REFLECTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PARENTING STUDENTS

A Thesis

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by

Jennifer Gama-Rodriguez

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REFLECTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PARENTING STUDENTS

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I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit it to be awarded for the thesis.

Susan Heredia, Ph.D.

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Abstract

of

REFLECTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PARENTING STUDENTS

by

Jennifer Gama-Rodriguez

Brief Literature Review

Academia is filled with studies identifying challenges teen and unmarried parents encounter in education. Sara Goldrick-Rab and Kia Sorensen (2010) claim that although access to college has increased, unmarried parents are least likely to attend. Despite the dismal outlook for these parenting students, there are success stories. Particularly of those underrepresented in academia are studies of traditionally-aged parents who are students and who are successfully pursuing baccalaureate degrees.

Statement of Problem

Vincent Tinto (1975) theorized that the decision to withdraw voluntarily from a university is influenced primarily by a student's academic and social integration into the university. The purpose of this study is to identify key factors contributing to the success of traditionally-aged parenting students in persisting and attaining their undergraduate degrees. Specific questions addressed include,

1. What factors impact traditionally-aged parenting student's persistence in higher education?
2. How do student organizations impact traditionally-aged parenting student’s retention in higher education?
3. How does family support impact traditionally-aged parenting student’s persistence in higher education?

Methodology

This study shares the stories of four traditionally-aged female students who successfully attained their baccalaureate degrees while parenting at the Northern California Research Institute. The data were based on the participants’ responses from semi-structured open-ended interview questions. Interviews were transcribed and subjected to content analysis to determine common themes.

This qualitative study addresses the challenges traditionally-aged parenting students encounter by focusing and identifying contributing factors to their success.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that while traditionally-aged parenting students may face many challenges in navigating the Northern California Research Institute with the support of family members, professors, mentors, peers and student organizations, a baccalaureate degree is obtainable. The study also concluded that with the support of family members, professors, mentors, peers and student organizations, traditionally-aged parenting students successfully overcome the additional challenges they encounter as parenting students while they navigate Northern California Research Institute and ultimately succeed in attaining their baccalaureate degrees.
The results of this study can be used by educators, parents and policy makers to create initiatives to support, promote, and encourage the educational success of all students, in particular traditionally-aged parenting students.

Rośe Borunda, Ed.D.  

__________________, Committee Chair
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family – I am blessed to have such a supportive family, you are the reason I have succeeded all these years!

Xitlali and Yaretzi – my beautiful and most valuable cheerleaders. I cherish watching you grow and become the independent little ladies you are. You are my world and inspiration to achieve it all.

PS – Yes, we can bake cookies now!

German – my love, your unwavering encouragement and support made this possible.

Thank you for all that you do for us!

Dad, Mom, Frank, Nancy & Sarah – your unconditional love and belief in my abilities kept my mind from wandering and eyes on the prize. Thank you for eliminating “impossible” from my vocabulary.

Nana and Grandpa Lewy – thank you for being such amazing grandparents and all that you have done for me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people have made the completion of this thesis possible:

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

High school graduates enroll in college anticipating earning a college degree; yet
within three years of entering higher education, more than one-third leave empty-handed.
(Goldrick-Rab & Roksa, 2008). There are multiple factors contributing to the high
number of college students opting to discontinue their path toward completing their
college degree. Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Palucki Black and Tran (2009) stated that the
global economic downturn is having an impact on the characteristics, attitudes, and
beliefs of incoming first-time students at four-year institutions. First-generation students
are more concerned about finances, more likely to take out loans and need grants in
higher amounts. They will also likely be graduating with higher debts and have shifted
majors and career aspirations away from business fields. Although the values of these
students coming into college show a slight retrenching toward financial security and less
towards social agency, there is hope that their increased desire for volunteering and
community service will foster an increase in such attitudes during their college careers.
While multiple strategies may be developed to retain college students as they face
mounting financial debt and other challenges, the evidence speaks to the majority who
persist and overcome challenges.

National statistics on undergraduates collected by the National Center for
Education Statistics reported, 17.9 million students, aged 18 – 24, enrolled in some form
of postsecondary education in 2005. Students from many backgrounds and experiences make up the student populations in postsecondary institutions. Of the total number of undergraduate seats, women hold the majority among undergraduate students. Additionally, students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds have increased representation on college campuses.

Figure 1. Actual and projected undergraduate enrollment in postsecondary institutions by sex: Fall 1990 – 2023

As Figure 1 illustrates, student enrollment in higher education has increased significantly particularly between 1990 and 2013. Notably, the number of women pursuing higher education has also increased by 39 percent and it is projected these numbers will continue to increase in comparison to their male counterparts.
Historical Background

Susan P. Choy (2001) claimed that regardless of students' backgrounds or gender, the pathway to higher education continues to present challenges for students, particularly for first-generation students. Ninety-one percent of eighth grade students whose parents obtained a bachelor's degree desired to attend college, compared to only fifty-five percent of first-generation college-bound students. Low educational aspirations can be attributed to a student's environment. Some students' families and communities expect college enrollment directly after high school. Subsequently, the next logical step in their educational journey is not whether or not they will attend college, but which college they will attend. For these students, high school is the avenue to prepare for college and solidify their goals. Even so, for some students, the thought of, or even the decision to attend, college does not formulate, if at all, until late in their high school careers. By then, it is often too late in the academic pathway process to adequately prepare for higher education (Choy, 2001).

Noting that access to higher education has increased over the past several decades, underrepresented students continue to face struggles. Particularly, parenting students struggle to successfully pursue and complete their baccalaureate degrees. Data indicates a substantial increase in the number of unmarried parents pursuing higher education; however, they have low completion rates (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). There are multiple factors that present greater challenges for various subsets of the college student population. Research (Choy, 2001; Thayer, 2000; Vargas, 2004) indicates that low-income and first-generation college-bound students are less likely to be
prepared for college, less knowledgeable of financial aid opportunities, and have more
difficulty in acclimating to the university setting than their student counterparts whose
parents attended college. Data (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010) suggests that
individuals who become parents early on are less likely to pursue their education while
those who have not become parents by the age of twenty-four are more likely to complete
their college education.

