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The Impact of Participation In Workplace Adult Education Programs on Low-income Single Mothers Working In Healthcare Service Occupations

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THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN WORKPLACE ADULT EDUCATION

PROGRAMS ON LOW-INCOME SINGLE MOTHERS WORKING IN

HEALTHCARE SERVICE OCCUPATIONS

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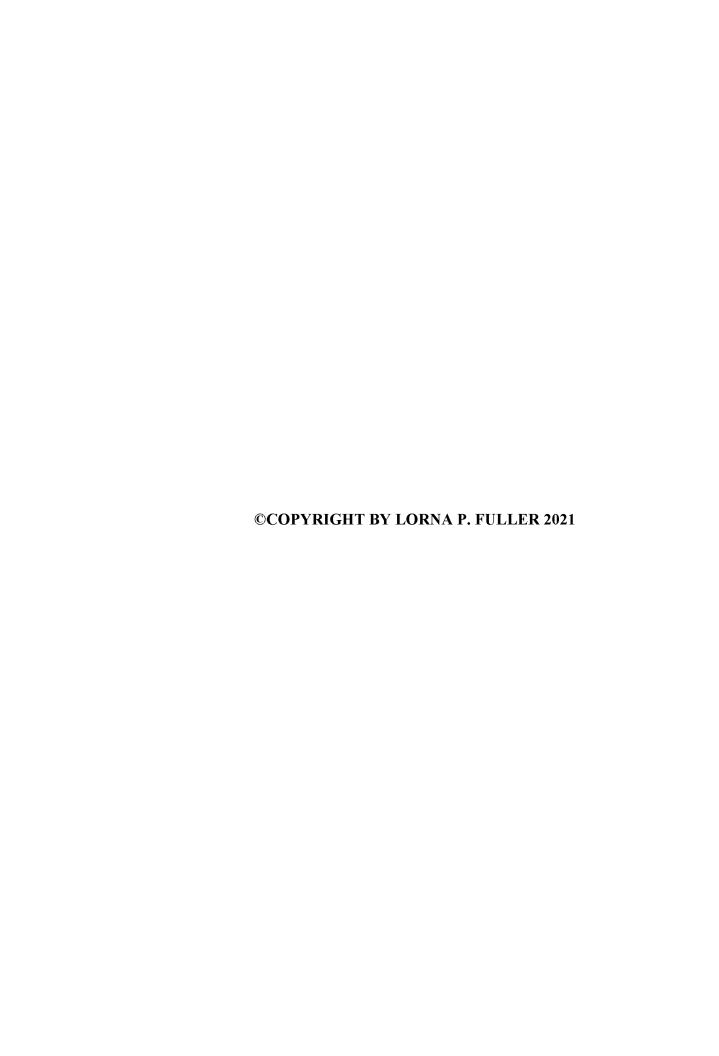
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DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my God, Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ, in whom I live, move, and have my being.

To my husband, Wendell A. Fuller whose passion for education and support enabled me to take my first step in obtaining a degree. Your actions propelled me to finish what I started and produce a product that I am pleased to call mines.

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the barriers, support, and aspiration of single mothers participating in work-based training programs. This basic qualitative interpretive study aimed to fill a gap in the literature on understanding the barriers low-wage adult single mother service workers encounter while participating in voluntary workplace learning programs and the support, which has allowed them to persevere. The research considered the following: 1) What were the perceived barriers low-wage, single, adult mothers faced while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers? 2) The types of support systems low-wage single adult female participants received while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs? 3) To what degree did participating in work-based voluntary training programs impact low-wage single adult mothers' career plans?

Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 15 low-wage single mother participants working either full or part-time in one of two healthcare facilities in Ohio and Michigan. This study used the situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers to learning in Cross (1981) as its theoretical framework. The findings from this study indicate that low-wage single mothers faced obstacles such as lack of childcare, transportation, finances, and time. Time poverty was one of the most insidious barriers reported in this study. Additionally, this study showed how low-wage

single mothers navigated their environment by seeking support from various resources as they participated in work-based training programs.

The findings of this study suggest that public policy can play a pivotal role in addressing challenges specific to low-wage single working mothers by increasing their economic opportunity, and possibly strengthen the fabric of communities across the nation. Of particular interest is how the government can best aid in assisting single working mothers to gain the financial security through education and skills training while providing a robust economic future for their children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To earn a living wage in the United States requires having a college degree due to rapidly changing technology, increased competition, declining union membership opportunities, changes in the structure of the economy, and the globalization of the United States (Patterson, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2016). The demands caused by these rapid changes have resulted in a shift toward jobs that require more advanced skills and specialized knowledge (Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Patterson, 2018). In fact, two-thirds of all jobs today require skills that can only be attained by earning at least a bachelor's degree (Carnevale et al., 2013a; Carnevale et al., 2016; Patterson, 2018).

The Lumina Foundation according to Carnevale et al. (2013a) estimated that by the year 2020, 65% of the workforce will need education beyond high school to gain employment. Those with a bachelor's degree earn 89% more than those with only a high school education over their lifetime (Carnevale & Rose, 2014). In general, women continue to fall behind men in attaining bachelor's degrees and realizing higher wages (Goldin, 2014; Lee & Wie, 2015; Kristal et al., 2018). Women who work full-time earn 25% less on average than men with similar educational attainments (Carnevale et al., 2016; Carnevale & Rose, 2014).

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Background of the Study

Single working mothers in service-oriented professions face barriers when pursuing the higher education, they need to earn a living wage. More than 80% of the 12 million single-parent families with children under the age of 18 were headed by single mothers (United States Census Bureau, 2017). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), in 15 states, two of every three workers are women earning a minimum wage. Women represent over half of the minimum wage workforce in 49 states. The poverty rate for families headed by single mothers in 2016 was 35.6%, which was nearly five times more than the 6.6% poverty rate for married-couple families (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Researchers have also indicated that single mothers have low rates of college degree attainment (Kristal et al., 2018; Lee, 2018).

According to Hegewisch (2016) and the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) (2016), just 31% of single mothers 25 and older held a bachelor's degree or higher in 2015, compared to 54% of married mothers and 40% of single women without children. Single mothers may not have access to formal education due to financial constraints, marginalization, poverty, low socioeconomic status, sexism, ageism, home environment, a lack of parental involvement in their education, racism, and little or no high school-based support (Chrisler et al., 2016; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Patterson & Song, 2018; Radke et al., 2016).

Single mothers are less likely than their married counterparts to earn higher education degrees, and they are more likely to seek immediate employment options right after high school (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2010; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Patterson & Song, 2018). Although advanced skill sets and higher education are correlated with

higher earnings, many single working mothers do not attain college degrees and are, therefore, unable to compete for the jobs with higher incomes (Damaske et al., 2016; Kruvelis et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018a). Instead, many single working mothers live in disabling environments where they are forced to be self-sufficient (Berlan & Harwood, 2018).

According to the Pew Research Center (2016), women made up 47% of the workforce in 2015, and 40% were either the sole or primary income source for their families. More recent research puts the percentage of mothers who were primary or co-breadwinners at 64% (Gupta et al., 2018). Historically, African American mothers are more likely to work outside the home, and 70% are the sole financial provider in their families (Gupta et al., 2018). Single working mothers tend to be younger, non-White, low-income, and be less likely to have a college degree than all mothers with children under the age of 18 (Cruse et al, 2018b; Wang et al., 2013).

According to DeNavas-Walt and Proctor (2014), nearly 31% of female-headed households were below the poverty line, compared to 16% of their male-headed household counterparts. Single mothers have the lowest income among all families with children. However, single mothers who never married are particularly at a disadvantage economically (Wang, et al., 2013), due to their lower earning power. Increasing the educational attainment of single working mothers is critical to helping them achieve economic security and strengthening their families' well-being (Cruse et. al., 2018a; Damaske et al., 2016; Goldin, 2014).

Holzer and Lerman (2014) indicated that obtaining a college degree can help graduates overcome poverty. Those who do not earn college degrees may often find

themselves employed in service-oriented jobs in healthcare settings as low-level workers because there are many low-level positions available in healthcare settings (Dill et al., 2014; Dill & Morgan, 2018). According to Dill and Morgan (2018) service-oriented jobs are those that do not typically require higher education degrees.

Examples of service-oriented jobs are housekeepers, food service workers, patient transporters, and janitors (Bergson-Shilcock, 2017; Bernstein & Vilter, 2018; Dill & Morgan, 2018; Frogner et al., 2016). Service-oriented workers have fewer benefits and experience lower job satisfaction levels (Pew Research Center, 2016). The healthcare service sector has many low-wage, service-oriented jobs available (Frogner et al., 2016).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010) predicted that between 2008 to 2018, there would be an estimated 1.2 million jobs in healthcare. Low-skill workers in the United States health care settings are also referred to as entry-level health care workers. This study will refer to these employees as low-wage service workers. Low-wage service workers in healthcare are those employees who provide direct care or support services (Dill et al., 2014). Examples are housekeepers and food service staff (Dill & Morgan, 2018). They provide hands-on care, make low wages (generally less than $40,000), and may or may not have a high school diploma (Dill & Morgan, 2018). Recent statistics on healthcare workers indicate that almost 36,000 women worked full-time in healthcare alone in 2017 (Labor, 2018).

Background of Women in Healthcare

At any given time, approximately two-thirds of single mothers are employed outside of the home, which is slightly higher than married mothers who also work outside the home (Labor, 2017; US Dept. of Labor, 2017). Nevertheless, according to the Bureau

of Labor Statistics report (2017), only approximately half of these single mothers were employed full-time. A third of them were unemployed the entire year (Damaske et al., 2016). In a similar report, Labor (2018) indicated there were a total of 15,439 women working in service-related occupations holding jobs with titles such as healthcare support, food and serving preparation, and cleaning and maintenance workers.

Healthcare Workers Essential to Organizations

Swanberg et al. (2016) suggested a strong correlation exists between high patient satisfaction scores and the financial health of a healthcare organization. Healthcare organizations with high patient satisfaction scores were more financially sound. Service healthcare workers are essential to the financial soundness of the organizations they serve (Swanberg et al., 2016). Specifically, employers need to employ healthcare support service workers, such as housekeepers and dietary service personnel, as they are vital to overall patient satisfaction scores (Swanberg et al., 2016).

The scores healthcare organizations receive from The Joint Commission and other regulatory agencies are intended to help hospitals see what areas of their organizations need improvement. Additionally, the ratings provide healthcare organizations with information about how well they meet their patients' needs. (Dill, 2018; Dill et al., 2014; Swanberg et al., 2016). These same authors further stated that the financial impact that patient perceptions yield is significant in that those hospitals that regularly report high patient satisfaction scores are among the most financially sound.

Moreover, organizations in the healthcare service sector realize the importance of providing educational opportunities to develop their service-oriented employees to protect workers against layoff and to help them to advance their careers. This allows

them to grow personally and professionally. Developing their employees also creates job pipelines to other organizational opportunities (Dill & Morgan, 2018). Employee pipelines are necessary due to the high turnover rates of those employed as low-level wage workers. There is also a need to reduce the high turnover rates among frontline employees as they negatively affect patient care and healthcare organizations' overall financial condition (Ellingson et al., 2016; Lopez et al., 2014; Swanberg et al., 2016). Healthcare organizations with high employee turnover rates could face decreased patient satisfaction and customer service quality, lower profitability, disengaged employees, and higher patient discharge costs.

Dachner and Polin (2016) posited that organizations employing low-wage service workers could face annual voluntary turnover rates that could easily exceed 50%, with the potential to reach 100% turnover. High turnover rates pose a challenge to employers who must continuously recruit and train new employees. Excessive employee turnover rates lead to diminished employee engagement, morale, productivity, and innovation (Manuti et al., 2015). Customer satisfaction can also be compromised from excessive employee turnover (Dachner & Polin, 2016).

A stable, qualified, and adequate workforce positively affects an organization's success. Researchers focused on workforce stability and turnover has examined many factors, such as the type of setting and location and job satisfaction (Lopez et al., 2014). Lopez et al. (2014) found job satisfaction correlated to several positive outcomes, such as lower job turnover and better patient care quality. A stable workforce could mean organizations can maintain or obtain a competitive edge over competitors. Organizations recognize their role to identify and provide continuous development opportunities for

their employees to achieve ever-increasing levels of competency among their workers (Dill & Morgan, 2018). Additionally, training programs offer a unique opportunity to enhance less skilled and displaced workers' well-being (Brown & Bimrose, 2018).

Healthcare organizations also reap more holistic economic rewards when they invest in their employees' education (Swanberg et al., 2016). Such investment can lead to advantages like great employee job satisfaction and commitment. These advantages often lead to higher employee retention percentages. Employees who have an opportunity to achieve their career goals at their current place of employment may not have the desire to seek employment elsewhere (Robinson et al., 2018). Workforce shortages and concerns about the quality of care have motivated some healthcare organizations to invest in career ladder programs, allowing their employees to progressively gain skills and knowledge on the job allowing them to be compensated for their knowledge, experience, and skills (Dill et al., 2014).

Providing training and other educational opportunities for employees is essential for employers wanting to retain a competitive advantage (Dill & Hodges, 2019). The education opportunities often include workshops, certifications, on-the-job training, vocational classes run by training providers, mentoring, apprenticeships, and technical classes (Desjardins & Lee, 2016; Dill & Morgan, 2018; Frogner et al., 2016; Swanberg et al., 2016); most following under the umbrella of work-based training.

Work-based voluntary training programs are essential for organizations and businesses. Voluntary training programs can be used to increase low-wage workers' earnings and employment opportunities. These work-based voluntary training programs may also serve as an alternative to more formal education types ((Patterson & Paulson,

2016). Work-based voluntary training programs allow employees to acquire and upgrade skills, which can be valuable to employers (Lopez et al., 2014). Work-based voluntary training programs can provide remedial training in literacy and numeracy for their employees with weak foundation skills; thus, offering a second chance for developing value-added skills (Lorenz et al., 2016).

Researchers have studied adult education programs for single working mothers in various ways. The first emergent theme in the literature regarding single mothers examined barriers and supports to academic success. Cerven's (2013) case study of sixty low-income single mothers located in California concluded that the role of these mothers' significant others, i.e., family, friends, and peers, were primary to access and persistence in both practical and emotional support. Most importantly, the children motivated their mothers and influenced these mothers' persistence to succeed in college while acting as role models for their children. In a related study, Lovell (2014) found that women with younger children were motivated to complete college in their desire to compensate for their poor childhood educational experiences.

A recent study exploring the lived experiences of working single mothers, was conducted by Richard and Lee (2018) examined low to middle-income level women and their work experience. Using a qualitative research method, the researchers captured a snapshot of participants "lived experiences" through interviews and direct interaction. The researcher themselves were women; some were diverse faculty members or graduate assistants.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 participants between the ages of 21 and 39. Six domains emerged from their findings on the work experience

of these single mothers, they were job/education decision-making process, challenges, characteristics of self, resources, coping and suggestions. This study's limitations were that the researchers focused on one minority group recruited from a Midwestern state. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire working single mother population.

The second theme that emerged was the resiliency of single mothers. Grzankowska et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study on 435 German mothers between March and September of 2016. The research comprised of two groups: mothers who were in a formal or informal relationship and those who were single or lone mothers. The researcher accessed resilient, coping skills, the ability to overcome adverse life events, job satisfaction, and resilience as an attribute (shaped by one's life context and considered a trait that may improve and develop over time) with study participants. The results indicated no significant difference amongst the two groups except single mothers scoring lower for openness to new ideas and humor.

Problem Statement

Educational attainment continues to elude those who are disenfranchised. Low-wage single mothers fall into the category of being disenfranchised. They face barriers or obstacles such as lack of childcare, unreliable transportation, poor or no support system which do not allow them always to matriculate and attain a postsecondary degree. They use workplace learning as a mechanism to learn new skills or increase their career prospects either in or outside the workplace despite many barriers. Beyond having to deal with racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, sexism, single mothers are challenged to find time for themselves while managing multiple priorities and multiple roles as parents,

caregivers, students, employees, and heads of household (Chrisler et al., 2016; Radke et al., 2016).

The aforementioned barriers can prevent women from building human capital and can wreak havoc on these women who may have inadequate social and communication skills and attitudes and behaviors that may work on the street but not in the workplace (Eyster & Briggs, 2016). Barriers loom even larger for lone or single mothers who have difficulty locating jobs with arrangements, which enable them to balance work, and life, and keep their family commitments. Provisions such as support with childcare, and adequate financial means that address the above barriers will allow them to progress in and maintain their jobs once they get them.

Efforts to increase employees' educational opportunities can be affected by financial constraints. An even larger barrier can be the pervasive cultural view that women should not receive equal access to education (Patterson, 2018). Women are more likely to leave their place of employment and re-enter the workforce to face tougher competition (Kim & O'Brien, 2018b). Women are usually the first to be affected by downsizing and layoffs (Petty & Thomas, 2014; Patterson & Song, 2018). Because the number of single female heads of households has increased, researchers must examine factors that contribute to their economic well-being (Kim & O'Brien, 2018b; Petty & Thomas, 2014; Patterson & Song, 2018).

Proctor et al. (2016) suggest that based on data from the United States Bureau of the Census, single mothers are more likely to experience poverty. Thus, there is a need to investigate the barriers and the strategies businesses and organizations use that facilitate

the integration of single mothers into the workplace by supplementing their knowledge and skill gaps with voluntary work-based training programs.

This basic qualitative study's overall objective was to address a gap in the literature on barriers that low-wage single mothers over the ages of 18 experience and the strategies they use while participating in work-based voluntary training programs. According to Massing and Gauly (2017), it is imperative to understand adults' barriers when participating in lifelong education to implement policies that allow more adults to receive training. Unfortunately, the ways in which these barriers are related to gender are scarcely represented in studies and literature (Massing & Gauly, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify barriers low-wage single adult mothers experience and the support systems they used while participating in voluntary work-based training programs. Educational attainment continues to elude disenfranchised mothers, especially single mothers who wear many hats and face numerous barriers or obstacles. Besides having to deal with racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and sexism (Chrisler et al., 2016), these single mothers are challenged to find time for themselves while managing multiple priorities (Eyster & Briggs, 2016), including their numerous roles as a parent (Patterson, 2018), caregiver (Stavrova & Fetchenhauer, 2015), student, employee, and head of household (Desjardins & Lee, 2016; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Petty & Thomas, 2014).

Guiding this research was the overarching question regarding the lived experiences of single mothers working in service occupations in a healthcare environment and the barriers they face in pursuit of participating in work-based voluntary training programs. This study uncovered and described some of the obstacles and supports single mothers encountered as they compete in America's workforce. The researcher endeavored to ascertain if these programs help low-wage single mothers acquire postsecondary education, which has become a prerequisite for admission to the middle class. Furthermore, the researcher highlighted and expounded on the perceived transformational benefits low-wage single adult mothers may gain through their participation in such programs.

Research Questions

Three research questions were used to guide this research:

1. What are the perceived barriers low-wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

2. What types of support systems do low-wage single adult female participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

3. To what degree does participating in work-based voluntary training program impact low-wage single adult mothers' future career plans?

Methodology

This research used a basic qualitative design to gather and analyze data to answer the research questions. A qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration into how individuals make sense of their experiences or phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

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Qualitative Researchers like Simons and Goes (2013) support the opinion that reality, based on the perceptions, varies for each participant; it changes over time and derives meaning primarily from context.

For this study, the researcher wanted to understand the barriers that prevent marginalized women from achieving their educational goals. Researchers posit that learners' experience, and the likelihood of educational obtainment and success are defined and understood in the context of influences like culture, community, social class, and poverty (Chrisler et al., 2016; Patterson, 2018; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Patterson & Song, 2018; Radke et al., 2016). The researcher planned to conceptualize the barriers described by low-wage single adult mother participants and share best practices to offset some of the obstacles described in the literature. These barriers were posited by Cross (1981) in her seminal work on deterrents to adult learning, which she classified as dispositional, situational, and institutional barriers.

Cross (1981) cited impediments arising from attitudes and perceptions about oneself as dispositional barriers. In terms of dispositional barriers, they are related to issues of self-esteem and their place within their socio-environment, their prior learning experiences, and their sense of competency. These may be attitudes of feeling too old or not smart enough to learn or a lack of confidence due to previous negative educational achievement or study fatigue.

Situational barriers, on the other hand, results from a person's situation at any given time and usually include factors such as geographical ones. For example, difficulties in traveling to the school or training site due to distance and time, lack of finances to pay for books, materials or classes, a lack of time, and demographic, which

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may be a result of the person's age, gender, and other influences such as rural or urban background. Finally, Cross (1981) defines institutional barriers as those procedures and practices that impede or discourage adults from participating in adult education and may include bureaucratic problems such as too much "red tape", course content lacking relevancy for the participant, or a combination of any of these barriers.

