about the teen mothers. This was however inadequate since, quite often, the school counsellors themselves did not supply adequate or detailed information on the teen mothers.

Although some of the teen mothers were visited, the process was not sensitive to their challenges and so these challenges were not identified, let alone addressed. Patient’s story was that, “After I was placed in school, they called to say they wanted to see whether I was going to school. I told them I did not take up the placement because of the finances, but they did not do anything about it.” The counsellors seemed content to know that the girls were “attending and doing well”; a common comment made in some of the files. Care was not always taken to adequately assess the girl’s situation and so determine the extent of her problems, joys, and sorrows. As one teen mother put it, “they did not ask and I did not tell.”

My research found several factors that frustrated completion: Inadequate preparation, inadequate coping skills; inadequate post-placement monitoring; little or no familial support; financial constraints; insurmountable domestic challenges; a second pregnancy; systematic shortcomings. The number of factors that frustrated completion exceeded the number of factors that facilitated completion. It is little wonder then, that Chevannes (1996) found that that 46% of teen mothers who are returned to school drop out a second time. Both the findings surrounding factors that facilitate and frustrate completion pointed to both person and practice. A summary of the research findings is presented in Table 6 on the following page.

Table 6: Summary of Research Findings

<i>Factors that Facilitate Completion</i>	<i>Factors that Frustrate Completion</i>
Preparation	Inadequate preparation
Internal fortitude	Inadequate coping skills
Monitoring	Inadequate post-placement monitoring
Familial support	Little or no familial support
Institutional support	Financial constraints
	Limited or no institutional support
	Insurmountable domestic challenges
	A second pregnancy
	Disparity between the pre-placement and post placement components of the Programme intervention

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter first presents a review of the research process. Recommendations based on the research findings are then presented; these are followed by my conclusions, final words, and notes to the reader.

Review

My research primarily focussed attention on the phenomenon of teen motherhood in Jamaica. The literature review pointed to the fact that adolescents the world over, are in fact sexually active. There is a preponderance of early sexual initiation, and adolescents do in fact become pregnant. Adolescents in Jamaica are no exception. The Jamaican reality though, is that adolescent girls who become pregnant, are not allowed to remain in school. Pregnancy is therefore one of the reasons for school dropout in Jamaica. Like the rest of the world, however, the GOJ embraces the worth of educating girls, and so provisions have been made for teen mothers to continue their education beyond a pregnancy. Whereas not all of these girls complete their secondary education, my research sought to answer the main question, 'What are the factors that facilitate or frustrate the completion of secondary education for teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system?' The secondary research questions focussed on the preparation of the teen mothers to return to school, the extent to which they were monitored as they returned, and the roles played by the various stakeholders in the process of completion.

My project embraced the qualitative research methodology and employed the use of interviews and document analysis as the primary data gathering tools. Comparatively, interviews were conducted with two sets of teen mothers: those who completed and those who did not complete their secondary education. Interviews were also conducted with the parents of the teen mothers, and the school principals and or counsellors from the schools at which the teen mothers were placed, primarily to corroborate the stories told by the teen mothers.

Inductively, my research found that completion was facilitated by: preparation to return to school, the internal fortitude of the teen mothers, post-placement monitoring, familial support, and institutional support. On the other hand, my research found that completion was frustrated by: inadequate preparation, inadequate coping skills, inadequate monitoring; little or no familial support, little or no institutional support; financial constraints; domestic challenges, and a second pregnancy. In a general sense, my research also found that there was disparity between the pre-placement and post-placement activities of the Programme intervention. In the glaring light of my research findings, I will proceed next to make some conclusions.

Conclusion

It is probable that returning to school will be a challenging experience for teen mothers who have to balance between being a student and being a mother. It is however possible for them to complete. Adequate preparation by the counselling programme will prove facilitative. The counselling process must expose and challenge the spirit of complacency. The counselling process must help the teen mothers to dispense with thinking that impedes their progress. The counselling process must encourage the teen mothers to embrace a positive outlook on life. Teen mothers should be helped to acquire a spirit of discipline and determination; of positivity and perseverance; of tolerance and tenacity; they must be empowered to harness their inner strength and find the will to complete.