Statement of the Problem

Vincent Tinto (1975) theorized that the decision to voluntarily withdraw from a
university is influenced primarily by a student’s academic and social integration into the
university. The purpose of this study is to identify key factors contributing to the success
of traditionally-aged parenting students in attaining their baccalaureate degrees. The
following research questions guide the study in order to provide greater insight to the
factors contributing to college degree attainment.

1. What role does family support play traditionally-aged parenting student’s
   persistence in higher education?

2. What role do peers play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students
   experience in higher education?

3. What role do student organizations play in traditionally-aged parenting
   student’s experience in higher education?

4. What roles do professors and on-campus resources play in supporting
   traditionally-aged parenting students?
Definition of Terms

Academic Success: completion of baccalaureate degree.

Continuing-Generation Student: at least one parent has earned a baccalaureate degree.

First-generation Student: neither parent has earned a baccalaureate degree.

Low-Income Student: student whose family meets the federal low-income guidelines.

Northern California Research Institute: Pseudonym for the 4-year institution when study participants attended and successfully obtained their baccalaureate degrees.

Persistence: refers to the student's ability to succeed academically from year to year at a college or university.

Traditionally-aged Parenting Students: students between the ages of 18 - 25 while pursuing their baccalaureate degrees.

Significance of the Study

Current research focuses on non-traditional college women, who are typically over the age of 24 and/or married. There is a lack of research on traditionally-aged undergraduate parenting students. This study may contribute to an existing body of knowledge available to higher education leadership on the retention of traditionally-aged parenting students pursuing a baccalaureate degree.
Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Following this section Chapter 2 will be a review of related literature discussing the historical background and evolution of parenting students. This chapter will also include theoretical frameworks that support the need for this research. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, data collection and data analysis processes. Interviews were transcribed and theme coded, the results are highlighted in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 is an in depth analysis of the participants responses and their relation to literature presented in Chapter 2, while Chapter 5 provides a brief summary along with conclusions and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature that focuses on the exceptional college experiences of traditionally-aged parenting students while in pursuit of their baccalaureate degrees. Specifically, this chapter presents and discusses a historical perspective of the emergence of early parenthood, parenting, parenting students in higher education, and external factors that impact academic success.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify contributing factors to the success of traditionally-aged parenting students while enrolled at the Northern California Research Institute during their undergraduate career. Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What role does family support play traditionally-aged parenting student’s persistence in higher education?
2. What role do peers play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students experience in higher education?
3. What role do student organizations play in traditionally-aged parenting student’s experience in higher education?
4. What roles do professors and on-campus resources play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students?
The answers to these questions are extremely complex, in that they require a holistic understanding of the students, families, school, peer and communities in which the students live. The review of related literature seeks to provide such an understanding.

**Emergence of Early Parenthood**

In the 1950's, close to half of all women wed in their teens and well over a quarter of all women had their first child by age 20. During this era, the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing failed to draw public attention. It was not until the following decade that adolescent pregnancy and childbearing was identified as a social problem (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, Morgan, 1987). Post World War II early marriage concealed the high rate of premarital sexual activity, as close to half of all women married before the age of 20 and half of those women were pregnant at the time. In the 1960’s women married later which made premarital sexual activity and pregnancy more visible. Out-of-wedlock births to teenagers jumped from fourteen percent in 1955 to fifty-six percent in 1984. The link between marriage and sexual activity was severed and premarital sex became a prevalent topic by the middle of the twentieth century (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, Morgan, 1987).

While premarital sex was becoming identified as a social problem, higher education became increasingly important. Women had joined the labor force during World War II while servicemen were away. Upon their servicemen’s return, women were displaced from the labor force and encouraged to return to their domestic roles. Despite the significant increase of women in the labor force, women were deemed secondary workers. This changed in the 1970s and 1980s with the economic restricting
and Civil Rights movement (Raley, Mattingly & Bianchi, 2006). Subsequently, high school graduation and post-secondary education became prevalent in the 1950s; this resulted in women’s reluctance to enter marriage and/or childbearing immediately after graduating high school. In turn this trend drove the marriage age up even more so, and while early family formation was common in the 1950’s it would cease to be so by the 1970’s (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, Morgan, 1987).

**Unplanned Pregnancies**

Traditionally-aged women in college, those who enroll immediately after high school, are between the ages of 18 – 25. Three in ten girls in the United States get pregnant at least once by age 20 and six in ten pregnancies to women aged 20 – 24 are unplanned (National Campaign to Prevent Pregnancy, 2012; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned – about three million each year. An increasing number of young women have entered motherhood before marriage. Although pregnancy rates for girls aged 15 – 19 have declined since the mid-1990s, approximately one million adolescent girls become pregnant; more than ninety percent of those are unplanned. In addition to this the proportion of births to unmarried adolescents from low-income backgrounds continues to be high and are significantly elevated in comparison to those of adolescents in other developed countries (Klein, 2005). These statistics are increasing important considering women outnumber men during their undergraduate careers. Undergraduate women who experience an unplanned pregnancy face additional challenges with the limited resources available at their institution.
Teen Pregnancy

Adolescent pregnancy and parenting is a complex social issue that impacts the individual, the family, and society as a whole. Adolescent pregnancy presents major challenges to teens and a growing concern regarding the rising birthrates found particularly among minorities and households headed by unmarried females (East, Khoo, & Reyes, 2006; Klein, 2005). Teen childrearing has been linked with long-term family poverty, school interruption, and medical complications to mother and child (Klein, 2005). Also, several risk factors have been found to adversely contribute to the problems of adolescent childbearing and affect low birth outcomes, examples of which include growing up poor or from low-income families, being exposed to a harmful social environment, and exhibiting high-risk behavior involving substance abuse (Klein, 2005; East et al., 2006).

Studies have explored the negative and positive outcomes teenage pregnancy presents. Pregnant and parenting teens have been found to be at a high risk for depression and are often unprepared for the stresses and tests that lie ahead (Eshbaugh, 2007). However research shows there is very little difference between teen mothers and women who delay childbearing in attaining their High School Diploma. Delaying childbearing would reduce the likelihood of high school completion by ten percent and teen mothers are more likely to obtain a GED, fourteen percent, than women who delay childbearing. By age 30, teen mothers would have worked twenty-three percent more hours than their counterparts (Eshbaugh, 2007). The high risk for depression and stresses associated with childrearing present complex issues to traditionally-aged parenting
students and their academic success. To understand the complexities of challenges traditionally-aged parenting students face one must acknowledge the similarities between teen parents and traditionally-aged parenting students.

