A CASE STUDY OF STAFF'S SELF-EVALUATION OF SUCCESS AT A FORMER CAL-SAFE SCHOOL IN SAN FRANCISCO

A Project

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By
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Abstract

of

A CASE STUDY OF STAFF’S SELF-EVALUATION OF SUCCESS AT A FORMER CAL-SAFE SCHOOL IN SAN FRANCISCO

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This project investigated how staff members at a former Cal-SAFE in San Francisco measure their success when working with pregnant and parenting youth. This qualitative exploratory content analysis operated from a foundation of grounded theory and relied on snowball sampling method to acquire seven participants. Analysis of the data demonstrated nuanced and abstract short-term and long-term assessments of success among the sample. Significant reliance on personal philosophies to help put progress in perspective and potentially mitigated feelings of burnout was present. One key finding included an emphasis on student-driven outcomes in line with aspects of a harm reduction model. This study demonstrates the importance for further research around the connection between implementation of person-centered frameworks within agencies and programs and a reduction of burnout symptoms, including depersonalization and compassion fatigue. Implications for social work practice and policy are discussed.

Maria Dinis, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Committee Chair

Date April 26, 2016
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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Our globalized, rapidly changing world has been set in motion by the momentum of technological advances offering solutions and cures to issues that have plagued societies for hundreds of years; developments which can improve and extend peoples' lives, as well as complicate them further. Western society's emphasis on growth and productivity has lead to the creation of a self-driving car, but has failed to minimize or reduce pressing social problems and 46.7 million Americans continue to live in poverty and its consequences (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The staggering gap between the classes continues to grow, pushing certain groups further into the margins and exposing unsustainable injustice. Those compelled to dedicate their professional lives to addressing these systemic inequities are members of the helping professions, which may include lawyers, teachers, doctors and nurses, public health workers, educators and social workers. Factors which often define social service work include a general lack of attention, investment, resources and funding for inflated caseloads and at-risk, vulnerable populations, and together create the perfect recipe for burnout.

Burnout is a mental, emotional, psychological phenomenon often associated with high pressure Western societies which often place work-related demands on workers which are greater than they are capable of providing (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). While burnout may be present across all fields in this capitalistic society, the implications, and stakes, for helping professions are much greater. Intimate work with traumatized, vulnerable and at-risk human beings is complex and when staff do not receive adequate
support or begin to believe they are ineffective or incapable of performing their duties, they may experience feelings of frustration depersonalization and compassion fatigue toward their clients, causing unintentional harm (Ben-Zur & Michael). The author is specifically curious how social servants working with pregnant and parenting teens are able to manage goals and identify measurements of success, even when the more visible indicators society uses to assess progress are not present. Additionally, the author would like to gain a better understanding of how validating growth and progress in one’s work may operate as a preventative measure against burnout.

Pregnant and parenting youth in the U.S. face significant barriers, including lower education attainment and lifetime incomes than women who delay childbirth (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011). Graduation rates demonstrate that the added barrier of becoming a mother makes it difficult to complete their educations (Kane, Morgan, Mullan Harris & Guilkey, 2013) and teen mothers experience unemployment and poverty at rates much higher than their counterparts (Institute of Education Sciences). The literature demonstrates that providing wrap-around services and supports into alternative education programs is beneficial for both mother and child (Sadler et al., 2007), however the social and environmental realities of becoming a teen parent, especially in low-income and urban areas paint a stark picture for these young women and their children (Meade, Kershaw & Ickovicks, 2008). While much of the research in this field has been done around strategies and programs to effectively support these young families, little research has been done around how to support the providers who work with them.
The indicators of growth in individuals and families are often more subtle and nuanced than much of society would like to believe. The change process can be slow and repetitive (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016). Social servants tasked with supporting vulnerable and at-risk populations through the change process without adequate support of their own can experience feelings of frustration, helplessness and depression, leading to depersonalization of clients and compassion fatigue (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). The author of this study would like to investigate how helping professionals can identify short-term and long-term successes in order to help social servants put their work in perspective and reframe their beliefs around efficacy and change to prevent damaging symptoms of burnout.

This chapter will describe the research question investigated in this project. The author will begin with a description of the background of the problem that necessitates research, a statement of this problem, an explanation of the purpose of this study and the formulated research question. Following, there will be an introduction to the theoretical framework used to guide the work and how it will be applied, definitions of terms used in this project, assumptions and the justification for the project, delimitations of this research and finally a summary of what was shared in chapter one, as well as an overview of all of the chapters.

**Background of the Problem**

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Service's Office of Adolescent Affairs (2016), not only has teen pregnancy has been on a steady decline for the past twenty years, it went down 10% between 2012 and 2013 alone. The Office of
Adolescent Affairs shares that in 1991, there were 61.8 births for every 1,000 teen girls ages 15-19, which has dropped over to 29.4 for every 1,000 2012. That said, the U.S. continues to have one of the highest teen pregnancy rates of any developed country, including Canada and the United Kingdom (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Adolescent Affairs). There are many competing cycles that can be found in the lives of parenting teens, including intergenerational considerations and multiple births to one adolescent. The negative outcomes associated with teen pregnancy are both complicated and well-documented.

The U.S. Department of Health’s Office of Adolescent Affairs (2016) estimates that each year, pregnant and parenting youth cost taxpayers $9.4 and $28 billion dollars due to health care costs, loss in tax revenues, foster care and the criminal justice system, among other expenditures. Data obtained from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) of youth who were fourteen to twenty one years old in 1979, found that only 35% of those teen mothers graduated from high school with a diploma by the age of thirty, in contrast to the 85% of women who postponed parenthood or never became parents (Ferre, Gerstenbluth, Rossi & Triunfo, 2013). It is not difficult to see the connection between a lack of a high school diploma and long-term financial stability. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), a high school dropout earns an average annual income of $20,241, about $10,000 dollars less than their peers who do graduate; they experience an unemployment rate of around 12%, three times higher than people with a college degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015) and they experience poverty at a rate of 30.8% (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011). For teen mothers, these statistic
become even more dire; by age 30, their annual earnings are only 58% of the those who did not become parents until later in life, making it infinitely more difficult to attain any degree of security, stability and autonomy (Institute of Education Sciences).

Statement of the Research Problem

Considering the multifaceted and complex social and personal issues parenting youth face, it can be difficult for professionals who work with this population to know how best to support these young women. As an exploratory study, this project will investigate how classroom teachers, a school nurse, social worker and guidance counselor at a former Cal-SAFE school measure their personal and professional success with this particular group. The Code of Ethics published by the National Association of Social Workers (2008) states in section 4.01, Competence, the necessity for Social Workers to remain relevant in their field and section 5.02, Evaluation and Research, demands that Social Workers stay committed to evaluation and the evolution of interventions and practices in their work. Ideally, this study will contribute to the understanding of how personal competence and evaluation are used by social workers who serve populations that traditionally have poor outcomes like foster youth, as well as those with high recidivism rates, including sex offenders, domestic abusers and people living with addiction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the school wide and personal goals of staff members at a former Cal-SAFE school and how they measure their progress in achieving them. Ideally this project will benefit social work practice with vulnerable
populations on the macro, mezzo and micro levels. On a macro level, this research may benefit not only people who work with parenting youth, but all social workers in the field who are engaged with high-risk populations that have traditionally negative life outcomes by allowing for acceptance and examination of alternative ways of measuring success. On a mezzo level, this study may allow for this former Cal-SAFE school and others like this to discuss their practices and discover new ways to address certain problems and support students. Finally, on a micro level this work will allow social workers, teachers and other school staff to reflect upon, observe and note their beliefs, strategies and goals for individual personal and professional growth.

Research Question

This study explores the following research question: What are the goals of staff who work with parenting teens at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco’s Mission District, and how do they measure their success and progress in achieving these goals?

Theoretical Framework

This study mainly utilizes the social constructivism theory, with an emphasis on cultural constructivism. In the subsequent paragraph, the author will discuss both social constructivism and its offshoot cultural constructivism, followed by a description of how they can be applied to the research.

Social and Cultural Constructivism

Constructivism theory will be described here in this section. First, social constructivism will be explained and then cultural constructivism.
Social constructivism holds that all ideas, concepts, beliefs, and knowledge is actively created and composed through and by society as it develops and evolves. Therefore what we “know” is through often subliminal consensus and acceptance, and is visibly demonstrated through our behavior, language, literature, art, music and, as Cottone (2004) notes, even our interpersonal relationships. Cottone further posits that there are no “original” or independent thoughts, that all thinking is a product of collaboration and communication, beginning when one enters this world. While this is a relatively complex and complicated concept for many to process, especially as we like to believe that our thoughts and ideas are our own, there is much scientific, biological evidence of the phenomenon of social constructivism (Cottone).

Take for example, the concept of “intelligence.” According to Cottone (2004), the belief that someone is “intelligent” is embedded both within the context of the time period which they are alive, as well as their biological drive to survive. Today, the people who developed the technology for 3D printing may be considered to be extremely intelligent or even “geniuses” by their peers and society at-large; however, two hundred years ago, when such opportunities and advancements were obviously nonexistent, the concept of being a “genius” would have been measured against the baseline standards of the time. Additionally, “intelligence” serves another purpose as we are biologically hardwired as humans to survive in our environments, and certain abilities and skills are useful for survival of both the individual and the species (Cottone). Here, Cottone points to the works of Maturana, which established that the concept of knowledge is the combination of both biology and our social conditions as we are capable of acting on.
biological urges while simultaneously acknowledging the socially constructed term or concept attached to this behavior. A most basic example of this co-occurring process might be eating in the evening after a long day because we are hungry and require nourishment for survival, while understanding that as a society we call this process dinner, and that it is eaten as the last in a series of “meals” throughout the day.

Second, cultural constructivism is a more specific extension of the broader term, social constructivism, as it relates to subgroups of the general term “society.” It stands to reason that if society at-large co-creates both physical and ideological concepts, then each country, ethnicity and culture will, in turn, have unique and varying social constructs, beliefs and practices. While differences in social constructs from one culture to the next are obvious, the connection between those differences and historical events and experiences may not be as well understood or accepted (Franks, 2014). It is obvious that culture has a bearing on people’s behavior, as many immigrants struggle to adapt to life in a country with socially constructed customs, beliefs, practices and even laws that are vastly different than those of their homeland. As various groups and populations within one country or even one state have had different historical experiences, even their health, educational opportunities, economic status and life expectancy can be affected. The social construction of race is linked to historical atrocities including slavery, and has functioned to systemically oppress people of color for centuries (Machery & Faucher, 2005). Within both the dominant and oppressed groups in this country, there are diverse customs, beliefs and practices that have been socially co-constructed and then transmitted from generation to generation (Machery & Faucher).
Application of Social and Cultural Constructivism

This research project centers on the perspectives, goals and beliefs of school staff at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco, California. In this state during the academic year of 2014-2015, almost 65% of public school teachers were White (not Hispanic), while 75% of the student body population identified as a race other than White, including 53% who identified as Latino and 6% who identified as Black or African American (California Department of Education, 2015). The gaps between races are also visible in teen pregnancy and birth rates, with twice as many Latina and Black youth becoming parents than those of their white counterparts (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). The significance of this racial discrepancy cannot be ignored. While the concept of race is a social construct with great historical ties, the cultural beliefs and practices that may be associated with certain ethnicities are very real and present aspects of daily life and therefore applicable to this study.

Social constructivism is relevant to this research as the project attempts to understand the goals and hopes school staff has for the teen mothers whom they work. It would be irresponsible to take their expectations for the young women at face value without recognizing that their beliefs about what it means to be successful are inextricably embedded in the socially constructed notion of "success." Beyond the concept of "success," there is also the socially created and established idea of a "goal" or "goals" to be set and then achieved. These ideas become even more complex when you begin to factor in cultural differences that may exist between staff and students. Based upon the racial gaps noted in the previous paragraph, cultural constructivism must be
factored in when examining beliefs and feelings about teen pregnancy, as well as appropriate goals, hopes and ideas about what it means to be successful.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout this project and relevant to social work in various school settings.

**Alternative Education:** Perspective-based educational program which recognizes that not everybody has the same needs or learns in the same way (Chalker & Brown, 1999). Alternative programs recognize the weaknesses of traditional education and aim to meet the mental, emotional and academic needs of at-risk students (Goodman, 1999). Programs may take many forms including transitional, extended day, inclusionary, pullout, academic acceleration and behavioral intervention among others (Chalker & Brown).

**Burnout:** This phenomenon is characterized by emotional fatigue, disconnection and depersonalization and reduced feelings of accomplishment and achievement and is often experienced in professions that are under-funded and/or low-paying and that engage intimately with people, groups and communities that are at-risk, including teaching, nursing and social work (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007).

**Cal-SAFE:** Former California state program (2000-2015) which worked to provide extra support and services for pregnant and parenting youth in public schools (California Department of Education, 2015)

**Change Process:** Referred to as the “change process” in this study, the term refers to the Stages of Change or Transtheoretical Model developed in the 1970s by Prochaska and
DiClemented which divided the process by which individuals incorporate lasting change in their lives and behavior into six separate stages. These include pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and termination (Boston University School of Public Health, 2016).

**Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act which ensures the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities, including public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

**Harm Reduction:** Practical strategies, beliefs, programs, policies and practice that aim to reduce negative consequences related to drug use. Additionally, it is a social justice movement grounded in respect for individuals to make choices for themselves and meeting people where they are (www.harmreduction.org).

**Helping Profession:** Careers centered on nurturing “the growth of or addresses the problems of a person’s physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional or spiritual well-being” and may include therapy, counseling, social work, education and medicine (www.wiktionary.org)

**Person-Centered Theory:** Originally developed by Carl Rogers in the 1940s, person-centered theory places an emphasis on an individual’s ability to make positive choices for themselves based upon their experiences and needs and perceives clients as “competent, trustworthy and forward-moving” (Capuzzi & Gross, 2003).

**Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPSC):** A California state credential that is required for certain public school staff including school psychologists, guidance counselors and school social workers (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2016).
Strengths-Based Approach: Individualized practice approach which seeks to identify and then build upon strengths of individuals, families and communities. In opposition to deficit approaches which focus on problems, these approaches are tailored to the uniqueness of the client and also acknowledge and incorporate understanding around a person in their environment (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008).

Teen Mothers: A biological female who becomes pregnant and gives birth between the ages of thirteen and nineteen years old (UNICEF, 2008).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study: 1) that staff at the former Cal-SAFE school have personal and professional goals for their students; 2) that staff at the former Cal-SAFE school reflect upon, assess and monitor their individual and collective work for progress; and 3) there are multiple ways to measure success and growth in a person that may not be reflected in quantitative data or information.

Justification

The results of this work may help not only social workers working with parenting youth, but also those who work with groups and populations that, by traditional markers of societal success, do not do well. As the author previously noted when explaining the purpose of the study, both NASW code 4.01 Competence and NASW code 5.02 Research and Evaluation are essential to the advancement of the field (National Association of Social Workers, 2016). While a component of abiding by these two codes is to actively remain up-to-date on relevant and emerging research, techniques and strategies, it also involves individual self-reflection and personal evaluation. Taking time to critically
discuss and analyze one's own practice, preferences, interventions and evidence of success can contribute to a social worker's growth and have larger implications for the field in general.

The author of this study hopes that ultimately this research will, in some small way, contribute to burnout prevention in social work and other helping professions. Burnout occurs when someone enters a job with high expectations and motivations, but instead experiences disappointment, often in relation to being unable to meet their objectives due to a variety of barriers (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). This emotional state associated with one's work includes reduced feelings of accomplishment and achievement, as obstacles feel insurmountable and goals cannot be met (Ben-Zur & Michael). This study may create a better understanding of specific ways helping professionals can reframe and measure goals, as well as create a dialogue about how to maintain moral and instill a sense of hope in the workplace.

**Delimitations**

This qualitative research project does not include surveys or any numerical information beyond demographic collected at the beginning of each interview; therefore findings are not generalizable. The snowball sampling method utilized in this study is also a non-probability sampling method that precludes generalizability of study outcomes. There is no information whatsoever about any specific students who currently attend or previously attended this former Cal-SAFE school. All data collected via interviews is limited to the personal practices, beliefs and goals of staff and cannot be
independently verified. The scope and size of the study is limited to the nine staff members at the former Cal-SAFE school in the Mission District of San Francisco.

