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[25 Years of Operation of the Trinity Learning Centre Evaluative Study Report]



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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The Trinity Learning Centre (TLC) was established on the 13th October 1987. Dr Harry Cohen, King Edward Memorial Hospital and Reverend Wes Hartley, Trinity Uniting Church, recognised the need for young women who were pregnant or parenting to have an opportunity to continue their education so they, and their children, would have better prospects for the future and reduce their dependence on social welfare.

The aim of the study was to determine the extent to which the TLC program has enhanced the social, health and economic wellbeing of the students and the impact on how they live, work and parent. It also examined their aspirations for the future for themselves and their children.

An online survey was developed in conjunction with TLC staff (see Appendix A). Data was collected from February 2012 to July 2012. A total of 39 people began the survey. Five responses were eliminated as they were incomplete, leaving 34 responses in this data set. Eight women were then interviewed about their experiences as teenage mothers and at TLC.

There is evidence that teenage mothers who attend TLC have positive outcomes. For example, five participants utilised temporary housing or were homeless when attending TLC, but currently none utilise temporary housing or are homeless. Fifteen participants (44.1%) have completed post-secondary school study. Six participants (17.7%) have a combined household income greater than \$100 000/annum. The majority of students (19, or 55.9%) are currently partnered, and 23 (67.6%) have been in paid employment since leaving TLC. The negative stereotypes of poor outcomes for teenage mothers and their children are not supported by this study. The qualitative data provides further support of this, and indicates TLC is a very valuable program.

This evaluative study has several limitations.

1. Finding past students, despite concerted efforts, was difficult, as contact details might not have been updated;

2. These results need to be interpreted with caution due to social desirability effects and auto response effects;
3. The accuracy of memory might have been affected by time; and,
4. Positive outcomes cannot be categorically and solely attributed to TLC, as other factors may have contributed.

From the data, there are several recommendations.

1. TLC is a valuable program that should continue to provide support to teenage mothers;
2. TLC should be funded by state and federal governments;
3. TLC should be upheld as a successful model for other programs Australia wide; and,
4. A longitudinal study would provide further valuable data and insight.

Background

The Trinity Learning Centre (TLC) was established on the 13th October 1987. Dr Harry Cohen, King Edward Memorial Hospital and Reverend Wes Hartley, Trinity Uniting Church, recognised the need for young women who were pregnant or parenting to have an opportunity to continue their education so they, and their children, would have better prospects for the future and reduce their dependence on social welfare.

The TLC is a centre-based program that supports pregnant and parenting teenage women aged 14-19 years who are committed to continuing their education. Students are enrolled through the School of Isolated and Distance Education. With the help of the school's psychologist, the students' educational goals are identified and an individualised education plan is developed accordingly. A highly experienced and committed study supervisor is available to assist students with their studies. Whilst the primary emphasis is on education, it is recognised that many life factors impact on a student's ability to focus on study, so an on-site crèche facility provides child care, and personal, parenting, social and emotional support is readily available, as well as referrals to other programs and services if required.

The program is due to celebrate 25 years of operation in October 2012. The TLC supports up to 20 students in any given time through the school year. To date, over 400 students have attended the program.

Literature Review

Australia has the third highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the developed world after the United States and the United Kingdom (Quinlivan, 2006). Factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy are attributed to social and economic issues involving failure in education, dropping out of school, poverty, and including the fact that many teenage mothers themselves were born to teenage mothers (Quinlivan, 2006). Despite the difficulties raising a child as a teenager, sister studies conducted in the United States

over a ten year period have shown that the pregnant teenager had more chance of achieving financial stability compared to the non-pregnant female sibling (Quinlivan, 2006). However, such a study may not apply to the Australian context, where government support is readily available and provided to teenage mothers in order to cushion the blow of financial hardship associated with raising children (Quinlivan, 2006). Government incentives available in Australia are not readily available in the United States, which in effect, conditions the young mother living in the United States to pursue education and employment opportunities, or to face destitution (Quinlivan, 2006).

A study conducted at the University of Pittsburgh interviewed five teenage mothers in high school, adopting an in-depth qualitative analysis approach, in order to determine the support systems that motivated the young mothers to continue with their studies (Mangino, 2008). The results reflected issues within the home that are in need of addressing, such as emotional support from the teen's parents or guardians (Mangino, 2008). However, the five participants were provided with immediate needs such as food, shelter and clothing (Mangino, 2008).

In South Australia, a study similar to the one above was conducted to determine how young pregnant women were remaining engaged in their education (Barling, 2007). The participants were 47 teenage mothers who were still studying at a high school featured in any one of the four different school locations in Adelaide targeted by the research, and 12 contacts who were employed at any of those educational institutions (Barling, 2007). The results revealed that respondents mostly lived in disadvantaged areas, however the parenting students maintained their education with the help of committed school staff, as well as antenatal classes that provided education on nutrition, help with giving up smoking, accommodation, drug and alcohol services (Barling, 2007). Despite this, the respondents did reveal that the antenatal classes were more focused on the needs of older women, and not relevant to young student parents (Barling, 2007). Another contributing factor to staying in school was that parenting students were allowed to bring their infants to school, which enabled them to continue class attendance (Barling, 2007).