Research (Zhan & Pandey, 2004) consistently indicates that educational attainment, particularly postsecondary education, positively affects the economic well being of single mothers. Women with postsecondary education tend to have higher incomes than their counterparts. “Access to community resources and supportive communication from health care professionals have been shown to provide the childbearing teen with essential coping mechanisms that help support her and promote her capacity to overcome stressors in her life. The healthier the communication channels, the greater the possibility for building self-esteem and overcoming significant and varied barriers for childbearing teens. This directs the young mother towards more capacity building, increases her perception of her own competence, and leads to the growth of resilience” (Kahan, 2010, p.43).

Parenting Students

Although marital instability, single parenthood and childbearing out of wedlock tend to be concentrated among low-income, urban populations, there is growing concern that these trends are spreading. Marriage pessimists point to rising divorce rates, childbearing out of wedlock, increased cohabitation, gay marriage, and the decline in early marriage (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Increase in access and availability of reliable contraceptive methods made it possible for young adults to engage in sexual activity
without intention of marriage. Young adults are waiting longer to marry, inclined to pursue higher education and establish themselves financially. Higher levels of education delay the timing of marriage and while the existence of shared children is not a strong incentive to get married, they are not entirely irrelevant to marital decision (Furstenberg, 2010).

It is probably no coincidence women became motivated to pursue higher education and enter the labor force, in the event that they remain single they had the ability to support themselves. Women are closing the gender gap in educational attainment and have higher rates of educational attainment than their counterparts. This is particularly evident among families with children and these families’ decision to challenge the traditional male/female roles. Although when children do arrive typically mothers, not fathers, leave the labor force or decrease their work hours (Raley, Mattingly & Bianchi, 2006).

Holocomb (1998) argued that the media often conveys negative and inaccurate information about dual-income families. Dual-income families are often depicted as unorganized, selfish and materialist. Media often depicts their children as desperate for attention and often are raised by surrogate parents. Often times these scenarios are exaggerations and misrepresentations of dual-income families.

According to Sara McLanahan (2004), children in the 1950’s were more likely to live in traditional nuclear families, to be in good health and attend school. Scholars have argued that highly educated women are responsible for the changes in family formation. McLanahan also observed children born to well-educated women reap the benefits while
their counterparts do not. Although these families may be more educated and have higher incomes, there is no direct correlation between parent college attainment and family outcomes (McLanahan, 2004; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Research regarding changes in family formation and emerging parenting trends highlight the need to understand the growing number of parenting traditionally-aged undergraduate students.

**Physiological and Emotional Strains of Parenting**

Naturally most individuals consider an optimal arrangement for mother and child to be when employment is discontinued after birth and restarted when the child reached school age. Extensive research has examined the impact of maternal employment on the development of their children. However, studies find that women pursuing higher education often plan to combine their careers and motherhood in the future. Michele Hoffnung (2004) described her study to have found that almost all 200 of her participants considered their careers to be important, anticipated pursuing graduate degrees and combining work and motherhood. In addition 86% of these women anticipated marrying and almost 98% planned to have children.

Women continue to aspire for their careers, financial stability and feelings of self-efficacious. Feelings of pride and satisfaction in their work fuel these ambitions. Goldrick-Rab and Sorensen (2010) and several other studies claim, “On average, college-educated adults live longer, healthier lives and tend to have better access to health care. In addition a recent study found that college graduates report being happier than high school graduates with the same household income” (pg. 190). However parenting students’ must face intimidating conflict between their familial and academic roles. They
often face financial and time restrictions in addition to the burdens of balancing short and long term sacrifices to make strides in their pursuit of higher education (Johnson, Schwartz & Bower, 2000).

**Economic Resources for Parenting Students**

Although financial aid once made it possible for students to devote time exclusively to studying and parenting – with school essentially replacing work – students today very commonly study, parent and work (Zhan & Pandey, 2004). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, female-headed households with children were five times more likely to be poor than two-parent families with children. In 2000, thirty-five point one percent of female-headed families with children under 18 lived in poverty, compared with six point nine percent of married-couples with children under 18. In the same year, female-headed households with children under 18 comprised fifty-two percent of all poor households with children under 18 (Zhan & Pandey, 2004).

Economic barriers are a constant stress factor for parenting students. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2008) “More than half (59 percent) of unmarried parents attending college earn less than $10,000 a year, 38 percent earning less than $5,000 annually” (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010, p. 183). Financial aid policies intended to make college affordable inadvertently limit parenting student’s access to the necessary aid for them to succeed in college.

For example, national statistics indicate that in 2007–08, three-fourths of all unmarried parents who were enrolled in college fulltime were working at least fifteen hours a week; and 30 percent were working forty or more hours a week.
By contrast, in 1989–90 less than half (48 percent) of unmarried parents enrolled in college fulltime worked at all. (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010, p. 183)

Although parenting students may be more likely to apply for financial aid than their counterparts. Their family contributions also tend to be higher due to their likelihood to work. Financial aid policies inadvertently reduce their eligibility for aid (Goldrick & Sorensen, 2010).

The problem is that earnings from work rarely fully offset declines in financial aid, and earning require time to generate. As a result, national data indicate that for 87 percent of unmarried parents attending college in 2007-08, there was a gap between verified budgets (as reported on the federally mandated aid application) and their expected family contribution and all financial aid grants they received. (p. 184).

There are various gaps in financial aid policies that further hinder parenting students’ ability to reap the benefits aid yet many the women in this student persevered.

**Parenting Students in Higher Education**

Sara Goldrick-Rab and Kia Sorensen (2010) stated families headed by college-educated adults, are more likely to be stable and economically secure in comparison to those without education. Research (Tamborini, Kim & Sakamoto, 2015) suggests a college education yields substantially more financial rewards and has potential for higher growth rates in earnings in comparison to those who have not attended college.
Unmarried parenting students seem to be ideal candidates for the benefits of higher education. Ironically, they are among the least likely to attend college.