Summary

Chapter one provides an introduction to the subject of the study, a brief description of the background of this issue, a statement of the problem, the objective of this study and a discussion of the theoretical framework applied to the study. Additionally, Chapter one contains definitions of key terms, a description of the project's limitations and a closing summary. The following chapter, chapter two, is a review of the literature that is relevant to the project. It includes sections about the history of teen pregnancy in the United States, outcomes for teen parents, overview of alternative education, burnout in helping professions and a description of the gaps in the literature. Chapter three outlines the research methods used and chapter four presents the findings of the research. Chapter five examines the results as they relate to the research question, as well as potential implications and recommendations for the field of social work.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

The following chapter will be organized into three main topics, each with several subsections. The initial section will provide a very brief overview of the history of teen pregnancy, followed by an introduction to the phenomenon as it presently exists in the U.S. The author will provide a statistical background before exploring the complexities and correlated factors referred to as "the web," which often result in negative outcomes for teen mothers including educational attainment, financial implications and mental health issues. The second section combines Truancy and Alternative Education and discusses environmental and social factors which cause students to be absent from school and the effect it has on their lives long-term, as well as an overview of Alternative Education programs in the U.S. This section also discusses the implications of such programs for pregnant and parenting youth. The last section reviews the literature around burnout in the helping professions by first defining the concept and dimensions of the phenomenon, then discussing contributing factors and implications for prevention. The third topic is followed by a section discussing some of the gaps in the literature and the chapter is concluded with a summary.

Brief History of Teen Pregnancy

Much of the historical literature about pregnancy and motherhood does not focus specifically on teen mothers, but rather on women who gave birth out of wedlock. This theme demonstrates that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the age of a mother was far less of a social issue, as was her marital status at the time of conception.
While many of the single mothers described in the literature may not have been teenagers at the time of their pregnancy, it is important to note that statistical evidence from the National Center for Health Statistics shows today 77% of teen pregnancies are unplanned (Mosher, Jones, Abma, 2012) and almost 89% of teen births are out of wedlock (Hamilton, Martin, Osterman & Curtin, 2015).

American and European eighteenth and nineteenth century society coveted the narrative of a young, beautiful and innocent woman who is cruelly seduced by an older, powerful man and then abandoned, pregnant and unmarried. This poor, misguided figure is the “Fallen Woman;” a product of the misogyny and sexual repression of the times, and a cautionary tale for little girls. Romanticized and fetishized in novels such as *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, or the painting “Found” by Dante Rosetti, the reality for “Fallen Women” was extremely difficult. In her article, “Fallen Women and the London Lock Hospital Laws,” Ruiz (2010) describes that Victorian society considered prostitutes to be women who had been seduced and subsequently abandoned, and therefore must turn to selling her body for survival, leading to her ruination and eventual death. In fact, according to Ruiz, there was no discernable difference between a Fallen Woman and a prostitute, so that the former was just a euphemism for the latter. Ruiz describes how after the passage of the Contagious Disease Acts in the 1860s, prostitutes with venereal diseases were committed to Lock Hospitals, whose goal was to both treat and reform the women. However, Ruiz’s research establishes that Fallen Women who became pregnant were denied the reformatory opportunities offered by Lock Hospitals or Magdalen Houses, and instead were essentially committed to workhouses. These
workhouses were created after the New Poor Law of 1834, and were not unlike prison labor camps as the women were forced to wear uniforms, perform endless hours of physically painful, monotonous work and were provided insufficient, inedible food rations, earning these establishments the nickname, “The Bastilles” (Ruiz).

**History of Teen Pregnancy & Race**

Just as there are racial disparities among young mothers today, the negative outcomes for young, single mothers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were intensified by race and can be directly linked to the social effects of slavery (Bodenhorn, 2007). Referencing other authors including Tocqueville, Du Bois and Fogel and Engerman, Bodenhorn acknowledges that the systematic separation and destruction of families by slave owners was just one of many factors that may have had intergenerational consequences on the American black family (Bodenhorn). Bodenhorn uses 1896’s census data to back up Du Bois’s assertion that the tearing apart of slave families eventually lead to an imbalance in the sexes of African Americans, making it more difficult for Black women to find a suitable mate to co-parent. Bodenhorn also found that African American children were twice as likely to be raised by single mothers as white. Relying on the sample of census data collected during 1860, Bodenhorn establishes that black children raised in mother-only households were less likely to attend school than both their two-parent black and single-mother white counterparts, which in turn lead to higher rates of poverty among other social difficulties. While he was unable to find longitudinal data for these youths, Bodenhorn states that an examination of cross-
sectional data can still provide insight on the lifetime outcomes of these women and their children.

**Parenting Youth Outcomes**

The following section will introduce the complex web of factors which may contribute to teen pregnancy, including poverty and adverse childhood experiences. It will also provide an examination of the research regarding causality, including intergeneration implications. Additional information included in this section addresses financial outcomes and barriers for teen mothers, educational attainment rates among parenting teens and a description of potential mental health issues associated with this phenomenon.

**The Web**

The researchers in several studies agree: Teen mothers and their children have, across the board, poorer life outcomes than those born to women who delayed pregnancy (Brown, Harris, Woods, Buman & Cox, 2012; Institute of Education Sciences, 2011; Kane et al., 2013; National Conference of State Legislators, 2016; National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 2007; Patel & Sen, 2012). While this trend has been consistently proven across the research over decades and centuries, the question as to whether or not teen motherhood causes poor outcomes, or is the result of poor circumstances is more divisive and difficult to answer. Data gathered from both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016) does points to a continuous, steady decline over the past twenty years, including a decline of ten percent between 2012 and 2013 alone, however, teen pregnancy is far from an
eradicated social problem, especially for communities of color. The data that has been gathered by the U.S. Department of Health & Human services among other agencies, maintains that despite the decrease overall, a significant discrepancy exists between White teenagers and their Latina/Hispanic and African American counterparts. Despite major reductions among communities of color between 1991 and 2012, including a drop of 67% to 11% for Black teens alone, this group still leads in the number of teens who become mothers each year (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2015). According to the Centers for Disease Control, Black and Hispanic teens in the U.S. in 2013-2014 continued to become pregnant at rates two times higher than White youth, with American/Alaskan native youth at one and a half times higher. Additionally, the United States overall experiences higher teen pregnancy rates than those of any other Western developed country, including both the United Kingdom and Canada (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services).

There appears to be a general attitude toward what causes teen motherhood, including high-risk sexual activity; however, the social factors and motivations are much more complex and difficult to pinpoint. And though it is not difficult to connect how low socioeconomic status and other social barriers may put young women more at-risk of becoming pregnant, it is significantly harder to prove causation. Furthermore, it is important to note when discussing this issue, that not all teen pregnancies are unplanned or undesired, which may have an impact on long-term consequences (Pires, Araújo-Pedroso & Canavarro, 2014). Researchers who argue that negative life circumstances do, in fact, contribute to teen pregnancy often turn to what they refer to as the intergenerational cycle of young motherhood. In their ecological approach to
understanding this phenomenon, Meade, Kershaw and Ickovics (2008) refer to several studies done in the U.S., Great Britain and New Zealand that each found the children of teen mothers became teen mothers themselves at much higher rates. One of these, a longitudinal study conducted in Baltimore, Maryland, followed a group of Black teen mothers as their children began to get older and found that 33% of their daughters became teen mothers, as opposed to 21% of youth born to mothers who waited to become pregnant (Furstenberg, Levine & Brooks-Gunn, 1990). Manlove (1997), similarly, took a representative population sample of British teen mothers and found that 20% of their offspring became parents, versus only 8% of older mothers’ children. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997) conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, further revealed that children of teen mothers are 66% more likely to become teen parents themselves than children whose mothers who gave birth later in life (Meade et al.).

The theme of intergenerationality is consistent throughout the research, however, those who do not believe that there is direct causality between being born to a teen mother and becoming a teen mother, including (Meade et al., 2008), point out that there were many psychosocial factors that could not be accounted for when assessing those women, like adverse early childhood experiences, among others. Continuing the argument that there is no direct causation, researchers hold up the flip side of those statistics, which they claim actually demonstrate that the majority of the daughters of teen mothers do not become teen mothers, in turn. These researchers believe that this “cycle”
can actually be explained by exposure to social and environmental factors associated with teen parenthood, which make them more vulnerable and higher risk (Meade et al.).

**Untangling the web: Education & Socioeconomic Status**

One such adverse experience that the children of teen mothers may experience is poverty. Data obtained from the same National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (Kane, Morgan, Mullan Harris & Guilkey, 2013) of youth who were 14 to 21 years old in 1979, found that only 35% of teen mothers graduated from high school with a diploma by age 30 in contrast to the 85% of women who postponed parenthood or never became parents. Kane et al. went on to examine this phenomenon further by taking the data obtained from the NLSY study and re-running it to exclusively produce information about the educational attainment of those teen mothers. Using four different statistical strategies, including propensity score matching and semiparametric maximum likelihood estimation, Kane et al. determined that teenage mothers receive .7 to 1.9 fewer years of education than young women who delay the birth of their first child until at least twenty years old. Furthermore, data collected by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy found that only 2% of teen mothers will go on to complete college by the age of thirty, and women who give birth while attending community college are 65% less likely to finish than those who do not (National Conference of State Legislators, 2016).

It is not difficult to see the connection between a lack of a high school diploma and financial stability: The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) estimates that a high school dropout earns an average annual income of $20,241, about $10,000 dollars less than their peers who do graduate, and according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2015), they
experience an unemployment rate of around 12%, 3 times higher than people with a college degree and experience poverty at a rate of 30.8% (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011). According to data gathered by the Institute of Education Sciences, when it comes to teen mothers, these statistics become even more dire. They found that by age 30, the annual earnings of a woman who became a parent in her teens are only 58% of those who delay parenthood until later in life, making it more difficult for them to attain security, stability and autonomy (Institute of Education Sciences). While teen mothers who do complete their high school diplomas clearly will have better opportunities at obtaining some type of employment, their low-college completion rates described in the section above, make it difficult for them to exceed certain financial ceilings. Data obtained by the U.S. Department of Education (2015) noted that young adults ages twenty-four to thirty-four with bachelor’s degrees who worked full-time in 2013 earned a median salary of $48,500, in contrast to the $30,000 those with just a high school diploma or GED received in the same year, a significant 62% less which remained true across gender and racial demographics.

In addition to the financial implications of low-educational attainment, a study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that 77% of teen pregnancies in the U.S. today are unplanned (Mosher, Jones & Abma, 2012) and almost 89% of teen births are out of wedlock (Hamilton, Martin, Osterman & Curtin, , 2015). In their article for the National Research Bureau, Berglas, Brindis and Cohen (2003) describe that teens who become parents are more likely to get married than those who do not; however, as the stigma around teen parenthood has diminished somewhat, almost 80% of teen father do
not marry their child’s mother, which is a 30% increase from 1960. Those who do marry, however, experience divorce at rates two times higher than women who delay marriage until they are at least twenty five. According to an article done for The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy by Stewart Ng and Kaye (2012), of the 13% of teen mothers who were unmarried but cohabitating with the father, 20% were white, while 13% were Hispanic and only 2% were Black. Stewart Ng and Kaye go on to determine that three quarters of the 72% teen mothers they describe as “single” live with relatives of some sort. In addition to the loss of income when there is only one primary parent, roughly 24% receive child support from the father, and those who do reported that they only received about $2,000 a year (Stewart Ng & Kaye).

A 2014 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that for a middle-income, two parent household the average yearly cost to raise a child ranges from about $12,800 to $14,970. Citing the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, the report claims that food and housing are among the top expenses for parents today. In addition to providing basics, the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (2014) estimates the average yearly cost for childcare in the U.S. to be $11,666 a year, with a range of $3,582 to $18,773, depending upon location. The combination of low educational attainment and limited job opportunities and absence of financial support from a partner, many of these steep costs drive teen mothers to remain in low-economic brackets for extended periods. According more research conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (Stewart Ng & Kaye, 2012), 63%
of teen mothers receive some form of government benefits within the first year their child is born, including 55% who were on Medicaid.

**Untangling the Web: Teen Pregnancy & Mental Health**

Due to the social stigma and assumptions around teen parenthood, it is not necessarily difficult to understand how many of the negative outcomes discussed so far could occur. Beyond logistical hardships; however, teen mothers also are also at risk of experiencing mental and psychological consequences of early childbearing. Research conducted at a parent support program by Sadler et al. (2007) revealed that 33% of the 65 participants were mildly to moderately depressed according to their Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI II) scores. The BDI II is a twenty one question inventory developed by Aaron T. Beck, designed to be appropriate for a 6th grade reading level which consists of four ranges of depression from mild to severe. According to Brown, Harris, Woods, Buman and Cox (2012), Sadler et al.'s findings are consistent with the literature which have shown a range of teen mother depression rates from 28%-59%, depending on sample size and other research variables. Brown et al. describe that many of the factors that contribute to these statistics include limited social support, poor self-esteem and stress associated with low socioeconomic status. In their longitudinal research conducted at a hospital based “teen tot” program in an urban neighborhood, Brown et al. collected data from young women who became first time parents when they were under the-age of 18 over the course of three years, from 2003 to 2005. In this study, the researchers used a modified version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CESDS) due to the lower reading levels of the participants, which consist of 20 questions each
scored like a Likert scale with a total possible score of 60. Over the course of a year, 120 teen mothers responded to the questionnaire at three different times; once at the beginning to establish a baseline, a second time at twelve weeks, and a third at one year--with the hypothesis that the levels of depression experienced by the young women would be modified by their baseline scores (Brown et al.). In their analysis, Brown et al. found that 50% of the young women experienced depression at all three points, far above the national averages for non-parenting teens of the same ages.

A 2012 study by Patel and Sen used a subset of the data that was obtained by the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) in order to examine the long-term physical and mental health consequences of teen mothers and attempt to determine whether negative outcomes existed prior, or can be attributed to having been teen parents. Patel and Sen focused on 4,271 of the original 12,868 participants who reported their Physical Component Summary (PCS) and Mental Component Summary (MCS) for the year 2006, all of whom were female. Using a multivariable regression framework which controlled for factors including race, ethnicity, region among others, Patel and Sen found significant negative associations for women who had become mothers in their teens and the state of their physical and mental health by the time they reached age forty. Among their findings, were lower PCS and MCS scores than their counterparts, as well as notable differences in their backgrounds, especially race. In their discussion, Patel and Sen write that the results of their research strongly implicate that the experience of being a teen mother does in fact contribute to diminished physical and emotional health later in life, and go on to speculate that this may be connected to financial strain and other life stress
that results in an overall lack of resources and investment in themselves. This study by Patel and Sen is one of the only longitudinal studies to focus on the physical and mental health of teen mothers as they age, and have serious implications for providers who work directly with pregnant and parenting youth. Considering what they found, it is important to note that in the study by Sadler et al. (2007), depression among teen mothers was inversely correlated with self-esteem, and in the study by Brown et al. (2012), depression was inversely correlated with higher levels of social support. These findings are supported by other studies, including research out of Portugal around social support and teen mother depression, which concluded that feeling supported, particularly by the mother and father of the child, acts as a buffer in reducing depression symptoms (Pires, Araújo-Pedrosa & Canvarro, 2014). Pires et al. also note that perceptions around the negative impact their pregnancies will have on their quality of life correlates to levels of depression. All of these findings suggest that investment in improving the self-esteem of teen mothers, providing positive frameworks around expectations and quality of life, and developing strategies to help bolster social support and strengthen relationships could improve the immediate and long-term mental health of teen mothers. Additional research, including a study done by Leplatte, Rosenblum, Stanton, Miller and Muzik (2012), suggests that incorporating some form of therapy or mental health counseling into the primary care of a pregnant or parenting teen can reduce depression symptoms and other negative emotions.
Truancy and Alternative Education for Teen Mothers

This section defines the concept of truancy and addresses some of the causing factors, racial demographics and consequences of chronic absenteeism. The following information is then connected to the rationale behind alternative education, and provides an overview of the philosophical frameworks and types of programs for at-risk youth. The section wraps up by examining the literature pertaining to alternative education programs for pregnant and parenting youth and presenting potential benefits found in the current research.

Truancy in the U.S.