It is the desire of the majority, if not all, of the teen mothers to continue and complete their secondary education. Several mishaps may occur between the placement and the actual return to school. Hence, beyond question, the post-placement monitoring process must be strategic and systematic. Some of the teen mothers are proud; too proud to admit that they are faced with difficulties; too proud to openly share the difficulty with which they are faced. It is therefore not enough to visit a teen mother who was returned to school, or have the teen mother visit The Centre without ensuring her welfare and well being.

Completion of secondary education will be dependent on the multi-faceted role played by each stakeholder. As much as they are able, parents as well as members of

the extended family should provide their daughters with a supportive environment that fosters completion. Relieving the teen mothers of the responsibility of caring for the baby is not to encourage a sense of irresponsibility; it is to mitigate frustration and facilitate completion.

The school plays a critical and pivotal role in determining whether the teen mothers complete their secondary education. Schools should play a facilitating role in the lives of the teen mothers. Of course, teen mothers should not be made to feel that they are 'a special kind'. They should be treated like the average student. However, I want to advance the practice of some schools that are discretionary to those teen mothers who are burdened with added responsibilities of child care. This is not to promote indiscipline; it is, instead, to facilitate completion of secondary education for teen mothers.

Returning to school can prove financially challenging for the teen mothers. Besides the financial requirements of the schools that confront the teen mothers, there are other expenses like those required by their babies. Whither should these teen mothers source the funds with which to finance their secondary education? Who is to help these teen mothers financially as they return to school? Here then, is an opportunity for corporate society to make an investment in a 'product' that will yield untold dividends.

Several of the teen mothers were members of churches before their pregnancy. Even if premarital pregnancy runs counter to religious principles and practices, it behoves the church to play a redemptive role and commit to provide a teen mother with financial, emotional, and social support which should help her to redeem her second chance to complete her secondary education.

It is the Government of Jamaica that funds the Programme that it mandated to provide continued education for teen mothers. However, continued education goes beyond the pre-placement intervention of the Programme. In fact, education is more likely to be continued, if the teen mothers complete their secondary education. It cannot therefore be that teen mothers are successfully brought through the pre-placement intervention, are strategically returned to the formal school system, but are carelessly left to "sink or swim". That could certainly not be construed as frugal spending of the country's

resources. It seems to me, therefore, that the post-placement component has to be construed as an equally important aspect of the overall Programme intervention. Then will the education of our girls be guaranteed. Then will the education of the next generation be guaranteed. Then will the nation be on its way to eradicating poverty. Then will the nation be on the way to becoming “the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business ...” (Planning Institute of Jamaica 2010).

My husband once told me of the time when, as a boy, his mother sent him to the dentist to mend a broken tooth. He promptly left the dentist’s office after receiving the local anaesthetics, as he innocently thought that the procedure was done. I am of the view that, to bring the teen mothers successfully through what I have called the pre-placement aspect of the WCJF’s Programme intervention, but pay scant regard to what I have called the post-placement aspect of the intervention, is like leaving the dentist’s office prematurely before the job is done. And so, the post-placement aspect of the Programme intervention must be treated with the same measure of importance and diligence as the pre-placement intervention. Where the post-placement process is recognized as an equally important aspect of the Programme intervention, teen mothers, returned to the formal school system, would know that they have not ‘exited’ the Programme by virtue of their placement. Teen mothers would know that the WCJF stands ready to assist them in every way while they are in school.

Where the post-placement process is treated with the measure of care and concern as is accorded to the pre-placement aspect of the intervention, adequate attention will be given to the process whereby the teen mothers are monitored when they are returned to the formal school system. Counsellors will be aware that some teen mothers are faced with frustrating situations, and steps will be taken towards remediation.

Where the post-placement Programme intervention is equalled to the pre-placement Programme intervention, care will be taken to ensure that the placement records are adequately kept and account is given for every teen mother who is returned to the formal school system.

If secondary school completion is critical to the employment potential of the teen mothers, then their return to the formal school system cannot be left to chance. It must be systematic and strategic. It must be decisively calculated. All the factors that

frustrate completion must be unearthed and mitigated. By the same token, the factors that facilitate completion must be identified and highlighted. It is for these reasons that I make the following recommendations in the next section.