Unmarried parenting students are more than three times likely than average to be enrolled in a short-term vocational postsecondary program, and less likely to conclude with a college degree (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Unmarried parenting students pursuing higher education are underrepresented in four-year institutions; they often choose two-year institutions. Approximately forty-nine point one percent of unmarried parenting students in higher education make up sixteen point four percent of the student body population in two-year institutions (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010).

Aspirations of attending college have taken root among young Americans across all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, including unmarried parents. In fact the share of undergraduate unmarried parents has nearly doubled from seven percent to just over
thirteen percent in the past twenty years (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Unmarried parents tend to identify with marginalized and ethnic minority backgrounds. For example, more than one-third (thirty-six percent) of African American female undergraduates are unmarried mothers, and fifteen percent of African American male undergraduates are unmarried fathers. Furthermore twenty-one percent of Native American undergraduates and sixteen percent of all Latino undergraduates are unmarried parents in comparison to ten percent of their white and nine percent Asian undergraduate counterparts (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010).

In the past 20 years college attendance among unmarried parents has increased with more than two-thirds of this increase attributed to a large number of unmarried mothers. Overall, eight percent of male undergraduates and seventeen percent of female undergraduates are unmarried parents (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Women are more likely than men to begin or reenter college after having children, in fact, twenty-five percent of women entering college after the age of thirty are not married at the time of entry (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010).

Although there has been an increase in attendance rates among unmarried parents their completion rates are far lower than other undergraduate students. For example among all students who started college in 1995 – 65, twenty-nine percent successfully attained their undergraduate degree by 2001, compared to fewer than five percent of unmarried parents. Furthermore forty-six percent of unmarried parents were more likely to depart college early compared to thirty-five percent of their counterparts (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010).
Theoretical Framework

While access to higher education for first-generation low-income students has increased and the gap in access between them and higher income students has decreased, the gap in the completion of four-year degrees has not decreased. Furthermore while more low-income students are entering college, fewer are able to successfully obtain their four-year degree (Tinto, 2008). According to Frances Contreras (2011),

The transition from high school to college for students is a critical step that establishes the foundation for a student's educational attainment, career options, preparation, and social mobility. Because even academically talented and gifted minority students often experience a tenuous path to higher education (Gandara, 2006), support programs play a critical role in academic success and the transition to college.

For marginalized groups in particular, intervention program efforts have bridged the gap of unequal learning opportunities they encounter in the public education system throughout the United States. Tinto (1975) theorized that the decision to withdraw voluntarily from a university is influenced primarily by a student's academic and social integration into the university. Various factors appear to influence students' integration: interaction with students and faculty outside the classroom seem to be particularly important.

The factors measured on the institutional integration scale have been supported as being important in terms of influencing student academic performance for students in areas such as engineering (Amenkhienan & Kogan, 2004). Specifically, student
involvement and commitment, peer interaction, and faculty contact were reported by engineering students to positively influence their performance in the university environment (Amenkhienan & Kogan, 2004). Students involved in student organizations, build relationships with faculty, and maintain a healthy level of peer interaction tend to develop strong support networks. These support networks tend to be contributing factors to their academic success.

Tinto (1993) suggested that the first six months of college are the most critical in determining whether or not a student will become integrated into the academic and social environments at their college. Furthermore lack of integration into the college environment may also result in the student’s inability to transition into their new environment and successfully pursue their educational goals. Students who have not been able to successfully integrate to their college environment are less likely to attain their undergraduate degree.

Tinto’s model has been revised or enhanced by a number of researchers, Bean used aspects of Tinto’s academic and social integration theory in the development of his model. According to Bean (1980), a student’s persistence is influenced by their attitudes, which are shaped by their experiences with the institution. Thus, a student’s attitude regarding college tends to influence their intent to persist or drop out. This theory however is severely limited when applied to parenting students. To think that parenting students will depart or disassociate themselves from their culture, family and values when raising their children is unlikely.
Pascarella (1980) suggested that formal (in-class) and informal (out-of-class) interactions contribute to students' subject matter competence, cognitive skills and intellectual growth, attitudes and values, educational attainment, and career choice and development. According to Kim and Sax (2009), students who assist faculty with research as volunteers, for course credit or for pay, tend to have higher college GPAs, higher degree aspirations, and larger gains in both critical thinking and communication. While this study focuses on faculty-student interaction contributing particularly to female students' perception of belonging, faculty-student interactions play a key role in students' academic success.

Data consistently indicates faculty – student interaction has a positive affect on students overall experience and perception of their college experience. However the lack of research on parenting students and their potential benefits from formal (in-class) and informal (out-of-class) limits the relevance of this study and its significant impact on student’s pursuit of an undergraduate degree. The dismal disparities between faculty of color and the students they serve can become very visible at large institutions such as Northern California Research Institute. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2015), of the 17.5 million undergraduate students in fall 2013, 9.9 million were White, 2.9 million were Hispanic, 2.5 million were Black, 1.0 million were Asian 0.1 million were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0.1 were Pacific Islander. Both Hispanic and Black undergraduate enrollment significantly increased yet in fall 2013, 79 percent of full-time faculty were white, 6 percent were Black, 5 percent was Hispanic, and 10 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander.
Figure 3. Percentage distribution of full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by academic rank, selected race/ethnicity, and sex: Fall 2013

Although the frequency and quality of student-faculty interactions are strong predictors of students’ motivation and academic success, studies also associate strong student self-confidence and motivation with the genuine respect of students from faculty (Komarraju et al. 2010). Faculty of color are often perceived as role models by students of color and become inundated with various requests resulting in mixed messages from departmental colleagues who may prefer to focus on publications and grants (Neal-Barnett et al, 2002). Most campuses do not have a faculty representative of that of the students they serve.
Rationale for Study

Data indicates individuals who become parents early on are less likely to pursue their education while those who have not become parents by the age of twenty-four are more likely to complete their college education (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Presumably parenting students graduate at much lower rates than non-parenting students. However lack of research on traditionally-aged, 18 – 24, parenting students and factors contributing to their decisions to withdraw, drop or prolong their degree completion make it difficult to comprehend what factors contribute to the success of parenting students.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify contributing factors to traditionally-aged parenting students’ academic success. By understanding factors that contribute to traditionally-aged parenting students’ academic success the researcher hopes that effective educational support programs can be created and/or modified to support traditionally-aged parenting students in pursuit of their baccalaureate degree.