Based on the evidence given by these studies, it can be argued that there may be a missing element to the support strategies that service providers give to their clients, in providing motivational strategies for young mothers to continue their education and completing Year 12 with the prospects of pursuing higher education. It would seem that a lot of attention is focused on parental responsibilities on how to take care of their young infant, which is of utmost importance, however is referred to as alternative education. This may impair the young mother's discovery of her full potential in terms of education and following career paths. Education itself is said to not only fulfil intellectual ability, but also ensures the young parental student's social and emotional needs which can also be very beneficial to their young child (Barling, 2007).

Aim

The aim of the study was to determine the extent to which the TLC program has enhanced the social, health and economic wellbeing of the students and the impact on how they live, work and parent. It also examined their aspirations for the future for themselves and their children.

Method

This project was conducted in four parts, namely:

- brief history of TLC;
- demographic and social profile of the students;
- stories of students who have attended the program, including an update of their current situation; and,
- an outcome evaluative study to examine the long term effects of the program.

An online survey was developed in conjunction with TLC staff (see Appendix A). Data was collected from February 2012 to July 2012. A total of 39 people began the survey. Five responses were eliminated as they were incomplete, leaving 34 responses in this data set. Eight women were then interviewed about their experiences as teenage mothers and at TLC.

Evaluation Researcher

The evaluation was conducted by Dr Bronwyn Harman, employed in the School of Psychology and Social Science, Edith Cowan University. Dr Harman is a community psychologist and Lecturer at Edith Cowan University who teaches and researches in the area of applied social and community psychology. Her principal area of research is in the area of families and young children. Dr Harman has been involved in and directed many community based research consultancies, projects and workshops. Much of her work has been written and presented for and to/with community groups and organisations as well as theses and conference presentations. She is also competent in all aspects of project management including managing staff, budgets, public relations and planning processes.

Evaluation Framework and Process

The overarching approach was based on the Social Assessment and Evaluation Framework developed by Community Psychologists at Edith Cowan University. The framework provides the opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved in the evaluation process. The stages of the evaluation (scoping the issues and profiling the community; data collection; data analysis; and, report writing) are outlined below.

Stage One

This stage involved meetings between the evaluation researcher and TLC staff members in order to:

- I. Discuss the purpose of the evaluation study
- II. Discuss the evaluation framework
- III. Identify some initial key issues
- IV. Identify sources and methods of data collection
- V. Establish an initial time frame

Scoping the issues involved refining the evaluation brief, familiarisation with the TLC, and identifying key issues relevant to the stakeholders that might impact on the TLC. Further issues were explored through meetings with key staff members, and the relevant literature.

Stage Two

Past and present students were surveyed via an electronically distributed survey. Interviews provided qualitative data that provide a richness and depth of data that cannot be obtained by quantitative techniques.

Stage Three

In this stage the data collected in Stages 1 and 2 was analysed, and integrated.

Stage Four

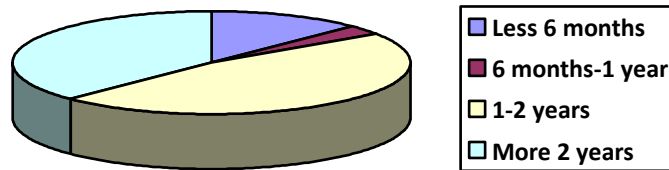
This written report summarises the findings of the evaluation.

Survey Results

The results of the online survey follow.

Attendance At TLC

Time attended	Number
Less than 6 months	4
6 months to 1 year	3
1 year to 2 years	15
More than 2 years	12



Living Arrangements

Data in regard to students' living arrangements when attending TLC and presently was collected. Of the 34 students surveyed, 11 (32.35%) reside in the same suburb now as when they attended TLC (in part because they are current students).

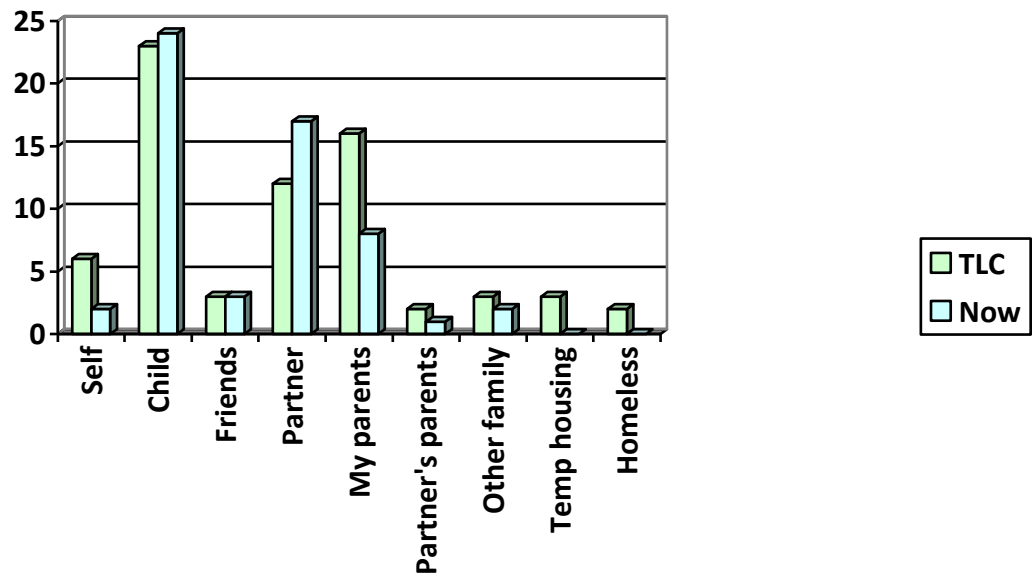
Current postcode	Number	Postcode when attending TLC	Number
2264	1	6000	1
3163	1	6010	1
6019	1	6019	1
6025	2	6025	2
6030	1	6027	1
6031	1	6030	1
6056	1	6051	3
6057	1	6057	1
6061	1	6058	1
6062	1	6059	1
6064	2	6061	1
6069	2	6064	1
6074	1	6065	1
6076	1	6069	1
6108	1	6074	1
6109	1	6081	1