Recommendations

The recommendations that I now proffer are grounded in the findings of my research. These recommendations call attention to the following elements of the research:

- The preparation of the teen mothers to return to school
- The post-placement monitoring of the teen mothers
- The stakeholders involved in the teen mothers' return to school
- The teen mothers themselves
- The overall perception of the Programme

Preparation of the teen mothers to return to school

Teen mothers must be adequately prepared to return to school. I therefore make two recommendations relative to the counselling syllabus which is used in the process of preparation.

1. I first recommend that the syllabus used by The Centre be reviewed and revised. (a) The services of a curriculum specialist should be retained to guide the review. (b) The revised document should carry a rationale which outlines the unique nature of the Programme and the specific needs of the Programme participants. (c) An overarching goal and specific objectives should be set for each topic. (d) The subtopics should be more pointed and pertinent to the teen mothers' return to school. (f) Each session should be accompanied by suggested methodology.
2. The second recommendation is that the revised curriculum should make provisions for the inclusion of additional topics, pertinent to the teen mothers' return to school: *coping skills; values and attitudes; setting priorities;* among others.

Post-Placement Monitoring

Monitoring of the teen mothers is critical to their completion, and necessitates at least three recommendations. I therefore recommend that:

1. The monitoring process should be guided by strategic objectives.
2. Counsellors should be held accountable for the achievement of these objectives.
3. Counsellors should systematically visit with the teen mothers both at their homes and at their schools.
4. The teen mothers should be required to visit The Centre at strategic periods: (a) during the first two weeks of school and (b) at the end of each term. The first visit will indicate that they assumed the placement. The second visit should be accompanied by the school report which will bear insightful comments.

Stakeholders

Each stakeholder has specific roles to play in ensuring completion. This set of recommendations is made relative to the roles played by the respective stakeholders.

Parents. It is recommended that the parents of the teen mothers consciously partner with their daughters in the process of completion.

1. At the very least, parents must display interest in their daughter's school life and work.
2. School meetings should be attended; reports should be collected and discussed both with teacher and daughter.
3. Sacrifices should be made so that school expenses are financed.
4. Parents should also seek to relieve the teen mothers of some of the pressures of caring for their baby. Let me not ignore the fact that some parents may not be in a position to offer the fullest support to their daughter. Where this is the

case, the additional resources of the members of the extended family must be harnessed to the benefit of the teen mother.

Churches. It is recommended that:

1. Churches seek to play a redemptive role in the lives of the teen mothers and commit to provide them with financial, emotional, and moral support.
2. Mentorship programmes could also be provided for respective teen mothers by their respective churches.

Schools. I am recommending that all schools play a more facilitating role in the lives of the teen mothers.

1. Where needed, teen mothers should be placed on the welfare programmes.¹⁰
2. Teen mothers should also be allowed time to attend to domestic matters¹¹ without penalty.
3. It is not always possible to keep the status of the teen mothers from the knowledge of the students and teachers. A deliberate education programme should be geared towards enlightening teachers and students about: (i) the sensitivities of teen motherhood; (ii) the negative impact of derogatory remarks; (iii) the rights of teen mothers to an education; (iv) the struggles that they encounter with their new status as parent and student; (v) the teen mothers own sense of ambition towards acquiring an education.
4. The MOE should consider the Millennium High School a model to be adopted by all secondary schools (see figure 15 on page 173).

¹⁰ Students on the school's welfare programme are often times berated as being poor. For this reason, some students, although in need, are unwilling to make their needs known.

¹¹ There is always the need for the babies to be taken for regular clinic visits or other medical services. Some parents are unable to assist in this regard. In some instances therefore, this becomes the sole responsibility of the teen mothers.