Situational barriers relate to the individuals' overall circumstantial conditions (Cross, 1981). Árnason and Valgeirsdóttir (2015) conducted a qualitative study with 22 adult educators in eight Iceland centers. The researcher's examination of barriers to participation and their focus on dispositional barriers is especially valuable when looking at the deterrents to education for rural adults. This recent study by Árnason and Valgeirsdóttir (2015) addressed a concern with many of the existing studies regarding barriers to participation. They reflect that most studies have relied on participants to self-report the barriers to participation, and "participants and non-participants have been recruited to participate in the study often with 'persuasion'" (p. 3).

Árnason and Valgeirsdóttir (2015) note that what they call a "frontal attack" method of acquiring data directly from the population in question might obstruct the researcher's view, similar to a vehicle's blind spot. To gain another perspective, the authors turned to adult educators in lifelong learning centers to explain why adults with lower educational attainment rates might not participate in learning activities. Most of the responses in this particular article addressed dispositional barriers. The educators reported that adult learners had images of themselves as non-learners and had experienced negative past school experiences. This experience "influences their intentions to participate in adult education". The authors concluded that those students

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who had negative experiences are the least likely to participate in adult education (Árnason & Valgeirsdóttir, 2015).

A similar sentiment echoed by McGiveney (2016), noted "It is not surprising, therefore, that amid all the identified reasons for nonparticipation, one factor consistently stands out. People who have ostensibly failed in the school system do not wish to repeat that failure. Many are consequently suspicious of education in any form, even informal learning opportunities specifically designed for them" (Edwards & Duncan, 2013, p.20). The educators in the study noted:

Low self-esteem seems to lie at the heart of why people with little formal education participate less frequently…[and] their belief that they cannot learn or will not be able to complete the courses, keeps them away from responding to offers to participate in courses of interest to them" (Árnason & Valgeirsdóttir 2015 p. 9).

Whereas barriers, and in particular dispositional barriers, deter participation for rural adults, according to Beder (1991) motivation is the force that helps adults overcome barriers to participation in educational activities.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. The results addressed the gap in the current literature about barriers that impact low-wage, single mothers engaged in work-based voluntary training programs. This study's results could benefit human resource professionals, program planners, and policymakers. First, the study might assist human resource professionals in planning and implementing workplace development programs as training is seen as an investment into human capital (Massing & Gauly, 2017). Those individuals who invest in training expect a return on their investment, for example, by

getting an increase in their salaries (Massing & Gauly, 2017). According to Massing & Gauly (2017), women who are less involved in the labor market have less of a chance to participate in training, limiting their ability to invest in their future. Additionally, the authors conclude that this issue is magnified as women are less likely to be employed full-time because they invest in family responsibilities instead.

People are the most critical asset of any organization. The need for talent continues to be a prime focal point with human resources, as is the need to attract, develop and retain a quality workforce (Manuti et al., 2015). Low-wage employees, such as food service workers, environmental services workers, and transportation workers, are at the bottom of healthcare organizational charts (McGuinness & Ortiz, 2016). These positions usually require a high school diploma or less, and they are usually feeder positions for other jobs in healthcare organizations (Swanberg et al., 2016). Additionally, internal low-wage service workers in these healthcare organizations have a shorter ramp-up time in their new role as they know and understand the work culture, which can benefit employers. Those employers who invest in on-the-job training for their employees will more than likely benefit the organization if they stay on the job (Frogner, 2016; Massing & Gauly, 2017) or remain in the organization

Second, this basic qualitative research study could help program planners specifically design programs for low-wage single adult women to help them understand the impact of these barriers alluded to earlier and help them develop strategies to cope with these obstacles (Dill & Morgan, 2018). Cervero and Wilson (2005) states that program stakeholders strongly influence the instructional design and decision-making process. Program Planners need to consider a long-term approach, personal scaffolding

development with incremental learning, to deliver sustainable continuing education programs to their participants.

Lastly, this study can help policymakers understand the need to address the barriers faced by low-wage single mothers engaged in continuing education programs. Additionally, this study can help craft intervention policies aimed at reducing barriers. Moreover, bridge community programs (Greenstone & Looney, 2011; Dill & Morgan, 2018; Dill et al., 2014) might be another avenue for policymakers to explore. They provide access and equity pathways for low socioeconomic status disadvantaged groups.

Definitions of Terms

Barriers: Barriers are impediments or obstructions that can hinder someone or something (Cross, 1981). An example of an impediment for low-wage, low-skilled workers is a lack of childcare.

Employee-sponsored learning in the workplace: Employee supported education in the workplace is the formal and informal process of learning through which individuals at every level in the organization can gain knowledge and expertise leading to professional development. For some, it is for accomplishing job tasks; for others, career goals (Peterson, 2010, p. 243).

Healthcare service or support workers: Healthcare service or support workers are those who earn less than $40,000 per year, primarily provide direct care or support services and hold jobs that require minimal levels of education and training" (Swanberg et al., 2016).

Higher education: Education beyond the secondary level, especially education at the college or university level (Clemmons et al., 2016).

Labor force participation rate: The labor force participation rate is the percent of the population working or looking for work. The rate was 71.1% in 2017 for all women with children under age 18 (Labor , 2018).

Low income: Low income is when families have a taxable income less than150% of the federal poverty level (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015), guidelines for poverty is $25,750 (https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines, 2019).

Minorities: A part of a population differing from others in some characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment. The term in the sociological literature refers to a group that is underrepresented and disadvantaged: socially, politically, culturally, physically, and economically (Sabharwal & Corley, 2008).

On-the-job-training: On-the-job training is one-on-one instruction between an employee and a supervisor or coworkers (Peterson, 2010).

Poverty: Poverty is when a family's pre-tax income is below a threshold set by the current value of three times the minimum food diet, adjusted by family composition (Shambaugh, et al., 2018).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1994).

Single mother: A single mother is an unmarried or formerly married female who is raising or has raised a child or children without the assistance of the father of the child, current spouse, or partner (Engber, 2011; Parent et al., 2013).

Work-based voluntary training or learning: Work-based voluntary training or learning is formal, informal, and non-formal learning opportunities leading to personal or professional development (Robinson et al., 2018).

Summary

The study concentrated on single mothers (18 years and older) who attended work-based training at a healthcare facility. Chapter 1 provided an outline for the basic qualitative research study. As the number of single mothers entering the workforce continues to increase, businesses and organizations will face the challenges related to meeting the needs of this population. Unique barriers that single encounter are related to situational, dispositional, and institutional obstacles while participating in work-based training.

The next chapter reviews the relevant literature on low-wage single mothers working in the healthcare environment. This literature focuses on the history of the education of single mothers, the barriers they face while working to obtain certifications or postsecondary education, and the support that is needed for them to overcome those barriers. Additional topics reviewed included bridge the gap programs and adult learning theories.

Chapter III provides information on the methodology used in this study and the context in which the study was conducted. The researcher followed with a description of the study participants. This chapter concluded with a detailed review of the data collection process and data analysis. Chapter IV discussed the research findings and the results from this study on low-wage single mothers. Chapter V summarizes the study, recommendations, implications of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The globalization of employment markets in the United States has elicited an employment shift toward highly skilled and knowledge-based, intense jobs. Workplace learning plays an intricate part in this process, driven by the impact of changes in demographics, technological advances, and expertise requisites within various organizations, communities, and institutions (Choi, 2019; Manuti et al., 2015; Patterson, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2016). To acquire skills for these new jobs, career-ready adults can no longer afford to stop at a secondary credential or less, resulting in them being amongst the least educated (Patterson, 2018; Manuti et al., 2015).

The least educated include those with a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED), low-skill development, immigrants, high school early leavers, or those with disabilities (Patterson, 2018). According to Carnevale et al., (2013), two-thirds of all jobs in the United States will require education and skills beyond high school education or general educational development. Skills have become an essential currency in job markets (Carnevale et al., 2015). Women are acquiring those skills; they are enrolling in postsecondary education at a rate higher than men. However, they are plagued by barriers

that impact their completion rates (Carnevale et al., 2018). Numerous prior studies have focused on the obstacles that single mothers encounter, such as mental health issues, financial insecurity, work-life balance, limited education, lack of support and resources, and discrimination (Bass & Grzywacz, 2011; Richard & Lee, 2019; Stier & Yaish, 2014).

The focus's preponderance centered on the barriers low-income, single mothers' face while pursuing postsecondary education. Recently, however, the focus has shifted to understanding why it continues to be challenging to attract lower-educational attainment adults to organized learning activities. To effectively research this issue, it is necessary to utilize a narrative framework, investigating through their lived experiences and probing why they choose not to participate in adult learning (Amason & Valgeirsdóttir, 2015). What follows in Chapter 2 is a description of the literature search process, the review of the literature, adult learning theories, social cognitive theory, empirical studies, and conclusion.

Literature Search Process

This review's resources were generated from several databases and academic libraries, which include Academic Search Premier, Annual Reviews, Education Resource Complete, Current Index to Statistics, EBSCO OpenDissertations, Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ProQuest (Dissertation Abstracts). The review of the literature entails using the following descriptors to guide the searches: adult learning, adult learning theories, adult basic education, barriers to education, barriers to workplace learning, barriers to training programs at work, barriers to participation, barriers to participating in education, career mobility and healthcare workers, career mobility and low-wage service workers, career mobility and service

workers, coping efficacy among women, coping efficacy among single mothers,

deterrents to participation in adult learning, dispositional barriers, frontline workers,

frontline workers and income, frontline workers and barriers, formal learning, gender

wage gap, graduation rate, high school dropout, high school graduate, institutional

barriers, informal learning, learning strategies and adults and motivation, low

socioeconomic status and education, low socioeconomic status and barriers, low socio-

economics and support, low-wage workers and healthcare, mentoring, mentorship,

motivation and adult learners, motivation and resiliency, non-participation in adult

education, PIAAC, perceived barriers to learning, perceived barriers and low-wage

workers, perceived barriers and women, single mothers in the workplace, self-efficacy

theory, single mothers, low-wage workers, women and barriers, low-wage income,

service workers and income, service workers at work, service worker in training,

situational barriers, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy theory, the condition of

education, single mothers persistence in education, service workers and healthcare, single

mother's employment, single mothers, single mothers and poverty, training participation

and adults, training participation and gender, voluntary training, women, work and

learning, workforce, single mothers, work-based learning, women in the workplace,

workforce and economic development, and women in the workforce.

Literature Review

Earlier research included studies about the barriers single mothers encounter when

pursuing postsecondary education. Those barriers include mental health issues, financial

insecurity, work-life balance, limited education, lack of support and resources, and

discrimination (Richard & Lee, 2019; Stier & Yaish, 2014). The study's main focus was

on the deterrents low-income single mothers face while engaged in education beyond

high school. Thus, the research was conducted to answer questions as to how

organizations struggled to attract adults with lower educational attainment towards

organized learning activities at work. Researchers sought to understand the employees'

lived experiences to explain why they choose not to participate in adult learning (Amason

& Valgeirsdóttir, 2015). Due to the increasing demands of a global workforce and the

economy, a college degree is becoming an essential commodity in society (Patterson,

2018). Whether adults wish to increase their marketability, change careers, maintain job

security, or create career advancement opportunities, the number of adult learners

pursuing higher education has increased significantly (Mettler, 2014).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), adult learners

or non-traditional students are becoming the majority on many college campuses (Aud et

al., 2012; Kena et al., 2014; McFarland et al., 2017). The National Center for Education

Statistics (Aud et al., 2012; Hussar & Bailey, 2014) reported an enrollment increase of

51% for non-traditional students who range in ages from 24 to 25 during the timeframe of

1997 to 2011. Attainment and maintenance of a middle-class lifestyle in the United States

require higher education in the 21st century.

There is a correlation between the adult learners' completion of a college degree

and an increase in earned income, employment opportunities, self-sufficiency, and

contribution to society (Carnevale et al., 2016; Kena et al., 2014; Farber & Valletta,

2015; Wolla & Sullivan, 2017). Adult women from low socioeconomic backgrounds

generally have low education levels. According Manuti et al. (2015), approximately two-

thirds of adults do not persist in attaining a college degree even though the labor market projects workers with a college education are in demand.

Additionally, people who do not attend or graduate from college have difficulty advancing in their jobs and becoming self-sufficient (Carnevale et al., 2013b; Kena et al., 2014; Kezar et al., 2015). Therefore, they are unable to compete for advanced positions or possibly retain their employment when competing with higher qualified candidates (Eyster & Briggs, 2016). Many workers in the United States need to upgrade their skills to meet the labor market demands successfully. Low-wage workers need additional opportunities to gain the education and skills they were not able to acquire from high school (Eyster & Briggs, 2016).

The United States market projects the need for postsecondary education for entry-level positions (Carnevale et al., 2016; Farber & Valletta, 2015; Wolla & Sullivan, 2017). However, the United States is expected to have a shortfall of around three million graduates with these credentials, even though college graduates have more earning potential, lower unemployment rates, and higher career trajectory (Carnevale et al., 2016; Kena et al., 2014). These individuals bring with them deterrents that impact their recruitment and retention in higher education and the workforce.

Businesses, especially those in high-growth industries, face challenges recruiting, hiring, and retaining top talent (Eyster & Briggs, 2016). Although higher skill sets and higher education correlate positively with increased earned income, single mothers generally have minimal education and are unable to compete for those jobs (Hartmann et al., 2014; Richard & Lee, 2019). Instead, single mothers tend to live in disabling environments that compels them to become self-sufficient (Duncan & Edwards, 2013;

Richard & Lee, 2019) by seeking postsecondary education and employment (The

Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2016). According to Kruvelis et al. (2017), once

enrolled, single mothers do not graduate from college at the same rates as married women

or women overall.

Nondominant ethnic groups tend to lag behind those who are White concerning

college enrollment and graduation rates perpetuate the income gap between the two

groups (Gault et al., 2018; Meschede et al., 2017). Among single parents' households,

about 44% of African Americans and 33% of Latin Americans cannot pursue college and

graduate because they live below the poverty line (Labor, 2015). Literature suggests that

since a large majority of minorities and single mothers live in poverty (Fins, 2020;

Richard & Lee 2019), training programs that straddle the divide between real human

capital policies and policies that focus on job quality improvements must be created and

implemented in the near future.

Horowitz (2018) estimated that two-thirds of all jobs will require education and

skills that can be obtained only beyond a high school education. The increasing

significance of skills, especially those acquired through the educational system, has

resulted in a shift from manual to knowledge-based work and has led to a deterioration of

job opportunities available to workers with lower skills and education (Stier & Yaish,

2014). Although higher skill sets and advanced education correlate with higher earned

income, single mothers generally have minimal education and are unable to compete for

those jobs (Hartmann et al., 2014; Katz, 2013; Richard & Lee, 2019).

Bridge the Gap Programs

Civic and business leaders, policymakers, and educators share a concern over the US low to middle working class's relentless erosion and a growing polarization of income. At the crux of this issue are the unprecedented number of workers who report being underemployed, the millions of aspiring workers who remain unemployed, and the industries and organizations that find it challenging to fill their open positions. Also, businesses have reduced or eliminated their investments in workforce development programs. Relationships between employers and local colleges and other talent suppliers have weakened as educators are burdened with budget cuts and find it harder to provide the relevant skillset training employers seek in their employees.

In turbulent job markets, employers may have little incentive to share the forecasts of their human resource needs with local adult educators or to invest in apprenticeships and cooperative learning programs. Thus, low-wage workers have virtually no access to how to compare entry-level jobs for their career goals and wages or which skill sets organizations and businesses seek in their new hires. Companies that champion an employer-led skills development system bring the rigor and discipline needed to source talent for their organization. Healthcare organizations can source talent through the bridge the gap programs.

Bridge the gap programs are based upon grassroots and community-style organizations with political power and reach enough to encourage employers to place trainees to meet wage standards. Examples of such programs include Industrial Area Foundation programs like Project QUEST in California, Capital Idea in Texas, and Project VIDA in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Bernhardt & Osterman, 2017). These

programs and others like them recruit in local communities and provide skill training in

community colleges settings or other dedicated facilities. Additionally, they work directly

with employers to understand clients' needs and work with them to improve the

participants' job quality. Such training programs are necessary given statistics showing

that an absence of higher education primarily determines whether one will live in poverty

(Richard & Lee 2019).

Many low-wage workers need a second chance to gain the skills and experience

necessary to succeed in today's workforce, an ability they did not necessarily acquire

from the first-chance system of public education (Savner & Bernstein, 2004). One such

bridge program is a California Community College model for women on welfare. This

program was designed to offer "one-stop-shop" services to students who were recipients

of the welfare system by providing support with remedial services, childcare, work-study

jobs, and an opportunity for a permanent position after successful completion of the

program. The wages of those who received vocational certificates rose from annual

median earnings of $4,000 to more than $16,000; those who completed an associate

degree earned even more, roughly $20,000 (Danielson, 2012; Nelson & Purnell, 2003).

Project QUEST (Quality Employment Through Skills Training) in San Antonio,

TX is another example of a "bridge" program initiated by community organizations. In

the early 1990s, the program forged links between the Alamo Community College

District and employers in the healthcare and business service sectors. They implemented

rigorous skill-training programs for low socioeconomic status people and the

unemployed. Remedial programs were created to address participants' weak necessary

skills and provide a bridge to the college's training programs. Participants in the program

were able to take advantage of critical services like childcare, housing, and transportation (Bernhardt & Osterman, 2017: Chaudry et al., 2011).

The QUEST program mentioned in the preceding paragraph modified their hiring practices in the organization to improve the structured and starting wages for their entry-level jobs. According to Osterman and Chimienti (2012), the training program's goal was to integrate energy efficiency into the city's long-term economic development plans. The agreement mandated the training program providers pay participants a decent wage and offered healthcare benefits. The findings of the research conducted by Osterman and Chimienti (2012) indicated that as of March 2011, the median salaries for participants in this study were $18 per hour, nearly two-thirds of the participants received health benefits, and close to 50% of the participants self-identified as a minority. This weatherization program's success facilitated other statewide initiatives that offered employment to workers in local communities.

The bridge programs like Project QUEST in California, Capital Idea in Texas, and Project VIDA in the Lower Rio Grande Valley had excellent outcomes, as the researcher suggests that some of the bridge programs for single mothers and low-wage workers provided examples of programs that addressed fundamental issues (Bernhardt & Osterman, 2017). Studies that address food insecurity, money management, conflict resolution, parenting skills, and spiritual enrichment are vital; however, research does not address how to navigate through work-based training programs when barriers exist. Barriers can impact a person's program participation in the work-based learning program. Single mothers often face many obstacles. They include but are not limited to inadequate childcare, lack of reliable transportation, housing, or just persevering through education

programs, whether it is training at work or postsecondary programs. All of which can lead to exhaustion as they carry the burden of parenthood most times alone.

Work-based Voluntary Training Programs

Learning is not confined to occasional formal activities in classroom environments. The landscape of knowledge is vast and transitional and requires a more flexible model. By incorporating this philosophy, organizations can serve as catalysts for innovation and profitability (Manuti et al., 2015). According to researchers learning at work is associated with planned training and educational courses (Manuti et al., 2015). In contrast, learning in the workplace is also informal and includes multiple ways of understanding, such as discussing, observing, asking questions, and problem-solving (Geoffrey, 2017; Manuti et al., 2015).

Work-based, voluntary training programs are necessary, given statistics showing that an absence of higher education primarily determines one's socioeconomic status (Patterson, 2018; Patterson & Paulson, 2016). Suppose low-wage single adult mothers are to share more equitably in the gains from rising productivity. In that case, they will require greater access to career and economic advancement opportunities through marketable skills training, income-enhancing work support, and education. Support services that offer low-wage single adult mothers and others in this low-income category the chance to acquire family-sustaining wages through training and adult education programs benefit the recipient and their dependents (Patterson, 2018).

Work-based training programs offer low-wage single adult mothers an opportunity to gain skills and knowledge. Work-based voluntary training programs identified in the literature can be in the form of workshops, certifications, online or

distance training, vocational classes, mentoring, technical courses, on the job training (OTJ), and apprenticeships (Manuti et al., 2015; Stier & Yaish, 2014; Patterson, 2018). This research categorized adult learning into the two major categories of formal and informal (Manuti, 2015; Patterson, 2018).

Formal training is provided through the education system in a hands-on approach that instructs knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to perform organization-specific tasks in a training facility. Examples of training facilities could be a college, university, or training organization. Informal training is learning in the work environment associated with the more familiar processes implied in these activities such as discussing, observing, asking questions, and problem-solving (Manuti et al., 2015).