6110	3	6102	1
6112	2	6107	1
6147	2	6109	1
6152	2	6110	2
6155	1	6112	3
6163	2	6149	1
6164	1	6150	1
6167	2	6163	2
		6164	3

The following responses total more than 34 as multiple responses were allowed.

Living arrangements	Currently	While attending TLC
On my own	2	6
With my child/children	24	23
With friends	3	3
With my partner	17	12
With my parents	8	16
With my partner's parents	1	2

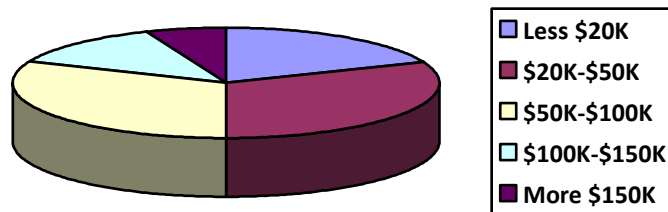
With other family	2	3
Temporary housing	0	3
Homeless	0	2



The following question was not compulsory. Two chose not to answer.

Combined household income	Number
Less than \$20 000	6
\$20 001 to \$50 000	10
\$50 001 to \$100 000	10

\$100 001 to \$150 000	4
More than \$150 001	2

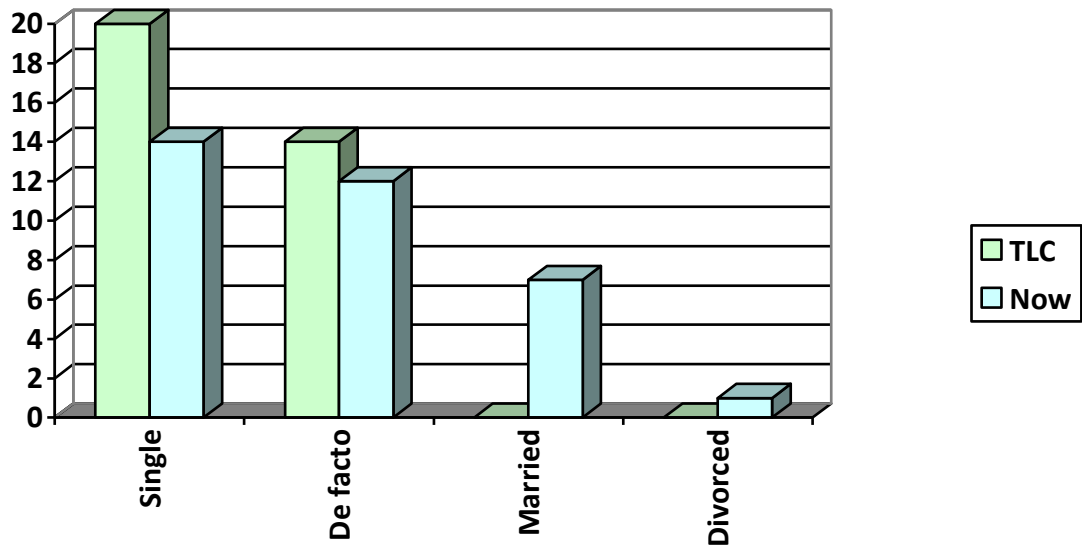


Age

Age	At birth of first baby	When enrolled at TLC
Less than 14	0	2
14	4	1
15	2	6
16	14	7
17	7	13
18	7	5

Marital Status

Status	Currently	When attending TLC
Single	14	20
De facto	12	14
Married	7	0
Separated/divorced	1	0



Children

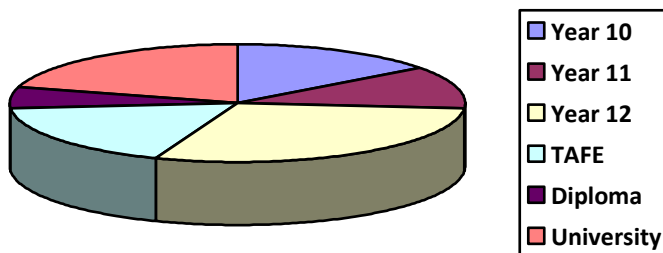
Number of children	Currently	When first enrolled at TLC
1	22	33
2	5	1
3	6	0
4	1	0

None of the participants' children have had children.