According to Section 48260 (a) of California’s Education Code, a student is considered truant if they miss thirty minutes of instruction without an accepted, approved excuse three times or more within a school year (California Department of Education, 2016). By this definition, one might argue that a majority of students may be classified as “truant” at some point throughout their public school education. However, chronic truancy is defined in Section 48263.6 of the Education code as any student who misses 10% or more of the school days of a specific school year (California Department of Education). Additionally, a student may be considered a “Habitual Truant” they have been reported for truancy three or more times within the period of one school year. Each of these definitions has a corresponding intervention, beginning with contacting the student’s parent(s) or caregiver(s) and going so far as taking them to court. However these interventions do little to examine and address the underlying causes and barriers that prevent children and adolescents from getting to school each day.
The concepts of truancy and subsequent school attendance laws and policies in the U.S. date back to the late 19th century when Massachusetts passed legislation in an attempt to curb child labor. In his piece, “Truancy Laws: How Are They Affecting Our Legal Systems, Our Schools, and the Students Involved?” Gleich-Bope (2014) describes that by the early 20th century, thirty-two other states actually had school attendance laws in place; and by 1918, and the remaining states followed their lead. However, he goes on to elaborate that the solution these policies provided was, ironically, to simply remove the truant students from school altogether, and did nothing to target the roots of their absences. These punitive and zero-tolerance policies established over two hundred years ago are the foundation from which current legislation and interventions have evolved (Gleich-Bope,).

A national survey conducted by Johnston et al. revealed that 11% of eighth graders, 16% of high school sophomores and 35% of seniors had skipped at least one day of school in the last thirty days (Henry & Huizinga, 2007). The available research has established that the types of families who usually end up in truancy court are single-parent families, families where parent(s)/caregiver(s) have multiple jobs, and families that are experiencing low socioeconomic status (Gleich-Bope, 2014). The research also shows that school districts that have a disproportionate number of students and families living in poverty have higher numbers of chronic and habitual truant students. Henry and Huizinga observed, for example, that third graders in urban schools in Denver, Colorado were chronic or habitual at 11%; and eighth graders and twelfth graders at 23% and 35% respectively.
Children and adolescents may not attend school for a variety of reasons including community and campus violence, lack of access to transportation, language barriers, cultural norms and practices, bullying and mental health issues, among others. In addition to physical, emotional or mental barriers, young people attending public schools in the United States get put on an academic trajectory very early. Chalker and Brown (1999) declare that the research consistently and accurately reveals that we can actually identify the students that will not complete their educations by the third grade. According to Chalker and Brown, factors associated with these statistics include low socioeconomic status, attending a school with a majority of the student body also living in poverty, being retained and not becoming literate by the third grade. Chalker and Brown cite the 1996 Carnegie Task Force on Learning’s findings that the “window of opportunity” for children to become successful learners is between the ages of three and ten, or roughly preschool to about fourth or fifth grade.

**Attendance, Performance & Race**

It is impossible and irresponsible to discuss public education in the United States without acknowledging the Achievement Gap. Roughly put, the Achievement Gap is the vast disparity across the board in all academic measures of success between White and Asian students, and their Latino and African American counterparts. Understanding the Achievement Gap involves deep investigation into the intricate, multifaceted political, economic, environmental forms of institutional, structural racism, inequality and oppression that exists in this country. While this research project does not focus specifically on this social phenomenon, it is important to establish that, in many ways,
racial disparities in teen pregnancy and the Achievement Gap are consequences of the same social injustices and inequities.

In Kamala Harris's 2014 "Report on California's Elementary School Truancy & Absenteeism Crisis," the California Attorney General cites a study conducted by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. (CFE) did regarding issues of truancy and academic performance in New York public schools. According to their mission statement, the creation of California Fiscal Equality, Inc. is the result of a 1993 Supreme Court case, CFE vs. The State of New York, which was filed by parents and educators who believed that education as a civil right was being violated in that state. CFE Inc., secured funding for research to investigate the problem of truancy in New York City, and in 2011 Philbeck Musser published her findings in the article, "Taking Attendance Seriously: How School Absences Undermine Student and School Performance in New York City."

Philbeck Musser and CFE, Inc. analyzed data made available by the Department of Education (DOE) for 705 fourth graders who attended New York City public schools for both third and fourth grade in the academic years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, respectively. Each student's identity was made anonymous through the application of tracking numbers, identifiers such as gender, ethnicity, English proficiency, performance on state tests for those two years, as well as number of days marked "absent," "present" or "released." In addition to information about the students, CFE, Inc. analyzed data related to teachers, including information related to schools of study and teacher preparation programs.
Philbeck Musser and CFE Inc. (2011) created formulas in order to calculate and account for each attendance variable, with the ultimate goal of examining how attendance affects performance on the fourth grade English Language Arts (ELA) and math assessments. The researcher established that the most significant predictor of performance on assessments is previous performance, so they used the students’ performances on their third grade ELA and math assessments as the control. Additional factors of analysis included eligibility for free or reduced lunch, gender, ethnicity, disability, proficiency in English, all of which the research has shown are associated with academic performance. The data regarding teacher preparation was included in the “school contextual factors” and described as the “teacher quality variable” with the assumption that teachers who had obtained 30 credit hours beyond their master’s degree in math and the turnover rate for English Language Arts teachers would be the greatest predictors of school performance (Philbeck Musser, p. 19).

Analysis of this data on multiple levels established that across the board, better attendance predicts better performance on ELA and math tests, and that improving attendance was the variable which would lead to the greatest increase in assessment scores, for each variable (Philbeck Musser, 2011). A correlation between appropriate certification, number of years in the classroom and turnover rate and student attendance and therefore performance was established as a small but extremely significant predictor (Philbeck Musser). Philbeck Musser notes that these findings corroborate other research conducted in 2009, 2010 and 2011 out of Philadelphia, which suggests that the relationship between attendance and performance exists for grades three through eight.
Unlike the pre-existing data collection methodology of CFE, Inc., Gottfried began by following five different “student cohorts” for a period of six years, and was therefore able to link attendance and performance across elementary to middle school (Philbeck Musser, p. 58). In the discussion of their findings, Philbeck Musser describes that one in five Black students is chronically truant and therefore, targeting attendance can work to reduce the Achievement Gap. The discrepancy in attendance between Black students and other groups was further established by information provided to the California Attorney General by Aeries, which found that African American and American Indian students had the highest rates of absenteeism at 37% identified as truant and are more likely to be chronically truant at a rate four times higher than all other groups of students (Harris, 2014). In addition to minority students, those who are homeless, in the foster care system, are migrant workers or whose parents are migrant workers and students with disabilities were all more likely to have lower attendance (Harris). While none of these studies examined attendance and teen parenthood specifically, Perper, Peterson and Manlove (2010) drew on statistics obtained by the National Longitudinal Survey on Youth--1997 Cohort (NLSY97) to determine that 34% of teen mothers do not get a high school diploma or their GED, as opposed to 96% of young women who delayed childbirth until later in life. As with all social issues, these numbers cannot be explained by simply one phenomenon; however, Perper et al. (2010) note that falling behind in coursework due to absences and a lack of adequate support are contributors to eventually leaving school entirely.
Rationale for Alternative Education

In her 2015 Report on California’s elementary truancy & absenteeism crisis, California State Attorney General Kamala Harris shares that 83% of Kindergarten and first grade students who are considered to be Chronically Truant will not be able to read at grade level by the time they enter the third grade, which can have dire consequences. Harris states that children who are not reading at grade-level by third grade are four times as likely to drop out of school altogether. This leaves them at-risk of many negative outcomes. Dropping out may be the ultimate academic consequence of absenteeism; however, there are many experiences, situations and nuanced, subliminal messages which occur along the way, building upon one another and climaxing in that final, permanent absence. Goodman (1999), a long-time school psychologist and professor at Fresno State University, writes that the behavior a teacher sees in the classroom and interprets as disinterest, a lack of motivation and even aggression, is actually responses to deep, shameful feelings of inadequacy and repetitious failure.

The argument for alternative forms of education can be further made by examining the “bigger picture” when it comes to dropping out of school. Ingersoll and Leboeuf (1997) obtained information from a 1995 report from the National Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention which revealed that a quarter of young people entering the prison system had roughly a tenth grade education, and only two percent had actually finished high school or had a GED equivalent. As Goodman (1999) notes in his book, Alternatives in Education: Critical Pedagogy for Disaffected Youth, there are many reasons that a young person may benefit from a smaller scale or modified
approach to attaining their education, including violence on or off campus, drug and alcohol use, suicidal ideation, truancy and teen pregnancy. The 1973 Rehabilitation Act mandated that people with disabilities in the United States are entitled to a "free and appropriate public education," essentially acknowledging that education appropriate for each individual based upon their individual needs is a civil right (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). According to data collected by the California Department of Education (2015), the present graduation rate in this state is 80%. While this is actually an all-time high for California, the fact remains that one fifth of youth are not graduating from high school, many times because an “appropriate” form of education for these young people simply does not exist, and their needs are not seen as disabling.

Despite having existed for over two hundred years, many people in the U.S. are unsure what alternative education actually is (Morley, 1991). Morley established six tenants or goals of alternative education, including accommodation and pluralism, providing choices and recognizing and respecting the strengths of each individual student. The heart of the concept of alternative education is not a specific program or pedagogy, but rather a perspective based upon the belief that all people are capable of learning and growing, and that there is not merely one way to educate. Chalker and Brown (1999) expand on this idea by noting that the foundation of alternative education is the understanding that "no two students are ever the same, and there is no one solution for everyone," and therefore a certain curriculum or process would defeat the purpose. Similarly, alternative education does not take merely one shape; transition programs, extended day programs, the inclusionary model, the pullout model, academic acceleration
and behavioral intervention are all forms of alternative education (Chalker & Brown).

Looking to the documented poor academic outcomes for teen mothers, it is obvious that alternative approaches and increased support beyond the regular public school will be essential in keeping parenting youth in school and on track to graduate.

A mixed-methods ecological study conducted by Sadler et al. (2007) referred to in the first section, interviewed, surveyed and assessed sixty-five teen mothers enrolled in a parenting support program as well as their sixty-eight children. The research took place at a large, urban high school in a diverse, low socioeconomic community over the course of three years and relied on a variety of measurement tools including the Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI II), the Norbeck Life Event Questionnaire (LEQ), the Maternal Self Report Inventory (MSRI), Parenting Daily Hassles Scale (PDHS) and the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID), among multiple others (Sadler et al.). Sadler et al. (2007) found that the young women enrolled in this program completed high school at a rate of 100% and only 6% had a second child while participating in the study, despite 33% of the girls experiencing depression and 39% experiencing some amount of transitional homelessness. They conclude that this form of alternative education on-campus contributed to the positive outcomes they were able to observe, and that the daily interaction between adults like health professionals who are trained to work with this population, unlike traditional classroom teachers, was particularly beneficial.

One of the most comprehensive studies around alternative education and teen mothers was Pilat’s (1997) examination of five varying models, which included an alternative school, a cooperative school, a community-based program, a tutoring program
and an in-school program. For her research, Pilat used a qualitative approach which combined her experience as a practitioner with voices of stakeholders; including policymakers, administrators, service-providers, support people and teen mothers themselves, as well as the historical context nationally and locally, in order to address the question, “Do gaps in service exist?” (p. 98). Upon immediately experiencing the complexity of answering such a question, Pilat refers to Knapp’s recognition that the collaborative, flexible and convergent nature of service providers requires researchers from varying traditions to engage and communicate. Pilat divided her project into two phases; Phase one dealt with the national context; and Phase two with the local. During Phase one, Pilat conducted six formal and six informal interviews with policymakers in Washington, D.C., as well as reviewing archived legislation and minutes of congressional hearings. Phase two was then informed by and designed around the findings of Phase one, and took place at a local school-based program which offers a depth of services for parenting teens. Phase two was further broken down into three stages; stage one involved obtaining community demographics, data around school attendance, and access and use of services, followed by stage two, which consisted of both individual and group interviews of forty teen mothers and thirteen support people, as well as the creation and dissemination of a questionnaire for the administration, designed collaboratively by the researcher and the parenting youth, and finally stage three which consisted of twenty-one interviews with direct-service providers and seventeen program administrators.

During the analysis process, Pilat (1997) was confronted repeatedly with the theme that “adolescent parenting is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be lived”
Operating from this holistic foundation, Pilat found that while the young women had their basic needs met by service-providers, there remained gaps in health care, life skills and development of various types of relationships. The most profound gap appeared to be what Pilat refers to as “soft skills” or relationship building, which was experienced across the board by all participants in this study. According to Pilat’s work, the teen mothers expressed the relationship with their child was the greatest source of happiness, providers noted that their relationships with the young women was the most gratifying piece of their work and administrators discussed their desires to connect and communicate with other program administrators, and yet very little direct and explicit investment or focus was placed on these “soft skills” (p. 98-9). Turning her attention to what then, might lessen these gaps, Pilat referred to Mayeroff’s seven characteristics of caring (knowledge, patience, honesty, trust, humility, hope and courage) and examined how each one could be better addressed in alternative education for teen mothers. Pilat recommended that in order to achieve all seven of the characteristics of caring, direct service providers should focus on the personal growth and development of the mothers, trust for decisions to be made at a client-service provider level, tolerance and accommodation for clients so their mistakes may be viewed as an integral part of their growth, and lastly a provision of a “continuum of service” based upon a client’s specific needs to contribute to her autonomy, as long as necessary. Pilat elaborates on each recommendation in greater detail, including the importance of an individual caseworker committing to a teen parent for multiple years and extending the length of basic support services from eighteen years old to twenty-three, but she did not find that one form of
alternative education was necessarily "better" than the others. After an incredibly in-depth comparison of all five models originally noted, Pilat notes that it is not necessarily the type of program teen mothers attend, but rather that it is essential these young women receive an education that acknowledges and connects to their new status as a parent. Furthermore, the particular model does not matter as much as whether the services are dynamic, comprehensive and consistent, and that all of her recommendations can, and should, be applied to each model.

**Burnout in Helping Professions**

The following section provides an overview of the Western phenomenon often related to work known as burnout. It will describe the early emergence and acceptance of the term, as well as examine the literature around causes and consequences of excessive stress in the workplace, with an emphasis on helping professions. The section describes some of the literature around demographics and burnout and closes with an exploration of preventative and mitigating factors.

**Overview**

While it is reasonable to assume that people have been experiencing this social phenomenon for hundreds of years, burnout was first defined in the 1970s by an American psychologist, Herbert Freudenberger. Freudenberger characterized what he was seeing as "a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward" and was most notable in those who spent their careers in high-stress helping-professions (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). In 1981, the American psychologist out of UC Berkeley, Christina Maslach,
created what is known as the "Maslach Burnout Inventory," a tool for assessing and measuring this particular phenomenon (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The scale was initially developed to contain 47 items distributed to 605 participants from varying health and service professions, all of which involved working directly with people around issues that can or do cause them problems, with the belief that this type of work is highly emotional and results in chronic stress that is believed to contribute to burnout (Maslach, 1996). Maslach and her colleagues used this preliminary inventory to establish reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity and are now the most widely used measure for occupational burnout.

Causes and Contributing Factors

Burnout is not necessarily a universal, global experience, and is associated with Western cultural, societal and economic practices (Montero-Marin et al., 2013). Since researchers first began to observe and document this emotional state, findings have consistently demonstrated that there are three persistent characteristics of burnout; emotional exhaustion related to stress, depersonalization of clients and individuals, and diminished feelings of personal success or accomplishment (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). While these experiences are not necessarily chronological, they appear to be interconnected and contribute to one another. Ben-Zur and Michael describe, for example, that emotional exhaustion, which is experienced as lowered energy and feelings of being run down, can lead to staff people distancing themselves from their clients as a coping mechanism, which results in depersonalization. Similarly, Ben-Zur and Michael note that feelings of diminished success in the field can be tied to a lack of energy and
disconnection; however, this particular aspect may also be related to inadequate resources and tools necessary to achieve established objectives; and other more macro barriers. While most working professionals in all fields in Western countries may experience feelings of exhaustion and frustration at various points in their career, Maslach’s early research established that the high rates and levels of burnout are particularly associated with helping professions, specifically teachers, doctors, lawyers, therapists and psychologists and social workers (Ben-Zur & Michael). Maslach, whose three decade long career has focused on this work-related phenomenon, acknowledges that burnout is a multifaceted and complex issue; however to some degree, it can be boiled down to a theme of chronic imbalance and conflict between what is expected or desired and the actual resources and support needed to follow through (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Demographics of Burnout

The early research of the 1980s around burnout established that younger workers, under the age of 30, are more likely to burnout than their older counterparts, who are theoretically more mature, stable and tend to live more balanced lives. Developmentally, older professionals have higher self-esteem and mental fortitude, as well as greater familial support and financial stability. In contrast, foundational research has shown that in addition to lower levels of each of those characteristics, younger social workers also have more idealistic and lofty goals and expectations in their work, making them vulnerable to corresponding disappointment and feelings of failure (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In regards to gender, the initial usage of the MBI by Maslach and Jackson in 1981, found that women did score higher than men in the category of emotional
exhaustion; however when run again in 1985, they found that gender had no bearing on either depersonalization or feelings about personal accomplishment (Vredenburgh, Carlozzi & Stein, 1999). The quantitative study of 521 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) done by Vredenburgh et al. in 1999 was consistent with Maslach and Jackson saw in 1981 regarding higher instances of emotional exhaustion in women, and inconsistent with that they and others found in 1985, making it inconclusive regarding the correlation between gender and burnout. In addition to what they saw around gender in 1981, Maslach and Jackson also found that social workers who were either single or divorced had higher rates of emotional exhaustion; however again they were unable to replicate these results in 1985, and the correlation remains unestablished. While the research remains unclear on demographic characteristics, certain personal characteristics that can either contribute or combat burnout have been established. Twenty years after her first implementation of the MBI, Maslach found that those individuals with low psychological hardiness, external control loci, neurotic tendencies and who exhibited Type A behaviors as outlined by Friedman and Rosenman, experienced more symptoms of burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael 2007).