Figure 15: The Millennium High School Model

THE MILLENNIUM HIGH SCHOOL MODEL						
STRATEGY #1	STRATEGY #2	STRATEGY #3	STRATEGY #4	STRATEGY #5	STRATEGY #6	STRATEGY #7
Accepting teen mothers into the school as per 'regular' students	Concealing the identity and status of the teen mothers	Partnering with The Centre to strengthen the monitoring process	Fostering a climate of acceptance of teen mothers within the school	Facilitating individual counselling when and where needed	Offering assistance through the school's welfare programme	Allowing time to attend to welfare & health care needs of the babies

The Government. With regard to the GOJ, I am recommending that:

1. Budgetary allocation to the Programme must be increased so that the post-placement intervention is adequately funded. With this, travel to the homes and schools will be sufficiently reimbursed. The teen mothers' transportation costs to and from The Centre would also be reimbursed.
2. Girls who drop out of school because of a pregnancy should remain on the PATH Programme¹² for as long as they are enrolled in the Programme.
3. All teen mothers (unless they decline) should be registered with the PATH Programme as they return to school. With this, they will be given a monthly stipend with which to offset their school expenses.
4. I also to recommend that the GOJ aligns Section 31, paragraphs 2 & 3 of the Education Act with the education objectives of its "Vision 2030 Jamaica". As such, steps must be taken to ensure that all the schools seek

¹² School attendance is one of the requirements for continued benefit from the Programme. Compliance is monitored and ensured by officers who check school registers.

to facilitate completion of secondary education for teen mothers who are returned to the formal school system.

Corporate Society. I am recommending that the circle of stakeholders be widened to include corporate society. Their role could be that of providing temporary paid employment for teen mothers on weekends and in the vacation periods. Bursaries and scholarships could be given to most needy teen mothers; other areas of expenses could be sponsored.

The teen mothers

I make three recommendations relative to the teen mothers:

1. That they extend and expend their inner resources so as to complete.
2. That they seek help when and where needed. The Centre should be their first port of call. There are however several avenues within their communities to which they can turn for help.
3. That they endeavour to persevere despite the odds set against them.

The Overall Programme

There are three recommendations that I will make concerning the Programme on the whole:

1. That official recognition be given to what I have called the Programme's pre-placement intervention and its post-placement intervention (see figure 16 on page 175).
2. That both aspects of the Programme be treated with equal importance.
3. That the success of the Programme be also weighted by the extent to which the teen mothers complete their secondary education (see figure 17 on page 175).

Figure 16: Dual Components of the Programme

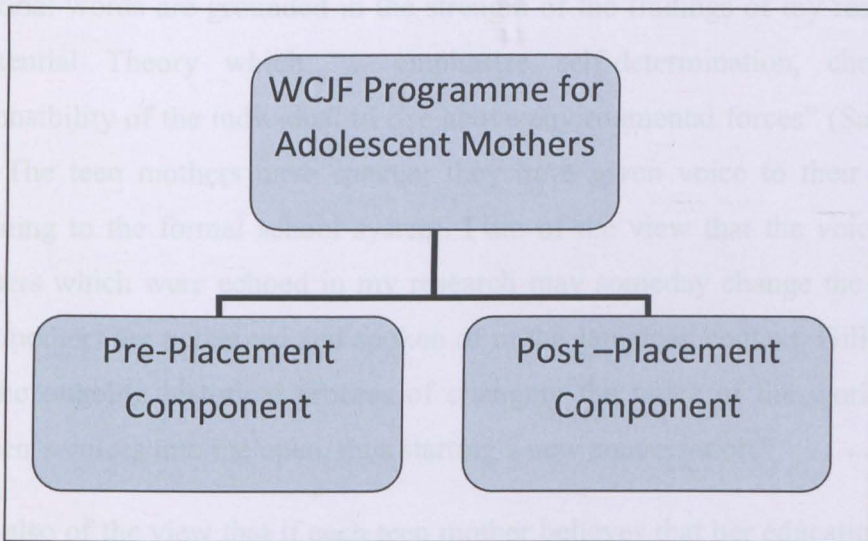
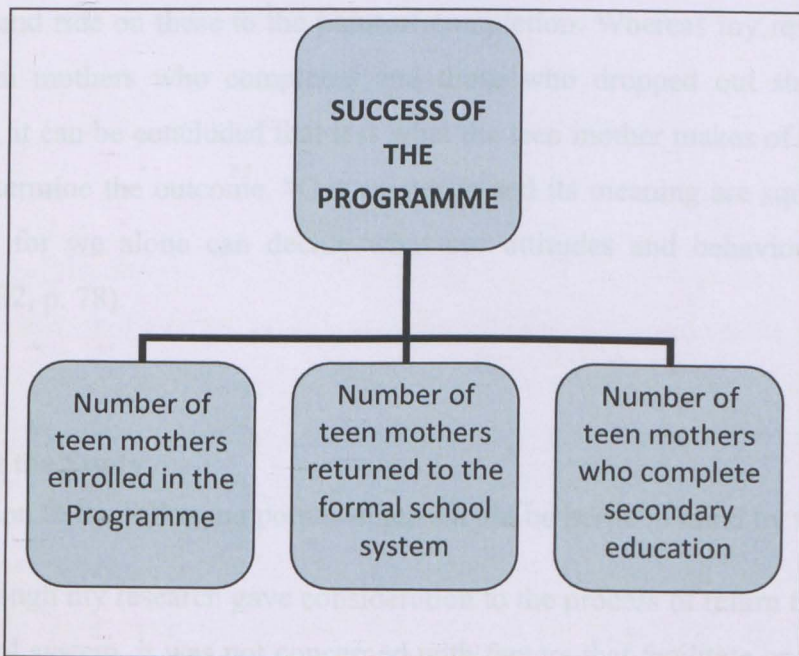