Informal learning, however, takes place outside of the formal environment. learning that occurs through the sharing of real-life lessons with others is another aspect of the adult learning processes. The ability for adults to successfully work with and learn from each other, especially in the workplace, is essential in many professions (Manuti et al., 2015). According to Patterson & Paulson (2016), there is a third category of adult learning called non-formal learning is self-directed learning that can be embedded in planned education without necessarily being raised as learning activities. This research will focus on the empirical investigation of the first two types of knowledge, with learning during job training and apprenticeships.

On-the-job training is planned and organized and takes place in the working environment (Manuti et al., 2015). An example is an empirical research conducted by Swedberg et al. (2015) on nursing assistants in Sweden. Swedberg et al. (2015) conducted a cross-sectional study on 128 healthcare nursing assistants on their perceived

competence and perceived responsibility in their care of ventilated patients living at home. Using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, the researchers determined that participants' perceived ability and perceived responsibility for their patients' care rates were high. The researcher concluded that on-the-job training was significantly associated with high ratings on perceived competence and perceived responsibility. Clinical supervision was associated with a high score on perceived responsibility. On-the-job training based on the literature review would fall under informal learning.

Apprenticeships, on the other hand, are an example of formal education. Apprenticeships are often considered to be the "gold standard" of workforce education and are formal training programs, during which successful employees or students are paid while being trained on the job by experienced workers, mentors, or supervisors (de Alva & Schneider, 2018). A key benefit of apprenticeships is the delivery of knowledge skills and competencies needed in the workplace.

Apprenticeships have been a key mechanism of skill development since the pre-industrial ages and have been positioned as an essential ingredient of an efficient education system as they secure qualifications, workforce, and competitiveness (Smith et al., 2016, p. 578).

Historically, apprenticeships were where young males worked full-time in trade; however, the landscape for educating and training is evolving to one that involves a broader spectrum of occupations and larger sector of the population (Autor et al.,; Kirby, 2015; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Simon & Clarke, 2016), including females. Patterson and Paulson (2016) posited that apprenticeships and on-the-job training are a proven way for organizations to transition inexperienced or new employees into their jobs

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methodically under coworkers' or managers' supervision. The authors further explained that when conducted correctly, these practices can help an organizational learning culture and participants economically at the same time. Apprenticeship programs offer participants a chance at lucrative careers, but only if those participants conform to current stereotypes.

Simon & Clarke's (2016) mixed-method study on Australian women completing apprenticeships in male-dominated positions revealed that participants in this study were steered towards predominantly female careers (teaching and training) by being intimidated physically, emotionally, and intellectually by male classmates. The authors in this study used data from a national electronic survey of educators, industry associations, community groups. A range of semi- structured interviews was conducted with participants who were either in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs or non-traditional sectors to report their findings.

The numbers of females who enroll and complete apprenticeship programs are low due to the cultural expectations of the society specify and the small numbers of female role models working in male-dominated fields such as automotive and engineering, manufacturing, electrical, and construction. The ability to see more females in these types of roles encourages others to pursue these types of careers (Simon & Clarke, 2016). Winthrop and McGivney (2014) suggested that women who were employed and educated were more productive. These women had greater control over their family income and decision-making and invested more in their families.

Academic providers and employers play an integral role in helping women overcome the challenges they face as apprentices. According to Mulkeen et al. (2019),

educational providers need to support these women by making learning materials available in various formats and languages as apprentices work across numerous industries and at different times. Also, there needs to be a broadening of programs to include occupations in high demand, such as information technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing (de Alva & Schneider, 2018). Employers need to have effective recruitment processes and rigorous retention strategies, established mentorships (Rowe et al., 2017), and address perceptions of negative workplace cultures (Smith et al., 2016). The danger of not increasing the number of women who complete internships perpetuate the problem of women being employed in low-wage jobs, underpaid without fringe benefits or security.

High School Graduation Rates

In the 21st century, there has been a 30% gap between the college attendance rates of low socioeconomic students and those of high socioeconomic students (Katz, 2013; Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). Schools with a higher percentage of minority students also had a higher dropout rate (Ducan & Santy, 2015). Regardless of their ethnicity, males were more likely than their female counterparts to drop out of school (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Males from low socioeconomic status homes were more likely to drop out than females in a similar economic status (McFarland et al., 2017).

According to McFarland et al. (2017) the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that three and a half million to six million people between the ages of 16 and 24 have not earned a high school diploma. Of those people, the poor minorities experience the negative consequences at a disproportionately higher rate than their counterparts (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; Johnson-Bailey, 2001). Even more alarming is the declining

employment rate between 1999 and 2007, when the number of 16- to 19-year-olds without paid employment rose from 44 to 59% (Bloom, 2010).

The research on high school graduation rates offers many reasons this gap between the low and high socioeconomic status students exists and has not diminished in decades, despite programs designed to eradicate it. The reasons some students do not graduate from high school vary, but common themes which surfaced from the research include, but are not limited to the following: financial constraints, marginalization, low socioeconomic status, home environment, parenteral involvement, or lack thereof (James, 2016; Osam et al., 2017; Richard & Lee, 2019).

During students' educational experiences, reasons like racism and lack of high school-based support, could in part explain why nearly one-fourth of the population never enrolls in any type of formal training post-high school. For those who do enroll, the statistics of those students from low socioeconomic groups earning a college degree are equally dismal (Bjorklund-Young, 2016). Although the proportion of the population attaining a bachelor's degree from a college or university has increased over time, and higher education correlates with higher earned income, nearly three-fourths of the nation's population never received a bachelors' degree (Mettler, 2014). In the fall of 2013, over 10 million Americans were enrolled in a 4-year degree institution, however approximately 20% dropped out during their first year (Kena et al., 2016).

Students from low socioeconomic homes who enroll in a 4-year college or university continue to be underrepresented at higher education institutions and graduate less frequently than their peers with greater economic means. (Bronson, 2013; Wisker & Masika, 2017). For many low-income adult learners, traditional andragogical approaches

replicate the very techniques that did not work well for them in high school. Adult learners benefit from active engagement in defining the learning program and strategy, including methods that tap their experience base as workers and in other aspects of life, and learning that is structured in ways that align with work settings (Kazis et al., 2007). Additionally, African Americans often experience more academic difficulty and have lower grade point averages (Bowman et al., 2018).

Furthermore, African American females tend to experience more difficulty transitioning into academia than men. Thus, there tends to be a large population of non-collegiate females who find lower-income employment than their male counterparts (Bierema, 2001). Studies show that the high attrition rates of African American students correlate with their socioeconomic background, yet, when socioeconomic factors are controlled, the attrition rates mimic those of their White counterparts (Bedolla, & Kim, 2014). Social class even impacts the time students take to complete a bachelor's degree.

To examine how social class influences the time to complete a bachelor's degree, Zarifa et al. (2018) used the 2008-2009 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B) from the NCES in the United States. This study examined students' past educational experiences, future education and labor market expectations, and post-baccalaureate activities. The researcher followed up twice with these respondents in 2009 and again in 2012. They found that an average student required 6.33 years to complete their program. Most often, women completed their degree program before men. At the same time, the study indicated that Hispanics are less likely to graduate on time than other races, and married students with dependents are less likely to graduate in the four-year time frame.

Additionally, (Zarifa et al., 2018) found that nontraditional students balancing multiple roles will lag behind traditional students to finishing their degree. The results showed that despite controlling for academic performance, educational behaviors, program, and institutional characteristics, students from low socioeconomic status families experience deterrents while pursuing their education. The researchers concluded that future studies should focus on the impact timely graduation has on students' postgraduate experiences and the extent to which the educational course impacts other life progression outcomes.

Another vital contribution to the literature is Andrew (2017), which considered the impact of socioeconomic status on students' educational attainment. Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS,88) and evaluating the inequality theory called Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI), the researcher found that higher academic achievements shift both low-and high socioeconomic status (SES) students up to the postsecondary institutional hierarchy. However, those who were in a high SES had a higher probability of moving up the hierarchy; one additional position over their low SES student counterparts. While this article looked at the dynamics of SES inequalities in higher education and the hierarchical postsecondary system in the United States, it did not address the general gatekeeping behaviors driving the observed SES differences of students' actions (coursework, college application) or institutions (selection process) as they relate to an institution's reach.

Barrier of Women in the Workplace

Women represent 60% of the low-wage workforce, with single mothers making up to 50% of all women who fall below the federal poverty line (Labor, 2015). Given the

increase in single mothers as heads of households, the factors that contribute to these families' economic well-being must be examined. It is documented in the literature that single mothers are more likely to experience poverty, but few studies address the programs that have reduced this phenomenon. According to research, the remedy is education (Katz, 2013; McClearly-Sills et al., 2015; Richard & Lee, 2019; Robinson, Magee & Caputi, 2018). Education will positively impact the wage gap that currently exists today.

Historically, the wage gap between men and women persists despite programs geared to eradicate the problem. According to Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell (1998), Asian American, African American, Latin-American, and Native American women earn between 83 and 91 cents for every dollar earned by White-Americans. On average, women earn 76 cents for every dollar earned by men (Bierema, 2001). Today, not much has changed. According to the Institute for Policy Research (2017), females working full-time earned 80.5 cents for every dollar earned by men, a gender wage gap of 20 percent, and a difference that continues to perpetuate the inequality that women experience in the workplace. Notwithstanding the years of exponential gains in the workforce, women today continue to trail men in the number of benefits, promotions, and pay they receive (Bacolod, 2017; Kim et al., 2018a; Kristal et al., 2018; Mandel & Semyonov, 2016).

Occupations dominated by men tend to pay higher salaries than those occupations dominated by females (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Reisel et al., 2018). Blau and Kahn (2018) further state that occupation and industry comprise the largest observable factor accounting for the gender pay gap in the United States. According to Bloome et al (2019), although overall earning has increased for women more than men in the past

decade, the gender pay gap is mostly due to class position; the progress of women in the working class has been more modest compared to that of men and professional women as well.

Thus, current literature seems to suggest that programs like action learning and workplace learning can help women develop career-related self-efficacy and may provide opportunities for its participants to advance their careers, grow personally, and achieve job satisfaction in addition to benefits afforded from postsecondary education degrees, if attainable (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Hegewisch, 2016; IWPR, 2016).

Higher education's transformative effects are well-defined in the literature (Kristal et al., 2015; Lee & Wie, 2017; Martin & Broadus, 2013). Educational attainment, especially post-secondary education, elevates single mothers' economic well-being (Richard & Lee, 2019). Furthermore, according to Zhan and Pandey (2004), single mothers who work more extended hours have higher incomes, which further elevates their economic status. Higher education increases median incomes substantially more for women who obtain postsecondary education than those who do not. The more knowledge these women have, the more likely they are to secure employment and earn above poverty income (Kristal et al., 2015; Lee & Wie, 2017). That is especially true if women can persist despite the deterrents and barriers they face while participating in informal adult education programs (Jacobs, & Padavic, 2015; Ramirez & Rodriguez, 2019).

Women face many difficulties while trying to compete in the workplace today. These deterrents include but are not limited to lack of access to daycare, little or no work-time policies, low-earning capacity, few job opportunities where they reside, transportation, and meager public benefits (Darkenwald, 1985a; Warren, Fox, & Pascall,

2009). The inability to accrue human capital can be another deterrent faced by these disenfranchised women (Lee, 2018). Zhan and Pandey (2004) define human capital as encompassing education, work experience, and job training.

Based on Zhan and Pandey's (2004) definition, these deterrents prevent women from accruing personal wealth. Barriers, such as these, are often maximized when women have inadequate social and communication skills and attitudes and behaviors that may work on the street but not in the workplace. These barriers loom even more extensive on for single mothers who have difficulty locating jobs with arrangements that enable them to balance work and life and keep their family commitments. Support that addresses these barriers will allow them to progress in and maintain their jobs once they get them (Damaske et al., 2016; Patterson, 2018).

Financial constraints have hindered efforts by the government to enhance educational opportunities for all. Additionally, the pervasive view in our cultures still say that women should not receive equal access to education (Jong-Wha & Wie, 2017). Women are more likely to leave and re-enter the workforce to face tougher competition and are usually the first to be affected by downsizing or layoffs (Augustine & Papanyan, 2016; Simon & Clark, 2016).

There have been and continue to be many initiatives, training and employment programs to recruit and employ more females into male-dominated careers (Boeren & Whittaker, 2018; Simon & Clarke, 2016). However, many non-traditional roles involve high technology skills that mandate a 4-year college education or additional training (Jacobs & Padavic, 2015). The public sector's credibility to address these barriers and solve intractable problems of poverty and inequality is still at an all-time low. Some

studies suggest that there needs to be government involvement at the local, state, and national policy levels to create equitable employment conditions. These policies should promote social justice, and public engagement (Osam et al., 2017), and develop formal and informal programs geared towards specific population groups (Boykov& Goceva, 2019). Otherwise, the issues of scale, funding, and public support for comprehensive long-term efforts will continue to frustrate us.

A recent study by Devillard et al., (2018) looked at women in the workplace, drawing upon data from 279 organizations employing more than 13 million people and used qualitative results from 64,000 participants. With a focus on gender diversity in the workplace, the study results indicated two things: women remain significantly underrepresented, especially women of color, and companies need to change their hiring and promotion procedure for entry- and manager-level employees to make real inroads. In this study, women lag behind men for varying reasons. Those reasons ranging from receiving less managerial support to sexual harassment and discrimination.

Although women earn more bachelor's degrees, they are less likely to be hired into entry-level positions. Only 38% of women hold a management position, and 1 in 5 women are at the C-suite level. Women of color receive less support from managers than Whites, and African- American women earn the least support. Additionally, 64% of the participants' surveyed indicated that they face discrimination from sexism and racism, also known as microaggressions. These behaviors can manifest in many forms. As columnist Penny (2011) exclaims in *The New Statesman,* "While we all worry about the glass ceiling, there are millions of women standing in the basement—and the basement is flooding." In other words, we need to be conscious of those women at the C-suite level

and their workforce struggles. However, those women who are in a low socioeconomic status make up the majority of women in the workplace; their efforts to earn a decent living for themselves and their families also need our focus.

Low Socioeconomic Adult Learners and Families

While low socioeconomic families face many of the same challenges as other families, they are particularly financially vulnerable. Families of a low socioeconomic status struggle to earn a decent living, find work, pay their expenses, and provide for their dependents with essentials like health care and housing (Petty & Thomas, 2014). Single-parent families are twice as likely to have low incomes than their married counterparts with children (Stanczyk, 2009). Single parents make up 70% of the workforce, but only 40% hold full-time jobs –perhaps due to being responsible for their dependents and having childcare challenges and other family obligations. Although low-wage single parents can work, they generally work for less pay (Stanczyk, 2009) and have low health insurance coverage rates. Those who do take advantage of the educational system to remove themselves from this cycle of financial poverty face many barriers.

Education is not only a human right but also a powerful tool that empowers as a strategic development investment (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015). The research indicates that there is a correlation between academic persistence and low socioeconomic status (SES), as a student with low SES is less likely to persist in graduating from college (Kena et al., 2016; Kezar et al., 2015). Only 8% of students from the lowest income quartile complete a college education, compared to 85% of students from the highest socioeconomic status (Myran & Parsons, 2013). Of those educated, under-served students

from low SES backgrounds often face an array of risk factors, the most prominent of which are financial constraints (Savage & Graves, 2015).

Additional barriers include financial stress, home environment, lack of childcare options, transportation to and from class, academic unpreparedness, food insecurity, unemployment, underemployment, healthcare costs, and inadequate knowledge of college (Adams et al., 2016; Lee, 2017; Osam et al., 2017; Patterson, 2018; Selekman & Ybarra, 2011) or financial aid (Kezar et al., 2015). These barriers are often unmeasurable yet present.

In addition to the financial barriers to educational success experienced by low SES students there are the rising costs of higher education (Kimball, 2014). College costs continue to accelerate and outpace the prices of most other goods and services (Wyatt et al., 2014). In the past 30 years, college tuition and fees increased four times faster than the median income and four and a half times faster than inflation (Choitz & Reimberr, 2013). The cost of college textbooks has also increased considerably, with a 600% increase. Lack of access to postsecondary education and academic success is another barrier to education for addressing this population (Cerven, 2013; Dawber, 2019; McSwain & David, 2007).

Women of Low-Socioeconomic Status

In general, women continue to perform the unpaid work of childcare and domestic labor, and life ultimately forces single mothers to restructure their ambitions and narrow them down to being a provider and just a mother to their children. Single mothers settle to become "sacrificial lambs" for the sake of their children. They have to push through

disappointments without being able to draw on the physical, emotional, or financial support of the male who fathered their child(ren).

The government is addressing this problem and aiding this low SES population through such programs as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. This act replaced welfare with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program under former President William Clinton. The problem with these block grant programs was their focus on work instead of educational attainment; thus, women were forced to choose between education and employment. Most single mothers choose employment (Cerven, 2013; Narain et al.,2017). The additional problem is that single parents face barriers that can affect their motivation and degree attainment after college enrollment (Gioiosa & McCambly, 2015).

Those mothers who pursue higher education can face additional challenges while seeking postsecondary education. The vast majority of single mothers in college have low incomes; 63% live at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (Kruvelis et al., 2017). One in four college students is a parent with dependent children, and the majority of the students who are parents are women. As of 2015, just 31% of single mothers aged 25 and older held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 54% of married mothers and 40% of comparable women overall (Kruvelis et al., 2017).

Many single mothers work in addition to going to school and caring for children: 54% work 20 hours or more, and 43% work 30 hours or more per week (Kruvelis et al., 2017). These low-wage single mothers often work in minimum wage jobs as wait staff, housekeepers, or salesclerks (Miller & Hill., 2011). A single mother may net the same amount as her male colleague; however, her income measures against half of that of a

dual-income household, and childcare expenses would offset any income gains. Single mothers are often tasked with finding childcare providers offsite, leading to undesirable spending in transportation and time consumption. Additionally, if single mother can secure childcare, the quality of that care may be questionable (Adams & Spaulding, 2018).

Furthermore, single mothers who may not be able to afford a certified professional caregiver may put their child at risk of neglect or abuse. The assurance of a child's safety is essential to the parent's ability to perform at work or in class (Dill & Hodges, 2019; Miller & Hill, 2011). Additionally, research indicates that working a significant number of hours while pursuing a college degree can negatively impact a single mother's college outcomes in the forms of grade point average, persistence, time to degree, and graduating (Kruvelis et al., 2017). Conversely, women who successfully complete a postsecondary degree have much better outcomes. "Women who are educated are healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better healthcare and education to their children compared to women with little or no education" (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015, p. 69). According to Story et al. (2013) mothers who possess the aforementioned are more resilient when facing challenges of parenting.

While the link between skills and wages suggests, education and skill enhancement are the key to substantial wage growth, encouraging single mothers to enroll in education and training and persist in it and complete the program continues to be a challenge. The aforementioned statistics provide a glimpse into the limited educational

attainment of low SES students and poverty's effect on their success in and completion of college (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2013).

Support and Resources

In the literature on single mothers social support and resources are essential for single mothers' resiliency (Hartwig, 2016). Working single mothers need a great deal of support from many different avenues. This support can come from national organizations like the National Organization of Women (NOW), which is an organization sensitive to women's needs in the workplace. Support can come in the form of laws advocating for women's rights and protecting women from workplace harm regarding gender-related issues. It can also come in the form of social support, which may include family members, friends, local support groups, significant others, colleagues, neighbors, and places of worship (Hartwig, 2016; Richard & Lee, 2019).

Another vital resource for low-wage single adult mothers support is paid support, including childcare assistance, which is often crucial for single mothers to maintain employment (Grankowsky et al., 2018). However, in the literature about single mothers, there appears to be a lack of support and resources provided to low-wage single mothers and a lack of knowledge regarding what help this group of individuals might need.

Single Mothers

There are many employment and training alternatives programs targeted at marginalized population, such as with single mothers. Programs geared towards improving women's life outcomes, especially single mothers, are increasing. Unfortunately, the impact is small or not been realized, which undoubtedly causes a dilemma as women comprise half of the human race and over half of the workforce in the

United States (Bierema, 2002). It is documented in the literature that single mothers and minorities are more likely to experience poverty. Still, few studies address the programs that have successfully diminished this phenomenon. Given the increase in single heads of households, it is imperative that factors that contribute to the economic well-being of these families be examined.