In a study of 75 Dutch volunteers working with terminally ill patients, Zellars, Perrewé & Hochwarter (2000) used the Five Factor Personality Inventory (FFPI) developed by Hendricks in the late 90s to assess what is known as the Big Five personality dimensions. The Big Five are actually factors associated with Bipolar Disorder and include Extraversion vs. Introversion (I), Agreeableness vs. Hostility (II), Conscientiousness vs. Lackthereof (III), Emotional Stability vs. Neuroticism (IV) and
Intellect/Autonomy and Openness vs. Lackthereof (V) (Zellars et al.). Establishing a hypothesis between each of the five traits and its correlation to burnout, Zellars et al. predicted that there would be relationships specifically between neuroticism, agreeableness and extraversion and burnout, and a relationship between conscientiousness and personal accomplishment. Zellars et al. note that despite their relatively small sample size, that they did see significant relationships between the personality traits and burnout predictors. For example, individuals with higher rates of neuroticism experience stronger and more frequent emotional reactions when placed in stressful situations, and then in turn rely on less constructive and more avoidant coping strategies like denial, wishful thinking and self-criticism. An inability to effectively cope with workplace distress, in turn, contributes to exposure and vulnerability to factors associated with burnout. In regards to traits that do help workers manage stress, Zellars et al. were able to establish that extraversion and agreeableness correlated positively with a sense of accomplishment, which is consistent with other research. The overall findings of Zellars et al. are consistent with much of the early work around burnout, which demonstrates that there are certain people who will consistently be more capable of managing their stress in constructive ways when working in demanding professions or with high-risk groups, allowing for them to potentially avoid experiencing burnout.

**Burnout and Client Age**

Although demographics of the psychologists like gender and marital status and their connection to burnout was inconclusive in Verdenburgh, Carlozzi and Stein (1999) study, they did find that the most consistent variables in predicting burnout were caseload
and the type of practice setting. Much of the initial research around burnout has been related to defining its characteristics and examining internal and external factors related to the helping professionals themselves, but significantly less investigation has been done on working with various communities and demographics, specifically age. For example, Herz, Harada, Lecklitner, Rauso & Ryan (2009) note that children under the age of 18 years old make up over 50% of social welfare referrals for services. While “children” as a group are of course extremely diverse coming from many different cultures, ethnicities, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, communities and so on, they can also be generalized by developmental and cognitive characteristics and stages. Children and youth are developmentally less mature, naive and vulnerable, and the understanding of these vulnerabilities contributes to the intensity and emotional reactivity on the part of the social workers who serve them (Longeran, O’Halloran & Crane, 2004). In their qualitative study of child therapists, Longeran et al. interviewed clinicians who discussed experiencing ongoing feelings of grief, deep sadness and pain, which created a sense of shame, weakness and being unfit for the work. According to their research, these powerful emotions resulted in vicarious trauma, secondary stress, distorted schemas and overgeneralizations about their clients and the prevalence of certain behaviors and issues (Longeran et al.).

In addition to experiencing intense emotional reactions and sadness, providers who work with at-risk children and youth are also tasked with being fluid, adaptable and extremely creative in their work. The developmental demands and limitations, the perceptiveness and sensitivity of children and youth require social workers to be
consistently emotionally warm, compassionate, engaging and creative in order to communicate and build connections (Hamama, 2014). Furthermore, social workers must be persistent and patient in their work to keep children and youth participating and engaged and motivated to stick with the work and complete treatment (Hamama). In her 2014 study of Israeli social workers, Hamama attempted to investigate to what extent stressors related to working with young people might contribute to burnout. Using four questionnaires, including Maslach’s MBI, Hamama set out to determine to what degree those engaged in direct practice with children are experiencing burnout, and then isolate and identify the contributing demographics and other variables. In addition to the MBI, Hamama (2014) used a demographic questionnaire of her creation, Gorlick’s work environment questionnaire to assess work conditions, and Kershner-Cohen’s social support questionnaire to determine the level of social support in the workplace which were mailed and returned at a rate of 75% for a total sample of 126 social workers. Contrary to her hypothesis, Hamama found that in fact, social workers in direct practice with children did not report high instances of burnout, consistent with other studies out of Israel. Using burnout intensity as the dependent variable, Hamama found a significant negative correlation between burnout and supportive work conditions, specifically in regards to supportive supervisors and managers, which explain the lower instances of burnout than she had initially predicted. Hamama’s 2014 findings suggest that one way to help prevent burnout is related to the improvement of and investment in workplace condition, including the way staff people communicate, interact and acknowledge stress and other difficulties, to the arrangement of the physical space and general atmosphere.
Burnout Prevention and Coping Strategies

In order to assist social workers and other helping professionals in managing or even preventing symptoms related to burnout such as stress, anxiety and depression, researchers in the 1980s had to initially establish that this work-related phenomenon was a verifiable, consistent quantifiable state of being, comprised of and marked by varying criteria. More recent work has attempted to investigate how to prevent or minimize factors of burnout. A study conducted by Ben-Zur and Michael (2007) set out to assess burnout and coping mechanisms using five different inventories including a demographic questionnaire, Bjorck and Klewicki’s appraisal scale, a short version of the COPE scale to assess coping strategies, four items from Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) to measure social support at work, and modified version of the MBI to establish burnout. The sample was comprised of 249 participants, 55.8% of whom were social workers, 20.5% who were psychologists and 23.7% who were nurses.

The research of Ben-Zur and Michael (2007) was guided by the cognitive model of stress and coping, which states that stress occurs when an individual determines that the demands of their environment are greater than their ability to manage them, resulting in an initial appraisal that the stressful situation is a loss, threat or obstacle, followed by a second appraisal in which the individual assess the stressful situation in order to solve, correct or remove in accordance with the resources they have at their disposal internally and externally. What takes place during the second appraisal is what we refer to as “coping,” and can be made up of any number of behaviors or activities, and may either be targeted directly at the problem itself, or at the negative emotions that it is eliciting.
According to Lazarus and Folkman, a person engages in problem-focused coping, they are focusing on not only eliminating the current stressful situation, but also working to avoid being confronted with a similar issue in the future, as opposed to emotion-focused coping, where an individual exerts their energy into reducing, preventing or accepting/tolerating the uncomfortable emotional and psychological repercussions the problem is eliciting (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). In addition to individual coping styles, other researchers have noted the importance of social support in all forms, including having a support network, supportive behaviors and supportive relationships, as well as the personal perception of actually feeling supported. The results of Ben-Zur and Michael’s study found that both social support and problem-focused coping mechanisms were correlated negatively with an important characteristic of burnout known as depersonalization, and positively correlated with feelings of accomplishment. Additionally, emotion-focused coping strategies appeared to increase feelings of depersonalization among participants. The key finding from their research, however, is that the most significant factor to burnout prevention was not actually the amount of support or specific coping style, but how the participants appraised or perceived the challenge and their level of control in tackling it (Ben-Zur & Michael).

While the research has demonstrated that certain personality traits and individual attitudes and strategies can work to minimize the impacts of burnout, the research has shown that at the end of the day, external and situational variables are greater predictors than those at the individual and personal level (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Over fifteen years after creating the MBI to measure burnout, Maslach developed a multidimensional
approach for employers, agencies and organizations, which acknowledge the interconnected complexities of the issue and the ways in which environmental factors elicit individual reactions. The implication of this multidimensional approach is that employers should begin at each component of burnout, for example emotional exhaustion, and then discuss as an entity how this particular sensation can be addressed in according to their particular philosophies, structure, means etc. In order to create a comprehensive program or activities that are effective in targeting burnout in its employees, an agency must have a clear definition and in-depth understanding of burnout and its causes and how it may manifest in the workplace, identify specific goals or outcomes that are desired, and then develop some sort of tool to measure and assess their success (Maslach & Goldberg). According to Maslach and Goldberg, at the primary level the objective should be to eliminate or modify stressors where and when they are able, at the secondary level managers and supervisors should devise strategies to help staff in the process of working through stressful situations that cannot simply be removed, and at the tertiary level, the goal should be to support workers who have already been exposed to chronic stress and may already be experiencing burnout. In a similar way that many of the social programs in the U.S. focus on helping individuals, families and communities cope with unjust policies and structural inequities, much of the foundational literature around burnout prevention places the burden of managing burnout on the individual, and not on altering the environmental factors which lead to burnout in the first place. These person-centered approaches include recommendations for individuals like working less, developing better coping skills through processes similar to
those of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), relying on social support, taking better
care of one’s health through improved sleep, better diet and exercise and self-reflection,
all of which require the individual to make changes to try and control the situation.
Maslach and Goldberg write that very little attention has been paid to what they refer to
as “situation-centered approaches,” which implies that in our individualistic, capitalistic
society, it is just “a given that work is stressful--thus the only issue is how to cope with
such stress” (p. 68). In their article, “Prevention of burnout: New perspectives,” Maslach
and Goldberg point out that in the litany of workplace issues, burnout is viewed as not
being serious or even real; perhaps because it is slow to develop and its early warning
signs are not necessarily visible, but also in part to its prevalence among many staff and
the stigma that is attached to a person who appears they are not strong enough or tough
enough to handle their job. The solution they offer has dual parts: to first recognize and
respect that burnout is a very real, very serious problem with detrimental consequences
for both employees and the organization as a whole, and then to shift how this issue is
perceived to person-in-environment framework which acknowledges that each worker
will be affected differently by adverse and stressful work conditions. Operating from a
foundation that acknowledges that burnout is a real experience and will happen
differently for each person; agencies can then develop a mental model to assess, evaluate
and predict areas of potential burnout, as well as determine the presence of job-person
mismatch (Maslach & Goldberg).
Gaps in the Literature

This researcher performed an extensive examination of the literature around multiple topics and subjects, including teen pregnancy, truancy, alternative education and burnout. Although divided into different sections, the author maintains that they are all interconnected and overlapping. One of the glaring gaps that the author continued to encounter was, in fact, the lack of research on the connection between certain themes, specifically teen pregnancy and the Achievement Gap. During the investigative process, the researcher was only able to locate one article with a title linking the two issues, “Teen Pregnancy and the Achievement Gap Among Urban Minority Youth,” however the contents did not actually address how one phenomenon may contribute to, or be the result of, the other (Basch, 2011). In fact, after reading the length of the article, the researcher discovered that the only place the Achievement Gap is mentioned is in the title itself.

While scouring existing literature on both subjects, the researcher established two important facts: first that teen girls of color, specifically Black and Hispanic, have the highest teen pregnancy rates, and second, that Black and Hispanic students are leading nationally in truancy and high school dropout rates. Examining these two phenomena separately without attempting to determine possible correlation or even causation does not only leave a gap in the research, but in policy makers and service providers being able to effectively target either issue.

Another apparent gap in the literature is the absence of longitudinal data on the long-term life outcomes of women who became mothers in their teenage years. Both this researcher and the authors of “Longitudinal Health Consequences of Teen Mothers,” cite
that their study is one of the only of its kind, at present (Pal & Sen, 2012). While truly longitudinal data is laborious and difficult to obtain, this author notes that due to the steady decline of teen pregnancy in the U.S. described in this review, feelings that this is still a pressing social issue appears to be fading, and therefore potentially receiving less attention by researchers in general. After describing significant intergenerational implications associated teen pregnancy in the review for this study, it is apparent that the benefits of uncovering further data around potential long-term consequences of teen pregnancy cannot be minimized, as the impact of previous generations of teen mothers will continue to ripple through society for generations to come.

The last gap that was of particular significance to this researcher was the lack of substantive strategies for the prevention of burnout. This author believes this particular gap can be attributed both to the relative newness of burnout as a documented, measurable concept, as well as to the social perception that it is not real, or serious, and rather a sign of weakness or a character defect (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Additionally, there is an absence of information and data surrounding the burnout of professionals who work with specific communities or groups. The research around the age of the client conducted by Hamama (2014), ultimately found that there was no significant correlation between working with children and experiencing burnout. Furthermore, this study and another number of studies surrounding burnout the researcher examined are conducted out of Israel, revealing a gap in research on the same topic in the U.S. The researcher was able to locate some research around burnout and specific groups, including a 2001 study about staff use of violence against clients when working
in a residential facility for the elderly, which attempts to track the course of burnout that leads to such an unfortunate climax (Evers, Tomic & Brouwers, 2001). Similar research has been done around what we might call “badly behaved” clients, especially when workers are required to make home visits; however, this data has not been examined through the lens of the correlation between clients not making visible changes or progress and dimensions of burnout, including feelings of low-efficacy, failure, compassion fatigue and eventually depersonalization. The researcher also noticed a void of attention paid to the racial demographics of people experiencing burnout, and how other social factors, including institutional racism, could potentially be factored into rates of burnout. Lastly, on the other side of this issue, there is a absence of information around the consequences of burnout on the actual clients themselves, specifically those who may be mandated to services. This study will specifically explore how staff at a school for pregnant and parenting teens are able to set manageable goals and identify and assess their achievements in the hopes of better understanding how helping professions, agencies, programs and institutions can capitalize on perceived positives to prevent and reduce burnout symptoms and better serve their populations.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the focus was on the literature surrounding three key topics to this research project, as well as some of the remaining gaps. Some of the topics that were introduced include the complex web of factors that contribute to teen pregnancy and long-term consequences including poverty and mental and emotional stress, environmental factors which contribute chronic truancy, particularly among African
American youth, alternative education models and how they may best serve at-risk youth, as well as burnout in the helping professions in the U.S. and other Western societies. The following chapter will describe the methodology used in this research project.
Chapter 3

METHODS

The research design and methodology are described in this chapter. The researcher includes the key details of the methods implemented in creating the study and analyzing the interviews, including the research question, research design, the study population, the sample population, the instrumentation, and the procedures employed for data gathering and data analyzing. Additionally, the researcher shares information about the formation of the interview questions, the criteria used during the selection process and the study population. The chapter closes with an explanation of how the safety of human subjects was protected during this study.

Research Question

This study investigates the following research question: 1) what are the goals of staff who work with parenting teens at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco's Mission District? and 2) how do they measure their success and progress in achieving these goals?

Research Design

For this particular study, the researcher used qualitative methods, working from a foundation of grounded theory. The philosophical standard applied to the project is social constructivism, and phenomenological content analysis was used to identify categories and themes present in the interviews. The remainder of this chapter will clarify and expand upon the framework and design used in this research.
Qualitative Approach

Researchers will often employ a qualitative approach when they want to explore aspects of society and human behavior that does not necessarily lend itself to quantifiable, quantitative deduction. An example of this might be a researcher who is attempting to determine whether a twelve week after-school program to boost the confidence and self-esteem of middle school age girls was successful. In this study, determining if and how self-confidence had grown would not be possible exclusively through numerical information and would benefit from qualitative research to help discern the true effectiveness of the program. The complexities and subtleties of people’s motivations, behaviors and attitudes require a more nuanced form of analysis, which qualitative can offer (Townsend, Cox & Li, 2010). Cleary, Horsfall and Hayter (2014) point out that in academia, quantitative research continues to be viewed as “hard/real science” and qualitative methods are seen more as an abstract offshoot or relative (p. 1). This limited perception of qualitative research denies that there can be intuitive, natural and palpable ways to document the change process or observe a specific phenomenon. Qualitative data is collected through methods such as direct, in-depth, in-person interviews that also allow for observation of surroundings, sounds, tone, facial expressions and other nuanced indicators. These subtle external factors are combined with the data that is collected orally and verbally to help researchers interpret the meaning the interviewee is attaching to their words (Townsend et al.).