Research (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2009) that goes beyond identifying parenting students for statistical purposes is at its earliest stages, even providing an accurate statistical portrait of college enrollment among parenting students is difficult. “National statistics on undergraduates collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) likely underreport the presence of parents by limiting the definition of “parent” to students claiming financial responsibility for one or more children” (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2009, p.180).

An analysis of interview data collected from four Northern California Research Institute traditionally-aged alumni provided the qualitative data. This chapter includes information about the population and sample of the study, the design of the study, data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures.
Research Design

Setting of the Study

The site for this study was Northern California Research Institute (pseudonym). Northern California Research Institute is situated on over 5,000 acres in a rural college town and is one of ten campuses in its system. A college town, Northern California Research Institute plays a major role in the life of the city. As the third largest campus in enrollment, in its system, Northern California Research Institute has over 32,000 students; this Institution has an excellent reputation for research, offering studies in more than 100 fields including engineering, agricultural, social, biological and environmental sciences.

Northern California Research Institute is a highly selective Institution with a strong international reputation with admission offers going to the top 12% of California high school graduates. Fall 2014, freshman class had a 3.90 – 4.16 GPA. Northern California Research Institute has a student population of over 27,000 undergraduate students. The ethnic breakdown of the undergraduate student population is as follows: Asian 39%, White 29%, Hispanic 19%, International 7%, African American 3%, American Indian 1% and Other 2%. 57% of the undergraduate student population is female.

Northern California Research Institute utilizes a quarter-based academic calendar, with a 15:1 student-faculty, and 36.1 percent of its classes with fewer than 20 students. Northern California Research Institute houses nearly 500-student organizations and sizeable Greek community with more than 40 fraternity and sorority chapters.
**Population & Sample**

The population for this study was Northern California Research Institute traditionally-aged parenting alumni, who were traditionally-aged parenting students while pursuing their baccalaureate degree. Fall 2014 the freshman class consisted of 8,515 undergraduate students, of which 5,377 were admitted directly from high school.

The sample chosen for this study was four female students who earned their baccalaureate degree at Northern California Research Institute. The sampling approach that was used was purposive sample. Purposive sampling refers to selecting study participants based on specified criteria essential for a thorough analysis of the topic (Cowan, 2007). Students participated in the study voluntarily.

The sample size is not expected nor intended to be representative of the traditionally-aged parenting student campus population. Qualitative research seeks to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of these women rather than have the ability to generalize their experiences and perspectives to the entire traditionally-aged parenting student population.

**Design of the Study**

This study conducted a semi-structured open-ended interview process to facilitate discussion about the experiences of traditionally-aged parenting students at the Northern California Research Institute. Resulting in a qualitative study using an interview format used to identify salient themes. Brown (1996) suggests, “qualitative researchers deal with the lived experience of participators; this inevitable includes the non-rational, the
emotional and feeling aspects of the participators’ actuality. Investigators must be able to handle all realms of human experience – not to analyze them, not even understand them, but to be able to listen and truly take in the meaning of other’s lived experiences” (Brown, 1996, p.32; Cowan, 2007, p.142).

The researcher employed inductive analysis to address the research questions; “Patton defined this as a process of exploration and discovery without “imposing preexisting expectation” (Cowan, 2007, p. 143). Cowan (2007) suggests that qualitative research employs an open-ended approach through the process of observing or interview or examining documents, each piece of information and encounter directs the research’s next step. “The path is not laid out beforehand with the aid of a theory to prove or disprove. Themes, categories, and patterns emerge in a recursive manner as data are gathered and confronted again and again” (Cowan, 2007, p. 144).

**Data Collection**

In accordance with California State University, Sacramento’s Institutional Review process, the researcher completed and submitted necessary forms, which lead to approval to begin the study. Upon approval, participant selection began by soliciting acquaintances that successfully completed their baccalaureate degree while parenting. The researcher employed the snowball effect method. The snowball effect, according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010) is, “...in which cases are recommended by individuals who know other individuals likely to yield relevant, information-rich data” (p. 348). The sample selection process included three steps. First, the alumni were introduced to the
purpose of the study. Second, students who fit the criteria for the study were identified. Finally, those who agreed to participate were selected.

The researcher contacted former acquaintances for assistance in making contact with traditionally-aged parenting students who had successfully obtained their baccalaureate degrees from the Northern California Research Institute and might be interested in participating in the study. The researcher was invited to send an email briefly introducing the purpose of the study to an alumni list serve. The researcher then sent an email introducing the purpose of the study to those individuals who had expressed interest in participating in the study. Four individuals agreed to participate in the study. The researcher emailed a consent letter and request to arrange an interview to participants. The individual interviews were arranged for each participant. Participants signed the consent letter prior to the interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

The intent of this study was to gather and analyze data to identify contributing factors to the academic success of traditionally-aged parenting students. The process of qualitative data involved the comprehensive search for general statements and themes that connect the various categories of data. The consistent findings were clustered into thematic labels to reveal the core themes of participants’ experience. The researcher developed categories by looking for recurrent themes in the interview logs.
Limitations of the Study

All studies have limitations and researchers should be transparent in communicating these limitations and how these limitations may affect the results of the study. The researcher of this study identified four limitations.

First, this study focused on Northern California Research Institute alumnus. Focusing on a relatively small participant and institutional sample size of one campus can limit the ability to generalize the results of the study.

Second, the perceptions of the participants were exclusively from Northern California Research Institute alumnus. The perceptions of traditionally-aged parenting students who attend other Universities may differ from those at Northern California Research Institute.

Third, an additional limitation to this study was the perceptions of the participants were exclusively from single female traditionally-aged parenting students. Perceptions and experiences of participants who attended Northern California Research Institute and are male and/or married may differ from those of the participants of this study.