Figure 17: Suggested Indicators of the Programme's Success



Final words

My final words are grounded in the strength of the findings of my research, and the Existential Theory which "... emphasize self-determination, choice, and the responsibility of the individual to rise above environmental forces" (Sarason 2002, p. 78). The teen mothers have spoken; they have given voice to their experience of returning to the formal school system. I am of the view that the voices of the teen mothers which were echoed in my research may someday change the way in which teen mothers are perceived and spoken of in the Jamaican context. Gilligan speaks of "... the ongoing historical process of changing the voice of the world by bringing women's voices into the open, thus starting a new conversation."

I am also of the view that if each teen mother believes that her education is important for her advancement and for the advancement of her child, she must assume responsibility for her education; she must explore and exploit all available resources such as will ensure completion. There may be familial support, but she must embrace it if she is to complete. There may be institutional support; she must maximize it and therefore complete. There may be personal challenges, but she must call forth all her inner resources to surmount these and push herself toward the finish line. She may not have been adequately prepared by the Programme, but she must set personal goals for her life and ride on these to the point of completion. Whereas my research found that the teen mothers who completed and those who dropped out shared similar experiences, it can be concluded that it is what the teen mother makes of her situation that will determine the outcome. "Our existence and its meaning are squarely in our own hands, for we alone can decide what our attitudes and behaviours will be" (Sarason 2002, p. 78).

Notes about the Study

I call attention to the following points which should be borne in mind by the readers:

1. Although my research gave consideration to the process of return to the formal school system, it was not concerned with factors that facilitate or frustrate the process of return. Instead, my research concerned itself only with factors that facilitate or frustrate completion.

2. The placement programme of The Centre sees teen mothers placed in institutions of varying nature. However, my research concerned itself only with teen mothers who were placed in the secondary school system.

3. There are several teen mothers in Jamaica who do not access the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers. My research was only concerned with those teen mothers who were enrolled in the WCJF's Programme for teen mothers.

Areas for Further Research

Having conducted this research project, there were some areas of the WCJF Programme that seemed to beg for further investigation. I want to suggest that these areas be considered for research in the near future. An area that readily comes to mind is that of the number of teen mothers who complete their secondary level education. Chevannes (1996) found, in his research, that 46% of the teen mothers returned to school do not complete; but that was twelve years ago. What would be the percentage today? This question could be readily answered by research.

My research project did not set out to compare the activities of the main centres with those at the outreach sites. It however became apparent that there were some areas of dissimilarities and these should be examined with a view to strengthening the outreach sites.

Another area of the Programme that requires additional research is the actual process whereby the teen mothers are placed into the schools. Questions arise as to factors that might prejudice the acceptance of the one teen mother over the other. Questions also arise as to whether the process is facilitating or frustrating. Research would speak to this matter and, hopefully, further advance the work of the WCJF.

There is one other area that merits further research. The interviews conducted with the parents of the teen mothers revealed that several of them were themselves teen mothers and thereby, were school dropouts. The question to be answered is: What are the indicators that the daughter of a teen mother will herself become a teen mother?