One of the distinct advantages of qualitative research is the direct contact between the researcher and the participants itself. This level of connection allows for the
researcher to both observe behavior and affect, but also establish rapport, engage the participant and ask follow up and clarifying questions when necessary. The effect engagement during an interview can have is prolific; it provides a more in-depth responses and understanding as opposed to a questionnaire with closed questions and pre-written answers (Townsend et al., 2010). The focus of qualitative research are the experiences, emotions and beliefs of the participants and the meaning behind those experiences, as opposed to discrete, testable information or data, which can leave gaps in understanding (Townsend et al.). Qualitative research by nature also allows for a shift in power between researcher and interviewee by placing the former in a place of the "learner" or novice, and the ladder in the role of "experiencer" and expert (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005, p. 99). Finally, some research has shown that the actual interview process can have beneficial, even therapeutic effects for the participant. A successful interview consists of engagement, rapport building, active listening and paraphrasing to elicit a fruitful discussion and story, which can healing and "emotional release" (Rossetto, 2014, p. 4).

Disadvantages of qualitative research to consider include the subjectivity of the analysis and the inability to generalize findings (Townsend et al., 2010). It is impossible for a researcher of a particular qualitative study to objectively interpret their findings without incorporating, however subconsciously, their personal biases during the analysis process. A person's gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, sexual identity and other factors determine how a researcher interprets the world, their experiences and the information they obtain for their project, as well as during the actual conduction of the
interviews. In addition to concerns regarding the subjective nature, qualitative research cannot be easily duplicated for greater understanding. Qualitative work is usually smaller in scale, therefore making it impossible to apply to an entire group or population.

**Grounded Theory**

This project was guided by the grounded theory paradigm. Grounded theory is an ontological and epistemological way of collecting data that is inductive, meaning the researcher does not have a preconceived outcome or hypothesis they are attempting to prove (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009). Instead, the consistent issues, concerns and beliefs of the participants emerge as themes that can be tracked through content analysis methods like coding. As previously mentioned, grounded theory is ontological and epistemological in nature, therefore it cannot be separated from the concept of reality and what that concept means to the researcher. For example, positivists who work with grounded theory believe that it is possible to observe the emotional world in the same way we can observe the natural world: scientifically and objectively (Ghezeljeh & Emami). For this particular study, the researcher was operating from a platform of social constructivist grounded theory, which will be explained in the section below.

**Social Constructivism**

As previously noted, the paradigm used to guide this study is embedded in the researcher’s particular belief about the nature of reality. This research design was guided by social constructivism, which posits that there is no one collective, “true” reality, and that each individual’s perception of reality is distinctly different (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009). The differences in individual’s perceptions of reality, according to the...
constructivist approach, are a result of not only people's unique life experiences and the stories they have attached to them, but also through socially constructed conditions such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status among others. The implications of social constructivism for qualitative research are that it is impossible for both the researcher and the interviewee to be free of these preconceived, socially constructed beliefs, biases and attitudes; however subconscious they may be, and therefore they must be acknowledged, if not observed.

**Phenomenological Research**

Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that attempts to study and distil the essence of a phenomena or experience. Originally credited to the philosopher Edmund Husserl, it was later adapted and expanded by Martin Heidegger, and is centered on his concept of Dasein, or the human state of "being" (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Heidegger's Dasein emphasizes studying everyday life and the "being" in human being, which he believed is the heart of existence (Wilding & Whiteford). In order to do this type of research, one must create a space for the phenomenon to surface without overly aggressive tactics, but rather gentle, unobtrusive exploration. Ultimately, the phenomenological research approach attempts to look at ordinary life with a skilled, discerning eye in order to highlight the underlying essence and truth of an experience (Wilding & Whiteford).

**Content Analysis**

Unlike the previous sections, content analysis is not a paradigm or philosophical underpinning for how to conduct research, but rather a more tangible strategy for actually
analyzing written, verbal or visual qualitative information (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis was originally used in the 19th century to analyze newspaper and magazine articles, political speeches and even hymns and is now used as a means for "describing or quantifying phenomena" (Elo & Kyngäs, p. 108). Qualitative content analysis can consist of a series of different systematic procedures, including inductively or deductively identifying and coding words and/or phrases which contain similar meanings and then placing them in the same category, in theory equating them. Both deductive and inductive qualitative content analysis has three phases: preparation, organization and then reporting. The ultimate goals of these processes are for the researcher to become completely immersed in the data in order to strike at the heart of the "why?" (Elo & Kyngäs). One specific strategy used in content analysis for qualitative research is the manifest method, in which the researcher actively identifies and counts specific words or phrases that repeatedly appear in the transcribed data (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). In addition to the manifest method, the latent coding strategy can be employed through interpretive analysis of the transcriptions to reveal underlying meanings in the content (Rubin & Babbie). This project relied on both manifest and latent content coding, however the ladder was the primary method employed:

Advantages to content analysis include affordability and feasibility as this is neither a costly methodology, nor does it require any type of certification or specialization training. These strategies allow for a somewhat scientific approach to qualitative data, without expensive software or computer programs, simply the time and effort of the researcher. Disadvantages of content analysis are related to the nature of
qualitative research, which is that it is impossible to truly quantify. Additionally, there is no “one-size-fits-all” model for content analysis; each project is unique and will require distinct codes and procedures left to the discretion of the investigator, potentially discrediting the validity of the work (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Study Population

The study population consisted of individuals who were employed at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco’s Mission district. This study did not restrict interviews to social workers; all employees employed by the school district who worked directly with students were eligible to participate. This included a school nurse, classroom teachers, a guidance counselor and a social worker. The study population was not specific to race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Participants were screened on one basis: their employment status at the school at the time of the on-campus interviews. The researcher felt it was important to have diversity in the roles of helping professions on campus in order to have greater implications for other fields in addition to social work. However, all other demographic characteristics were intentionally removed from consideration and analysis in order to maintain participant confidentiality.

Sample Population

The population under investigation in this study was only bound by one qualification, that they be employed in some capacity at the former Cal-SAFE school at the time of the interviews. In a study such as this one, snowball sampling is an effective method to increase the number of participants, especially within a contained and defined setting like a specific school campus. Initially, the author relied on convenience
sampling, which consists of making contact with a person or people known to be qualified, by emailing an employee at the school that she had previously known (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). From there, the researcher relied on snowball sampling, which asks already established participants to recommend other qualified individuals who might be interested (Rubin & Babbie). In this case, the researcher provided a space at the bottom of the Informed Consent and questionnaire for the interviewee to write the name and email address of another eligible subject. Convenience and snowball sampling are practical, convenient and effective in allowing researchers to access certain populations that might not move through society as a cohesive group, or those that are marginalized, like the mentally ill or the homeless. However, a distinct disadvantage to both includes the absence of randomization which reduces representation within a population, thereby increasing error (Rubin & Babbie). The final sample size for this study was seven qualifying participants.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher gathered data for this study via in-person interviews. The interviews consisted of twelve open-ended questions and all took place on the campus of the former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco. In an effort to cause minimum disruption to the participant’s day, they were held in whatever space was most convenient for each person, including various offices and classrooms. Each interview was recorded on a cellphone and then transferred to the researcher’s private laptop and erased from the phone in order to maintain privacy. Establishing and maintaining validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research due to its nature can prove difficult, and remains
widely disputed (Suter, 2009). Efforts to maintain internal validity in this study included the construction of a list of six demographic, close-ended questions and twelve standardized open-ended questions, numbering eighteen in total. The objective of the predetermined open-ended questions was to withdraw unique and personalized experiences and beliefs while responding to the same topics and themes (See Appendix A) while simultaneously making it easier to code during the analysis (Suter). No reliability tests were performed during this process.

The first six, close-ended questions were located on separate handouts for the participants to fill out independently prior to beginning the interview. These questions included age, gender, ethnicity, degrees held, job title and length of time at this specific former Cal-SAFE school. The initial two interview questions asked staff to describe both what they like about the pull-out, alternative school model, and what they believe needs improving. These were followed by two questions regarding misconceptions the staff believed society tends to have about teen mothers. The remaining questions focused on essential supports and interventions, the personal philosophies and goals of each participant and how they are measure, closing with a question regarding feelings of success and achievement in the workplace. While the goal of the pre-written standardized questions was to guide the interviewee, create a sense of consistency among the interviews and eliminate bias, the disadvantage to this structured format was the impediment to the natural flow of conversation. In order to build rapport and elicit optimal responses, the researcher asked follow-up questions and reframed participants’ statements when appropriate.
One important advantage to open-ended questions can be found within the name, "open." The inclusion of this word implies that there is no right, wrong or finite answer, allowing this format of inquiry to act as a sort of net for the complexity and multifacetedness of human experience (Friborg & Rosenvinge, 2013). When participants in a study fill out a close-ended questionnaire, they may put down answers they do not necessarily believe or agree with, but do so because it is the closest to the answer they would have provided independently. Some research that compared responses to the same questions phrased both in an open and closed format found that answers frequently did not align and actually had very large statistical gaps between them (Friborg & Rosenvinge). Similarly, if a participant leaves a question blank because they feel it does not apply to them, there is no opportunity ascertain why, leaving gaps in understanding and data. The disadvantages to open-ended questions include the variation and potential length of the responses, as well as the possibility of receiving tangential and irrelevant information without the specific data the researcher was hoping to ascertain. Because verbatim transcription and the subsequent coding is a laborious and sometimes tedious task, open-ended question interviews can become very time-consuming for the researcher (Friborg & Rosenvinge). Lastly, due to the nature of qualitative research design, it will be very difficult to compare, generalize and/or reproduce a study that used open-ended questions.

The interview process itself relies on many of the subtle codes, norms and expectations of social interactions. The guidelines for an effective interview are as follows (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). When preparing to conduct in-person interviews, the
physical appearance of researcher should be considered. Clearly, the researcher should take care not wear anything overly exposing or inappropriate and meet all social requirements of proper grooming and hygiene. In addition to those fundamentals, it is important the researcher assess the environment where they will be conducting interviews, as well as the people with whom they will be interacting that day. It is prudent that the interviewer avoid dressing in a manner that is less professional than the participants for fear that they make take them and their work less seriously. However they must also take care not to wear clothing that is nicer or more ornate than the participants in order to demonstrate respect and avoid accidentally isolating or offending them. In addition to concerns about appearance, it is essential that the researcher be well-versed in all of the paperwork they are bringing, including the questions they will ask during the actual interview to avoid sounding awkward and stumbling, which will assist in helping the conversation flow. It is important that the researcher work to put the participant at ease through tone of voice and body language, so they feel comfortable and confident enough to share honestly. The interviewer must be prepared to actively listen to the participant and demonstrate their attentiveness through reframing statements and appropriate follow-up questions, as well as body language. Knowing when to ask clarifying and probing questions will help collect more clear, concise and meaningful data; it is also helpful to develop techniques for gently rerouting a participant when they have strayed from the topic to avoid useless information. Once each interview is complete, the researcher should thank the participants for their time and for sharing their experiences. Lastly, during the transcription process, the researcher must be careful to
transcribe the interviewee’s answers verbatim, without modification, correction or summarization.

**Data Gathering Procedures**

The researcher contacted a previously known staff member at the former Cal-SAFE school first by email and later by phone. The staff member agreed to ask at a weekly meeting if the researcher could come to campus to speak with anyone who was available and interested on a fixed date in the future. Once the staff consented to the researcher’s presence (Appendix B), the known employee made contact and a date was set and the potential participants were notified. On that date, the researcher was introduced to staff members on campus and explained the study and received verbal consent from multiple workers. The researcher began by meeting with the employee she had previously known, who then referred her to another staff member who consented to be interviewed. At the completion of that interview, another staff member was recommended and the researcher proceeded using that snowball method of referral.

All interviews were conducted on-site at the campus of the former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco in various private rooms and offices at the participants’ convenience. The researcher brought in breakfast snacks as well as coffee from a local coffee shop for the staff to enjoy before meeting. Prior to beginning the actual interview process, the researcher reviewed consent paperwork and shared background information about the study. Each participant was given time to independently answer the six demographic questions and was provided with a copy of the twelve open-ended interview questions (Appendix A). A total of twelve questions were asked during each session,
which lasted on average twenty minutes long. Follow-up and clarifying questions were asked as necessary.

Data Analysis

After all interviews had been conducted, the audio-recording of each interview was transferred from the researcher’s cellphone to her laptop for safe-keeping. The data was then transcribed verbatim, except for all personal identifiers including proper names which were replaced in order to adhere to confidentiality standards. Content analysis of the written data was conducted manually by the researcher. Data was identified, coded and then collected together under sections of overarching themes about how staff set and measure their goals and successes, as well as challenges and personal philosophies and frameworks from which they operate. The manual coding system worked to first identify key words and phrases and relevant passages within the data which were connected or tied into the common themes, as well as any glaring differences. Once this information was isolated and reorganized by subsection, the data was reexamined and compared for further latent content and themes within themes.

Protection of Human Subjects

A Human Subjects Application was submitted to the Research Review Committee of California State University, Sacramento, Division of Social Work and was approved “Exempt.” The approved research project was assigned a human subjects protocol number of 15-16-034. No contact was made to any participants prior to this date.

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, which was relayed to participants prior to, and again at the time of, the interview itself while the researcher
reviewed the consent form (Appendix B). Before starting the interview, the researcher took time to explain that participants did not have to respond to questions they did not feel comfortable answering, they believed did not apply to them and that they could end the interview at any time for any reason. Subjects were referred to under a pseudonym both during the transcription process and the analysis and did not mention any students by name at any point. Participants were advised that all information would be confidential; interviews were transferred to a private laptop until they were transcribed, after which they were erased and the paper transcriptions were kept in a locked box at the researcher’s home. All materials will be destroyed by August 31, 2016 when this research project has been completed.

Summary

This chapter discussed and reviewed qualitative research and its advantages and disadvantages, as well as grounded theory and social constructivism, and the phenomenological content analysis process used in this study. This research attempted to explore the personal and professional goals of staff working at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco’s Mission District, and how they were measured and assessed. This chapter explained how participants were selected, the fundamentals of the interview process and the steps that were taken after completion. Lastly, this chapter outlined how human subjects were protected during this project. In the next chapter, the data analysis is presented.
Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will share the results of this study through an in-depth description of the more significant and pertinent data points related to how staff members recognize success and progress in their work and the young women they serve. Each theme will be discussed via manifest and latent content of the data, incorporating direct quotations from interviewees which demonstrate the connecting themes. In order to maintain the confidentiality promised to the study participants, the following information will be reported using these pseudonyms: Tanya, D.J., Allen, Manny, Annie, Paula and Eva. The name of the former Cal-SAFE school has also been modified for this chapter and will be referred to as Mountain View. The chapter will open with an introduction of demographic information about each participant. Following the descriptions, the emerging themes of this project will be introduced and discussed. The chapter closes with a summary of the data disclosed.

The main goal of this project was to investigate the following research question: 1) what are the goals of staff who work with parenting teens at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco's Mission District: and 2) how do they measure their success and progress in achieving these goals? The intention behind investigating these specific questions was to hopefully gain a better understanding of how direct service providers working with high-needs, at-risk communities are able to identify progress in their efforts, potentially extending their tenure in the field and preventing burnout. Each participant was asked a total of six demographic questions, followed by twelve open-
ended questions which allowed for follow-up and exploratory inquiries and facilitated conversation (See Appendix A). The initial set of open-ended questions was intended to obtain a foundational understanding of participants' feelings about the system they work within, misconceptions about the population they serve, as well as their personal philosophies from which they operate, while the later portion worked to evoke key data regarding measurements of success for both their students and themselves. Key themes that emerged during analysis included providing an engaging, fluid, safe and comprehensive alternative education program, goals of educating and empowering two generations, short-term successes measurement through improved attendance and communication, and long-term achievements like confidence and community presence. In addition to the aforementioned themes that were identified and developed from the two foci research questions, other pertinent interview data was coded and tracked for measurements of success among the participants.