For every three households in the United States, one is headed by a single mother (Livingston, 2018). Women in all racial and ethnic groups experienced higher poverty rates than White, non-Hispanic males. The poverty rate for African American heads of households with children rose from 44.2% in 2009 to 47.5% in 2010 (Fins, 2020). According to the Proctor et al, (2016), only 10% of single mothers held a college degree, and while 62% had a high school diploma or never obtained a high school degree. These factors contribute to the income disparity realized by these single female heads of household as they struggle within a society that places an increased demand on its' members to be college-educated.

Because of the low high school graduation rates of minorities, women, and single mothers, there are likely a few studies that have shown alternate pathways to formal education to advance their careers and acquire transferable skills. Less formal education options are through grant-funded programs (Bloom, 2010), scholarships, federally funded programs, or training curriculums similar to action learning programs discussed in this paper. Although the proportion of the population earning a bachelor's degree from a college or university has increased over time, nearly 75% of the nation's population never earns one (Mastracci, 2003). Almost 25% never enroll in any formal training beyond high

school. This research will describe the status of those few who pursue training beyond secondary education.

Those who enroll in a four-year college or university, particularly African Americans, continue to be underrepresented at higher-education institutions (Andrew, 2017). Based on the National Center for Education Statistics (Kena et al., 2016) data, the six-year bachelor's degree completion rate is 43% for White students, 21% for African American students, 16% for Hispanic students, and 15% for Native American students. Also, African Americans often experience more academic difficulty and have lower grade point averages (Strayhorn, 2013).

Additionally, those students who do pursue academia are more likely to report negative experiences on a college campus than their White peers (Strayhorn, 2013). African American females tend to experience more difficulty transitioning into academia than men do. Thus, we have a large population of non-collegiate females who work at lower-paying jobs compared to their male counterparts. Given the increase in single heads of households, the factors that contribute to these families' economic well-being must be explored. Although it is well documented in the literature that single mothers are more likely to experience poverty, few studies address the programs that have reduced this occurrence.

Minorities and single mothers, most of whom tend to be the primary caretakers of their children (Patterson, 2018; Petty & Thomas, 2014; Stavrova & Fetchenhauer, 2015; Van Gasse, 2020), are challenged on numerous fronts as they seek to obtain higher education. Most notably, they struggle to find time and resources while managing multiple priorities and roles. They usually have less education and more learning

disabilities than those who find and keep work (Desjardins & Lee, 2016; Patterson, 2018; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Petty & Thomas, 2014). As the primary caretaker of their children, Zhan, and Pandey (2004) further states that these female-headed households have inadequate child support and meager public benefits. They may also be unemployed or underemployed.

There have been and continue to be many initiatives and training and employment programs that recruit and employ more females into male-dominated roles. However, many non-traditional positions involve the comprehension of advanced technology, a skill that requires a 4-year college education (Manuti et al., 2015; Patterson, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2016). Also, the public sector's credibility to address these barriers and solve intractable problems of poverty and inequality is low.

Some studies suggest that to alleviate the problem, the government must get involved, and local, state, and national policies must be enacted that promote social justice, public engagement (Kazis & Kopp, 1997) and the creation of formal and informal programs geared towards disadvantaged population groups. Otherwise, the issues of scale, funding, and public support for comprehensive, long-term efforts will continue to perplex us. The literature documents that single mothers and minorities are more likely to experience poverty, but few studies address the programs that have reduced this occurrence. Given the increase in single heads of households, the factors that contribute to these families' economic well-being must be examined.

Workplace Programs

One of former President Barack Obama's goals was to expand American access to college by increasing money for the Pell Grant program and revitalizing the community

colleges (Hillard, 2011). It was an effort to make the United States the country with the

highest proportion of college graduates by 2020 (Kim et al., 2018a). According to Kim et

al. (2018a), this presidential proposal recognized access to education and training as a

critical driver for those in poverty. There is, however, a wide gap between the goals set

by former President Obama and the contemporary data in the United States. The general

problem is that students who are parents have unique needs that were not considered in

program reforms and are less likely to complete college degrees.

A study completed by Nelson et al. (2013), concluded that 53% of parents left

college with no degree than 31% of nonparents. Additionally, only 31% of single mothers

hold a bachelor's degree or higher than their non-parent counterparts, where 57% of

women were married (Kruvelis et al., 2017). The federal government was aligning job

training programs for funding under programs like the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

(Monaghan & Hansman, 2009), which includes programs targeting three different

populations: disadvantaged adults, youth, and displaced workers (Greenstone & Looney,

2011). The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other bridge to work

models that spend vast amounts of money and resources do not realize these gains for

low socioeconomic status populations.

Businesses are investing substantial dollars in employee training programs; some

of these investments are a consequence of a highly competitive business market, which

demands ongoing learning within corporations as a condition of survival (Rodríguez.

2018). For years, higher education controlled a significant part of the market for

corporate training (Cronen, 2018; Decker & Berk, 2011; Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

Historically, large corporations appeared to seek other training sources on their own

instead of relying on universities to provide it (Ahadi & Jacobs; 2017; de Alva & Schneider, 2018).

Corporations must work to retain competitive advantage, and organizations realize that to maintain a competitive edge, they must improve employee skills, talents, and knowledge (Bryant, 2018; Marquardt, 2004). However, many corporations show dissatisfaction with university-educated employees because they often do not have the necessary skills employers are seeking (Jarvis, 2013). They instead either create in-house programs such as the action learning program (Revans, 1982) or use consulting firms that specialize in corporate training programs or work-based programs.

Work-based programs and second-chance programs (Bloom, 2010; Long, 2014; Nightingale, 2018) have existed for an extended period. They provide some combination of education, training, counseling, employment, and social services for high school dropouts. However, according to Bloom (2010), their effectiveness is sparse, and their results are mixed. Organizations play a large role in workforce development may be inhospitable to learning due to mismatched goals and objectives for the learner (Bierema, 2008). In fact, employees who are not White male in the United States workforce face less chance of having access to training and development programs, receive less pay and promotions, and will more than likely experience biases or other microaggressions in the workplace (Bell, 2017; Blundell et al., 2021; DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016).

Second chance programs provide different options to their participants in the quest to build pathways to employment opportunities or postsecondary education. They range in size. Some are large, federally funded networks, including the ACCESS project at Hamilton College, Job Corps, Youth Build (Bloom, 2010), and some of the General

Educational Development (GED) programs. Others are funded in part by grants to less formal, smaller, independent programs managed by community organizations, churches, and businesses. In addition to second-chance programs, there are those offered through partnerships like Wal-Mart and American Public University Systems, Starbucks and Strayer University, Costco, and ECPI University. There are also scholarships and federally funded programs, i.e., the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Bloom, 2010), or on-the-job training programs participants can take advantage of in place of higher education. Employee-sponsored learning programs take on many forms, from formal to informal learning opportunities. They include but are not limited to apprenticeships, on-the-job training, mentoring (Hansman, 2009), and coaching programs (Peterson, 2010).

Informal education programs like workplace learning have benefitted the disenfranchised by providing adequate preparation and qualification for sustained labor market participation and lifelong learning(Bamdas, 2014). These programs have allowed women, single mothers, and others who are marginalized to move toward economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. Indeed, these programs could benefit women irrespective of race, class, or career path (Bierema, 2002) who continue to have trouble combining paid work and motherhood (Kruvelis et al., 2017; Miller & Hill, 2011; Patterson, 2018). The challenge with these programs is that there is very little knowledge of their effectiveness due to the small numbers of rigorously tested programs and even fewer programs showing unequivocal positive results with their participants (Bloom, 2010).

Chung and Chow (2004) conducted a study to redesign existing problem-based learning (PBL) subject curriculum to accommodate the learning potential and the interest

of their students in a health care environment. They found a higher degree of motivation to learn and achieve better outcomes than previous PBL implementation. This study highlighted the importance of matching students' learning capability with the right types of learning activities. There were two limitations to this study. The first limitation was that the study size was small. Second, the study did not have a control group. Caution needs to be taken to discourage generalization about the results.

In their study of formal, non-formal, and informal learning, Colley et al., (2002) examined data from several research areas covering community education and learning, learning for school teachers, and mentoring in the context of business. They disclosed that informal learning in each of the investigated contexts was significant in informal settings and vice versa, and there were few, if any, settings where this was not the case. The workplace environment plays an integral role in developing the office culture.

Workplaces that allow employees a higher level of autonomy, responsibility, and shared decision-making encourage community development of practices and get rewarded for their engagement. They are considered best practices (Manuti et al., 2015), and an example of one such program is from the results of a worksite in the United Kingdom (WALF Programme), where conditions allow employees to become flexible, creative, and have autonomy (Felstead et al., 2011).

Adult Education

Because of their place in the life cycle and position in the social context, adult learners have different learning needs and interests than children. Andragogy, a concept introduced by Knowles (1972), is grounded in humanistic learning theory (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Merriam et al., 2007). Knowles's learning theory had four assumptions.

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The first assumption relates to adult learners' independent self-concept and self-directed ability. The second assumption is that adults accumulate a growing list of experiences, providing a source for more learning. The third assumption of andragogy is the adult's readiness to learn and correlate the developmental tasks of his or her social role. The final assumption of andragogy is that adults are more problem-centered than subject-centered in their learning.

In other words, adults need to know why they should learn something and how it benefits them (Knowles, 1980, Knowles et al., 2014; Ozuah, 2016). In the field of adult education, many researchers give Knowles credit for helping to develop a practice to understand how adults learn (Henschke, 2015; Merriam, 1991; Merriam, 2001; Merriam et al., 2007; Loeng, 2018; Ozuah, 2016). The term Knowles used for adult learning is called andragogy (Merriam et al., 2007). Knowles theory acknowledges that the adult learner is independent and self-directed. Adults have an intrinsic motivation related to real-life (Darden, 2014). Lifelong learning is an important concept that captures the all-encompassing nature of adult learning and discovery in the worksite, whether it be formal or informal.

Knowles's (1973) andragogy model posits that adults' self-concepts move from dependency to independence or self-directedness. They accumulate a reservoir of experiences from which to draw new knowledge and skills. Their readiness to learn increases with the developmental tasks of social roles. Their time and curricular perspectives change from postponed to immediate application and from subject-centeredness to performance-centeredness (Darden, 2014).

There are many reasons why adults participate in learning activities: to improve life situations (life, work, social), or they may enjoy learning for its own sake. A few examples of adult learning activities are English as a second language, adult basic education, GED, continuing education, and personal development classes. Even though more adults participate in educational opportunities, the overall participation rate remains extremely low (Institute for Women Research Policy, 2017; Kena et al., 2014; Patterson, 2018).

Learning occurs in formal, nonformal, and informal settings (Manuti et al., 2015; Tynjälä, et al., 2014). Formal settings include educational institutions (i.e., colleges, universities, schools), institutions, agencies, communities arrange nonformal settings and typically offer temporary, short-term, non-educational opportunities. Last, informal settings of learning occur throughout the individual's daily life. Examples might be in the home, neighborhood, workplace, social media, internet, library, and even media sources.

Soon, workplace learning will be about achieving continual learning through various mechanisms like social collaboration, teamwork activities, and peer-to-peer learning that's decentralized due to technology (Dearborn, 2013; Tynjälä, et al., 2014). Learning will be virtual, and access will be continuous and instantaneous (Scott, 2015: Dearborn, 2013). Employees will attend fewer scheduled classes and online training sessions and instead, short videos, game-like simulations, and peer communities that offer networking, information sharing, and informal coaching will engage workers by delivering anyplace, anytime learning (Tynjälä, et al., 2014; Scott, 2015).

Adult Learning and Adult Learning Theories

In 1970, Knowles (cited in Knowles et al., 2014) was the first to shed light on the difference between the adult learning process (Andragogy) and children learning (Pedagogy). Knowles' theory was categorized by Pratt (2002), who said that adults learn through (a) assisting in setting the climate; work best in collaborative and non-competitive environments, (b) mutual participation in planning as they like to help with the planning, (c) assessment of their learning needs; having a good understanding of their abilities and capabilities (d) formulating their objectives through mutual negotiation, (e) design their own personal learning plans, (f) implementing their learning plans and activities, and (g) evaluating the success of the learning process for themselves.

Since Knowles's groundbreaking work, adult learning's collective understanding has gained momentum and sophistication. The attempt to codify differences between adults and children as a theory of adult learning continues to elude adult educators. There is no single theory that can explain all of the human knowledge. As a result, many adult learning theories have been developed. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) categorized adult learning theories into schools of adult learning. These schools include cognitivist, humanist, constructivist orientations, and social learning behaviorist (Kiely et al., 2004; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Behavioralist Theory

Watson (cited in Chowdhury, 2006) was said to be the father of Behaviorism. Watson researched and studied animals' responses to conditioning based on Pavlov's research. Watson posits that behaviorism is based on cause-and-effect relationships, focusing on objectively observing someone's behavior. Chowdhury (2006) further states

that behaviorists view learning as acquiring new behavior. He identified two different types of conditioning thought to be universally accepted as the standard for learning processes. The two types of conditioning are operant conditioning and classical conditioning (Clark, 2017; Kymissis & Poulson, 1990; Skinner, 2011).

Operant Conditioning occurs when a response to a stimulus is reinforced. If a behavior is rewarded, there will be a repeat of that same performance. Skinner is probably considered the best-known behaviorist to use reinforcement techniques and is responsible for much of modern training and teaching (Polo, 2018; Brightwell & Grant, 2013). On the other hand, Classic Conditioning is a process of learning by temporal association in which two events that repeatedly occur close together in time become fused in a person's mind and produce the same response (Skinner, 1948; Skinner, 1988).

Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning is considered a significant cornerstone of behaviorist theories of learning. Pavlov's research on dogs who would salivate (conditioned response or reflex) when a bell was rung (conditioned stimulus) regardless if there were food presence or not is famous for demonstrating this kind of conditioning (Pavlov & Gantt, 1941).

Skinner's most relevant aspect to training is the significance attached to the organism, which is mainly active in the environment emitting the behavior (Olson 2015). According to Skinner (1948, 1988), the trainer's job is to ensure the right behavior is reinforced. Therefore, the trainer needs to understand the terminal behavior of their trainees and monitor the trainees closely to augment correct responses. Brightwell & Grant (2013) notes that Competency-Based Training or Competency-Based Education is

based on this theory. A subsequent behaviorist theory that ties into training and educating adults is Social Cognitive Theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social learning theorists such as Bandura (1977) and Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the social nature of learning through which humans process and store information. The social learning behaviorist combines critical elements from cognitivist and behaviorist theories. Learning occurs by observing and interacting with others in a social context or setting. According to Bandura (1977, 1978), most human behaviors are learned by watching and modeling behavior.

The psychologist, Bandura (1977), discovered the importance of behavioral modeling while working with snake phobias patients. He found that the patient's observation of former patients handling snakes was an effective form of therapy. The patient in treatment abstracted the information that similar patients handling snakes had no ill effects and considered that information when reflecting on their behavior. Bandura found these observations were more effective than treating these patients with persuasion and the psychologist handling the snakes. Bandura's (1977, 1978, & 2012) social cognitive theory stresses observational learning, imitation, and modeling.

Thus, Bandura's theory integrates observational learning, imitation, and modeling; the focus is on the continuous interaction between behaviors and personal factors and the environment, which he referred to as a reciprocal causation model (Bandura, 1977, 1999). Bandura did not suggest that the three factors in the triadic model mentioned earlier make equal contributions to behavior. Instead, the behavior depends on which element is the strongest at that moment. The environment in this triadic model is not a large entity. It

comprises the imposed environment, selected environment, and constructed environment (Bandura, 1999). The taxed environment is thrust upon people; however, there is leeway for them to interpret and respond to this atmosphere.

It is essential to distinguish that the selected environment is the opposite of the imposed environment. It is a setting where people choose their associates, activities, and surroundings. "The environments that are created do not exist as a potentiality waiting to be selected and activated" (p. 23). Instead, people construct their environment through their generative efforts (Bandura, 1999). The last factor in the triadic causation model is the person, focused mainly on cognition and other personal characteristics, such as self-efficacy, motives, and personality. The triadic model operates as interacting determinants that bidirectionally influence one another (Bandura, 1999). It is essential to understand the triadic causation model from Bandura's (1977) social learning theory.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory aims to develop appropriate social relations. Learning does occur, but it happens in a social contest. An example is Bandura's most famous experiment in 1961 with the Bobo Doll Study. Bandura (1965) made a video in which an adult woman acted aggressively to a bobo doll, hitting, and shouting aggressive words like fly away (p. 591). The film was shown to groups of children, and afterward, they could play in a room with the same doll. The children began imitating the model by beating up the doll and using similar aggressive language. The children received no encouragement or incentives to hit on the doll. They simply imitated the behavior they have observed. Through the Bobo doll experience, Bandura (1977) better-understood modeling's primary function, which is to transmit information to an observer.

Primary modeling occurred in three ways. First, modeled behavior serves as a cue to initiate a similar reaction in others. The model also strengthens or weakens the learner's existing restraints against the performance of a modeled behavior. Third, modeling is used to demonstrate new patterns of behavior. Bandura did not believe that people learn behaviors through reinforcement; instead, actions enacted by others often either reinforce or punish. Outcomes of the modeled behavior are vicarious reinforcement; modeled behavior arouses emotional reactions in an observer. There are two components for vicarious reinforcement (Rosenstock et al., 1998). First, modeled behavior can reinforce an observer's behavior. Second, positive emotional reactions can be aroused by an observer.

Unlike vicarious reinforcement, punishment administered to a model tends to cause three primary effects in an observer (Bandura, 1965, Rosenstock et al., 1998). First punishment can convey information about behaviors that are likely to be punished, and the observer understands the negative modeled behavior is inappropriate. Second, those who observe a model being punished for negative behaviors could imitate the aggressive actions they saw. Third, the witness of negative, aggressive behavior could devalue the status of the person who modeled the behavior. If the model of aggressive behavior is not punished, the message conveyed is that the response is acceptable.

Starovoytova and Arimi (2017) gave an example of a careless teacher when monitoring exams and cheating occurs. If the deception went unpunished, more students would be inclined to cheat on the next exam. Despite how many times a person observes a behavior, they will only engage in the behavior if they believe they will succeed.

Beliefs about the ability to complete a task are called self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 2012; Brown & Bimrose, 2018; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy perceptions will be an essential part of this study (Bandura, 1977, Bandura, 2012; Dankyi & Dankyi, 2019). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy facilitates action and learning. He further states that self-efficacy theory relates to a person's perceptions of their ability to achieve a goal or their belief in their ability to produce desired results through their actions. Self-efficacy is the mind's self-regulatory function, which tells us when to try and when to stop. Self-efficacy is an attitude towards specific tasks in a context (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura (1994), further states that people can possess a high degree of talent or skill but not see themselves as able to consistently apply their capabilities across various situations (Bandura, 1977). The theorist states that beliefs about self-efficacy affect a multitude of diverse factors, such as the amount of effort people put forth, their perseverance and resilience in the face of adverse situations, and the decisions people make. Additionally, people's tendency to think in ways that are self-hindering or self-aiding and the amount of stress and depression they experience in response to adversity (Bandura, 1977).

Wuepper and Lybbert's (2017) literature review on perceived self-efficacy (PSE) related to poverty and economic development concludes that PSE is an individuals' perception of their domain-specific capabilities and shapes their internal constraints and drives economic behavior. People with high PSE try harder, persist more diligently, and set high expectations for themselves. Otherwise, people have little reason to invest their

time and energy without adequate PSE or attempt to try something new (Wuepper &
Lybbert, 2017).

Self-Efficacy: A Form of Power

Self-efficacy is a form of power. When the word power is conjured up, a wide
range of terms may come to mind. According to Pratto (2016), power is a complex
concept. However, due to the consequences that power has, it will be discussed in terms
of its link to inequality and the concern one has over the suffering inequality produces.
The focus of the writer being low-wage single adult mothers. According to Pratto (2016),
"power is important because having (more) power or lacking sufficient power enhances
or curtails the length and quality of people's lives, the functioning of communities, and
the health of their environment" (p. 3). Power implies an ability to influence others, such
as in social control and the ability to resist others' influence as in personal power (Leach,
et al., 2017).

Power represents the ability to control social systems. Power can also be a
motivating force at the core of human interactions (Rucker & Galinsky, 2017).
Historically and currently, much research has focused on how unequal power produces
social harm. Researchers do not always study power from the viewpoint of those less
powerful but instead from the vantage point of the agency and points of view of more
powerful parties (Pratto, 2016). To test how power can produce inequalities, Researchers
have put study participants in situations in which they have a choice over whether to
perform behaviors that are often viewed as unethical, such as cheating (Yap et al., 2013),
taking advantage of lower-level subordinates, and dividing resources up unequally (Son-
Hing et al., 2007).