Lastly, as a traditionally-aged parenting student and Northern California Research Institute alumni, the researcher began this study for both personal and professional reasons. First as a traditionally-aged parenting student who successfully obtained a baccalaureate degree from Northern California Research Institute the researcher has seen her daughter reap the benefits of her academic success. The researcher believes academic success to be attainable for all traditionally-aged parenting students and their child(ren). Second as a student affairs professional the researcher has become increasingly aware of
the academic challenges, concerns, and academic success of traditionally-aged parenting students in higher education. This experience has prompted the researcher’s desire to investigate contributing factors to the academic success of traditionally-aged parenting students and provided the context for understanding and appreciation of this study.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify contributing factors to the academic success of traditionally-aged parenting students while enrolled at the Northern California Research Institute. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What role does family support play traditionally-aged parenting student’s persistence in higher education?
2. What role do peers play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students experience in higher education?
3. What role do student organizations play in traditionally-aged parenting student’s experience in higher education?
4. What roles do professors and on-campus resources play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students?

This chapter will describe and summarize the data collected from interviews and conclude with a discussion of the findings. The results begin with demographic information about the research participants. Data is presented by order of research question, followed themes that emerged. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the data.
Demographics

Table 1 demonstrates demographic information for the research participants in this study; Hometown (city of residence prior to attending Northern California Research Institute), high school type, educational background, and the participant’s baccalaureate degree.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psuedo Name</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>High School Type</th>
<th>First-generation</th>
<th>College Degree(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>History &amp; Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>Hayward</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Latin American Studies Minor: Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanin</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Political Science &amp; Spanish Minor: Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kourtney</td>
<td>Parlier</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Environmental Toxicology &amp; Registered Nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Results

Findings from interviews with four Northern California Research Institute alumni are presented in this chapter. The incredible lived experiences of these participants exhibit factors that have supported their academic success.
Role of Family Members

Parental support is a critical contributing factor to the academic success of students pursuing a baccalaureate degree. Research consistently supports that students who have significant parental support for their educational goals achieve greater levels of academic success than their counterparts. Students who have consistent parental support reinforced with clearly expressed expectations ultimately have greater esteem about their ability to succeed when faced with a personal or academic challenge (Hrabowski, Maton & Grief, 1998).

All interview participants discussed the support their parent(s) provided throughout their education and the role they played during and after their pregnancy in their academic success. Although parents of these traditionally-aged parenting students may have been uneasy with their students’ decision to continue to pursue their baccalaureate degrees while parenting, they continued to provide support. When a father was present, he often times provided financially. When a mother was present, she played the supportive role, often times stepping in as role model. Their shared value of education played a critical role in their perseverance, educational goals and decision-making.

Veronica shared, “My family, they all expected me to go to college. It wasn’t a choice. It was like more like where I wanted to go to college not like if I was going.” Samantha stated, “They were very encouraging. My dad had taken out some parent loans for me.” Hanin provided an example of how parents served as non-financial resources, “My mom she was more of a support as far as financial. When I had extreme difficulty
paying for something she would help me out and give me money in the way that she could. Her role was very minimal.” Kourtney shared “Once my parents saw that I was determined to finish school, they helped me raise my baby girl. My mother would take some time off work during finals to help me, so I could have time to study. When I graduated and decide to do nursing, my parents were very supportive because they understood that once I set myself a goal that I don’t let anything stop me from achieving that goal no matter what obstacles come my way and had not doubt I would finish the nursing program.” These varied means of support added to student perseverance.

Often times parental support is particularly significant in the case of first-generation students. All of the interview participants were first-generation and each had established educational goals at a very young age. Their parent’s lack of education was not an obstacle for these students. Hanin shared her mother’s background; “She’s an immigrant so she’s really not familiar with the education system at all. It was really difficult for her to support me as far as what I wanted in my education. She didn’t understand the process in itself.”

Although college attendance per se, was not apparent in all participants’ households, the participants expressed a consistent theme “education was key to social mobility.” As Hanin said, “I always knew I wanted to go on and get more education and also because I always had a goal of making more money when I grew up.” The interview participants also acknowledged the significance of their parents’ assertions about education. Veronica shared “She was all in my business and well maybe not so much in college but in high school she was very much so, like she made sure I was doing
internships in high school and like made sure I was getting good grades, taking the right classes and all that other stuff. In college she kind of was like: you’re on your own now, good luck.” Despite the early-engaged involvement of her parent, the student formulated the desire to secure a college degree.

Role of Student Organizations and Support Groups

Students are more likely to succeed academically while enjoying their educational experience if they feel integrated into their institution. Three of the four participants mentioned an on-campus resource or student organization/group as playing a strong role in supporting their academic success. Their ability to rely on such resources enabled them to continue to be successful as parents and students.

Veronia describes this on-campus resource as a “really important organization or group that met because not only did they provide me with like a group of people who were in the same situation, but they also have monthly, I guess it’s every quarter they have like a baby shower and they have tons of free stuff like strollers, and car seats and toys and clothes and all these things like so you don’t have to go out and spend your money like people in the community just donate them and like brand new stuff and you can just bring the stuff and rotate and that was really helpful for me financially and emotional support. I met great people and got a lot of great references. I think that without that group I don’t know what I would have done and I would be struggling, definitely.”
Hanin stated, "I was focusing on my whole law school program and getting into law school so then when I became pregnant I started to look at something different, something that would help me so I joined a support group for pregnant moms and that became more of my area of involvement.” Kourtney highlighted the importance of affordable housing; “housing is available for students with family, that really helped me because school was really close and affordable. I was able to pay for my bills and not stress out whether or not I could pay rent.” These young women identify the importance accessible programs that provided support during a time in which raising a child may have deferred their plans to attain a college degree. They also highlighted their involvement prior to their pregnancy playing a key role in their ability to seek additional support at their institution.

The majority of the participants took a leave of absence to give birth and bond with their newborn children. Yet, the majority of the participants attributed their integration to the institution as traditionally-aged parenting students to a support program available to them on-campus. Kourtney relied on her support system: “My sorority helped me feel like I had a family away from home. I didn't feel so lonely. When I gave birth all my sorority sisters would help me take care of the baby when I had class. They all gave me their schedule of when they were available to babysit. I believe that if it wasn't for their help I would of had a harder time finishing up school.” While Hanin described her experience as, “I would say outside of family and friends, I did have a really supportive daycare that contributed a lot to my success, there was a quarter where I had night classes, luckily they were willing to help and support me so that I could focus
on school or get extra time to study.” The importance of support programs cannot be understated as their role in providing viable assistance is clearly identified by the participants.