**Demographics of Study Participants**

Interviews for this research project were conducted with seven staff members at a former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco’s Mission District. The interviewees consisted of one guidance counselor, one school nurse, one school social worker and four classroom instructors, with the minimum length of employment of eight months and the longest at over thirty years. All were employed at the school at the time of contact. Four of the participants were women and three were men. Of the seven staff, five identified as White, one identified as East Asian and one identified as Middle Eastern. The youngest participant reported being 31-35, followed by one participant who marked 36-40, one 41-
45, two 46-50, one 51-55 and one 56-60, for a median range of 39-48 years old. Three participants had a Bachelor’s Degree and Teaching Credential, while four held Master’s Degree, and two of those participants held teaching credentials, as well.

**Free and Appropriate Public Education**

One of the subsections of the U.S. Education Act of 1972 including the introduction of Title IX, which prevents discrimination against students based on gender and includes protections for pregnant and parenting teens (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In addition to protections under Title IX, section 504 of *The Rehabilitation Act of 1973* mandates that all students with disabilities are entitled to a “free appropriate public education,” or FAPE (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). While pregnancy and parenthood are certainly not disabilities, Section 504 defines qualified students as those who have a physical or mental impairment which interferes with their ability to perform “major life activities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). It is arguable that young women who have become burdened physically and mentally by pregnancy and then tasked with the ultimate responsibility, caring for another human being, qualify for such provisions. Furthermore, young people who live in environments of constant trauma may also be exposed to physical and mental hardships which inhibit their abilities to perform academically. Unpacking FAPE’s declaration, the key word related to educating teen mothers and other at-risk student populations is, “appropriate.” Chalker and Brown (1999) acknowledged that alternative education was truly born out of the understanding that no two students are the same, and that some young people may have more intensive needs than others, which cannot be met in a traditional public school setting. The former
Cal-SAFE site where this research was conducted is considered an alternative school because it is a separate entity within the San Francisco Unified School District, removed from, and not-affiliated with any other schools in the area (Pilat, 199?). In addition to the academic space, this school offers a full-time comprehensive pre-school and has an on-campus wellness center, all within the same building. Students, once enrolled at Mountain View, can then enroll their children in the preschool, allowing them to attend classes while maintaining parental duties, including breast-feeding. Additionally, case management services are offered through the wellness center which is located across the hall from all of the classrooms. The wellness center offers free, optional, inclusive wrap-around services to each young woman, however not every student chooses to participate.

Each staff person interviewed for this project has a specific role on campus, defined by their credentials, expertise and training, and therefore, each interviewee added their own dimension and view in regards to the benefits of an alternative education model.

**The Wrap-Around**

All participants in this study felt that the pull-out, alternative education model for this population was extremely beneficial. Furthermore, each participant struggled to provide responses as to how this model could be improved, apart from an increase in funding for more services. Paula, the primary school counselor who has worked at Mountain View since 1985, swiftly described the comprehensive services offered through the wellness center and the full-time childcare as the most beneficial component of the model, noting that it, "made it the model of what we’d always hoped it to be. Now, there’s every option available to young person who’s become a teen parent." D.J., who
has been the History teacher at Mountain View for sixteen years, and in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) for twenty four, also described that on their campus, teen mothers “will receive the support that [they] need in prenatal classes and labor and delivery and doula and a nurse, in a small setting-- a nurse and a staff that will get to know you personally and individually.”

Consistent with the literature surrounding teen parents as a special group with special needs having access to logistical support services on-campus contributes to their ability to physically attend school, which is the first step toward graduation (Pilat, 1997; Sadler et al., 2007). Even the school nurse Tanya, who, at the time of her interview, had been at Mountain View for less than a full school year immediately responded that the most beneficial aspect of Mountain View are “the services... [which] are excellent and all inclusive. And, at as regular school, they would not get that. They wouldn’t have people that are experts in this and that we allow them the time after having the baby and during pregnancy to go to their doctor’s appointments without being ‘dinged’ for that, you know? In other schools, that would be a big issue.” Providing support around the basic and logistical needs of being a teen mother is consistent with previous research around alternative education for teen mothers, which shows these types of services can help to lower depression and raise graduation rates (Sadler et al.).

Engagement & Literacy

The belief that different students have different needs was represented in the data collected for this study, as Annie the English teacher described being able to engage students because “you can tailor your lessons to present relevant topics to your students
because they... have a common concern. [They is] concern for themselves as parents and concern for their children.” The understanding that it is important to investigate other ways to educate is, consistent with other literature around alternative education programs, which establish that strictly sticking to one curriculum or model of instruction is both ineffective and unjust to vulnerable populations (Chalker & Brown, 1999).

Extensive research around alternative education programs specifically for pregnant and parenting teens done by Pilat (1997), established that for the young women, their greatest interest and source of joy was their child and being a mother, therefore models which actively work to provide an education that ties in and connects to this aspect of their lives will have the greatest engagement and success. Manny, the media teacher emphasized this perspective explaining that he “always somehow try to connect it to their child... if I can do that, oh my gosh technology is pointless, but if it relates to them being able to take a photo and clean up any of it, stuff around their baby and make the baby look so much nicer, wow I have won them over.” The willingness as expressed by educators in this research to integrate the interests of their population is consistent with the six tenets of alternative education Morley (1991) established, which include accommodation and pluralism and providing choices for students.

Annie later elaborated that by using information about parenting in her lesson planning to help foster engagement, she was actually able to move forward to provide what she believed to be an appropriate education for this population. In her case as the only English teacher, Annie described this as “helping students to develop their strongest literacy, skills because I feel like literacy... is like the most important thing.” The belief
That literacy as essential and appropriate is consistent with the literature which points to a correlation between literacy and dropping out of high school and can be predicted as early as the third grade (Harris, 2015). For Annie, the need to develop literacy skills “is exceedingly even maybe more so important for a teen mom than for anybody else. Because you’re now not only responsible for yourself and not letting yourself get screwed over or something, somehow, you are also responsible for your child. And so you need to like to be able to... know what is available to you, what is within your rights and communicate when... you’re not getting those... I mean it’s just provides access.” Manny was also quick to follow this theme by noting that one of his priorities is to “teach them financial literacy, I teach them digital literacy, how not to get scammed how to be able to manage their, their finances, how to be able to just be successful on a day-to-day basis, regardless if they get the high paying job or not.”

The motivations behind the emphasis on literacy expressed by both Annie and Manny are consistent with other work around alternative education. According to Goodman (1999), if the function of mainstream public education is to perpetuate the norms and beliefs of the dominant culture, then the goal of alternative education is, in many ways, to disrupt this indoctrination. In the U.S., public education discourse and curricula often reflects and perpetuates the White, Protestant, Heteronormative narrative, and reinforces these messages through what stories get told and by whom (Gilborn, 2006; Klenowski, 2009). Alternative education is born out of recognition that the system is unjust and a subsequent desire to empower groups that are being marginalized and disenfranchised (Goodman, 1999). Manny and Annie’s collective objectives to provide
various types of literacy to their students reflect the alternative education social justice ideology of empowerment.

Fluidity & Safety

Morley (1991) describes alternative education as less of a specific pedagogy, and more of a perspective or mindset that every student has the potential to learn and grow, and that there can never be simply one way to educate. This notion came across in 100% of the interviews in different examples and strategies, depending on various roles on campus. D.J. explained that fluidity in the model is key and that as a staff, “we're constantly in a revision model. We reflect, we change things. And practically every school year, our schedule is different, the times are different. We're not... stuck in a particular way of doing things and we're very happy to change things because the challenges are so huge.” Alternative education at its core aims to investigate and implement different avenues for learning and growth in order to reach students that the traditional model has failed (Goodman, 1999). The fluidity that is necessary to achieve such a goal is not restricted to pedagogy or curriculum, and includes a willingness to modify the schedule and actual school day to best meet the needs of the target population. The school’s social worker, Eva, confirmed this sense of fluidity on campus by noting that just earlier that day a student had said to her, “people here understand, at my other school I could only go to the bathroom one time during that class period” and that students also “say that they don’t get as much homework here.” While being able to use the restroom when it is necessary and receiving less homework may not seem like revolutionary acts, Mountain View’s ability to be flexible and realistic about the most
basic needs of their students is exactly what allows at-risk students to begin to experience success at school (Goodman, 1999).

Understanding the need for alternative education modalities means acknowledging that the students who are labeled “at-risk” have built-up years of frustration, feelings of failure, shame, rage and mistrust that have altered their perception of both their academic capabilities, as well as school in general (Chalker & Brown, 1999). Large public schools with rigid, punitive, zero-tolerance policies can lead to reactivity, stress and fight or flight responses among students who have become fearful and untrusting of adults and other authority figures (Chalker & Brown). In order to help students unlearn these behaviors and develop better coping skills, the research shows that it is important to create a campus climate which is safe and inclusive (Goodman, 1999).

Allen, Mountain View’s math teacher, touched on this theme when he shared that the school is “a safe environment. It’s a small school...the smaller classes here--and the fact there’s not a lot of distractions... the girls speak out more...” In addition to the smaller classes which can help students feel more comfortable to participate, Annie remarked that their shared experience of parenting means “there's no stigma within this high school about being a teen mom. Everybody is a teen mom.”

In order to establish a successful alternative education modality, staff need to first evaluate the specific needs of their population and build their policies and programs to operate around them (Morley, 1991). The school nurse, Tanya, explained that Mountain View has done this by creating a space that is “a totally safe environment. They’re free to breastfeed wherever. They’re free to have their baby, you know, it’s just sort of like just a
more embracing community and environment.” Understanding that new mothers may need a place to pump milk or feed their child is in accordance with themes of establishing a safe and comfortable campus through acceptance and fluidity. Acknowledging and then meeting a student’s basic needs helps to build trust by validating them and helping them feel seen and heard. Eva provided further evidence of this feeling among students by sharing that “students have reported that they come to school more, and I think that part of that is that they’ve said things like, ‘well, my other school like no one really knew if I wasn’t there.” In a traditional setting, class sizes are large and teachers are often overwhelmed, making it easy for students who have significant barriers in their lives to fall through the cracks (Jepsen & Rivkin, 2009). Many alternative education programs seek to be the safety net which catches chronically truant students by connecting with them, tracking their presence and following up when they seem to slip away (Reid, 2006). D.J. noted that Mountain View does not penalize their students for absences, but instead takes the approach that, if “you fall down and you know something happens and you’re gone for a few weeks or you miss a few days here or there, you know, I’m going to encourage, I’m going to ask you what’s happening, but you’re going to be welcomed back.”

**Goals: Why Are You Here?**

Many of the themes in this project are overlapping and interconnected. The personal goals of an educator or counselor are often explicitly tied in with the primary objectives of alternative education or their particular school site. Being able to identify one’s specific goal(s) in their work may work as a preventative factor against feelings of
burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). Working intimately with other human beings can provide a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction; however, unlike other professions in fields like technology or finance, measurement is decidedly less straightforward. Helping professions like nursing, education, and social work involve complex layers of human experience and behavior and can be draining mentally and emotionally. Here the research shows that actually providing space and time in the workplace to debrief, discuss, and assess one’s goals or progress may in and of itself work to mitigate burnout (Hamama; 2014).

**Educating Two Generations**

In each interview for this research, the fact that there are two lives on the line when working with parenting teens became remarkably clear. Research conducted by Cox, Buman, Woods, Famakinwa and Harris (2012) found that teen mothers who were provided medical, social, and parenting support services while attending school had a positive correlation with attendance, employment and the physical health of the children, and a negative correlation with additional pregnancies. Over half (57%) of the staff at Mountain View who participated in this study directly addressed the importance of tending to the needs of the mothers so that they can, in turn, do the same for their babies. When asked directly what it is that he wants for his students, D.J. responded: “I want them to have a healthy family, a healthy relationship with their baby, number one... Because the most important thing... It’s that we’re educating two generations.” As the social worker, Eva elaborated on this theme by remarking that she is particularly invested
in disrupting negative patterns and behaviors the mothers may have experienced growing up and helping to foster healthy attachment:

I think my goals will be like, I mean specifically… parent-child interactions and develop, I mean definitely come from like the theoretical perspective like, definitely like, that early attachment... Ultimately like that would be like my goal for people, is that they know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and know to like, you know, honor their children in a way that their kids' needs are met… I think that’s like, that’s where a lot of pain and sadness comes from for the teenager, so that throughout their life—they learned to cope with the world in a way that they maybe weren’t having all of their needs provided for, and… in order to interrupt that cycle they want different things for their kids but like we have to help them recognize how powerful their own past was in shaping how they going to be with their own children. To really connect that piece to makes some changes.

Cox et al. acknowledge that many teen parents come from dysfunctional households with inadequate support systems and therefore require a multifaceted network of various types of support, like what is offered at Mountain View, in order to break negative behavioral patterns and promote healthy bonding between mother and child.

Paula, the main guidance counselor and longest running employee, also expressed that her goal for these young women is for “the mother to be a primary caretaker for that child when that child starts kindergarten.” Paula continued by explaining that the on-campus childcare center is one way to help facilitate this goal because it requires the
young women to follow certain rules and guidelines in order for their child to participate. Tanya’s responses to this question were also in suit with this theme; however, her approach to achieving this goal “is to make sure that they have health on all levels, so that it’s not just physical health...emotionally healthy that they understand how to make smart decisions.” Providing health on all levels for the mother as a means to improving child outcomes is consistent with the literature (Sadler et al., 2007), which shows that programs that offer wrap-around services are successful in improving feelings of parental competence and confidence. In order to improve child outcomes, it is essential, just as English teacher Annie noted that, they “feel good about themselves as a person. And as a Motber.”

What do You Want?

In addition to supporting the girls in becoming capable and confident mothers, a majority of the staff expressed that they had a desire for goals on campus to be student-driven. This was particularly apparent when speaking with the school’s social worker Eva, who shared that “if this isn’t where they are right now, then like we can’t force them in that direction even if this is something that is really important for their health, or their safety like, ultimately like people deserve to make their own life choices.” She continued to describe that as the adults on campus, the urge to exert influence over students decision making is natural, however “we’re just equipping people with knowledge and resources and like it’s important to defer to their own autonomy to really make decisions about when and how they’re living out their life.” This ideology Eva expressed is in line with strengths-based, person-centered theories which emphasize identifying and building upon
people’s positive characteristics (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008), and respectfully differing to them to make decisions appropriate for their own lives (Capuzzi & Gross, 2003).

**Measuring Success Short-Term**

One of the central goals of this project is to gain insight around how staff members at an alternative school who work with an at-risk population measure their success day-to-day, as well as long-term. The first step toward assessment is first establishing or recognizing one’s personal objectives, and then analyzing how they might be assessed for achievement. Research around burnout has shown that employees who feel like they are capable, progressing in their field and experience a sense of accomplishment in their work are much less likely to experience sensations associated with burnout (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). When employees are able to identify and vocalize both their goals and their success in meeting them, the more productive and satisfied they will feel and the better they will be able to serve their clients (Ben-Zur & Michäel, 2007).

**Attendance & Engagement**

The available literature around the consequences of truancy reveals a very bleak picture for at-risk youth in the U.S. Students who are chronically truant, as defined by the state of California, are more likely to come from families that are facing significant social and environmental barriers, including single-parent households, multiple jobs, and are generally of low socio-economic status (Gleich-Bope, 2014). Barriers to attendance are multifaceted and include any number of interwoven factors including community
violence, lack of transportation, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and teen pregnancy (Goodman, 1999). The literature also clearly shows that the implications of chronic absenteeism can be devastating. In her 2015 report on the truancy crisis in the state, California Attorney General Kamala Harris revealed that there is a correlation between chronic truancy and literacy and academic performance, noting that 83% of the Kindergartners with this label will not be able to read at grade level as Third Graders. Furthermore, Harris (2015) reported that children who cannot read at grade-level by this time are four times as likely to drop out of school, making them vulnerable to many negative life-outcomes.

The theme that attendance is central to success came through in this research, with 57% of the respondents mentioning the word directly. Mountain View’s social worker Eva very succinctly noted that “on the face of it... improved attendance is like a really easy way to recognize progress.” This statement was supported by classroom instructor, D.J., who shared that he begins to “judge success... when they’re coming into class.” While for many, simply having someone show up may not be considered a marker of accomplishment, D.J. went on to elaborate that “if you’re reading at a fourth grade level and now... and you haven’t been going to school for the last year, but now you’re coming to school and, you know, it’s 70% of the time.... you’re doing so much better. It has to be in a perspective.” The theme that attendance is the first step to everything else, was also articulated by Mountain View’s math teacher, Allen, who expressed that, “if they show up to class...that’s a good sign. If they show up to class and work, that means that I’m kind of getting through to them.” Chalker and Brown (1999) describe the window of
opportunity to foster a positive relationship with school is between the ages of three to ten, after which those who experienced frequent feelings of failure and shame often develop anger and mistrust in the place of curiosity and excitement. The school's nurse, Tanya, described that in her time at Mountain View she has witnessed "young women go from not attending school feeling defeated themselves, feeling like stuck or, and then they somehow make a breakthrough where they start showing up... and they start feeling really good about themselves."