Additional areas for further research were previously mentioned on page 11: the disparity between knowledge and practice that results in the phenomenon of teen pregnancy; the specific needs of teen mothers in school; how teen mothers are able to strike a balance between the various roles that they are forced to play; the sense of 'rebirth' that teen mothers experience and thereby improve their performance as they return to school. Since research seeks to improve practice, among other things, the WCJF will do well to seek to encourage further research into its Programme activities.

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APPENDIX 1

Reflectivity

Before putting down my 'pen', I summarily reflect on the process that engaged this research project. As I rehearse and traverse the project period, I conclude that there was something of life about the work in which I was engaged. My project seems to have been endued with properties akin to a biological pregnancy which involves conception, growth, development, and birthing.

I have come to the end of the project period, sensing that I have given birth to a product which was conceived in a counselling session I once had with a mother of a teen mother. Tears flowed freely as this mother, who was herself a teen mother in her day, told of the dream she had to have donned herself in her pink dress, with matching pink shoes, and watch her daughter march with the graduating class to receive her high school diploma. The mother was disappointed; devastated; despondent; for, as she said, that dream would not be; what with her daughter's pregnancy and consequent drop out from high school! It was then that the seed was conceived in my 'womb', for I knew then that I wanted to do doctoral research that would dry the tears of that, and countless other disappointed mothers of teen mothers. Of course, like a pregnancy, I was unsure then what the end product would have been. I only knew that I had conceived, and that it would have been.

A pregnancy grows on the mother. It brings her new experiences with every stage of its development. It requires her to spend and expend her resources to ensure a healthy pregnancy and child. The pregnancy requires the mother to dispense with old habits and embrace new ones. It is in the mother's best interest and that of the developing foetus that she consults with her care givers for expert advice that ensures the healthy development of the foetus and the health of the mother. It is of necessity that the mother makes sacrifices of person, and alterations of practice that advance the new life she carries. The mother's life is significantly changed by the pregnancy. There are places and activities that have to be shelved, especially as due date approaches. Nothing must interfere with the safe delivery of her long awaited baby.

Nine months is a long time to be carrying this thing; or so it seems. The period sometimes seems endless; it brings discomfort and tedium. The mother quite often

gets frustrated; she gets weary; she just wants it out; she just wants to have her life returned to normality. But it is a process; and it cannot be rushed. And so the mother perseveres; for she is determined to bring her pregnancy to term and to lay eyes on that which possessed her over the period. She endures with support and encouragement. To get that thing out before the requisite period would result in a premature birth with its accompanying challenges; or an aborted foetus with no apparent joy to the mother or those who also anticipated the birth.

A first time mother is consumed with relief, joy, a sense of accomplishment at the sight of that which consumed her for the period. The 'weight' is behind her. The pain is forgotten. It was a long hard process, but, who knows, she might even do it again!

Like an emerging pregnancy, my research project grew on me. What began as a mere desire to enter the world of the teen mothers and gain insight into their experience of returning to school soon multiplied; I soon experienced the process of what I will term literary mitosis and meiosis, and the 'life' that was enwombed in my mental faculties kicked with emergent life with the passing of each day.

Carrying this 'pregnancy' was an undeniable cost to my person and my pocket. It required me to spend and be spent for the advancement of the project. It necessitated my dispensing with old literary practices and embracing new ones. Several activities not included in the original 'conception' were incorporated with the emergent nature of the project. It was altogether a new experience from which I gained new insights. My horizon was greatly expanded as I read the work of literary luminaries and consulted with those who were assigned to be my 'caregivers'.

There were moments of frustration and discouragement as I carried my 'pregnancy'. Oh how I longed to return my life to normality. Sacrifices had to be made. Pleasure activities had to be shelved, particularly as due date approached. I lived through my birthday and wedding anniversaries with this 'thing'. I was totally consumed by this 'thing.' It occupied every minute of my day and of my conscious and subconscious being.