Education

Highest level completed	Number
Year 10 or equivalent	5
Year 11 or equivalent	4
Year 12 or equivalent	10
TAFE	6
Diploma	2

University	7
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Activity Since Leaving TLC

The following responses total more than 34 as multiple responses were allowed.

Activity	Number
Volunteering	6
Paid employment	23
Raising family	24
Further study	27

Social Support

The Social Support Scale contains 12 questions in a five point left to right Likert scale, with a possible score ranging from 12 to 60. The mean response was 48.88 ($SD = 11.75$). Generally, the participants reported very strong social support.

Future Thinking

The Future Thinking Scale contains 15 questions in a four point left to right Likert scale, with a possible score ranging from 15 to 60. The mean response was 52.15 ($SD = 7.94$). Generally, the participants reported very strong future thinking skills.

Handling Problems

The Handling Problems Scale contains 13 questions in a three point left to right Likert scale, with a possible score ranging from 13 to 39. The mean response was 26.59 ($SD = 1.94$). Generally, the participants reported strong ability to handle problems.

Life Satisfaction

The Life Satisfaction Scale contains five questions in a seven point left to right Likert scale, with a possible score ranging from 5 to 35. The mean response was 19.24 ($SD = 4.32$). Generally, the participants reported moderate satisfaction with life.

Qualitative Data

Participants were invited to speculate on their outcomes had they not attended TLC. Thirty three agreed their position would be considerably worse, with comments such as “I never would have gone to university”, “homeless”, “alone”, and “insane”.

Interviews

Eight women were interviewed about their experiences as teenage mothers, and at TLC. These are their stories. Identifying data has been removed, and pseudonyms are used.

Paula

I think I'm different to most teen mums cos I was lucky, um, I just met my husband really young. We met at primary school, and, um, I didn't mean to fall pregnant, but, um, we weren't using anything, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised. So I was in Year 11 and I had to leave, cos the other, the other, um, the other kids kinda shunned me, you know, and the principal said it'd be better if I left.

I went off at some old lady yesterday, cos they look at the kids and they look at us, and I turned around and said "what the [expletive deleted] is your problem?" and she said "I think you're a bit too young to be a mum" and I said "excuse me, but I'm 21" and she was like "sorry, I thought you were 15". She, she copped it, because in my eyes, they shouldn't disrespect, they should be more respectful of young mums. I'm glad I had my kids young, cos I don't want kids hanging off me when I'm 30.

I was at a swimming lesson, my husband had the older kids, and I had my youngest daughter with me, she was about six months and I had a lady in about her 40's, actually take the baby off me and start undressing the baby, and she said "I'm going to show you how this is done", and I'm looking at her like, cos she just decided to tell me that I shouldn't leave the baby in wet bathers cos she'll get sick. And it was really hard for me not to be rude, because I was trying to say that this is my third baby, I do know about it.

The medical profession is even worse. My first daughter had allergies which weren't diagnosed until she was nine months old. So she didn't put on enough weight, at the right levels. And you know the health nurse does home visits, so she came and said the baby hadn't put on enough weight, and then said she'd be back the next day, like didn't

give me a choice. So she did turn up the next day, and the next and the next, and then I found out that she thought that the baby hadn't gained weight because I wasn't feeding her. I didn't think much cos as a new mum, you're terrified of not doing things right, but she was still coming around every day two weeks later, but I was stuck there cos she said she'd be there between 9 and 4, and I didn't not want to be there when she turned up, cos then I'd be a bad mum trying to avoid the nurse, but at the same time, she's like in the end, my mum and my nanna would be there too, because she'd be saying it's my fault, I was too young, kids shouldn't be having kids, and that I wasn't prepared for how hard it would be to be a mum. After my husband went off at her and told her not to come back, she wrote a letter to my GP and said that I had postnatal depression and was starving the baby, so my GP did an examination of the baby, and me, and concluded that I didn't have anything wrong with me, I didn't have postnatal depression, he didn't know why the baby wasn't gaining weight. It wasn't until I was at wit's end that I went to PMH and they finally did blood tests and concluded that she was allergic to dairy. But that nurse had concluded that my baby had failure to thrive because I was a young mum and inexperienced, and was starving the baby to get attention.

I think TLC helped me a lot. Not so much school, but I finished Year 12, not that I'll use it, but being with the other girls, girls like me, and sharing, and, um, you know, just knowing I'm okay and having other people there.

Leonie

Me and her dad, we were together for like, all together 18 months, I guess. After like 15 months I found out I was pregnant and then he left me and moved over east and, yeah, that's what happened pretty much. It was very unexpected, just, yeah, went to the doctor's one day and he said we'll do a blood test and then found out I was pregnant that way. At the start, like, Michael said he was gonna stay and we were gonna be together and stuff and then he went over to Melbourne and saw his family and called, pretty much called me and said oh I'm not coming back so I don't want the baby. I don't speak to him whatsoever, like every now, well every two, three months he'll call me and

see how he is and the phone call lasts a whole of like three minutes so yeah, we speak and all he does is pay his child support and that's it.