Steffens et al. (2013) randomly assigned confederate basketball team captains to express high or low confidence in their team's performance prospects measuring each team member's confidence in themselves and the team. The authors experimentally manipulated the qualities of leaders to measure what conditions allow leaders to lead, to be able to set norms for the group, and act as role models. In studies like these, the research focus on the superior parties as agents who affect subordinate parties.

An example of social power is the influence a manager exerts over his/her subordinates. On the contrary, the ability to resist others' effects is equated with notions of personal power or autonomy. Looking at groups of people historically whose independence has been restricted (e.g., minorities, women), one typically finds that they had very little influence (Leach et al., 2017). Additionally, prolonged states of impaired autonomy can lead to feelings of social insignificance and powerlessness Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978 (cited in Leach et al., 2017). Power affords control and agency (Rucker & Galinsky, 2017; Brinol et al., 2017). Due to their status in society, low-wage single adult mothers could be negatively impacted as they have very little power.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's self-evaluation of his or her worth, self-respect, self-confidence, and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about oneself (Abdel-Khalek, 2016; MacDonald, 2012). Maslow's (1954) fourth level of need on his hierarchical pyramid is esteem. He reports that all humans need to feel respected; this includes the need to have self-esteem and self-respect. He further states that esteem presents the typical human desire to be accepted and valued by others.

Maslow noted two versions of esteem needs: a "lower" version, a need for fame, status, or recognition, and a "higher" version, which encompasses a need for competence, mastery, or self-confidence (Einstein et al., 2016).

The first empirical research article comes from Brady and Cook (2015). In a systematic review of the impacts of welfare-to-work on family wellbeing, Brady and Cook (2015, p. 20) found that the "academic research on the impact of Welfare to Work reforms on the wellbeing of single parents and their children presents an overwhelmingly negative picture." The opportunities constrain single mothers' ability to move from welfare to work they have for employment due to the dual role as breadwinner and primary caregiver and negatively impact their self-esteem.

The second research article comes from McKenzie et al. (2019), who recently conducted a qualitative study on self-esteem related to low-income single mothers and their lived experiences when they became ineligible for the Parenting Payment Single (PPS) program, an Australian welfare program. The authors investigated the impact these changes had on the lives of these single mothers and found that although these single mothers were negatively impacted by the reduction in dollars they received from the welfare program, they could cope and adapt to their poverty experiences (Narain, et al., 2017; Saunders, 2015).

The single mothers in this study reprioritized their finance allocations and sought support for childcare in their pursuit of work to compensate for their lack of income. In contrast to low self-esteem, using Arab participants, Abdel-Khalek (2016) found that self-esteem increased and was positively associated with mental health, satisfaction with life, happiness, love of life, and hope. Individuals with high self-esteem in difficult times

are more likely to persist than those with low self-esteem. Maslow (1954) assumed that only once people have achieved lower tier needs and esteem can they move on to individual pursuits of self-actualization or fully realize their unique potential.

Self-Actualization

The concept of self-actualization is best known in psychology in the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). The theory is based on leveraging one's abilities to reach their potential. Maslow (1943) describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything one can, to become the most that one can be. Maslow's hierarchy of needs encompasses the following: "physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization" in a pyramid from bottom to top. Each level of conditions must be realized before the individual can move up to the pyramid's next level. Meaning that one's physiological needs like food and water must be met before an individual can move to the safety need. A shelter would be an example to meet that safety need, and so on.

The last level is self-actualization. Maslow (1943) assumed that only once people had achieved lower-tier physiological and social goals and esteem, could they move on to self-actualization or fully realizing their unique potential. Maslow (1943) used the term self-actualization to refer to "the desire to become more and more of what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming' (p. 383). This level of need refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential (Kenrick & Krems, 2018); like Carl Rogers, Maslow emphasized the importance of self-actualization (Cherry, 2014).

Empirical Studies

A study conducted by Chiou and Wan (2007) illustrated the importance of considering self-efficacy as an intervening factor between experience, knowledge, and future action. The authors determined that if subjects undertook tasks that provided positive experiences in attaining information, self-efficacy increased (Chiou & Wan, 2007). The opposite holds for negative experiences. If people had negative experiences to gain knowledge (learning), their self-efficacy decreased.

Krishmnan and Krutikova (2013) investigated if it was possible to improve the PSE of the poor and if this correlated with improved educational and labor market achievements. The authors analyze a nongovernmental agency in India that offered support service programs in urban slums designed to raise PSE and self-esteem. Services included lessons, activities, and mentoring that talked about values and skills, such as PSE and self-control. The children-maintained diaries on their encounters with such values and skills and discussed them along with their aspirations to their mentors. Psychological counseling was available for participants. The authors measured PSE's unexpected effects by comparing the first students who received treatment with two comparison groups. One comparison group was peers of the same sex and age from the same neighborhood, whereas the second comparison group came from the same school and the same region. The authors reported that PSE and self-esteem were raised with program participants.

Beaman et al. (2012) identified a scenario in West Bengal, India; for political reasons, one-third of all village councils were randomly set aside for a female chief councilor or "Pradhan." The researcher showed that female leadership impacted

adolescent girls' career aspirations and educational attainment. The researcher's findings indicate that women politicians decreased the gender gap in aspirations by 32% for children and 25% for their parents. The researcher also reported that educational attainment was affected, being pretty much erased in the treatment groups with girls spending less time on household chores. Overall results were an increase in PSE with participants due to observing their social peers' success.

Pasquier-Doumer and Brandon (2015) studied the effect of PSE on educational performance and aspirations among indigenous children in Peru. Being indigenous is associated with low socioeconomic status and residing in rural environments. Indigenous children receive important negative messages about their identity and culture (Ames, 2012); thus, the researcher investigated whether these children might experience a decrease in their PSE affecting their aspirations and performance. The researcher learned that it was not the negative messages that impacted their goal; instead, it was the children's low socioeconomic status. The children were not internalizing the negative messages; however, their low socioeconomic status negatively impacted their educational outcomes and directly contributed to persistent inequalities.

Sizeable ongoing research on the lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam (as cited by Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017) entitled the Young Lives study is monitoring the evolution of PSE of 15 years of the children's lifetime. Results suggest that children who are raised experiencing helplessness reinforced through negative feedback have low PSE. However, as previously mentioned by Krishnan and Krutikova (2013), PSE can be improved with schools that have a laser focus on PSE. According to Wuepper and Lybbert (2017), it is possible to help people out of this low PSE cycle

because the dynamics that create the low-level equilibrium are behavioral, not structural. Both Lybbert and Wydick (2016) and Bernard et al. (2014) use video documentaries about successful peers' lived experiences to increase the PSE of participants in Ethiopia. Self-efficacy is also well researched in the quantitative study completed by Lepold, et al., (2018) on bank employees.

Lepold et al. (2018) investigated whether influence expectations on key performance indicators (KPI) can predict job satisfaction and work engagement above and beyond professional self-efficacy in Austria's bank employees. Using online surveys via the intranet, the researcher had 136 employees to meet the study's criteria. The study investigated the relationship between professional self-efficacy (specific to an individual's belief in his or her capability for successful performance at work) and its influence on KPIs' expectations with job satisfaction and work engagement. The study results indicated that job satisfaction, professional self-efficacy, and influence expectations on bank specific KPIs were the best predictors. Eighteen percent of the variance in work engagement could be explained by professional self-efficacy and the influence expectations of the branch managers.

As previously stated, self-efficacy contributes to Bandura's reciprocal causation model (1977). There are four ways of developing a strong sense of efficacy. The first the method is to increase self-efficacy through social modeling. People who see others like themselves being successful at something they want to try them to think that they can do it too. Enactive Mastery is an example (Bandura, 1977). Individuals achieve goals and overcome failures as they increase their self-efficacy through practice. With repeated practice, one gains experience and more confidence, which is an essential component of

growing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1994). Social or verbal persuasion is the third example. When others persuade people that they can succeed, this positively impacts their self-efficacy. People are more confident when they are assured and convinced that they can master a task through words or others' encouragement.

Finally, a person's physical and emotional state can help them accurately read their ability to be successful in an activity or an assignment (Rosenstock et al., 1988). We judge our self-efficacy by perceiving our anxiety levels in different situations. People rely partly on their somatic and emotional state while evaluating their capabilities. They interpret stress reactions, worry, and fear vulnerability to poor performance, and it negatively affects their self-efficacy, while positive energized emotional states help improve performance (Chiou & Wan, 2007). Mood also affects people's self-efficacy. A positive mood enhances self-efficacy, just as a melancholic mood diminishes self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy has relevance to many areas of research (Pajares, 1995; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990), but it is especially relevant around educational research (Schunk & Gunn, 1986) since higher self-efficacy is associated with greater persistence, effort, and intrinsic interest in academic learning and performance. Educators have sought to discover how to increase student's self-efficacy best. Researchers (Van Dinther et al., 2011; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990) have found that students' beliefs about their own ability to learn determine their aspiration, level of motivation, and academic performance.

Teachers' beliefs in their ability to instruct also impact how successful their students will be. Similarly, impacting faculty, instructors, and facilitators' assumptions

about their collective efficacy influences schools, organizations, and businesses' achievement levels. Researchers have also found that parents positively impact a child's self-efficacy when they provide an environment that stimulates youngster's curiosity and allows for mastery experiences. Peers may impact self-efficacy as people may surround themselves with people similar to them in socioeconomic status, life experiences, and culture, increasing the likelihood of being influenced by modeling by one another.

Perceived self-efficacy might benefit low-wage single adult mothers due to its impact on the amount of effort put forth by individuals when faced with adversarial circumstances and the benefits derived from having a higher PSE postulated by the researchers mentioned above. Highly efficacious individuals are not afraid of challenges, cope with pain and preserve through setbacks. This is in contrast to individuals with low-self efficacy, however, as they will avoid challenging goals or tasks, worry about a possible injury, expend fewer efforts, and give up amid their failure (Feltz & Payment, 2005; Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017). We need to recognize how the various dimensions of self-efficacy influence one's ability to act to attain training and value their skills as people work to apply these skills. This intuitiveness can be essential for workforce training guidelines of low-wage single adult mothers in the workplace.

Barriers to Adult Learning

There are many reasons why adults may not participate in adult learning programs. One of the most challenging tasks program planners face is helping adults overcome barriers that deter them from participating in adult learning programs. From a historical standpoint, Beder and Valentine (1990) conducted a study to determine through cluster analysis data how to identify and describe distinctive types of adults defined by

six deterrent factors they identified in this study and how these deterrents manifest themselves through the adult learner. The impediments to participation in adult learning, according to the authors, were "lack of confidence, lack of course relevance, time constraints, low personal priority, cost, and personal problems" (p. 33). Using the Deterrents to Participation Scale, the researchers evaluated the results of 215 New Jersians who had a mean age of 42. Most of the participants were females, with many of these adults working full-time.

The authors provided a typology of adults based on participants' self-reported barriers to learning. The findings correlated with recent empirical studies on adult learners. The largest cluster was on participants who faced obstacles due to personal problems such as family and childcare issues (Patterson, 2018; Petty & Thomas, 2014; Stavrova & Fetchenhauer, 2015) and, to a small degree, health concern. The second-largest cluster in the researcher's findings were participants who lacked confidence (Cross, 1981; Jury et al., 2017; Lee, 2017). Those with less than a high school diploma was disproportionately high in this cluster and predominately male. The third and smallest cluster consisted of many females with the lowest income and educational attainment. The participants in this group worked mostly part-time. These participants in group three wanted to pursue education but did not have the financial means to do so (Kim & O'Brien, 2018; Patterson & Song, 2018; Petty & Thomas, 2014).

The next cluster, group four, was comprised of those adults who were not interested in furthering their education (Beder, 1990; Desjardins, 2020). Most of these participants worked full-time and were males with high socioeconomic status. The last cluster was made up of participants who valued education but did not feel that the

existing educational classes were relevant. These individuals were like the fourth cluster of participants except for income. In group five, these participants rated themselves as middle class, whereas group four rank in the top percentile based on their income compared to the other groups.

Beder (1990), following the works of Darkenwald and Valentine (1985), conducted a quantitative study on Iowa residents eligible to pursue adult basic education (ABE) courses but had not, and those who did not finish high school. The study group consisted of 175 participants. The researcher used questionnaires, surveys, and telephone interviews to collect data. The results revealed that adults who do not participate in ABE are multifaceted. Adults tend not to participate in adult learning programs similar to what Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) reported, did not find value in participating, had negative experiences with education or school and encountered those deterrents that encompass situational barriers.

According to Beder (1990), there are three reasons why adults do not participate in adult basic education. They lack the motivation to attend, are deterred, or unaware of the programs. Motivation can be defined as the act or process of giving someone a reason, encouragement for doing something (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). To understand who fails to participate in adult learning programs, the researcher conducted a study with Iowa residents who were eligible for adult basic education (ABE) and had not completed high school and were currently not enrolled in any ABE program. Through a telephone survey, data were collected on 175 participants. Using basic descriptive statistics, the author concluded that participants did not enroll in ABE programs because of dispositional and situational barriers. The works of Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) took this research a

step further by looking at not only the six factors of deterrence's to participation

identified early but sought to understand and describe the demographics of adult learners.

The deterrents alluded to in this research recognized by Cross (1981) and others

(Darkenwald, 1985a; Darkenwald, 1985b; Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990) are some of

the same barriers that single women face.

Several challenges plague single mothers and young mothers, particularly as they

try to participate in learning activities. One problem is finding time for self while

managing multiple roles (Vann-Johnson, 2004). Single mothers are often faced with the

logistical and emotional difficulties of balancing their roles as caregivers to young

children, students, employees, or both responsible heads of their household. These roles'

demands and stress create additional hardships on these women as they participate in

adult learning programs.

Childcare and medical costs are other deterrents that affect low-wage single

mothers. The lack of available and affordable childcare during late hours or off-hours,

sick days, or even holidays can create problems for many single mothers because having

access to reliable childcare for emergencies is few and far between. Additionally, single

mothers are required to arrange and schedule a time for employment and household

duties around their dependents' care (Branscomb, 2006).

As medical care costs increase, single mothers view self-care and healthcare as

unnecessary luxury (Osam et al., 2017). Time constraints impact why single mothers

neglect their health. They may find it difficult to access healthcare institutions during

regular business hours. The challenges that impede single mothers' progress have been

further influenced in the past decade by significant federal social policies that stress

choosing between work and education, as discussed previously with the enactment of WIA (Goldrick-Rab, 2006; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016; Hopkins et al., 2009). Thus, the road that leads to low-wage single mothers' opportunities to use programs such as TANF dollars to cover their expenses for formal education is almost nil, creating financial hardships who want or choose to pursue higher education (Jones-DeWeever, 2007).

Summary

The number and proportion of low-wage single adult mothers in the workforce are growing. Many continue to be employed in a low-income category even though there are about 12 million single-parent-headed households in the United States, 80% are being headed by single mothers (Labor, 2017). These statistics indicate that low-wage single adult mothers face more significant workplace barriers and occupational challenges due to a myriad of factors. These factors include high-stress levels associated with financial insecurity, a lack of support systems, inflexible work-arrangements, discrimination at work, more frequent and more prolonged periods of unemployment, less access to fringe benefits, and fewer built-in programs fostering advancement (Kahne & Mabel, 2010; Krieger et al., 2006; Richard & Lee 2019; Stier & Yaish, 2014).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter consisted of nine (9) sections, which described the methodology used in this research study. These nine (9) sections included Basic Qualitative Research, The Research Site, Interview Protocols, Field Test, Internal Review Board, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Researchers Perspective, and Summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify barriers low-wage single adult mothers experience and the support systems they used while participating in voluntary work-based training programs. Educational attainment continues to elude disenfranchised mothers, especially single mothers who wear many hats and face numerous barriers or obstacles. Besides having to deal with racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and sexism (Chrisler et al., 2016), these single mothers are challenged to find time for themselves while managing multiple priorities (Eyster & Briggs, 2016), including their numerous roles as a parent (Patterson, 2018), caregiver (Stavrova & Fetchenhauer, 2015), student, employee, and head of household (Desjardins & Lee, 2016; Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Petty & Thomas, 2014).

Research Questions

Three research questions were used to guide this research:

1. What were the perceived barriers low-wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

2. What types of support systems did low-wage single adult female participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

3. To what degree did participating in work-based voluntary training programs impact low-wage single adult mothers' future career plans?

Rationale for Qualitative Study Methods

Researchers may use one or more qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. The research question should guide the selection of the research method (Foster et al., 2013). A basic qualitative research design has been selected to examine the experiences of low-wage single mothers working in healthcare and the barriers they face while participating in work-based training programs. Basic qualitative studies are perhaps the most common form of education research. Merriam (2009) describes this type of research as being derived philosophically from constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interaction. A basic qualitative research study is used when the researcher wants to know the following:

"How people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, what meaning they attribute to their experiences, and to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23).

The qualitative research method allows the researcher to understand these strategies in the respective social and cultural environment (Sandelowski, 2015). Furthermore, using a basic qualitative research design allows examining the contextual nature and meaning of barriers from the low-wage single adult mothers' perspective. It provides a comprehensive understanding of factors contributing to adult learning (Merriam & Genier, 2019). The researcher collects data through interviews, observations, or document analysis.

A basic qualitative study, as previously mentioned, allows the researcher to inquire about the experiences of the participant through interviews or surveys, along with what the participants' experiences mean to them. According to Merriam (2009), in a basic qualitative study, the participants' attitudes, ideas, opinions, and beliefs may emerge as part of the findings. However, they should not be the sole focus of the study. A central theme of qualitative research is that individuals establish correspondence to their social world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The authors contend that throughout the process of a basic qualitative research study, the researcher is attentive to comprehending the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved in the study. They further state people construct meaning of the world they live in through engagement and interpretation of their experiences.

In the previous chapters' literature review, few studies focused on the low-wage single mothers as a learner within the social environment of a work-based training program. Furthermore, little research examined how low-wage single mothers construct meaning out of their experience of going through work-based training programs to pursue their career aspirations. In order to develop effective programs targeting this population

of workers, it is necessary to understand their reason for participation and experiences within the actual learning environment. During a qualitative research study, a researcher can inquire about the experiences of participants through interviews or surveys, along with what the participants' experiences are to them.

One reason for conducting this basic qualitative study was to add to the body of knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of single mother adult learners, specifically those employed in low-wage jobs within a healthcare setting. Additionally, this research intended to understand the impact that work-based learning had on single mothers' career aspirations. Similar to the work of Cross (1981), this study assumed that adult learners face situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers while engaged in learning. However, with adequate support and resilience, they can persevere. The results of this study could benefit healthcare organizations, the hospitality industry, human resource personnel, and policymakers.

In fact, Massing and Gauly (2017) state that it is imperative to understand adults' barriers to participating in lifelong education so that policies can be implemented that allow more adults to receive training. Unfortunately, how barriers to participating in the training are related to gender is relatively scarce in the literature (Massing & Gauly, 2017). Consequently, the goal of understanding and interpreting the participants' lived learning experiences and the meaning they assigned to their experiences guided the exploration, thus addressing a gap in the literature on low-wage single mothers as adult learners pursuing training opportunities while working in a healthcare environment.

Basic Qualitative Research

Qualitative research aims to understand participants' experiences and views of a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research questions, which target a qualitative inquiry, use text as empirical material instead of numbers. Qualitative research studies are interested in participants' perspectives, everyday practices, and shared knowledge (Flick, 2018), not to test a theory. According to Merriam & Genier (2019), one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Data comprises participants' spoken or written words and are analyzed for themes. Qualitative research is interested in knowing how meaning is constructed and how people make sense of their lives and the world (Merriam, 2009) to understand a phenomenon. Qualitative research produces descriptive data that cannot be obtained through statistical procedures or other quantitative methods (Conceicao, 2015; Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2014).

In the previous chapters' review of the literature, few studies focused on single mothers working in a health care setting that participated in work-based training programs. Further, there is little research examining how low-wage single mothers construct meaning from their experiences of completing a work-based training program to achieve their career aspirations. In order to develop effective programs and services that meet the needs of adult learners, it is essential to understand their reasons for participation in work-based training programs.

The researcher used a "mix of description and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p.11) to describe the experiences of single mothers participating in voluntary work-based training program experienced at the ABC organization, as the researcher sought to understand the

barriers to learning from the perspectives of the people it affects (Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2014). The researcher in this study had the flexibility to investigate participants' initial responses by probing to draw out additional information from participants through the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, participants were able to respond in their own words and were not forced to choose from a selection of pre-determined options.