**Role of Peers**

An African proverb states, “It takes a village to raise a child.” The well-known quote suggests that united, communal relationships are key to producing a thriving community. Most often this phrase is used in reference to educating and guiding youth, this is particularly relevant in the experience of traditionally-aged parenting students. Three of four participants emphasized the importance of positive peer influence. The research literature suggests that attrition rates increase for students who do not become part of an institution’s greater community, sub-community, or find some alternative means of integration (Alsandor, 2011). For some, bonds with other traditionally-aged parenting students provided the positive peer influence. For others, the support came primarily from family members.

The following responses suggest peers played a supporting role in helping maintain college aspirations and that there was purpose to the peer groups with whom the participants chose to surround themselves:

Veronica: The support group provided me with like a group of people who were in the same situation, we could just talk about like “I can’t see my feet, I’m so pregnant or like people stare at me or what can I do when I can’t make it to class, what do I tell my professors etc.” and just making connections like I met Ruby in
that group. I met great people and got a lot of great references. I think that without that group I don’t know what I would have done and I would be struggling, definitely.

Hanin: When I became pregnant I started to look for something different something that would help me, so I joined a support group for pregnant moms. I benefited a lot from it, I started reaching out to other pregnant moms and helping them find the resources and referrals that they needed to help them complete school.

Kourtney: When I found out I was pregnant I felt a sense of disappointment because my parents had put all their trust in me, especially because they had been hesitant about letting me go to college so far away from home. I felt this great deal of responsibility to prove to my parents that I could still finish school even though I was pregnant; I focused more in school and pushed myself to success academically.

One participant also shared some peer challenges she faced: “I tried to reach out to the very little people who are in school with kids that are my age. I did not have any close friends, and I didn’t really have any friends at all that had kids.” (Samantha)

Although participants expressed the supporting role peers played in their academic success. They also expressed their difficulty being able to find and connect with traditionally-aged parenting students on campus and the limited resources available to parenting students.
Survival of the Fittest

For various reason it is unknown how many traditionally-aged parenting students are enrolled in higher education. The women in this study expressed having the “will power” to overcome their challenges. However the challenges of parenthood are substantial and often time overshadow their role as students. Support services and programs assist parenting students as they navigate the higher education system and balance their roles as parent and student. Resources on campus are often limited or students are unaware of their existence, unfortunately information on pregnant or parenting students is sparse (Brown & Nichols, 2012).

The majority of the women in this study expressed the need for traditionally-aged parenting students to be independent in their academic and personal goals. Moreover they expressed the perceived expectation others have of them and how that contributes to their academic success. Samantha described other’s perceived expectations of her as “my motivation was to prove everyone wrong, I know that’s a weird motivation, but I feel like most people expect you to not finish, or expect you to fail in whatever it is in life. Obviously having a kid at the age of 21 in the middle of college is not ideal, and being a single parent makes it a lot harder. So my motivation was trying to show everyone that I can do what you think I can’t do, and then proving it to myself.”

Discussion

This study allowed for the examination of family, academic, and social factors that lead to academic success from the perspective of traditionally-aged parenting students. The data provides some perspectives on what traditionally-aged parenting students
perceive to be important and supportive to their academic success. Their perspective affirms and dispels some of the previous notions about the academic success of traditionally-aged parenting students.

The lack of studies on traditionally-aged parenting students and studies that focus on why adolescent parenting students who leave school permeate academia, the researcher wanted to know what traditionally-aged parenting students believe to effectively support other traditionally-aged parenting students. All 4 of the participants responded that family, friends, support groups and academic resources would assist traditionally-aged parenting students pursue their baccalaureate degree. The following responses summarize what these women wanted other traditionally-aged parenting student to know:

Veronica: Time management and support is essential. Look for help everywhere you can and be open to assistance. Stay focused on achieving your degree but take your time. Don't overwork or overstretch yourself, being a good parent is your first job. And understand that what you are doing is amazing, you are helping yourself and your child(ren), don't give up. Keep your eye on the prize!

Samantha: Make connections with other parenting students as much as possible. Surrounding yourself with people that are experiencing something similar can be helpful whether that means helping babysit or just having someone to vent to.

Hanin: I would advise them to find and reach out to their support system (family, friends, support groups) when they are overwhelmed or when they need advice. I would also suggest speaking to professors at the beginning of the term, and letting them know that he/she is a parenting student. I would also advise him/her to ask their
professor questions about making accommodations if something happens with the child and the student's work is affected. Most of all, I would advise them to stay in school, even if it takes longer.

Kourtney: Do not to give up with your studies even though it could be hard to juggle all responsibilities at a young age. In the long run, it will be beneficial for your child and you as a parent.

Although qualitative research does not contend to generalize, the findings of this study may offer suggestions that can be considered in a variety of academic settings. For educators and administrators of all levels, this overview suggests a new framework for which to evaluate what is currently being done to promote academic success for traditionally-aged parenting students. Perhaps more importantly, family, friends, professors, and advocates of traditionally-aged parenting students can be informed of the critical points of intervention that may influence future possibilities.

These women identified lifelong relationships with their mothers, involved fathers, peers, support groups and daycare as influences to their academic success. Traditional support, perhaps not, however these support systems each played a key role in enabling these traditionally-aged parenting students in their academic success.