I have my cousin she told cos she's been trying for a baby I think she was just jealous she was older than me but when I told her I was pregnant she was just like oh you're too young you should get out and do teenage stuff, go out partying and stuff like that just, umm, now that I've had him I still get dirty looks when he's in the pram and stuff like that but it doesn't really bother me anymore. Friends are quite, if you have friends that have kids that's okay, but quite a lot of my friends don't have kids, and I remember like he was just seven hours old, and my friend rings me in hospital and says "so you're coming to the party this weekend, yeah?" and even now she rings me up and says "can you come out?" and I'm like "no", like she doesn't understand that I've got responsibilities that I can't just pick up and leave anymore, so it's hard for them to understand.

When you go there [TLC] you can, um, do the SIDE program, I was going there so I had somewhere to get away from my mum. Plus I had Billy in the crèche, so he was nice and close. And the staff are really good with the kids and they're great. When I used to have trouble with my English, I could go to teachers and the others in the class and exchange ideas. I'm really good at maths, so if anyone had any trouble with maths I could help them out.

Tanya

We lived in a small country town til I came pregnant, then we moved to Perth, uhh, I think my mum nearly died of embarrassment. Piper's dad, like, has nothing to do with her, he, like, didn't believe she was his anyway, and I couldn't be bothered with him. So we moved to Perth, and no school would take me cos I was like six months pregnant.

At the shops when they would give me dirty looks I would just turn the other way basically, just keep going but umm, yeah it didn't really bother me that much, yeah cos then they would see me walking down and big pregnant belly and see how young I am

and they just you know, criticizing so... just strangers, they just give you the worst looks and, um. also cos I'm still a smoker, when they see you smoking when you're pushing the pram they also say stuff, like mumble under their breath and it's just, I don't smoke, I didn't puff it in front of her face or anything but they just criticize you cos you're just a smoker.

When I was in labour with Piper, she was actually breech, and she was way too big, and I knew there was something wrong, but the midwife kept saying push, push, push, and I'm like nuh, you know, there's something wrong, I want a Caesarean, and the doctor came in and said yeah, I'm right, and the midwife wasn't. And it's just things like that. And she kept saying about my age, and "you can do it", you know, "let's get this kid out", and yeah, she was just evil. The worst people ever.

I was living with my Mum and when I told her I was pregnant she was disappointed, which is like worse than angry but she was really supportive and then I never told my Dad he kinda found out when I was at the hospital and yeah, he was shocked but supportive too. I'm coping well, like I still get my own, I still get my spare time at home and stuff and when I wanna go out Mum looks after Piper but it's not all the time that I want to put my kid on parents cos they also got a life and they've got three kids and, umm, when I go out on weekends and stuff my kid comes with me but when I have a drink or something I first look oh I got a kid, I gotta realise what I'm doing before I touch any alcohol or any cigarettes or anything. I first put my kid in front, I put everything behind me and then my kid come first so it's pretty good. Still got my life, but it's not as I've always wanted it to be. It's really different when you've got a kid.

About two years after I left high school I wanted to go back, and I rang all the high schools, and they said no, you got to go to TAFE, you can't come to school, so going [to TLC] instead of going to TAFE I was around people with same experiences as me. Piper loved the crèche and it's really good you know having her close by and stuff, so if she needed me, I was just in the next room.

Shelley

I just had that feeling and my mum just went and got me the pregnancy test and I went and took them and it come up with a very strong line and a very faint line so I took the next one in the morning for my very first wee of the day and it still came up with the same thing so then I went to the doctor's and he told me I was pregnant and then he did the test and told me I was only four weeks pregnant. Umm, yeah, and then when I told my partner, he couldn't believe it really either.

During my experience I would say that I lost a lot of friends from school because I was pregnant, you're not necessarily doing the same things that they are. They're going out drinking, going out to clubs, doing all that, and that's part of your life that you, you know, you're not necessarily involved in, I made a very clear decision as to which way I wanted to be, and, you know, I'm pregnant, I'm going to be a mother, so that's what I'm going to put all my energies into. You lose a lot of chances to go out with your friends, you just drift apart and they just stop asking and you stop seeing each other, you just drift apart. You don't necessarily understand their lifestyle that they're in and they don't necessarily understand your lifestyle, and you do have to make a clear choice about what you want to do. When I had my daughter, I was conscious of being young and I was conscious of the looks I would get in the shopping centre, and you kind of knew you were being judged. It took me a long time, I need to say as well, to come to terms with the fact that I didn't follow that path that was expected of me of university career, marriage and then children, and I had a lot of guilt and shame associated with that. I was very proud of my daughter and very proud of the life I had, but I pushed myself to go back and go to university, to get the degree, to get the job, to get the house, to do all of that and it's maybe been in the last five years to come to terms with the fact that I was a teenage mother, big deal. Look at what I have now. Look at what I've achieved, it didn't stop me from doing anything, I maybe just didn't do it in the order people expected me to do it in. I'm a happy person, my daughter is a happy person, umm, but you know, when it comes to going to school reunions, I chose not to go.