Additionally, in qualitative research, the researcher becomes part of the research process because they interact with the participants within the study. In this study, the researcher chose to use a basic or generic qualitative approach, which is sometimes referred to as a qualitative description (Cristancho et al., 2018; Dodgson, 2017). Unlike some of the significant qualitative methods like critical theory, grounded theory, ethnography, or phenomenology, no specific conceptual approaches were being used to guide the development or the approach of the interviews in this study.

The purpose of this qualitative study was a generic approach and was purely descriptive. The researcher sought to depict the lived experiences of low-wage single mothers working in a healthcare environment regarding their barriers, support, and aspirations while pursuing work-based training. This study was best suited for qualitative research because the researcher sought to find examples of behaviors to clarify the thoughts and feelings of participants who participated in work-based training. Furthermore, the researcher sought to interpret participants' experiences of the phenomena of interest to find explanations for human behavior in this given context (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Research Setting

This study took place in a healthcare organization that offers adult education training, certifications, and formal classes as part of their professional development curriculum leading to certificates or leadership development. The research was conducted in two different healthcare facilities in the Midwest, one serving patients in Ohio and the other in Michigan.

Hospital A is a 165-bed acute and long-term care facility (LTACH) located in a Midwestern state's capital city. This LTACH serves patients with complex medical needs requiring more extended hospital stays and highly specialized care. Participants in Hospital A participants work in the Environmental Services Department, which has 19 employees in Food & Nutrition Services and 34 employees in Environmental Services. The employees in these departments can work one of three shifts: first, second or third.

Alongside their respective managers, the employees in Environmental Services are responsible for cleaning offices, surgical units, and patients' rooms. Employees from this department are offered opportunities to participate in various work-based voluntary training and certification programs with their managers' or departmental directors' recommendations. The topics covered through the work-based optional training program range from customer service to Certified Healthcare Environmental Services Technician (CHEST). Employees can also pursue the Occupation Safety and Healthcare Administration (OSHA-10) certifications.

Hospital B provides a full continuum of care across various settings, including urgent care centers, home health, virtual care, and medical offices in more than 30 specialties and subspecialties. Hospital B has 97 licensed hospital beds and is a teaching

hospital. Participants in Hospital B work in the Food and Nutrition Services Department, which employees 50 Food & Nutrition Services workers and 55 Environmental Services employees. The employees in the Food and Nutrition Services department can work on either first or second shifts.

The Food & Nutrition Services employees are responsible for the patient meal deliveries and the retail operations (managing a cafeteria and coffee shop) of the hospital. Employees from this department are offered opportunities to participate in various work-based voluntary training and certification programs by their managers' or departmental directors' recommendations. Topics covered through the work-based optional training program range from customer service to ServSafe certifications.

Site Selection

After selecting the topic of low-wage single mothers participating in work-based training programs, the researcher reviewed the relevant literature and theories and selected participants for the study. Participants for the study worked in two different hospitals in the Mid-western United States, both outside the sphere of influence of the researcher employed as a Human Resource Manager in the company that has oversight of these hospitals. The subsequent sections describe the selection of study participants, development of interview questions, field test, accessing participants, conducting interviews, Internal Review Board (IRB) process, sample size, data collection, data analysis, saturation, quality criteria, credibility, transferability, confirmability, the researchers' perspective, and summary.

Selection of Study Participants

The participants for this basic qualitative research study were selected purposefully to guarantee transparency and validity. According to research the use of purposeful sampling within a qualitative study is necessary for building an information-rich case in order to learn about the primary issues within the research (Benoot et al., 2016; Creswell, 2013). The purposeful sampling method is effective when a limited number of participants serve as primary data sources to meet the goals and objectives of the study (Creswell, 2013).

The participants were frontline employees working in either Environmental Services (ES) or Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) as described above. The employees who met the study criteria were single adult females (at least 18 years of age) and mothers working in the ES or FNS department for a minimum of 6 months. Participants had to complete at least one voluntary work-based training program as an adult. Participants were provided with a copy of the demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) to determine inclusion in the study. Exclusion criteria include those FNS or ES workers who were males, married, or single with no children, as well as those participants who had not participated in a voluntary work-based training program as an adult or who declined to participate in the study.

The researcher aimed to solicit participants who represented a sample of the frontline service workers at both institutions. The researcher's goal was to get at least eight to ten participants who meet the criteria outlined above; however, the researcher added participants as described below in the Sample Size section until saturation was reached, which was fifteen. The researcher identified which participants to include in the

study by working with the department directors in both FNS and ES to determine which employees met the study's criteria. Because of the nature of the job the participants were employed in, most of the participants exhibited the following characteristics:

- Little or no formal education

- may not be literate or fall under the heading English as a Second Language

- may not be able to read well

- may not understand the words in the questionnaire

- may not be motivated to complete the questionnaire

Participants were offered a $10.00 gift card for participating in the study. The gift cards were mailed to their respective managers to distribute in the fall of 2020 due to the pandemic. The researcher informed participants of the following before the interview started: the purpose of the research and the option to exit the interview at any time without repercussion. Participants were able to decline to answer any of the questions posed during the interview and had an opportunity to refuse to be audiotaped. Participants were asked at the beginning of their interview to provide a pseudo-first name so that their identities could remained confidential (Appendix A).

Development of Interview Questions and Field Test

Open-ended semi-structured interviews via face-to-face meetings (before work, lunch break or after work) were used to investigate how the participants perceived their experiences in work-based voluntary training programs at ABC healthcare organization. One of the primary sources used to create the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C) was from a dissertation by Bennett (2016) in her mixed-methods study on "Attitudes Toward Adult Education Among Adult Learners Without a High School

Diploma or GED." The researcher selected a few of her questions and modified them to conform to this current study. Additional resources included Andrews-Standafer, 2018; Conceição et al., 2017; Kinchin et al., 2010) in addition to some internet links that are included in the references.

During the interim time period of seeking study participants, the researcher tested the interview questions using two former frontline ES workers who were recently promoted to management (see field test section) during the pilot phase of the research. However, due to some disruptions in the ES department, the researcher had to abort this plan. Instead, the researcher piloted the interview questions on single mothers working in healthcare at the same facility but in a different department. The testing aimed to uncover minor flaws, solve them, and subsequently conduct the actual interviews. This step helped clarify if the interview questions addressed the research questions and were appropriate for the research study.

Accessing Participants

The researcher connected with ABC Healthcare Human Resources (HR) to seek permission to approach the Food and Environmental Services Departments' employees for the research study. The researcher provided HR with a letter explaining the research, which characteristics met the study criteria, and outlined how the researcher planned to recruit participants for the study. The letter informed HR that there would not be any intentional harm done to the study participants. The researchers' and Methodologist contact information was provided for any questions or concerns that HR may have had relating to this research study.

The researcher contacted the Director of Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) and Environmental Services (ES) to review the protocol for the study to gain his/her approval. The researcher set up a separate meeting with the FNS District Manager, General Manager, and the ES General Manager as they have direct oversight of the frontline staff to discuss the research protocol. Once all necessary approvals were in place, the researcher used several methods to announce the call for the study participants through advertisements to both the frontline staff and the FNS and ES management team. Additionally, the Vice-President and District Manager who have oversight of these regions were notified of the study.

The advertisement included posting the need for research study participants during the departments' weekly huddles with the frontline staff and sharing the need for participants during the FNS and ES managers' daily handoff meetings. The researcher did not have to use an online random name picker to select participants who met the study criteria as there was not an overwhelming number of potential participants.

The researcher analyzed the participants' interviews immediately so that a decision could be made as to whether or not saturation had been reached. A total of fifteen participants completed the interview. The researcher asked each participant her views on participating in voluntary work-based training programs. The researcher sought to clarify their reasons for answering the research interview questions either positively or negatively, which helped to identify the emerging themes presented in this study.

Conducting Interviews

The actual interviews were conducted in a private location with one-to-one discussion with each participant. The researcher did analyze the participants' interviews

immediately until saturation was reached. The researcher used a script for the beginning

and end of the interview, which shared critical details about the study (Appendix E). It

was a reminder for the researcher to explain the notion of informed consent and direct the

researcher to have participants sign the statement of informed consent. The script allowed

the researcher to provide contact information at the end of the interview and to relay to

the interviewee that there may be a subsequent contact if there is a need for the researcher

to clarify information, ask additional questions, or perform member checking (Merriam

& Tisdell, 2015).

The questions were semi-structured and open-ended. The researcher started with

primary background data and then moved to more complicated or controversial items.

The researcher reviewed qualitative journal articles, dissertations, and website links to

find good illustrations of research interview questions that were used to connect to the

three research questions posed earlier (Andrews-Standafer, 2018; Bennett, 2016;

Conceição et al., 2017; Kinchin et al., 2010). Each interview lasted approximately thirty

to forty-five minutes.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The researcher did analyze the participants' interviews immediately after each

interview was completed until saturation was reached. The researcher used a script for the

beginning and end of the interview, which shared critical details about the study

(Appendix E). It was a reminder for the researcher to explain the notion of informed

consent and direct the researcher to have participants sign the statement of informed

consent.

Before the start of the data collection, all methods and relevant documentation, including interview schedules, introductory letters, participant demographic sheets, and consent forms were submitted and processed through the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval process at Cleveland State University. Approval was also obtained from the ABC healthcare organization representatives. Given the nature of the study, no adverse impacts on the participants were anticipated. The following procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2016) were followed to avoid possible ethical issues for the researcher and participants. Participants were protected with informed consent, anonymity maintenance, and the assignment of a number to each individual.

As described below, an informed consent in agreement with the requirements of the Cleveland State University was provided to the participants to ensure their understanding of the researcher's position on this ethical issue:

1. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent agreement in accordance with the Cleveland State University requirements.

2. Participant's confidentiality was maintained throughout the study with the assignment of a pseudonym and number instead of using their real name. A numbering process ensured that their names would not appear in the published research study or be associated with their responses.

3. The researcher did inform participants of the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used in data collection, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time voluntarily. The study's purpose was reiterated in the cover letters, informed consent of agreements, and during the verbal explanation of the study.

4. Participants had the option to refuse to be audio recorded. However, none declined.

5. The researcher acknowledged responsibility for the safeguarding and appropriate use of the data collected. Every effort was made to ensure confidentiality in conducting the study and reporting the results. The participants' identities were coded as previously mentioned, and all data, notes, signed consent forms, and audio recordings are being kept in a secure location. Only the principal investigators have access to the transcripts and interview. The interview will be held for at least three years as mandated by federal regulation. The participants will be given the option of requesting a copy of the final report of the project's findings, which will be kept in Cleveland State University under a lockbox in an instructor's office.

Sample Size

When collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, it is difficult to determine the research study's proper sample size. No particular rules are stating what is considered an appropriate quantity of sample in the literature (Englander, 2016: Hansman, 2017; Malterud et al., 2016). An adequate number of participants for a qualitative study varies depending on when saturation occurs (Hanssmann, 2014).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) first introduced the concept of saturation in their book The Discovery of Grounded Theory as "theoretical saturation. The term saturation has evolved since their book. Today, in a broader sense, it is now defined as the point in data collection and analysis when no new insights, information, or themes occur when

collecting data (Guest et al., 2006; Guest et al., 2020; Mason, 2010; Saunders et al., 2018). This broader application is often called data saturation or thematic saturation (Hennink et al., 2019; Guest et al., 2020). Indeed, saturation is often proposed as an essential methodological component within such work.

Nevertheless, based on the literature, there is no one method to determine when a researcher has to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researchers further explained that study designs are not universal as saturation for one study may not work for another. However, Morse (2015) notes that saturation is "the most frequently touted guarantee of qualitative rigor offered by authors" (p.587), and Guest et al. (2006) contends that it has become "the gold standard by which purposive sample size are determined in health science research" (p.60). Moreover, Fusch and Ness (2015) states that failure to reach saturation impacts the quality of the research in several keyways.

The results of the study's validity and transferability could be hampered, according to Fusch and Ness (2015). The authors further state that there is a direct link between data triangulation and data saturation; one ensures the other. "In other words, data triangulation is a method to get to data saturation" (p.1411), and without multiple sources of data, the impact of the research will be negatively impacted. Lastly, according to Guest et al. (2006), interview questions should be structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions. Otherwise, one would not achieve data saturation as it would be a constantly moving target.

Empirical research, interesting enough, began with efforts to determine when one might expect it to be reached. Though "interviewing until saturation" was recognized as a best practice, it was not a sufficient description of the sample size (Guest et al., 2020).

Today, researchers indicate that sufficient sample size for qualitative research can range from small to large sample sizes (Englander, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). The understanding, insights, and validity gained from the interviews are more likely to derive from analyzing the collected data (Elo et al., 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Several researchers have suggested specific ranges for achieving saturation based on the type of research studies.

Saunders (2012) imply that in order to reach saturation, there need to be between 5 to 25 participants, and Bertaux (1981), cited by Mason (2010), indicates that the smallest acceptable sample size is fifteen to reach saturation. Other researchers indicate that it depends on the type of research. For an ethnography, the sample size, according to Morse (1995), should be between 30-50; whereas Bernard (2017) suggested 30-60 interviews. As cited by Creswell (1998) in Mason (2010) suggests for grounded theories, 20-23 interviews are needed, whereas Morse (1995) recommends 30-50. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) in Mason (2010) recommends 5 to 25, whereas Morse (1995) suggests at least six.

Malterud et al. (2016) discussed the concept of information power, or a qualitative equivalent to statistical power, to determine the number of interviews that should be collected in a given study. The authors suggest that the size of a sample depended on the research aim, homogeneousness of the sample, the theoretical background of the study, quality of the interview dialogue between researcher and participants, and analytic strategy.

For purposes of this study, the researcher read all of the transcribed materials collected from the fifteen interviews while making notes and developing codes and

themes. In order to establish saturation, the data was read over and over again until no new materials emerged from the participant's interviews.

Data Collection

Interviews

The data collection was through a 30-45-minute semi-structured interview with each participant in person. Each participant completed a written demographic form prior to the interview. The interviews helped the researcher gain several valuable insights regarding identifying barriers low-wage single adult mothers experienced and the support systems they used while participating in work-based voluntary training programs. During data collection, the researcher's role was to obtain factual data without showing agreement or disagreement with the statements participants made during the interview but allowing them to answer freely. The focus was to clarify the questions asked during the interview, provide feedback when necessary, and provide guidance when the participants went off-topic.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews as alluded to earlier in the paper to measure the participants' views about their perceived barriers to participating in work-based voluntary training programs at work and their support while participating in those programs. A semi-structured interview is a form of data collection. The interviewer asks each participant a series of questions to gather information from key informants who have personal experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to the topic of interest (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). However, there was one final question that allowed an opportunity for participants to add additional information that was not

explicitly prompted. The final question of the interview protocol stated, "What else would you like to tell me about work-based training that we have not already discussed?"

Transcription

The researcher did audiotape participant responses during the interview with their permission. The researcher used the Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-853 and NVIVO (qualitative software program) to capture their narratives. The researcher used an external transcription service called 24/7 Transcripts to transcribe the data from the digital recorder into Microsoft Word documents. The transcriptions were uploaded into NVIVO, where the researcher coded the research interview results to capture commonalities and themes. Additionally, the researcher created charts and graphs in Microsoft Excel based on the study participants' responses.

An additional data source came from the face-to-face interviews, which allowed the interviewer to observe verbal and nonverbal cues, assess nonverbal communications, and sign agitation or tension (Oltmann, 2016). Unfortunately, due to the pandemic of 2020, the researcher could not travel back to the two hospitals for a face-to-face meeting with study participants. The researcher reached out to each participant through the telephone as a follow-up to allow participants to check the accuracy of the interviews through member checks. Six of the fifteen participants responded and were allowed to clarify and add additional information that was missed during the interview. There were varying reasons why the researcher could not connect with the other participants. They included leaving a voice message with no return call due to the telephone number being disconnected or changed with no forwarding telephone number. The participants'

responses were subsequently downloaded to a jump drive for storage at Cleveland State University's in the researchers' Methodologist's office.

During the data collection phase, the researcher took personal and vacation time to remove herself from the role and position as Training/HR manager at ABC organization so that there did not appear to be a conflict of interest in the researcher's role as manager and researcher. With permission from Hospital A and Hospital B Directors to access their employees, the researcher requested a list of employees that met the research criteria. For inclusion into this study, participants had to be eighteen years of age or older in order to sign the adult consent form, employed at the ABC healthcare organization in the Department of Food & Nutrition Services or Environmental Services, be female, and single. Participants had to have been the primary caregiver to a child or children under the age of 18.

The researcher provided demographic questionnaires to each of the General Managers at the ABC healthcare sites to distribute during their weekly huddles (held on varying alternate days) to advertise the study. There was a two-week recruitment window to seek participants from the department. During the recruitment phase, the researcher secured along with the Directors for both departments private room space to maintain confidentiality with participants when conducting the interviews at these healthcare sites. The researcher had an iPad and iPhone available as a backup in the event of a problem with the digital voice recorder.

Data Analysis

Researchers who use proper data analysis in qualitative research studies need to recognize themes among the interview responses (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Many

researchers struggle with knowing when it is time to start data analysis as well as how to know when the review is complete (Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2014). These researchers posit that data analysis should begin at the start of the study and end when the research questions have been answered (2014). Nevertheless, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that a more formal analysis and interpretation should not occur until all data is collected.

An analysis of the data was used to capture each participant's verbal responses. The first step was to transcribe the information collected from the audiotape interviews using an external transcription service and a qualitative software program. Interviews were transcribed verbatim through the transcription service 24/7 Transcripts (https://24-7transcripts.com/) and coded in NVivo software (an iterative analytic process), following the framework approach to thematic analysis (Clark & Braun, 2013; Hayfield et al., 2017). Data were entered into the data analysis software NVivo (https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home), which hosts qualitative data to support the organization of analysis.

The researcher familiarized herself with the transcripts and notes taken during the interview to garner a sense of the general meaning of the interview content, key issues, and themes that emerged in order to help guide the coding process. The next step was reading through all the transcriptions and making notations of first impressions (Saldaña, 2015). The last step was to reread the transcription several times and highlight keywords or phrases; a process is known as coding or recognizing specific words used by participants in response to an interview question.

After deciding to use the barriers classification framework from Cross (1981), the themes were reviewed and defined using visualization tools for coding. Data were analyzed using charts, frequencies, and percentages to look for deeper meanings, explore the connections between different participants, and organize the information into a final succinct matrix of themes, grouping the identified barriers and support systems into categories. In qualitative research, tracking themes and patterns are necessary to attain accurate data (Yazan, 2015). Coding, or the process of organizing and sorting qualitative data, is the second step in data analysis (Stuckey, 2015).

According to Saldaña (2015), "a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes" (p.27). Coding connects the qualitative data collection phase with the research's data analysis phase. Coding is not an exact science with right and wrong responses (Rogers, 2018).

The researcher is the main instrument in qualitative research has to make judgment calls when coding. Thus, researchers must recognize their biases, subjectivities, and predispositions within the research process (Rogers, 2018). Furthermore, researchers need to be cognizant that race, social class, gender, and age of the researcher and study participants impact an analytic lens (Rogers, 2018).

After coding, the next phase was to determine which codes could be clustered together into a category. Once categories, themes, and relationships were created, the data became conceptualized. Themes were then labeled, looking for similarities and differences among the themes. According to Lofgren and Östlund (2016), this step is the

main result of the study. Choosing appropriate themes and subthemes will provide answers to the research question. Coding is not a one-time linear event. Instead, its cyclical and the first-time cycle coding is conducted during the initial coding of the data (Rogers, 2018).

Saldana (2015) divides the first set of codes into seven subcategories: Grammatical, Elemental, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, and Procedural. Within each of the subcategories lay specific types of coding. This study's first categorization was what participants said about barriers and support while participating in adult learning programs. Second cycle coding methods may not be necessary for every study; however, it is a way to reorganize and reanalyze the coded data from the first cycle (Rogers, 2018). According to Saldana (2015), the second cycle's goal is to develop a sense of thematic, categorical, conceptual, or theoretical organization based on the first cycle codes' results.

The second and third cycles of codes for this study captured themes related to barriers, as posited by Cross (1981) in her seminal work on barriers to participation in adult education. This study looked for themes and codes from Cross's (1981) classification of barriers, which are situational (time, money, lack of childcare, etc.), institutional (location, expenses, etc.), and dispositional (attitudes, self-confidence, etc.). While looking for patterns from the three barriers named above, the researcher determined if there were barriers that did not fit into one of these three categories. The researcher also looked for themes related to support and motivation to improve one's status or career. Each semi-structured interview ranged between thirty to forty-five minutes.