In order for at-risk students who have personal histories of academic failure and rejection to reintegrate and be successful in a school setting, staff must work to create a space that feels safe, accepting and inclusive, on all levels (Goodman, 1999). In addition to creating a welcoming atmosphere, at-risk students need to be provided opportunities, no matter how small, to feel successful and be recognized in that success, so some of the damage may be repaired (Goodman). At Mountain View, the staff appear to begin validating the young mothers by acknowledging that getting to school, especially with a child, is an accomplishment. Tanya reported that once the breakthrough she described has taken place, "it's like that rush of adrenaline that you get when you're succeeding and you see, 'I'm doing good, people see it, people recognize it,' and that... snowball, that happens like the first spark of like, 'oh!'... it's really quite amazing." Alternative education programs operate from a perspective as opposed to a paradigm (Goodman); and it is a perspective that acknowledges the traditional model just doesn't work for everyone, and that no two students are alike (Chalker & Brown, 1999). Working from this perspective, alternative education staff work to foster academic engagement by
recognizing some of the psychological, emotional and even physical needs of their students, and using this understanding to create lessons and instructional practices that are appropriate and effective (Goodman). Mountain View's English teacher Annie discussed this theme when she shared that she feels successful when she sees her girls “engaging in the lessons and then, engaging in school in an ongoing way... Consistently in class doing their work and in the discussion and participating like when you you’re here... you’re here, you’re fully ‘on.’” Recognizing this link between physical presence, engagement and emotional, mental presence allows Annie to achieve these moments in her classroom.

**Communication: Follow Through & Outreach**

It is certainly not difficult to see how turning in work, participating in class discussions and assignments, and mastering new skills, as both Allen and Manny noted for question five, are a few quantifiable measures of success, several staff members also shared more nuanced markers of progress. While of course Mountain View employees would like 100% of their students to be in class 100% of the time, part of their model includes understanding that motherhood brings with it multiple barriers to attendance. Physical, mental and emotional exhaustion, transportation, health are just a few of roadblocks which may prevent a young mother from being able to get her and her child out the door on any given day, and this is understood and accepted on this campus. However, both Annie and D.J. reported that a more significant indicator of growth is actually what happens *after* a young woman is absent. D.J. described feeling successful
when “they start to care that if they did miss work, they come to me and say, ‘How can I make up this?’” Annie reiterated this theme of responsibility as growth:

If you’re not there, you follow-up. Like I feel like that’s also another one, it’s actually it’s a parenting skill to say, ‘Yeah you’re going to be absent sometimes. You’re going to be late, you’re going to miss something’... but something was happening that you missed. How do you--how do you--of your own volition like you don’t wait for somebody else to ask, you ask...

The idea that these concepts are actually skills that are developed through practice, but also that they translate and apply to parenting appears to be at the heart of the mission at Mountain View.

Connected to the theme of assuming responsibility and demonstrating follow-through that were present in this research are behavioral changes like improved communication and outreach. Eva, the school social worker, attempted to describe what she views as “just like general affect. You know, just how people communicate with... other people... You know, some people come in super quiet... So, I guess the amount of communication with other people, what that may look like, how appropriate that is...” The improvement in general affect, Eva says, can also be observed through “having a lot of patience with your child... because if you... have a lot of stress it’s hard to like stay calm in your own life, so if... someone’s kind of easy with their kid... I think that’s like an indicator that things are okay and they can focus on their job, that they’re managing their internal stuff.” The idea of lowering stress and therefore improving communication through creating a safe space is consistent with the literature around the goals of
alternative education (Goodman, 1999). Additionally, it connects to the themes revealed by staff around educating two generations; not only do the young women benefit from having less stress and more patience, but so do their children.

After years of repeated exposure to failure, humiliation and rejection, many at-risk students develop a general mistrust of adults and authority figures and have learned to protect themselves by simply not talking in class or asking questions (Goodman, 1999). Underlying philosophies of alternative education understand that creating a safe space is the initial step toward healing some of the trauma associated with school and establishing trust between students and staff so that education and growth may take place (Goodman). Following D.J. and Annie’s observations around improved responsibility and follow through, Mountain View’s guidance counselor shared another aspect of communicative progress: outreach and self-advocacy. Becoming a parent is a profound and daunting transition, and new mothers of any age can benefit from extra support during this phase, so as Paula noted, success may include that “you’re able to outreach for support like us all, as--that’s a healthiest of a grown adult that they can outreach for support... that they’re able to advocate and believe that it’s best to outreach for support.” In order to help their students work toward this, Paula shared that staff “put opportunity in their way to navigate that,” including the childcare center and work permits for part-time jobs. In addition to providing those opportunities, Annie shared that it is important to openly share with the students that these forms of communication like advocacy and “having the girls recognize that that’s actually a skill you can work on.” Educating youth about more than what exists in the traditional public school curriculum, including
development of social skills, coping mechanisms and distress management, is consistent with the literature (Chalker & Brown, 1999; Goodman, 1999; Pilat, 1997) and clearly present on the Mountaın View campus.

**Measuring Success Long-Term**

Working with at-risk populations, especially those where two lives are at stake, requires providers to meet their clients where they are, and use a strengths-based platform to help facilitate empowerment. When D.J. the History teacher was first asked what he would like for his students, he was quick to first establish that above the interests of the staff members, “we really try to have it be as much as possible student driven.” Philosophies behind alternative education agree with this idea, built around the idea that every student is different and comes to school with a unique set of experiences, needs, as well as goals and desires (Chalker & Brown, 1999). Being able to observe growth over a long period of time may also help to mitigate burnout by allowing employees to tolerate distress by focusing on the big picture and keeping things in perspective. Looking past their own interests for these young mothers, staff at Mountain View shared what they perceive to be their more long-term indicators of success.

**Confidence**

An informal aspect of the traditional model of education is the embedded belief that after high school, a person naturally goes to college. This is not written in educational code, but woven into the cultural and campus climate of public schools (Chalker & Brown, 1999). Alternative education was born out of the belief that the traditional model does not work for everyone, therefore many alternative programs
actively work with students to identify skills and interests, and then connect them with services and programs that are appropriate. While three of the four classroom instructors did specifically mention college attendance, each was quick to apply an addendum like Allen did: "if that's their choice..." All seven participants, however, described building confidence as a central drive behind the work that they do, which is consistent with other research around improving outcomes for teen mothers (Sadler et al., 2007).

The ripple effect of confidence for Manny, the media teacher, first starts in the classroom, when he sees that they "feel confident [to] actually know what's going on and you can actually be a contributor in the class; [that] tells me that these are students who are going to feel like they have a voice that they can contribute." Allen echoed a similar sentiment about class participation as an indicator of improved confidence, and D.J. went further to link confidence in their abilities on campus to their roles as mothers but sharing that, "I want them to be able to feel confident I want them to be able to feel confident that they can go to college if they like. They can be in the workforce if they like, that they can take care of this child, this beautiful baby that they brought into the world.” The theory that what is good for the mother is good for the child has been demonstrated in numerous studies (Cox, Buman, Woods, Famakinwa & Harris, 2012; Pilat, 1997; Maxon & Miranda, 2011; Sadler et al., 2007) and applies to building confidence, as Annie demonstrated when she replied that she wants, "[them] just to feel good about themselves as a person. And as a Mother.” Helping students to feel confident in their abilities as students, people and mothers by getting to know each of their students as individuals, and then building upon identified internal resources to build confidence is a tenant of
strengths-based work (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008). If the students at Mountain View are able to become more confident through the support and opportunities provided by staff, then they can begin to identify goals they would like to achieve and move forward feeling capable and with what nurse Tanya described as “sparks of hope.”

Community Presence

When given a chance to reflect on success in the “big picture,” three of the seven staff members made some reference to being able to see their former students out in the community in San Francisco. The research on education models hoping to serve pregnant and parenting teens specifically has shown that the shared bond of motherhood and solidarity helped facilitate a sense of community on campus (Pilat, 1997). For many at-risk youth, they have spent some part of their lives feel or living in isolation and marginalization, so learning how to operate in a communal setting and participate in its creation, are essential to building trust and confidence (Goodman, 1999). This sentiment was particularly clear for some of the longer-running staff like D.J., who acknowledges that some of this young women may have experienced rejection from their communities, and so “we're trying to model... a way of being in community that as a staff we're trying to model what it means to support one another” so that they know, “once they’re part of our community, they’re part of our family.” As with many of the themes expressed in both the literature and this research, there is present the philosophy that these skills will translate and transfer into all areas of their lives.
Modeling community at Mountain View creates a space where young women can feel as though they belong, and then take that confidence and sense of self in connection with others out into the community at-large. Manny shared his desire “that they can contribute once they’re outside of the school and that they’re going to be part of society in a way that, you know, we kind of expect and hope—that they’re not just going to like living on their own little world, but they’re actually going to be involved” and elaborated that he has had “students come back and share ‘Hey I’ve succeed, I’m going to school, I’ve got a path, I’ve got a direction, this is the job that I’m working towards’ and seeing them achieve that in their life… that’s like phenomenal.” D.J., who has worked at Mountain View for sixteen years, shared several anecdotal stories about running into former-students who working at different establishments in San Francisco, and how “I live in the community so I continue to see the young women in the community and that’s where... I see the real successes I think.”

As with so many of these themes, there is a degree to which they are all interconnected. D.J., who earlier had discussed the importance of educating two generations, shared just how this theme ripples out into the community of San Francisco through a personal anecdote: “You know, these babies are our kindergarteners in five short years. These are our students... And you know, my partner, he teaches second grade—He’s had my student’s children as his students.” Paula has worked at Mountain View for over thirty years, allowing her the opportunity to watch the students and their children grow over the span of multiple decades. Her invaluable insight revealed the power community participation as an indicator of success in her work, sharing that “we
have had students also who are our colleagues now... So, I’ve been long enough in the community, because I’ve lived in San Francisco, to know 35, 40 year old women that were women here, you know what I mean? It’s powerful for me.” Here, the research shows how short-term and daily successes build up to the ultimate goal of productive community involvement, with every theme present along the way. On the micro level for at-risk youth, helping to facilitate community involvement on the small scale is a fluid process and involves creating a safe-space where they feel fully accepted and in so doing, create room for true engagement, followed by improved confidence (Yoshitaka, 2014). These positive internal developments described throughout the interviews at Mountain View, contribute to the realization of macro goals, which may be thirty or forty years down the line.

Summary

This chapter focused on analyzing and reporting the data from this research. Chapter four described misconceptions of teen mothers, factors regarding an appropriate education through the alternative model, and short-term and long-term goals of staff and how they are measured. The following chapter will include a description of the author’s conclusions and recommendations, as well as the limitations and possible implications for social work practice.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusions of this project and their implications for both social work policy and practice. The chapter includes a discussion of the central themes, including providing an appropriate education and short-term and long-term goals as conceptualized and measured by staff at Mountain View. It will consider how these themes may be interconnected and how they may relate to burnout prevention in the helping profession. The chapter will outline the limitations of this study and offer appropriate recommendations of school staff and practitioners, as well as for future research on this topic.

Conclusions

The information collected for this research project is worth examining as helping professions continue to have high rates of burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007), in addition to having possible youth to providers specifically working with pregnant and parenting youth. The consequences of burnout in the field of social work extend beyond practitioners simply leaving the field after a few years, to transference of trauma (Spodek-Gregson, Holttum & Billings, 2013) depersonalization and compassion fatigue, which be harmful to both practitioner and client (Nolfe, Mancini, Mancusi, & Zotini, 2014). The research around burnout since the 1980s has concluded that there is a general attitude in many workplaces, including social work agencies, that symptoms like exhaustion and compassion fatigue function on an individual level, and are therefore an individual’s responsibility (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). The research in this field, however,
consistently demonstrates that external factors, like caseload size and workplace environment (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Verdenburgh et al., 1999; Hamama, 2014), as well as client trauma and behavior (Longeran et al., 2004) are the driving forces behind compassion fatigue and depersonalization. Due to its relatively recent acceptance by society as a work and environment induced-phenomenon, and not simply a sign of weakness in an employee (Maslach & Goldberg), there is still a lack of information on how agencies and service providers can better support employees in coping even when they may not be able to remove the obstacles or change policies. This project was constructed in the hopes of understanding how various helping professionals are able to set goals and experience feelings of success and accomplishment in their work. The results established several significant data points which revealed staff's short-term goals, including academic progress and increased confidence, and long-term goals like providing for their children and participating in the community, as well as their assessment measures. Information which surfaced during the analysis demonstrate that staff at Mountain View are aware of some of the complex challenges facing their population and understand that many of these obstacles function on macro, environmental levels that are out of their control. In connection with these findings however, the data also seems to suggest that the use of personal philosophies rooted in person-centered, harm reduction theories supports staff in distancing themselves from subjective or specific outcomes, in turn empowering their students, as well as providing feelings of success and progress in their work.
All seven participants in the study shared multiple personal and professional goals for the young mothers they serve, including providing an appropriate education serving both generations, building confidence and empowering them to become productive participants in the community. The four classroom teachers all expressed short-term goals that aligned with their particular subject matter, including improved functional and digital literacy, math skills and a quality history education. The school social worker, nurse and guidance counselor had goals that were more consistent with their particular fields, including fostering healthy attachment between mother and child, providing appropriate physical and mental health care and connecting youth women with outside services through the wellness center that can connect them with job opportunities and move them forward. One participant, who has worked at Mountain View for sixteen years, described the link between their varying objectives by stressing the importance of "each person doing their jobs so that other people can do their jobs. So, as the History teacher, you know, my job is to provide a quality History education... knowing that the school nurse is good at her job and knowing that the social worker is good at her job... if the counselors are doing their job... then I can focus on... even with everything else going on in their lives, that your education is important." The literature has shown that a key contributor to burnout occurs when a person feels that the demands of their role are greater than their ability to manage or address them, resulting in feelings of intense stress (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). The structured model and delineation of duties on campus this participant described appear to be a workplace strategy which can reduce the
sensation of being overwhelmed and allow staff to work productively (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Challenges

While much of the information gathered from the participants was focused around the positive experiences staff have on campus, several staff did touch on the challenges associated with working with this population. Logistical issues consistent with the literature around educating teen moms (Pilat, 1999) were present in this data set, including what the history teacher shared that his goals feel “a little bit unrealistic sometimes” when students “are reading at a fourth grade level and... haven’t been going to school for the last year.” He also acknowledged that despite wanting to provide the quality history education he knows they deserve, a lot of the factors that are confronting our students are so much bigger than the educational component is.” Helping professionals are usually motivated by desires to help facilitate positive change in people’s lives, communities and the world at-large. The literature on burnout shows that helping professionals enter their field with lofty goals and optimism and then are met with the constraining, limiting realities and macro barriers facing the social service industry (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). Another participant echoed similar feelings noting that “there are situations that leave you feeling like defeated or like crushed because there’s nothing you can do. You know, like there’s just nothing, and the system is sometimes not set-up to fix those things in a way that is at all helpful.” Coming up against macro-barriers in micro and mezzo social work practice is a reality for most agencies, which Tanya and other Mountain View staff acknowledged. Further
information from the data revealed the personal philosophies certain participants operate from, which may have implications for mitigating burnout.

**Personal Philosophy**

Every participant interviewed for this project revealed some sort of personal ideology they rely on in their work, including meeting students where they are, upholding the right for people to make choices for themselves and their families and offering unconditional care. While D.J., the history teacher, did acknowledge that there are times when his educational goals may be unrealistic, especially when a student’s academic skills are very low, he works from the belief that he must “accept every student where she is... I am here to meet you where you’re at.” Separating himself from where he might like the student to be academically in order to provide her what she actually needs in that moment was also expressed by Mountain View’s social worker. Eva’s personal philosophy in the work was consistent with person-centered, strengths-based theories (Graybeal, 2001), as she reported that when interacting with her students she reminds herself “this is someone else’s life and their life choice and they deserve to make that choice for themselves.” She elaborated to include that this does not mean you do not actively work to equip people with as much access to information and resources as possible, but at the end of the day, “it’s important to defer to their own autonomy.”