Especially the education program was good, cos I was always too scared to ask the teacher for help. Where there they are, like, they act as your friend, even though they're there to help and teach you, you can still talk to them as a friend. It doesn't matter what you need, or what help you need, they're always going to be there.

Who in their right mind would choose to be a teenage mother? So you're seen as impulsive, you can't make a decision, you've got no will power, you've got no ability to say no, and all of these apparently bad qualities for being pregnant in the first place, so how can you possibly raise a well-rounded individual who isn't going to be a teenage delinquent, who isn't going to rob me and my homes. That was the feeling I got as a teenage mother, that I was going to raise a little hellraiser myself.

Tammy

I was dating this guy, I was on the Pill but didn't take it properly and then, like I fell pregnant. And then I was with him for like three months and when I told him I was pregnant he was like it's up to you whatever you do and then, then he changed his mind was like you have to get rid of her. Then like he stayed with me until he realised like around three months, like I was like three months and then he realised oh I wasn't gonna get rid of her so he left me. And yeah, so I'm not with him and she's never met him but when I had her, like I was close with his sister, and then umm yeah she told her parents and they're Muslim as well so it was hell hard for them and then yeah I see the mum and all the family, except for him.

It's been really hard. Maybe inside yourself you feel that you have to portray perfection, that was me, that I had to show perfection. But I don't think it's any different, there's a social expectation to be that for any mother. Inside of you, you have your own insecurities by the looks you get, you know, things that are said to you, whatever, so inside yourself you feel that you have something to prove. And it's like an image. So my baby, my daughter, was always dressed absolutely perfectly and looked beautiful all of the time, so that everybody just thought that I was this fantastic mother [laughter].

My mum criticized sometimes like sometimes when I held her she thought I was a bit rough with her but I wasn't, if I just picked her up like this and sit her down and put her like that Mum'd go gentle and I'm like Mum she's not gonna break but I didn't do it so her head's flopping everywhere but yeah you know they just sometimes say you know if you don't put her to bed at this time she's gonna wake up at 5.30 in the morning and you know, I'd just try and say look shh! I know what I'm doing.

I don't know my mates always used to call me up asking do you want to go out and I couldn't just go, like I usually like, during like, I used to be hell bad like when I was younger, I used to go out like during the week and I just couldn't go out during the week once I had her, I had to go out like once a fortnight, on the weekend and stuff.

Being able to continue my education was really important, umm, even though I've got my daughter, and being able to get a better job from that. I can go out and I can become a nurse, I can get my business degree, I can do better with my life.

Stephanie

I was in my teens when I had my first, I'm now pregnant with my second, and it's meant to be my fault, I still get stares when I'm 22, and he's squealing at me, and I ignore him, cos that's how I deal with it at home, and I had one lady say to me "oh, well, why can't you keep him quiet?" and I said "look, I know how to parent and you're no person to tell me", like I'll tell them straight back, like, you know, but I think a lot of other girls are very quiet, so they probably wouldn't say much, they'd just shrug it off and keep walking.

I used to cop a lot, especially out shopping or when I took my brother, Tom, umm out with me it looked like I had two kids, like pregnant with one and all the dirty looks and comments I got was like, pretty much uncalled for and yeah I was like, I was, a bit shocked that people would like say things to me which, that they had no idea what the circumstances were and everything and they just still, umm, like said what they were thinking which I guess they have the right to an opinion but they can keep it to themselves and, umm, yeah they were just very like, what's the word? Judgemental.

Um, I know some of the people were saying stuff like why are you having a baby at like 16 and, umm, like you're only gonna end up like failing you're like failing school and then end up on Centrelink and not do anything with your life and you're just gonna screw around with like your baby's life as well cos they're not gonna get anywhere or do anything, and that made me feel really bad but yeah.

When I went to mum's groups I felt isolated and judged. You kind of just don't fit in, cos you're all mums, but mums over 30 have lost different parts of themselves than mums who are 16. Those mums have lost careers and all that kind of stuff and this is what they're finding hard to cope with, career change and finances and stuff, but then as a teenager you've lost your friends, you've lost your identity, you've lost your freedom, you've lost different things. It's not more or less, it's that you've lost different things. You lose your complete identity, it's like you grow up overnight. You can't be spontaneous anymore, it's all those things, and it's finding.... When you're a teenage mum, you think you're the only one, you're the only person who's had a baby at 16. That's the hardest bit, that coming to balance between being young and stupid and being responsible.

You actually have a computer to use [at TLC], and the internet, so you can actually do your research without it costing the world. You can come to one place and it's there and free to use it. And you get pushed by a few people, you're not allowed to get away with anything.

Lisa

Yeah, I was using dope, but, cos it made me happy, but my boyfriend didn't want me to, but it made me happy, but I gave up cos this baby was planned, and I fell pregnant the week I gave up, and cos I've been really happy I haven't craved it since.

Friends are quite, if you have friends that have kids that's okay, but quite a lot of my friends don't have kids, and I remember like he was just seven hours old, and my friend rings me in hospital and says "so you're coming to the party this weekend, yeah?" and even now she rings me up and says "can you come out?" and I'm like "no", like she

doesn't understand that I've got responsibilities that I can't just pick up and leave anymore, so it's hard for them to understand.