Saturation

Saturation refers to the thoroughness of the data collected. The researcher demonstrates that data was collected until no new information emerges during coding (Saldaña, 2015). The phenomena under study have been examined to the point that additional data would not contribute significantly to their understanding (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saldaña, 2015). Morse (2015) notes that saturation is often used by authors when discussing qualitative rigor. In a focus group study of HIV perceptions in Ghana, Ganle (2016) uses the notion of saturation to determine when to terminate each focus group discussion. When saturation has not been achieved, it is sometimes hard to group the data and create concepts (Daniel, 2019; Elo et al., 2014). The researcher analyzed each interview upon completion until saturation was reached. Saturation was reached at fifteen participants.

Quality Criteria

Researchers use reliability, validity, and objectivity to confirm the quality criteria of a qualitative study (Bengtsson, 2016; Bernard, 2017; Dikko, 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Quality criteria is a general term used to describe reliability and validity include credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2011). This section also includes discussing methods of achieving data saturation with interviews.

Reliability

According to Sutton and Austin (2015), the research method can affect a qualitative study's reliability. Reliability requires the dependability, consistency, and repeatability of a study's data collection and analysis (Dikko, 2016). The use of reliability

strategies will ensure that the dependability of the research through numerous qualitative

approaches (Widodo, 2014). To improve the reliability within qualitative studies and

thereby dependability, researchers need to decrease errors and bias (Bengtsson, 2016).

Researchers can enhance dependability through a process called member

checking (Widodo, 2014). According to Sutton and Austin (2015), Researchers can also

use member checking to increase the reliability of the research. Member checking is the

process of reviewing participants' interviews to confirm the accuracy of the

transcriptions and the interpretation made by the researcher (Bengtsson, 2016; Widodo,

2014). Researchers can enhance their research's reliability by providing a detailed

description of the research site and its participants and the dependability of the data.

Member checking took place three times in this study by the researcher using text

messages, telephone calls, and emails to connect with the study participants.

Validity

Validity refers to the assurance that the findings are correct, and it implies the

accurate depiction and internal and external application of the results (Morse, 2015;

Widodo, 2014; Yazan, 2015). According to Lub (2015) validity is the degree to which the

indicators or variables of a research concept are made measurable, accurately represent

that concept (p. 1). Additionally, qualitative research has been labeled with alternative

terms such as authenticity, adequacy, plausibility, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Merriam, 1998; Merriam, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further suggest that the

fundamental criterion for qualitative research is trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of

the data in research equates to credible, transferable and conformable information in a

study. The researcher promoted the study's validity through data saturation and member checking.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the researcher's methodological procedures and resources to establish a high level of harmony amongst the participant's body language and the researchers' interpretations of these expressions (Morse, 2015; Widodo, 2014). Credibility is akin to internal validity. The credibility benchmark constitutes the research findings' believability through evaluation of the participants (Nwachukwu, 2018). Widodo (2014) suggests that member checking increases the validity of the research. The researcher ensured the data's credibility through member checking (Morse, 2015) by validating interview information (Widodo, 2014) when possible. Unfortunately, in this study, the researcher could not reach some of the participants for varying reasons (see the previous section).

Transferability

Transferability is being able to transfer findings to other populations and aids in assessing qualitative rigor (Elo et al., 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2014) state that transferability is future researchers' ability to apply findings in a different context. To ensure the transferability of research findings, Researchers must provide a detailed description of the research context to apply to future research (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Transferability of the research findings is the responsibility of the users (Bengtsson, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017) and the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or

groups (Elo et al., 2014) and the number of informants or subject objects (Bengtsson, 2016).

Researchers can facilitate the ease of transferability judgment by providing a rich, thick, and detailed description of the phenomenon under study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), "the easiest way to differentiate between rich and thick data is to think of rich as quality and thick as quantity" (p.1409). Rich data has many detailed, intricate, and distinctive layers, whereas thick data is a lot of informative data.

The analysis for this basic qualitative research study were detailed, planned, and executed clearly and concisely. The researcher compared the findings with those from previous research studies with similar theoretical frameworks to ensure she was following similar processes and procedures for collecting and analyzing data. Thus, this basic research study could be replicated by another researcher from any geographical location within the United States and hopefully produce similar findings. The results would vary somewhat depending on the type of industry (business or healthcare), the number of children, and the age at which they had their first child.

Confirmability

A key to the validity of a research study is the accurate representation of the participant's viewpoints (Elo et al., 2014). Confirmability refers to the degree to which other researchers may duplicate a study's results. The researcher uses confirmability to establish the data, the interpretations, the translations, and the findings that originate from the information they have collected on the phenomenon under study (Cope, 2014). Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and the interpretations thereof are

factual and not figments of the researcher's imagination (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). researchers can communicate confirmability of the data collection by leaving an "audit trail," which considers actions over time that anyone can adopt ((Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researchers' audit trail in this study entailed the tracking of all notes and journal entries during observation and interviews and the rationale for the choices made. To aid in the data collection of notes and journal entries, the researcher used NVivo and Microsoft Excel software for coding and organizing data.

Researchers' Perspective

The role of the researcher is an understanding that they are the principal instrument of the research process, functioning with the ability to draw, explain, and analyze data obtained from the participants' lived experiences (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014). This research holds special meaning to the researcher in her current role as Training/HR Manager. The researcher collaborated with two service departments mentioned earlier in two different healthcare organizations. The researchers' responsibility as an insider Researcher (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017; Greene, 2014; Howitt, 2016) is to act ethically and collects data in an unbiased manner. The researcher purposely selected participants that fit the sample criteria outlined earlier.

To certify transparency with the participants (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017), the researcher disclosed that she worked for the same company, albeit in a different city. Since July of 2016, the researcher has worked in the capacity of Training and Human Resource Manager at ABC healthcare organization. The researcher has not worked with the frontline staff at either of these two healthcare sites in Ohio or Michigan. Any

potential participant relationships were disclosed and reviewed by Cleveland State University IRB to ensure the researcher upheld all ethical standards.

To confirm that participants understood their privacy rights before participating, the researcher asked each of them to complete a consent form that outlines the study's details. The use of consent forms assures study participants of their participation requirements and that the information they share will remain protected (Beskow et al., 2014). To ensure that bias is minimized, the researcher did maintain objectivity during the interview and allowed participants to speak freely and openly in response to the interview questions posed without interruption or interjection.

Summary

Chapter III presented information relevant to this qualitative study. The methods used in this research were structured in-depth interviews where the researcher posed a series of open-ended questions (Appendix A, B, and C) designed to explore the lived experiences of single mothers working in healthcare. The barriers experienced by low-wage working single mothers and their support to tackle the barriers encountered while engaging in work-based training were explored. Furthermore, any career aspirations that these participants expressed during the interview were also analyzed. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on deterrents to adult learning related to low-wage single mothers.

Additionally, this chapter described the rationale for selecting a qualitative study as the best approach for exploring this topic in this group. This chapter gave information on the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures used to identify emerging themes and to answer the research questions posed in this study.

Chapter IV consists of a description of the sample of the participants for this basic

qualitative research study and an extensive analysis of the research methodology. Chapter

IV also included a summary of the findings and a thorough presentation of the data. The

chapter concludes with the results of the findings for this basic qualitative research study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis and provides the findings of this research study. The purpose of this research was to address a gap in the literature concerning barriers that low-wage single mothers over the ages of 18 experience and the strategies they use while participating in work-based voluntary training programs. According to Massing and Gauly (2017), "it is imperative to understand adults' barriers to participating in lifelong education to implement policies that allow more individuals to receive training" (p.3). Unfortunately, the literature on how barriers to training are related to the gender of workers/training participants remains scarce.

Several reasons have been mentioned in the literature concerning how training relates to gender (Blundell et al., 2021; Polo et al., 2018; Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2018; Torraco, 2016; Van Hoek et al., 2020; Zeytinoglu et al., 2008). They include women's low participation rates in the labor market compared to males and their constant reconciliation between their work and family responsibilities. Meaning, women continue to be the primary caretaker while working outside of the home. Nonetheless, Cross (1981) indicated that there might be other reasons related to gender.

Cross distinguishes these barriers in her early work and places them into three categories dispositional, situational, and institutional. Some versions of Cross's classification of barriers are cited in numerous studies. Dispositional barriers are related to a person's attitudes and self-perception of oneself as a learner. Situational barriers arise due to personal situations or environments at a given point in a person's life.

Examples of situational barriers include family obligations, financial constraints, lack of childcare, and lack of transportation. The last obstacle is institutional barriers. Institutional barriers are those procedures and practices that exclude or discourage adult learners from participating in educational activities. All three classifications of barriers negatively impact the adult learners' participation. In addition to Cross's three general categories of barriers, Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) added another obstacle as an informational barrier, the availability or (lack thereof) and awareness of information regarding learning opportunities. However, Cross's (1981) empirical work is the theoretical framework for this current research study.

The research questions which guided this research were:

1. What are the perceived barriers low-wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

2. What types of support systems do low-wage single adult female participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

3. To what degree does participating in work-based voluntary training programs impact low-wage single adult mothers' future career plans?

Massing and Gauly (2017) state that it is imperative to understand adults' barriers to participating in lifelong education to implement policies that allow more adults to receive training. Unfortunately, how barriers to participating in the training are related to gender is relatively scarce in the literature (Massing & Gauly, 2017). Clochard and Westerman (2020) further state that due to the scarcity of research on less-educated workers and work-related training, there may be a need to review studies concerning higher education, informal learning, and learning in general to understand the needs of this group of individuals.

Consequently, in this research, the goal of understanding and interpreting the study participants' lived learning experiences and the meanings they assigned to their experiences guided the exploration, thus adding to the literature of low-wage single mothers as adult learners working in a healthcare environment. Learning activities can include formal education programs and training and informal learning initiatives. As reported by Larson and Milana (2006), "the question of why some people participate in adult education and training while others do not thus, is as relevant and urgent as ever as we want to make lifelong learning" (p.2) accessible for everyone.

Some fourteen years later, Clochard and Westerman (2020) conclude that "beyond simple explanations such as cost and convenience, we know little about what motivates or dissuades less-educated workers from participating in training when the opportunity arises" (p. 1). Kondrup (2015) proposes that the speed of change suggests that the value of knowledge and skills become temporary- they become archaic. Thus, we can no longer view education as isolated to a particular phase in life, i.e., childhood and

youth; instead, education becomes a continuous demand throughout the life cycle (Bell et al., 2017).

Context of the Study

In this study, the researcher focused on the barriers, support, and aspirations of low-skill workers in US health care settings, which the researcher refers to as entry-level health care workers. Entry-level health care workers are those that provide a high degree of hands-on care or care support in health care settings, have a low threshold to entry (typically high school education or less), and make relatively low wages (generally under $40,000 per year). Entry-level health care workers in this study are in care support roles of food and nutrition or environmental services. The participants in this study were single mothers working in healthcare.

The researcher first provides some background on the two healthcare organizations where the semi-structured interviews took place and the populations they serve. Next, there is a brief discussion on the biographical information on participants and a synopsis of each healthcare worker who participated in the thirty-minute interviews. Following the participants' summary, the researcher presents key findings and themes that emerged from the data analysis process to answer each research question.

Hospitals

Hospital A is a 165-bed acute and long-term care facility (LTACH) located in a Midwestern state's capital city. This LTACH serves patients with complex medical needs requiring more extended hospital stays and highly specialized care. Hospital A is located in the city's downtown area and surrounded by low to moderate-income housing.

Hospital B provides a full continuum of care across various settings, including urgent care centers, home health, virtual care, and medical offices in more than 30 specialties and subspecialties. Hospital B is located in a rural area of the state and has 97 licensed hospital beds.

Recruiting Participants

The participants in this study were low-wage single mothers working in two healthcare facilities in the Mid-west. When coordinating with the healthcare facilities in 2020 to conduct the study, the researcher worked with an extensive healthcare system in a downtown midsize urban city in Northeast Ohio. Unfortunately, there was a change in leadership, and the proposal to conduct research there was denied after their initial approval; consequently, the researcher had to seek other organizations.

The researcher was able to identify and conduct her study in a smaller healthcare system in Northeast Ohio where all the learners were employed in either Food & Nutrition Services or Environmental Services. However, after getting IRB approval, the researcher could not identify any participants willing to complete the semi-structured interview. As a result, after getting IRB approval for the second time, the researcher identified two additional healthcare facilities to conduct her study: one in Ohio and the other in Michigan.

Biographical Information of Participants

There was a total of fifteen participants in this study (see Table I). Out of the fifteen, eleven of the participants were employed in the healthcare facility Environmental Services. The other four participants worked in the healthcare facility Food & Nutrition Services. Seven of the participants were between 36 and 45 years old. The majority had a

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Table 1.

Participants' Demographics

Table 1 Participant Demographics								
Pseudo Name	Food or Environmental Services	Highest Level of Education	Age Range	Race Ethnicity	Estimated Income	Total No.Children	Ages of child or children	Assigned Number
	Hospital A							
Ms. Shae Cooper	EVS	12	36-45	Black/AA	25-30K	6	25, 23, 21, 21, 19, 18	#1
Ms. Lena	EVS	some college	36-45	Black/AA	25-30K	2	13, 9	#2
Ms. Joyce	EVS	12	36-45	Black/AA	30-35K	3	15, 10, 6	#3
Ms. Jackie	EVS	12	25-35	Black/AA	less than 25K	1	3	#4
Ms. Eva	EVS	11	36-45	Black/AA	25-30K	2	23, 19	#5
Ms. Lucy	EVS	11	36-45	Black/AA	no answer	5	23, 21, 19, 17, 14	#6
Ms. Anne	EVS	12	36-45	Caucasian	less than 25K	5	26, 23, 22, 20, 15	#7
	Hospital B							
Ms. Nancy	EVS	11	25-35	Caucasian	less than 25K	1	8	#8
Ms. Belle	EVS	some college	25-35	Caucasian	less than 25K	2	6, 1	#9
Ms. Brittaney	EVS	GED	25-35	Hispanic/Latino	less than 25K	1	7	#10
Ms. Stephanie	FNS	some college	over 45	Caucasian	less than 25K	5	27, 24, 22, 16, 15	#11
Ms. Abigail Joy	EVS	12	36-45	Caucasian	25-30K	5	20, 16, 15, 13, 2	#12
Ms. Toni	FNS	12	25-35	Caucasian	30-35K	1	14 months	#13
Ms. Reese	FNS	12	36-45	Caucasian	less than 25K	1	12	#14
Ms. Jess	FNS	did not answer	18-24	Caucasian	less than 25K	1	8 months	#15

high school education or GED, but two single mothers indicated they had education beyond high school. Three participants had an eleventh-grade education, and one chose not to answer. Participants self-identified their ethnic backgrounds: eight were Caucasian, six were African Americans, and one was Hispanic. When asked about estimated income, eight of the fifteen indicated they earned less than $25,000 per year. The rest of the study participants said they earned between $25,000 to $35,000 annually, except for one participant who stated she made between $30,000 to $35,000 annually.

Participants' Backgrounds

This section provides information about the participants' backgrounds. Eight Caucasian, six African American, and one Hispanic single adult mother working in healthcare participated in the in-person semi-structured interviews with the researcher. For confidentiality purposes, each participant provided the researcher with a pseudonym

to protect their identity. The initial interviews took place in February and March 2020, with a follow-up interview via telephone in February and March 2021.

Ms. Cooper is a single mother of six children ranging in age from 18 to 25 and a grandmother of four. She is a 40-year-old African American female with a 12th-grade education. Two of her six children's fathers had passed at the time of the interview. She is employed in Environmental Services for the past year and takes care of her 82-year-old uncle. Her current earning is $25-30K.

Ms. Lena is a mother of 2 children, ages nine and 13. She is between the ages of 36 to 45. She has a 12th-grade education and is of African American descent. She was born in Haiti and had some education post-high school. She has been employed for the past three years in Environmental Services. She recently remarried after being divorced for some time. She earns between $25-30K.

Ms. Joyce is an African American mother of three children, ages six, 10, and 15, and is single. She is between 36-45 years of age. She graduated from high school and currently works in Environmental Services. She celebrated her first anniversary in May of 2020. She currently earns between $30-35K.

Ms. Jackie is a single African American mother between 25 and 35. She has a three-year-old child. She has a high school education and has worked in healthcare for the past three years. She currently works in Environmental Services after a year as a Medical Assistant. She indicates she earns less than $25K.

Ms. Eva is a 38-year-old African American single mother of two young adults ages 19 and 23. She has an eleventh-grade education. Her previous position was in the hospitality industry as a Food & Beverage Supervisor on nights. She has worked in

Environmental Services for the past 11 months. She earns between $25-30K annually in this role.

Ms. Lucy is a single mother of five children who range from 14 to 23 years of age. She is an African American female with an eleventh-grade education. She has worked in the same hospitals for the past 11 years in Environmental Services, currently in a lead role. She did not share her annual salary.

Ms. Anne is a 45-year-old Caucasian mother of five children ranging from 15 to 26. She has worked in Environmental Services for three years and earns less than $25K annually.

Ms. Nancy is a 25-year-old Caucasian mother of an eight-year-old child. She completed the 11th grade and worked in Environmental Services for nine months. She works two jobs. Her second job is as a Cashier at a 7-11 Gas Station. She earns less than $25K per year.

Ms. Belle is a 31-year-old Caucasian mother of two children, ages six and one. She says she has been married twice, divorced twice, and currently in a relationship with a single father of one with a seven-year-old. She currently works in Environmental Services for the past eight months. She has education post-high school. She has an annual salary of less than $25K.

Ms. Brittany is a 30-year-old Hispanic single mother of one child aged six-and-a-half. She completed her GED and now works in Environmental Services. She has been in her role for the past two years. She earns less than $25K per year in this position.

Ms. Stephanie is a divorced mother of five children. The ages of her children are from 15 to 27 years old. She is Caucasian. She has worked in Food & Nutrition Services

for the past five months. She has education beyond high school. Ms. Stephanie states she was a Certified Nursing Assistant for 17 years. She earns less than $25K annually.

Ms. Abigail is between the age of 36 and 45. She has been divorced for three years and the mother of five. Her children's ages range from two to 20 years. She is Caucasian and a former owner of a successful bakery. She has a high school education and works in Environmental Services for the past two years. She earns between $25-30K per year.

Ms. Toni is a 30-year-old Caucasian mother of a 14-month-old child. She works in Food & Nutrition Services as a Diet Clerk. She has a 12th-grade education. Her long-term goal is to retire from the food department. She earns between $30-35K annually.

Ms. Reese is a single Caucasian mother of a 12-year-old son. She has a high school diploma and works full-time as a Dietary Aide for three years in Food & Nutrition Services. She earns less than $25K annually.

Lastly, Ms. Jess, is a 20-year-old Caucasian mother of an eight-month-old child. She works in Food & Nutrition Services for the last eight months as a Diet Clerk. She previously worked at Menards in retail. She did not answer the question on her highest education level. She earns less than $25K per year.

Qualitative Research Findings

This research was organized around the three research questions. The qualitative findings for the three research questions are presented in this section. The themes were barriers, support, and aspiration of single mothers participating in work-based training programs, and these themes correspond to the three research questions. The researcher examined each of the three research questions individually, along with the emergent

themes she believes best address the question providing data in the form of quotes from participants that will support or provide meaning to the research question or illustrate some of the participants' counter perspectives.

Following the definition and context for the theme, the researcher provided data in the form of quotes from participants that either provided support and meaning to the question or illustrate some of the participants' counter perspectives. The researcher paid careful attention to capture the essence of what was heard in conversation with participants. Hands, eyes, or the voice are often used when telling stories to communicate and clarify meaning. During coding of the data and transcribing the memo notes, the researcher reflected on both verbal and non-verbal communications.

Barriers participants indicated they faced while participating in work-based training programs are discussed first. Second, the researcher will review the support these individuals received while pursuing work-based training programs. Finally, the researcher will provide data on the study participants' aspirations during the interview based on the following question. "Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, 15, or 20 years?"

Themes and Barriers

When conferring on why people do not engage in learning, the concept of barriers is fundamental. Barriers are the first overarching theme and are whatever impedes the learner from taking part in education. Cross (1981) described deterrents to adult learning (Table II), which are situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers. Table II displays the three overarching barriers that emerged during the semi-structured interviews with the fifteen participants and the categories in each and displays the frequency of the participants' responses.

Barriers may be internal and include lack of motivation or other forms of emotional obstacles. There are also external factors, such as access to information, education costs, or lack of support from their employee. This understanding of barriers and how participants experienced them addresses research question one.