Again the theme of detaching from personal motivations or desired results when working with at-risk communities can work against burnout by forcing helping professionals to remove internal investments that can cause people to become overly involved, disappointed and frustrated (Szigethy, 2014). The school nurse who spoke of her own
feelings of defeat when students stop coming to school shared that she simply maintains the idea that she would like to "be that person I needed when I was a teenager for them" and offer her students unconditional positive regard (Wilkins, 2000). By aligning herself with this role, she chooses to "look at it from that perspective of like, this is going to be influential for the rest of their life... the care that I give to them... every seed planted has the potential to grow." The literature shows that feeling ineffective in one's day-to-day work is a factor in perpetuating the overall defeat and depression associated with burnout. Tanya's theme of planting hope does not only give her students room to grow, but it allows her to distance herself from the immediate disappointment, providing her hope as well.

**Letting Go of Outcomes & a Harm Reduction Model**

A common theme of these personal philosophies is a willingness to detach oneself from specific desired outcomes. Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) acknowledge that Western society places emphasis on constructing identity around our profession and roles within. Helping professionals working with at-risk populations who become attached to "fixing" people, or impress their own cultural or personal beliefs and values onto their clients, may experience frustration, depersonalization and unintentionally cause harm (Denning & Little, 2012). Not only is this destructive to the people or communities they work with, but it can also induce feelings of resentment and cynicism related to burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007). All seven participants shared views of their work which revealed the themes of unconditional care and general empowerment, as opposed to an attachment to specific, quantifiable outcomes. Furthermore, every staff person described strong
feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction in their work, despite the significant barriers their students are facing. The author of this project was surprised at the way the data pointed to a general mindset on campus that was in-line with a harm reduction model. While this model has traditionally been seen in public health, advocacy and drug and alcohol treatment, Denning and Little (2012) insist that “harm reduction therapy is for anyone, anywhere” (p. 24). Harm reduction is built around the belief that absolutes, like complete abstinence from alcohol, do not work for everyone, and instead aim to reduce the harm of certain behaviors to an individual as much as possible (Denning & Little).

The personal philosophies expressed by Mountain View staff integrated the overarching-belief that at-risk students and their life experiences and circumstances deserve to be honored and treated with respect, consistent with person-centered, strengths-based theories. Harm reduction also incorporates these theories and aims to “work side by side with the stated goals of the client” (Denning & Little, 2012, p. 16). The information collected from these participants revealed that staff people understand that there are many complex barriers in their student’s lives, including consequences of poverty and immigration issues among others, and put as many supports in place like creating the wellness center, offering bus passes, job permits and child care. While these supports work to mitigate some of the stressors in their students’ lives, the data also showed that staff recognizes there are many factors out of their control that they cannot necessarily remove. Harm reduction emphasizes that the concept of “success” is related to self-efficacy, which Denning and Little describe as “the belief that one has agency or control over one’s life and future” (p. 43). Examining how success is measured by staff
at Mountain View is consistent with the harm reduction model's emphasis on goals and outcomes being client driven, which was unexpected by the author.

**Recommendations**

Based upon the findings from this research, recommendations may be made for researchers of future studies, as well as helping professionals such as social workers, teachers, counselors and nurses. Recommendations for both research and practice are considered in the following subsections.

**Future Research**

The primary goal of this work was to gather data that might provide insight into how helping professionals working with at-risk populations assess their progress in their work and identify implications for burnout prevention. The results of this study reveal the need for future research in areas directly related to maintaining morale and productivity among helping professionals as a buffer against burnout. Additional research would benefit from focusing around a possible correlation between detaching from outcomes and feelings of success in the helping professions. The study findings suggest that all various types of staff at Mountain View experience significant levels of success and satisfaction in their work, despite their ability to recognize the obvious barriers, trauma and suffering. Future research could employ both qualitative and/or quantitative designs to further explore correlations between positive personal philosophies and theories like the strengths-based perspective and levels of burnout. More specifically, research between how the person-centered harm reduction model may be used as an overarching platform to adjust workplace attitudes and mindsets and a
potential negative correlation with levels of burnout among staff. It may be beneficial to conduct similar studies between the philosophical framework of an institution and burnout in multiple helping professional settings like clinics, residential treatment facilities and additional schools in order to identify specific stressors in varying fields.

Future studies that aim to explore similar research questions in more depth could directly implement Maslach’s Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) to obtain quantitative data directly related to levels of burnout among staff to create a broader understanding of the issue. Focusing and developing questionnaires directly around the possible correlation between institutional and personal philosophies and burnout will allow researchers to assess for correlation more effectively. Additionally, future research could benefit from larger sample sizes to potentially elicit stronger and more significant results. The survey design for future studies would benefit from considering demographic factors including age, race, gender, ethnicity and length of time in the field to gain insight on how different groups measure success, persevere in their work and stave off burnout and its consequences.

Nurses, Educators, Counselors and Social Workers

Recommendations for the helping professions derived from this research project include the creation and provision of time and space within workplace settings to discuss critical issues surrounding burnout. It is recommended that agencies and programs providing support services to at-risk populations create space and opportunities for staff members to share concerns and negative feelings openly and without criticism so they can receive social support and solidarity. Elaborating on this suggestion, helping
professions are encouraged to explicitly acknowledge the burnout phenomenon, share information about symptoms and consequences with employees, as well as examine arenas that can be targeted to help minimize its occurrence. The participants of this study discussed the fluid model of the Mountain View school, which was open and flexible to making changes as necessary, using input from both staff and students. Expanding this recommendation, the research from this study demonstrates the need for a strong mission statement or philosophical framework to which staff can defer when they are feeling that their work is no longer effective or satisfying. Having a clear outline of program ideology as well as staff roles and duties that can be articulated and applied was evident when speaking with each participant on campus. This allowed Mountain View employees to focus on the objectives outlined by their specific roles and defer to and rely on other staff when a situation arose that was out of their scope of practice. Recommendations based upon this observation include clearly defining roles and expectations at the time a person is hired, and reiterating and reinforcing these boundaries as needed to mitigate feeling overwhelmed or exhausted.

Across the information obtained from this research, a general theme of satisfaction among staff at Mountain View was palpable, as the nurse gushed, “most days I leave feeling really accomplished...I'd happily be here for the rest of my career.” Agencies and programs which employ helping professionals are therefore also encouraged to create space and provide time on a consistent basis for staff members to identify and share what they feel is going well or any recent successes to capitalize on that positive energy. The ability of staff members to recognize success and articulate
how it was measured may be related to the overall sense of satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment that were expressed during the interviews. Providing structure as much as possible so that staff members explicitly know the overarching philosophy of their workplace, as well as the specific parameters of their role came through in this research in what was described by one participant as "the flow-chart." The nature of the helping professions, which work intimately with other people and groups, is complex and multifaceted. This came through in this data. Finding quantifiable ways to measure human interaction and growth can be difficult but through this research it appears there is merit in supervisors working with staff members to help shape realistic goals. In connection with this recommendation, the data from this research shows that when possible, goal setting with staff should remain rooted in personal and professional philosophies, and remain detached from specific outcomes. The last recommendation based upon the findings of general satisfaction from employees at an alternative school for teen mothers is for managers and leaders in institutions to consider establishing a system of recognizing and honoring the hard work or success of their staff.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are both general to the nature of qualitative research, as well as specific to the project. The general limitations of this study are related to the subjective nature of qualitative research. A qualitative study design was used to collect information regarding how staff at a former Cal-SAFE school working with pregnant and parenting teens measure success in their work. The sample that was obtained for the project was restricted by several factors including size and geography, hindering the
generalizability of the study's findings. Additionally, the researcher acquired the sample through use of non-probability sampling, a strategy known to compromise validity. The study design relied on face-to-face interviews as a means of collecting data, which is recognized as eliciting some degree of bias on the part of the researcher, as well as bias on behalf of the participants. Qualitative research which relies primarily on semi-structured interviews is extremely difficult to analyze and duplicate, furthering its unreliability. Inherent to the subjective characteristics of qualitative research, there is an underlying existence of bias within each phase including design, collection and interpretation.

The specific limitations to this study involve both the sample size, as well as the lack of direct discussion of the burnout phenomenon on the questionnaire. The Human Subjects Application completed and confirmed in November of 2015 stated that the researcher would conduct interviews with at least ten staff people. The former Cal-SAFE school where this research was conducted only had four mainstream classroom teachers, one special education teacher, one social worker, one nurse, and two guidance counselors, one secretary, one paraprofessional and a part-time principal, for a total of twelve employees. While the wellness center and child care are both located on campus and work directly with the student body, they are separate institutions with their own set of goals and objectives. The preferred number of participants for a qualitative research design is at least ten; however due to the fluid nature of working with this population, only seven staff members were able to participate in face-to-face interviews on the day they took place. Generalizability of qualitative research is already low due to the nature
of the design, as was previously described; however, the 30% reduction of the sample size from the standard ten makes the findings even less reliable. The saturation of the data is not assured with such a small sample. Additionally, while the researcher found implications and connections between feelings of success and burnout prevention, the questionnaire did not provide any opportunities for staff to directly address their own experiences with this phenomenon, preventing the establishment of a direct link.

**Implications for Social Work Policy and Practice**

The United States is currently in the middle of a period of economic and social identity crisis, related in part to the fact that this is an election year filled several polarizing and radical candidates, whose potential rhetoric and electoral base are revealing many glaring inequities a majority of the dominant culture has tried to suppress or deny. Social workers in compliance with the National Association of Social Work's *Code of Ethics* (2008) are, and have been, aware that the structure of our society is structurally unjust and perpetuates inequality, marginalization and oppression; therefore, issues like income inequality and police brutality against people of color are not recent revelations. Furthermore, many if not most of the institutions, agencies or programs in the field of social work are underfunded, under-resourced and understaffed, with staff who are underpaid. While much of the rhetoric coming from the left regarding the metastasizing gap between the lower and middle classes and the “one percent” inspires hope and, at the very least, dialogue and acknowledgement, there is an understanding that change is slow, and the injustices social workers align themselves against may not be repaired in their lifetimes.
On the micro level, this research affirms that there is a need to understand how helping professionals can actually measure the nuances of progress when working intimately with other human beings, especially those who have experienced great trauma and are vulnerable. Acknowledging that for these fields, nuanced behavior like improved eye contact or increased smiling, is actually evidence of the change process in motion, may be beneficial for both client and practitioner and may contribute to the momentum of progress. On a mezzo level scale, institutions, agencies and programs are encouraged to explore audible and visible ways to acknowledge to their staff that burnout is a real possibility, and that the barriers and factors which cause it exist, and are understandably frustrating. Allowing staff members to feel seen, heard and validated in their experiences in the field may relieve stress and create a sense of support and solidarity among staff, which the literature supports. Expanding this responsibility into the macro level, leaders within agencies including supervisors and managers, should consider allocating time and resources to identify potential areas and barriers within the workplace that could lead to burnout and design strategies and implement protocols to reduce harm when possible. Delving deeper into macro practice, program leaders are encouraged to identify connecting policies or lack thereof, which may contribute to burnout in a specific helping profession, and then advocate accordingly for more widespread results in burnout prevention. A last note regarding the implications for the field suggests that universities and institutions which educate and credential future social workers, as well as nurses, educators and other helping professionals, to incorporate literature and curriculum around burnout directly. The program at Sacramento State, for example, includes an emphasis
on what is referred to as “self-care,” without relevant information regarding burnout rates and symptoms, including depersonalization and compassion fatigue, which can be particularly insidious. Creating space within the field at the beginning of a person’s career during the preparation stage is in line with a harm reduction model as it has the potential to reduce stigma, shame and unintentional consequences by validating a common experience and creating pathways to seeking support.

**Conclusion**

The intention of this project was to investigate how staff members at a high school for pregnant and parenting teens measure their success in their work and thereby reduce burnout sensations. The author’s specific attention was to create a discussion around the possible correlation between emphasizing nontraditional, abstract indicators of success, job satisfaction and burnout reduction for helping professionals working with vulnerable populations. The findings from this research reveal a variety of philosophical frameworks that inform personal goals and conceptualizations of success when working with pregnant and parenting youth. Further research could be conducted to investigate how degrees of success and satisfaction in meeting goals may impact feelings and symptoms associated with burnout. In addition to several recommendations for future research, this project offers suggestions to practitioners in the helping professions including social work, education and physical and mental health. The final chapter discusses the potential implications of the research on micro, mezzo and macro level social work. One key implication asserts that information, literature and open discussion around burnout become incorporated into all levels of work in the helping professions in
order to mitigate its harmful and unintentional consequences. Although this project contains multiple limitations in its design and generalizability, the results of this research reveal significant information regarding abstract and nuanced measures of accomplishment in challenging work.
Appendix A

Interview Guide

Staff’s Self-Evaluation of Success at a Former Cal-SAFE school in San Francisco

General Demographic Questions

1. Age: Check one
   - Younger than 25
   - 25-30
   - 31-35
   - 36-40
   - 41-45
   - 46-50
   - 51-55
   - 56-60
   - 61-65
   - Older than 65

2. Gender: Check one
   - Female
   - Male
   - Other

3. Ethnicity: Check all that apply
   - White
   - Latino
   - African American
   - East Asian
   - Pacific Islander
   - Southeast Asian
   - Middle Eastern
   - American Indian
   - Other, Please Describe
4. Degrees/Credentials held: Check all that apply
- Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS)
- Master's Degree (MA, MS, MBA, MSW)
- Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD)
- Teaching Credential
- Pupil Personnel Services Credential
- Administrative Services Credential

5. Job title: Check all that apply
- Classroom Instructor
- School Librarian
- School Counselor
- School Social Worker
- Assistant/Vice Principal
- Head Principal
- Other service provider

6. Length of time at Mountain View: Check one
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- Over 10 years

Interview Questions

1. What do you think is beneficial about the Cal-SAFE/pull-out model?
2. How do you think it could be improved?
3. What do you believe are some common misconceptions people have about teen mothers?
4. What do you believe are some important "things" people need to understand about teen mothers?
5. What are some of your personal beliefs or your personal philosophy when working with this population?
6. What do you believe are essential interventions/supports that should be implemented in regular education public schools when a youth becomes pregnant?
7. What do you believe is the mission or goal of CAL-SAFE schools?
8. In what ways is this mission/goal visible and present on campus?
9. How is the progress of this mission/goal evaluated and measured by school staff?
10. What are your personal goals for your students? (what do you want for them?)
11. How do you measure your success as an educator/social worker/administrator when working with teen mothers?
12. How do you measure the success (the progress/growth) of the young women with whom you work?
13. Do you know of any other teachers at Cal-SAFE schools whom you think might be interested in participating in this study? If not, thank you very much for your time. If yes, please provide their name, contact phone number and/or email address.

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Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research

Staff’s Self-Evaluation of Success at a Former Cal-SAFE School in San Francisco

My name is Cora Keeney and I am a graduate student in the Social Work Department at California State University, Sacramento. You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve the exploration of the Cal-SAFE model and working with pregnant and parenting youth.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate, you may decide to leave the study at any time. You may also decline to answer any of the interview questions.

The purpose of this research is to gather and organize information related to working with parenting teens in a pull-out school with the specific end of helping to expand knowledge around educating and supporting this population. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to verbally respond to demographic questions, as well as questions that inquire about your personal beliefs regarding the education parenting teens and their long-term outcomes. Your participation in this study will last approximately 15-25 minutes. Risks associated with this study are not anticipated to be greater than those risks encountered in daily life. However, some individuals may experience minimal amounts when discussing personal feelings about their work and success within their profession.

I am appreciative of your time. Please feel free to contact me, Cora Keeney, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or at corpkeeney@csus.edu. You may also contact Dr. Maria Dinis, the advisor of this project at (916) 278-7167 or dinis@csus.edu. For questions about your rights as a participant in this research study please call the Office of Research Affairs, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-5674; or email irb@csus.edu.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Measures to ensure your confidentiality involve the security of the recorded and transcribed interview, the removal of any identifiers from the written transcript, and pseudonyms in place of formal names within the published report. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of one year upon completion of the study by August 31, 2016.
Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above. You understand that your participation is completely voluntary. By signing below, you are not waiving any legal claims or rights.

I, ______________________________, agree to be digitally recorded for interviewing purposes of this study.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________________

I, ________________________________, agree to participate in the research study.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________________
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