It does change your life, um, before I would, well yeah before I would probably do, like drugs, just like weed and, umm, yeah and that but after I found out, it just changed everything but I never used to do it like constantly just like a few times but yeah I always used to drink and stuff like that, yeah it sort of changes everything but it's probably better this way, it puts me into the right direction like. I never really went to school and I was just doing drugs and that's when I started getting into weed and stuff like that, I never really went and then umm from then on I just didn't like it. Plus there's just too much bitchiness like you say something about someone, the next minute it's like oh great you're in a fight and it's like what I haven't done anything.

When I'm out of school I'm gonna become a nurse, I was doing interior design at TAFE but it got too hard leaving my kid at home and then going to school and TAFE so I quit TAFE and carrying on with school and I got my kid everyday with me and, umm, yeah but I just got the feeling I don't wanna leave Bob anywhere because he doesn't have a dad and he's always been with me around I don't wanna do anything after school just yet like when I finish Year 12 I don't wanna do anything just yet. I first wanna settle down and see what I'm gonna do with Bob first, but I couldn't of done anything without [TLC].

Kate

I fell pregnant the first time I had sex. I didn't even know that could happen. It was a one night stand, don't even know his name....

I guess being pregnant at school kinda showed me who my real friends were cos like some of them who I thought were my friend they just like they wouldn't talk to me and were like oh like yeah. And the ones that stayed with me are like my real true friends and they were really supportive and helped me and lots of other stuff. I think most teenage mums would be shit at some level, even the ones that look nice living at home

with their parents and all Brady bunch, they have at some level, even the nicest ones who are teenage mums cos they had sex once, the kids are going to miss out cos they're teenage mums. The kids of teenagers miss out on all sorts of things just because of different reasons.

Umm, I've always got a kid on my mind, before when I do whatever I want I first have to go oh well I've got a kid at home I need to look after her and stuff not just go out and do whatever I want I've got Jenny on my mind and stuff and, umm, just I can't do whatever I want anymore I just have to think of my kid before I think of what I want to do so, yeah it's not hard but, umm, it's not easy if you get what I mean, it's just okay, the way it is at the moment, I just get a lot of support which I really like and yeah it just it's the same as a normal teenager but just putting myself as being a mum, as a young mum and a teenager putting it together, it's just, yeah it's the same but you just got a kid to think of before you think of Oh I'm going out to parties Mum, I'll be home whatever time, I don't do that anymore, I'm not always, I was never ever a party chick, I always wanted two kids and now I've got a kid and now I'm like whoa I actually do have a kid, I'm like this is so weird but now yeah.

It's giving us a chance being [at TLC]. Like to get ahead in life. To get our education done. Cos if we had to go back to school, we'd have to put our child into day care, and it would just be too demanding. Where this place, we're actually treated like adults, not children.

Summary

There is evidence that teenage mothers who attend TLC have positive outcomes. For example, five participants utilised temporary housing or were homeless when attending TLC, but currently none utilise temporary housing or are homeless. Fifteen participants (44.1%) have completed post-secondary school study. Six participants (17.7%) have a combined household income greater than \$100 000/annum. The majority of students (19, or 55.9%) are currently partnered, and 23 (67.6%) have been in paid employment

since leaving TLC. The negative stereotypes of poor outcomes for teenage mothers and their children are not supported by this study. The qualitative data provides further support of this, and indicates TLC is a very valuable program.

Limitations

This evaluative study has several limitations.

5. Finding past students, despite concerted efforts, was difficult, as contact details might not have been updated;
6. These results need to be interpreted with caution due to social desirability effects and auto response effects;
7. The accuracy of memory might have been affected by time; and,
8. Positive outcomes cannot be categorically and solely attributed to TLC, as other factors may have contributed.

Recommendations

From the data, there are several recommendations.

5. TLC is a valuable program that should continue to provide support to teenage mothers;
6. TLC should be funded by state and federal governments;
7. TLC should be upheld as a successful model for other programs Australia wide; and,
8. A longitudinal study would provide further valuable data and insight.

References

Barling, M. (2007). Healthy young parents in education. *Shine SA*. Retrieved October 23, 2009, from <http://www.shinesa.org.au/go/working-with-communities/projects/healthy-young-parents-in-education-hype-/research-on-teenage-pregnancy-and-education/hype-research-on-teenage-pregnancy-and-education>.

Mangino, J. G. (2008). *Voices of teen mothers: their challenges support systems, and successes*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh.

Quinlivan, J. (2006). Teenage pregnancy. *University of Notre Dame Medical School*, 8(2), 25-26.

Appendix A

This research has been approved by Edith Cowan University's Human Research Ethics Committee. We anticipate that your involvement in this survey will take approximately 15 minutes. The aim of the survey is to gather information about your experiences at TLC, and since you left TLC (if applicable). Additionally, you will be invited to participate in an interview about your experiences at TLC. It is important that you understand that neither the survey nor the interview is compulsory.