**Summary of Findings**

Chapter four imparted the findings of this study, examining the experiences of traditionally-aged parenting students while pursuing their baccalaureate degree. An
analysis of interview data collected from four Northern California Research Institute traditionally-aged alumni provided the findings of the study.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Research that goes beyond identifying parenting students for statistical purposes is at its earliest stages. Furthermore parenting students have frequently been studied from a deficit perspective in which their hardships and failures are a focal point. This study provides an avenue in which researchers can begin to approach traditionally-aged parenting students in a positive manner, embracing their academic success and enhancing campus climate to provide them with the necessary tools and support.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify contributing factors to traditionally-aged parenting students academic success. Particularly, traditionally-aged parenting Northern California Research Institute alumni. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What role does family support play traditionally-aged parenting student’s persistence in higher education?
2. What role do peers play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students experience in higher education?
3. What role do student organizations play in traditionally-aged parenting student’s experience in higher education?
4. What roles do professors and on-campus resources play in supporting traditionally-aged parenting students?
The women in this study shared their experiences and opinions to identify factors they attributed to play crucial roles in their academic success. This chapter will discuss conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

**Conclusions**

College student departure occurs most often during the first and second year with educationally and economically disadvantaged students departing at higher rates than their college counterparts (Tinto, 2008). In addition to educational and economic background characteristics, academic success and social adjustment impact a student’s persistence (Choy, 2001). Traditionally-aged parenting students encounter similar obstacles to those who have educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Becoming socially integrated in their institution’s environment is crucial to their ability to seek out resources and support groups that enable them obtain their baccalaureate degree.

The women in this study obtained the baccalaureate degree despite having to overcome hardship. As indicated throughout the study, women who successfully integrated themselves at their institution were enabled to succeed academically. These women believed in themselves and their abilities to succeed despite the obstacles they encountered along the way. The responses from the four women who participated in this study were consistent with the findings. Participants attributed their success to the support of at least one person or support system.

Peer relationships and networks can be decisive in empowering young mothers, and can be found in a variety of programs (Lewis, Scarborough, Rose, & Quirin, 2007).
These relationships are enhanced when success stories, solutions, challenges, and disappointments are shared. This study concluded that family, peers and student organizations/support groups are viable support systems for traditionally-aged parenting students. When participants were asked about the role of their family on their academic success, it was apparent that family played a critical role. Veronica shared, “my family expected me to go to college, it wasn’t a choice. It was more like where do you want to go to college, not if I was going.”

Peers played a significant role in the participant’s academic success. For the participants in this study, responses suggested that peers either played either a supporting role or mentor role. Those who played a supporting role helped maintain their educational goals and continued integration at the institution. While those played a mentor role had an influence on the participants decisions and were credited for helping them make informed decisions. These women surrounded themselves with positive and influential individuals who persevered alongside them.

Notably the role of student organizations/support groups was significant according to the participants of this study. Although research acknowledges the role of student organizations, there are very few student organizations/support groups tailored to fit traditionally-aged parenting student needs. The resources these student organization/support group provided participants were invaluable, enabling them to feel confident in their abilities to overcome the hardships of being a parenting student. These women’s incredible experiences and will power were crucial in their self-initiative to seek out additional support to ensure their academic success.
The experiences and opinions shared by the four successful traditionally-aged parenting students in this study emphasize the importance of positive support from family, peers, professors, staff, and the student community because of the incredible influence these factors can have on a traditionally-aged parenting students academic success. These women expressed confidence in themselves and their abilities to succeed because they had significant support throughout their experience. As traditionally-aged parenting students continue to struggle families, peers, professors, staff and the student communities all have a role in striving to integrate traditionally-aged parenting students in campus life.

Findings from the interviews of the four women focused on their experiences and sought to identify contributing factors to their academic success. Responses from the four women who participated in this study revealed four important contributing themes to their academic success. The themes were

- Family support
- Peer support
- Student Organization/Support Group
- Will Power

**Recommendations**

Through the analysis of interview data collected from five interviews, this study explored the experiences of Northern California Research Institute traditionally-aged alumni to uncover contributing factors to their persistence and academic success. Specifically, the research explored support systems and on-campus services that impacted
student persistence and academic success. In all areas, a combination of the two areas explored had a positive impact on the students’ academic success. Furthermore, traditionally-aged parenting students form bonds with family members, peers, mentors, professors, and support groups to create and environment conducive for developing educational resiliency, a phenomenon that despite adversities students attain academic success.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
Consent Letter

Dear __________:
My name is Jennifer Gama-Rodriguez, and I work for the University of California, Davis as an Advisor for Educational Talent Search (ETS). I am also a graduate student with the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Sacramento. I am conducting a study regarding potential key factors that contribute to the academic success of traditionally-aged parenting students while pursuing their undergraduate degree.
In order to accomplish this, I need to identify a few individuals who are interested in giving their time and reflecting on their educational experiences via an interview. The interviews will be conducted separately and will be recorded to assist the researcher in analyzing data. The recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the research project and will not be shared with anyone. Your participation includes and interview(s) on the subjects of college awareness, the role(s) your parents, professors, peers and community played, and any other resources and/or experiences that you believe contributed to your success. The findings of all the interviews will be analyzed and compared. The interview will take approximately an hour, and will take place at your convenience at a location convenient for you. Your anonymity will be protected and the process does not pose any risk of harm to the participants whatsoever.
You may not personally benefit from participating in this research. However, your reflections about your experiences will add to the growing body of research about the educational barriers and successes of traditionally-aged parenting students.
In the published research report, the researcher will use fictitious names or refer to respondents as “the respondent.” This will preserve your anonymity and privacy. However, the findings from this study will be published in the form of a thesis for the California State University, Sacramento.
If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at [email protected] or by email at [email protected]. Thank you for your support in this research project. Your participation is voluntary. You may decline to be a participant in this study without any consequences. Your signature below indicates that you read this page and agree to participate in the research.

__________________________  _________________________
Signature of Participant Date
APPENDIX B
Interview Questions

1. Please describe your background (where you grew up, your schooling, major, and your family)
2. What made you decide to go to college?
3. What was the greatest challenge you faced when you decided you wanted to go to college?
4. When did you find out you were pregnant?
5. Describe your reaction to the news?
6. How did your priorities and academic goals change?
7. Describe the role that your parents have had in your education before and after the pregnancy
8. Describe any areas where your parents were not sure how to support you.
9. Describe your involvement on campus?
   If so, what clubs, organizations, etc.?
10. Describe the role of clubs or student organizations had on your education before and after your pregnancy
11. Describe the on-campus resources that were available and you took advantage of
12. Describe the role these on-campus resources played in your success
13. Describe the most influential support system to your success (i.e. family, student organizations, on-campus resources)
14. Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you think is important to include in this interview?
References


http://doi.org/10.2307/1129936