Truth is, I was tempted to abort the process; to be done with it and spare myself the discomfort; the inconvenience. I longed to be free of care and not be controlled by this 'thing'! Of course, an abortion would not have brought about the desired outcome that

I imagined at the point of conception. Thoughts to abort were dispelled by the encouragement and moral support of my 'caregivers'. The success of those who had passed this way before also stirred my determination to carry the project to term. And so I laboured on towards due date; joyfully anticipating the end.

There was something elusive and illusive about the due date for there were times when I thought, 'Oh now; this is it!' only to realize that it was false alarm; I was not quite there as yet; birthing was delayed. But now, here I am; at the end. What a joy it is for me to have carried my 'pregnancy' to term! My heart throbs with the joy of having given birth to this new product; one that will no doubt dry the tears of mothers who are disappointed about the pregnancy of their own teenage daughters; a project that will help teen mothers to pursue their dreams without delay; a project that will strengthen the work and worth of the WCJF; a work that will tend towards the building of a nation that is at the threshold of a new beginning. I look back over the period of the project, and know that I am not the same: at least not mentally. My only conclusion is that this was a most rewarding experience and, despite the 'pain', I most certainly will be doing it again.

APPENDIX 2
Sample of Consent Forms (for teen mothers)

Adapted - University of Sheffield

Title of Project:

The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System: Redeeming a Second Chance to Complete Secondary Education.

Name of Researcher: Zoe Simpson *email:* edp05zs@sheffield.ac.uk *tele:* 536-6454

Supervisor: Dr. Michelle Moore *email:* m.p.moore@sheffield.ac.uk

Participant's Name: _____

Please read each item below and place a tick (✓) in the box to indicate your response to each of the items:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. I do not wish to participate in the above named research project. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I agree to participate in the above research project. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I give permission for my parent(s) to also participate in the project. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I have read and I clearly understand the information supplied in the letter dated December 2009. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I was given the opportunity to ask questions about the research. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that my responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I understand that I will be given a research name for the purposes of this project and that this name will be used in reporting my responses. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymized the responses. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

APPENDIX 3

Sample of Information Letter Sent to Project Participants

Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation
42 Trafalgar Road
Kingston 10.

December 13, 2009

Dear _____

My name is Zoe Simpson. I am a member of staff at the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF) where you were enrolled as a teen mother. I am also a student at the University of Sheffield where I am pursuing a degree in Education. My course requires me to conduct a research and I have chosen to focus on: **The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System: Factors that Facilitate or Frustrate A Second Chance to Complete Secondary Education.**

I invite you to participate in this research which will seek to gather information from a number of persons:

- ✓ Teen mothers who were returned to the formal school system 2002 to 2008
- ✓ The parents of these teen mothers
- ✓ The school principals or school counsellors of the schools the teen mothers attended
- ✓ The staff at the WCJF
- ✓

You yourself will not benefit directly from this research, but your contribution will help other teen mothers to complete their secondary level education in the future. If you decide not to participate in the research, it will not be held against you. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a form to indicate your consent and your willingness to have your parent(s) also participate in the research. I will then arrange to meet with you and your parent(s) for an interview at an agreed on place and time. You will be reimbursed the cost of your transportation to and from the place of meeting.

During the interview, you will be asked questions surrounding your return to the formal school system. However, you will be free not to share anything that makes you uncomfortable in any way. You will also be free to discontinue participation at any time if you so desire. The University of Sheffield will ensure that your rights are not violated in any way. In order to conceal your identity, you will be given a 'research name' which will be used in reporting the responses that you will give. The school that you attended will also be given a 'research name'. The results of the project will be submitted to the University of Sheffield and to the Executive Director of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation. If you so desire, you too will be allowed to read the results.

Please feel free to ask me any questions about the research. I may be contacted by e-mail at edp05zs@sheffield.ac.uk; or by telephone at 536-6454. Thank you for having taken the time to read this letter.