We value your input, but you are not obliged to participate at any level. Please note that your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can choose not to participate, and assure you that it will not have any effect on you at all. Should you choose to share your experiences, ideas or beliefs, these will remain confidential as we do not collect any personal data from you. If you would like to know the outcomes of the research, please contact Dr Bronwyn Harman on the details below.

If you have any queries about this research at any time, you can contact the principal researcher, Dr Bronwyn Harman, Edith Cowan University, on (08) 6304 5021 (email b.harman@ecu.edu.au) to discuss any of your issues. If you wish to speak to an independent person, please contact the Research Ethics Officer, Edith Cowan University, on (08) 6304 2170, or email research.ethics@ecu.edu.au.

This survey has 7 sections:

Section 1 – Consent

Section 2 – Demographic Data

Section 3 – Social Support

Section 4 – Future Thinking

Section 5 – Handling Problems

Section 6 – Life Satisfaction

Section 7 – Interview Invitation

Section 1 - Consent

If you choose to complete the following survey, it will be determined that you have given consent to participate. I acknowledge my consent is given.

- Yes
- No

I understand that non-identifying information may be kept for future research and I give permission for it to be used in future research.

- Yes
- No

Section 2 – Demographic Data

How old are you now?

How old were you when you enrolled at TLC?

- Less than 14
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18

How long did you attend TLC?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1 year to 2 years

- More than 2 years

What is your postcode now?

What was your postcode when you attended TLC?

What are your current living arrangements? (Tick as many as apply)

- On my own
- With my child or children
- With friends
- With housemate/s
- With my partner
- With my parents
- With my partner's parents
- With other family members
- Temporary housing
- Homeless

What were your living arrangements when you attended TLC? (Tick as many as apply)

- On my own
- With my child or children
- With friends
- With housemate/s
- With my partner
- With my parents
- With my partner's parents
- With other family members
- Temporary housing
- Homeless

How old were you when you had your first baby?

- Less than 14
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18

How many children did you have when you started TLC?

- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

How many children do you have now?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

What is your highest level of education (completed)?

- Year 10 or equivalent
- Year 11 or equivalent
- Year 12 or equivalent
- TAFE
- Trade certificate
- Diploma
- Business College

- University
- None of the above

What is your combined household income?

- Less than \$20, 000
- \$20, 001 to \$50, 000
- \$50, 001 to \$100, 000
- \$100, 001 to \$150, 000
- \$150, 001 or more

What have you been doing since leaving TLC? You may tick all that apply.

- Volunteering
- Paid employment
- Raising family
- Further study
- Other (please specify)

What was your marital status when you attended TLC?

- Single
- De facto
- Married
- Separated/Divorced
- Widowed

What is your marital status now?

- Single
- De facto
- Married
- Separated/Divorced

Widowed

Have any of your children had children?

Yes

No

(Redirect if answer to above is “no”) How old was your child or children when their first child was born?

	14 or less	15	16	17	18	19+
Child 1						
Child 2						
Child 3						
Child 4						
Child 5						

Where do you think you would be without TLC? Would your outcomes be different?

Section 3 – Social Support

We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

There is a special person around when I am in need.

There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.

My family really tries to help me.

I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.

I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.

My friends really try to help me.

I can count on my friends when things go wrong.

I can talk about my problems with my family.

I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.

There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.

My family is willing to help me make decisions.

I can talk about my problems with my friends.

Section 4 – Future Thinking

How true do you feel these statements are about you?

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
I have goals and plans for the future				
I know where to go for help with a problem				
I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them				
I can work out my own problems				
I can do most things if I try				
I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine				
There are many things that I do well				
I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt				
I try to understand what other people go through				
When I need help, I find someone to talk with				
I stand up for myself without putting others down				
I try to understand how other people feel and think				
There is a purpose to my life				
I understand my moods and feelings				
I understand why I do what I do				

Section 5 – Handling Problems

How true are these statements about you?

	Not at all	Moderately	Very
When my first efforts to solve a problem fail, I believe that if I keep trying I will eventually succeed			
Difficult problems make me very upset			
When making decisions, I try to predict the good points and bad points of each option			
I like to deal with problems as soon as possible			
I spend more time avoiding problems than solving them			
When solving problems, I go with the first good idea that comes to my mind			
I put off solving problems until it is too late to do anything about them			
When I have a problem, I get as many facts about it as possible			
I put off solving problems for as long as possible			
I believe I can solve difficult problems on my own in I try hard enough			
When solving problems, I think of many options			
I am too quick to act when making decisions			
When making decisions, I go with my “gut feeling” without thinking about what would happen			

Section 6 – Life Satisfaction Survey

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Slightly Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
- 5 = Slightly Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

In most ways my life is close to my ideal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The conditions of my life are excellent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am satisfied with life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 7 – Interview Invitation

OPTIONAL SECTION: We would like to interview survey participants to discuss their experiences of parenting. If you are interested in being interviewed, please leave contact details below. We will be in touch with further information if you are randomly selected for interviewing. Please note that this information is kept separately from your survey responses, and will be destroyed when interviewing is completed (by 30th June 2012).

First Name:

Email:

Telephone:

Please press the button below to complete the survey. Note that once your survey is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn. Thank you for participating in this research.