Yours truly

Zoe Simpson

APPENDIX 4

Criteria for Purposive Sampling

- Teen mothers who completed
- Teen mother who did not complete
- Teen mothers who were involved in extra curricular activities
- Those who were given consistently good school reports
- Those who maintained contact with the Centre
- Those who the manager and counsellors thought had a story to tell

APPENDIX 5

Interview Questions

Questions used in interview with teen mothers who completed

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What were your thoughts and feelings about returning to the formal school system?
3. How prepared were you to return to school?
4. Who helped with your preparation for the return to school?
5. In what ways did the Centre prepare you to return to school?
6. In what ways did your parents assist with the preparation to return to school?
7. Who were the other persons who helped you to prepare to return to school?
8. How did the Centre maintain contact with you when you returned to school?
9. How often did they make contact you?
10. Where did they come to see you?
11. Is there anything in particular that you would have liked from the Centre when you had gone back to school?
12. How did the contacts made by the WCJF make you feel?
13. Did the students or teachers know that you were a teen mother?
14. Did it matter to you that they knew that you were a teen mother?
15. How did the other students respond to you?
16. How did you feel about the responses of the students toward you?
17. How did the teachers respond to you?
18. How did you feel about the responses of the teachers toward you?
19. What kind of help did the school offer?
20. How did you manage to complete your secondary education?
21. To whom or what would you attribute your success at completing your secondary education?

Questions used in interview with teen mothers who did not complete

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What were your thoughts and feelings about returning to the formal school system?
3. How prepared were you to return to school?
4. How prepared were you to have returned to the formal school system?
5. Who helped with your preparation for the return to school?
6. In what ways did the Centre prepare you to return to school?
7. In what ways did your parents assist with the preparation to return to school?
8. Who were the other persons who helped you to prepare to return to school?
9. Did the WCJF maintain contact with you when you were in school?
10. How did the Centre maintain contact with you when you returned to school?
11. How often did they make contact you?
12. Where did they come to see you?
13. Is there anything in particular that you would have liked from the Centre when you had gone back to school?
14. How did the contacts made by the WCJF make you feel?
15. Did the students or teachers know that you were a teen mother?
16. Did it matter to you that they knew that you were a teen mother?
17. How did the other students respond to you?
18. How did you feel about the responses of the students toward you?
19. How did the teachers respond to you?
20. How did you feel about the responses of the teachers toward you?
21. What kind of help did the school offer?
22. Why did you drop out of school the second time?
23. What difficulties confronted you as you returned to school?
24. Did you report the difficulty to the WCJF? If no why not?
25. Did you seek help outside of the family?
26. What could have been done to help you to complete?
27. What would or could you have done differently to ensure that you complete your secondary education?
28. What else would you want to say about your dropping out of school the second time?

Questions used in interview with parents

1. How did you feel about your daughter's pregnancy and her dropping out of school?
2. How did you feel when you realized that the WCJF would be able to have her returned to the formal school system?
3. In what ways did her having the baby hinder her when she went back to school?
4. How did she manage having the baby and going back to school?
5. In what ways did you help your daughter when she returned to the formal school system?
6. Who else was there that helped her when she returned to school?
7. In what ways did others help her when she returned to the formal school?
8. What would you say helped her to have completed secondary school this time around?
9. Why did your daughter drop out a second time?
10. What might have been done differently?
11. What else could the WCJF have done to have helped your daughter when she returned to school?
12. What else could you have done to help her to complete the secondary education
13. What is your own level of academic attainment?
14. How important is secondary education to you and your daughter?
15. What would you say to other parents about their daughter's return to secondary school?

Questions used in Interview with school principals/counsellors

1. For how long have you been principal of this school
2. How many members of staff are there?
3. What is the student population?
4. What is the size of the ancillary staff?
5. How many guidance counsellors are employed to the school?
6. What is the process by which the teen mothers are accepted into the school?
7. Is there a period of orientation to which they are subjected?
8. Is there anyone primarily responsible for their orientation?
9. Are any special considerations given to the teen mothers placed at your school?
10. Is there any special monitoring of their progress?
11. Is there an established relationship that you have with the WCJF concerning the return of teen mothers to that school?
12. Are you aware that the counsellors of the WCJF visit the teen mothers at school to monitor their progress?
13. Are there special provisions made for the visits of the WCJF counsellors?
14. What in your opinion are the factors that contribute to their completion?
15. What factors might result in their dropping out a second time?
16. Is there anything that anyone can do to help them to complete?
17. Is there anything that should be done to ensure that they complete?
18. Are there any final comments you would like to make concerning the return of teen Mother to that school?