Table II

Participants' Barriers

Answer Options	Total
Situational Barriers	
Just being a Single Mother	3 out of 15
Time Poverty	3 out of 15
Lack of Childcare	7 out of 15
Inadequate Finances	5 out of 15
Transportation Issues	4 out of 15
Dispositional Barriers	
Lack of Motivation	2 out of 15
Weariness of School	2 out of 15
Institutional Barriers	
Work Practices that exclude Participation	6 out of 15
Strict Attendance Policy (under lack of childcare)	2 out of 15

Research Question 1

What are the perceived barriers low-wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

Low-wage workers, especially single mothers, face many obstacles in the workforce and are challenged by what Cross (1981) terms situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers and in her seminal work on barriers to participation in adult education. These barriers can impact adult learners' resistance and persistence while participating in adult education programs, especially low-wage adult single mothers representing a marginalized constituency. The researcher will review each of Cross's barriers to participation in learning related to the responses received by participants in this study to answer this question.

During the interviews, the fifteen study participants shared barriers that impacted them as single mothers. They included just being a single mother, who encompassed both situational and dispositional barriers. The theme of situational barriers emerged as study participants discussed their lack of time, childcare, finances, transportation, and support. Other obstacles participants discussed during the semi-structured interviews were lack of motivation, a weariness of school and work processes that discouraged work-based training participation.

Situational Barriers

The first deterrent to learning is situational barriers, which according to Cross (1981), relates to the individual's overall circumstantial conditions. Cross (1981) states these obstacles include inadequate finances (or lack of), lack of time, conflicts between

job and home responsibilities, childcare issues, lack of transportation, and lack of family or friend support. All of the participants in this study indicated they experienced one or more of these difficulties as single mothers.

In listening to the participants' voices in this study, the researcher heard a reoccurring term that several participants used when describing their obstacles as single mothers during their interviews. The statement they used was "just being a single mother", which coincides with Cross's three barriers. Thus, the researcher shared qualitative data on this topic as many study participants indicated it was a barrier in itself. This section discusses just being a single mother with the themes of time poverty, lack of childcare, inadequate finances, lack of transportation, and lack of support.

Just Being a Single Mother. Some of the comments made by participants in this study outside the theme of just being a single mother included time poverty, lack of childcare, inadequate finances, transportation issues, and lack of support, which helped answer RQ1 on barriers single mothers encountered when participating in work-based training. The top obstacle mentioned by the study participants in this category of just being a single mother was time poverty. While a discussion of just being a single mother was not part of this original research proposal, participants were comfortable discussing this as an essential barrier that they experienced as the sole caretaker in their home.

The theme of *just being a single mother* was mentioned by several study participants, which coincides with the deterrents to learning from Cross's (1981) seminal work. Managers sympathetic to the barriers single mothers faced were instrumental in helping these women maintain their employment with the healthcare system in which they were employed. The participants' barriers in this study concur with numerous

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research studies that the researcher considered during the literature review (Cooke et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2020; Massing, & Gauly, 2017; Pennacchia et al., 2018). These barriers added stressors as the single mothers juggled being a caretaker to their children while being the breadwinner for their family. Several participants expressed a desire to improve their socioeconomic status but did not have the mental stamina to do so, many citing being too tired to participate in learning programs. On a positive note, many of the study participants had support from various entities and people to help them overcome some of the barriers that impacted them as single mothers.

Time Poverty. Lack of time was one of the most insidious barriers reported in this study. It is well-known that most women spend more time on housework activities than men (Barnes, 2015; Hampson, 2018; Lim et al., 2020; Parrott, 2014). Several participants faced challenges because of a lack of time to do all required of them once they returned home from work. The single parents who work have the additional burden of managing time efficiently to maximize meeting their children's needs. However, how time and energy are prioritized with single mothers can be a barrier in that the job or the family takes too much energy, and the person does not intend to use the free time left on learning activities.

The single parent participants who work have the additional burden of managing time efficiently to maximize meeting their children's needs. According to six of the participants, completing all of their necessary tasks during the day is impossible due to time constraints. During her interview, Ms. Stephanie, a mother of five children, mentioned her difficulties staying on task at work because she was contemplating all that she has to do as a caretaker once she gets home.

Sometimes, it is frustrating because you have already worked a long day and then

you have to stay for a two-hour training... .you're thinking about what you have

to do when you get home."...laundry and dishes, and you know what you're going

to make for dinner.

Ms. Stephanie further declared that she looks at the clock a lot because sometimes

training ends late and it was a long day already. She further stated that not having a sound

support system to help with some of her motherhood duties is sometimes an issue.

Ms. Toni made similar comments as she described her dilemma in wanting to go

back to school but not having the time to attend school after work. "It will mentally drain

you after going to work and then trying to go to school and ...single moms, they do need

a lot." In essence, situational barriers, such as lack of time and energy, must be

conceptualized as issues affecting single mothers since they impact their overall well-

being. There is a tradeoff for most people, but especially for single mothers, between

time dedicated to family and time dedicated to working.

Several participants in this study mentioned the need to continually evaluate what

tasks need to be done next on any given day—making rapid decisions being the sole

caretaker of children constantly, which can be exhaustive. Ms. Joyce alluded to the

fatigue of being a single parent, saying that the experience of working and participating

in childcare around the clock left her fatigued. "You do not want to get up and go to work

the next day because it feels like you just left work." Ms. Joyce indicated during the

interview that besides transportation and lack of reliable babysitters, she was too tired to

do anything else after leaving work. "As I said, sometimes working that third shift and

then going home by the time they (her manager) want you to come back (to work) in what seems like two hours, you're exhausted, you know."

Furthermore, Ms. Joyce stated that she tells her employers that "I'm always a mother first," as she laughs. She added that "jobs come and go"; thus, her third shift position (4:30 pm to 12:30 am) allows her to spend more quality time with her children. Similarly, Ms. Stephanie, a mother of five children, says that with working full-time, she has a hard time figuring out when she can go back to school to better herself, and further, "not having a good support system, it's sometimes an issue."

Moreover, Ms. Abigail, a mother of five children, said her biggest challenge is just time.

> I never have enough of it. There's just a lot of demands on- being on time and being able to juggle work and home. At home, you have to do laundry, and baths and feed dinner, help with homework, and so, there's no breath in-between." She further states, "Because you want to be able to push yourself at work, but you also know you push too hard, you're going to have nothing left to give the children at home that night, ...time is definitely a precious thing.

Ms. Abigail also commented on where she spends the bulk of her time. "Yeah, I spend most of my time devoted to the kids and work now. So, that's pretty much all I get to do." Single mothers have to rely on their tenacity to keep moving even when they do not feel like moving. Ms. Brittany sums up the opinions of other participants in this research on time poverty when she said, "Because you have to be an adult, but you also have to be a parent at the same time, so you have to juggle."

Balancing work and family life can be a difficult task for many families. One way that single mothers in this study coped with their time restraints and could accommodate their home schedules was to work second and third shifts. For example, as Ms. Jess said,

as a single parent, there are always going to be fights with the (work) schedule unless you get your perfect 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. When it comes to training, she said it is offered before or at the "tail end of her shift.

For her, there is flexibility for when she can take work-based training. Ms. Joyce's link to time poverty was when she shared that she had to look for a third shift job because the last position she held, she could not, according to her, "see my kids" because of her work schedule. She said that she could get her children off to school on the third shift and participate in "my kids' school activities.... field trips". She further stated that when she had to work a different shift or come in early for a class, she is given advance notice "to find a babysitter or transportation to go back and forth to work."

In two-parent households where both parents work, outside help is often necessary to support the infrastructure. This support may be in the form of daycare, after-school care, hiring a babysitter, or relying on family, friends, or neighbors to fill the gap when both parents are unavailable due to their work schedules. Single mothers often have no division of labor with the other parent, who is absent for numerous reasons. Thus, by default, being a single mother and having to work with limited support is almost always unavoidable. Furthermore, research suggests, single mothers may experience limited access to community resources and support (Napora et al., 2018; Richard & Lee, 2019). This phenomenon was apparent in this study as seven of the fifteen participants mentioned childcare as a barrier for themselves as single mothers.

Lack of Childcare. Eleven of the fifteen participates called out lack of childcare as an obstacle being a single mother. Single mothers may travel greater distances to find work opportunities and affordable childcare, thus adding to time away from their homes and their children. This juggling act can be draining on them, and this struggle is evident in this study by the participants' comments as they spoke about their childcare concerns. Childcare obstacles, according to Ms. Cooper, are a significant challenge. Ms. Cooper alluded to the fortitude single mothers draw on, which is not easy and wears on their mental status.

During Ms. Coopers' interview, she mentioned her challenges, which were lack of reliable transportation, reliable babysitters, and her patience. "My patience, I got like a lack of attention, like – I am very impatient. I'll be ready to get it done and get it right then and there." Her sentiment on childcare issues was echoed by six of the fifteen participants in this study. The ability to juggle multiple priorities takes determination and stamina; however, as a 24-hour caretaker, these single mothers' responsibilities can outweigh their desire to participate in formal or informal education. Another participant in the study is Ms. Abigail, a mother of five children. She said that she was single due to a divorce three years ago. She said that she allowed her older children to watch the younger children on occasion while she worked.

Since relocating to a new area of town, Ms. Abigail mentioned that finding reliable childcare that she could trust was a challenge. Ms. Abigail further states that "I can say when it comes to training that if they didn't offer it during my work hours, I wouldn't be able to participate." She explains that if she had more support, it would

make it easier" to navigate work and home. However, until she could build up her support system from her newly acquired friends and coworkers, it was not an option.

Another study participant, Ms. Eva, said it is hard when she in between babysitters explaining that "someone will say they will help you, and they did not come through." She said, "every day is survival and that it can get very hectic sometimes," According to Ms. Toni, trying to have a life outside of work is hard because she consumed all of her babysitting dollars for work hours, leaving none for extra-curriculum activities.

Not having reliable childcare support was a huge issue; some participants said people would commit to babysitting but never show up. When a babysitter did not show up as promised, this caused disruptions for those depending on this support. Those single mothers who were scheduled to work at a specific time on those days the babysitter did not show either had to call off work or frantically seek a replacement for their childcare needs. A fair number of the study participants depended on family and, at times, friends, and coworkers for childcare support.

The participants in this study who were not fortunate to have childcare support had to depend on daycare centers, which were costly as 99% of these single mothers in this study made minimum wage. There was one participant, however, Ms. Belle, who indicated that she did not have childcare issues because, according to her, she had adequate support from family members. She declared, "my parents took me in when I was going through my divorce, so I don't have to look at those challenges." Ms. Belles' story was the exception and not the norm. Several participants indicated that conflicts arose with adhering to their jobs' attendance policies due to childcare issues. Some

participants explained that they were penalized at their workplace because they had a sick child and had to stay home since daycare was not an option.

Besides childcare issues, the time of day that training is offered can impede an employee from participating as single mothers juggle between work and motherhood. As per Ms. Stephanie, attending training is challenging depending on the time of day, and if she had to keep them (children) in daycare longer, it cost more money. She also declared that if she had a sick child at home, her employer would not be sympathetic. Instead, they would say, "well, you know sorry, we don't excuse you for having a sick child." Thus, as a single parent, the study participants had to stay home and act as a babysitter while their child(ren) recuperated.

Ms. Stephanie explained that when she could not take her children to daycare because they were ill and there was no family member to watch them, it made it difficult as a single mother. Ms. Nancy echoed similar thoughts. She said, "you could get ten points if your child gets sick and have to call off work". She further stated that there is "a 50/50 chance that you will be sick... and not have a substitute or sitter to help out if your child(ren) gets ill." In other words, the participants were penalized if they had to stay home with their sick child or children, which is a "double whammy" as expressed by a few of the study participants.

Some of the reasons participants said that they had not pursued their career interests include that the classes are held at night. Thus, they need someone to watch the children if they are going to participate in classes, which is a barrier to their educational pursuit. However, according to Ms. Belle, in the past, she could not consider going back to school due to lack of reliable childcare. Now that she is in a stable relationship with

her boyfriend, "either he or her parents can watch her two children" while she takes night classes. However, it became clear that sacrificing their educational opportunities for childcare impacts other areas of the participants' lives, such as their financial success.

Inadequate Finances. The majority of the participants earned $30,000 or less annually. Financial hardship is a common disadvantage that the single mothers report. Lack of funds was a shared experience of these participants and contributed to their overall stress and exhaustion. Ms. Eva, a mother of two young adults, said she experienced a lack of pay and reliable transportation (riding on public transportation) as a single mother when her children were younger. Some participants in this study said they find themselves in a "catch twenty-two." Ms. Abigail shared her frustration of not having enough funds to do all she would like to do, explaining, " I cannot pay a babysitter if I am not currently earning money." She went on to say that she did not want to continue to earn minimum wage because she could not afford it: "my divorce left me homeless and penniless."

Single mothers have to be creative with their finances to stay afloat, sometimes at the expense of them going without to meet the needs of their children. According to Ms. Reece, without support from her family, she would not be able to manage her expenses, and she stated that she struggles to have enough money "I have bills to pay, rent to pay …although I am working, I am still struggling," Ms. Brittany echoed similar feelings with her statement on finances "I have help from my parents." She said it was hard (to survive) the first three years as a single parent "I had to live on my (child) dad's money….so it takes a toll on you." While sharing her financial struggles, this 30-year-old Hispanic mother of one child cried during the interview when making this statement.

Not only do single mothers in low socioeconomic status have to juggle their expenses, but at times have to skip medical care for themselves, sometimes to the detriment of their health. Ms. Anne shared with the researcher that she suffers from depression. However, she stopped taking her medication due to a lack of funds. Moreover, she indicated that her lack of money and the resources to get money caused her to be homeless at times and dependent on public welfare and public transportation.

Lack of resources and money can also be a source of embarrassment to single mothers. A few of these participants indicated their need for support from outside of their close circle by seeking support from friends, philanthropic groups, and on occasion, their supervisor. As Ms. Jackie specified during her interview, 'one time I didn't have any money, and my manager brought me lunch". She further stated that money is a challenge because "you want to do something, but cannot afford it… I am kind of living above my means." In addition to barriers of time poverty, lack of childcare, and inadequate finances, another theme emerged from the interviews—the challenge of reliable transportation.

Transportation Issues. A growing body of research suggests that many single parents may disproportionally rely on public transit systems due to their low incomes and lack of car ownership (Bernhardt & Osterman, 2017; Clawson and Gerstel, 2014; Lee, 2017; Patterson, 2018; Petty & Thomas, 2014). Low-income single mothers are more likely to make sequential trips, such as daycare, and then work, which is not easily supported on public transit. Transportation challenges showed up in this study as well. Four participants mentioned their dependency on the public transit authorities system in their city. The study participants expressed concerns that included public transportation

not being the most reliable method to get from point A to point Z on time---to being unable to drive a vehicle, even if they could afford a car.

Ms. Lucy, one of five participants with at least five children, verbalized her need to use public transportation even for her children's medical appointments. Having only her mother to assist her at the time, she said that hearing her mother's voice when she was struggling singlehandedly to take care of her children kept her strong. When asked to expound on her statement, she said, "My mom raised me better, to be a strong mom". She said that her mother, who was also a single mother, encouraged her to "stay strong and raise her children" just like she did....so I made it through". It was during this segment of the interview that she began to cry. Ms. Lucy was one of two participants who cried during the semi-structured interview.

Ms. Lucy said some of her hurdles were lack of a steady babysitter, transportation, the hours she had to work on the job, and just being a single mom. "Taking care of my kids by myself and getting on buses, taking them to their doctor appointments....it was just hard." During this segment of the interview, Ms. Lucy teared up as she reflected on her struggles as a single mother. She explained that when she took her children to their medical appointment, she would, on occasion, have to drop them off at the babysitter and then go to work. Having to depend on public transportation, she expressed that she was always concerned that she would be late for an appointment or work if the bus did not stay close to the published schedule.

Others described similar issues. Ms. Anne said, "transportation was always an iffy thing with me, because I don't drive." She, in turn, depended on rides from family and friends besides using the public transit system. Ms. Cooper mentioned transportation as a

challenge for her as well. When speaking about her specific barriers, she explained that she did not want to ride on a cold bus to get to a 7:00 am training. Nevertheless, she said that she complied and did ride that cold bus because, in her words, "I just had to do what had to be done."

Dispositional Barriers

Dispositional barriers are the second obstacle mentioned in Cross's (1981) seminal work on learning barriers. These barriers are related to self-esteem issues and their place within their socio-environment, prior learning experiences, and sense of competency, or in other words, a persons' attitude, and self-perception. Included in these may be attitudes of participants feeling too old or not smart enough to learn or lack the confidence due to previous negative educational achievements or having no energy to keep up with work and other responsibilities. Several participants mentioned a desire to improve their employment status, but the ability to juggle multiple competing priorities was mentally draining. Trying to work, attend training or school, and take care of the home as a single parent was exhaustive.

For this reason, participants like Ms. Toni expressed they were "just too tired to try." Besides being mentally drained, she said she lacked the motivation to continue learning due to prior negative learning experiences at school. Some examples of participants' dispositional barriers that include lack of motivation and a weariness of school are below.

Lack of Motivation. Motivation can be a valuable tool to trigger the intention and tendency to start or continue a task. It can increase an employees' confidence and inspire the workforce in an organization (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Research has indicated

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that motivational beliefs result from direct learning experiences, observation learning, and verbal statements by teachers, parents, or peers. Motivational beliefs can act as a frame of reference that guides someone's' thinking, feelings, and actions (Adebiyi et al., 2018; Berková et al., 2018). However, studies have found that having a negative experience with education may impact someone's decision to participate in educational opportunities in the future.

According to Beder (1990), there are three reasons why adults do not participate in adult primary education. They lack the motivation to attend, are deterred, or unaware of the programs. Petty and Thomas (2014) further states, "motivation is the force that helps adults overcome barriers to participation" (p. 475). Nevertheless, those low-wage employees who resist change, lack the motivation to learn at work, and remain stuck in their old way of doing things will find that this mindset will no longer be supported in the future workplace (Lewis, 2020). At the pace of emerging technologies and changes, being willing and able to change will be increasingly important to remain a competitive player in the future workforce.

There was one participant in particular who mentions her lack of motivation to learn. Ms. Toni said, "when it comes to taking classes…I have not tried it myself, just for the lack of—motivation". She further says that she settles when it comes to many things in life and feels apprehensive when she hears the word training. Other study participants who indicated their lack of motivation to learn at work were Ms. Jackie, Ms. Abigail, and Ms. Jess. When asked what motivates her to participate in work-based training, Ms. Jackie said unless the training topic is of interest to her, she does not pursue trying to attend, " I do not participate in much around here…I do my job and that's it".

Similarly, Ms. Abigail exclaimed that she associated training with "boredom and repetitiveness...it's a drag... the same thing regurgitated over and over....makes you feel dumbed down". The sentiment that Ms. Jess echoed was that she associated training as "being stressful". She participates in work-based training because it is mandatory. Comments made by participants that may not fall into Beders' (1990) three categories referenced earlier but could influence their motivation to learn. These include lack of recognition for their work efforts and lack of employee engagement due to disciplinary actions.

Weariness of School. According to McGiveney (2013), one factor consistently stands out upon identifying reasons for nonparticipation in adult education programs. Adults who have failed in the school system do not wish to repeat that failure. A participant in this study, Ms. Lena shared with the researcher why she did not finish college after taking courses towards a nursing degree was, " I had a lot of situations happen to me......challenging classes, tuition expenses, and transportation.... then I stopped". She indicated that she tried nursing classes and then a dialysis technician certification course at the local college; however, Ms. Lena was not successful, so she quit both programs. When pressed, she did not divulge anything further on education after making this statement.

On the other hand, Ms. Toni told the researcher about her previous experience in school. "I never decided to go back to school myself (laughing) I truly never liked it. I was a bad kid that didn't want to be there." She says her boyfriend is helping her work on her insecurities so that she could go back to school. "It is not surprising, therefore, that amid all the identified reasons for nonparticipation, one factor consistently stands out.

People who have ostensibly 'failed in the school system do not wish to repeat that failure. Many are consequently suspicious of education in any form, even informal learning opportunities specifically designed for them" (Edwards & Duncans, 2013, p.20).

Institutional Barriers

The last barrier that Cross (1981) references in her seminal work is institutional barriers. Institutional barriers result from practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities. Institutional barriers can include work schedules, which precludes adult learners from taking training and lack of information on when training occurs. Work schedules were the leading statement made by participants related to institutional barriers. An example of an institutional obstacle in this research came from Ms. Joyce, one of the study participants, where she alluded that not everyone in the department has an equal chance to participate in work-based training.

Work Practices that Exclude Participation in Work-based Training. Ms. Joyce spoke on institutional barriers that were an obstacle to low-wage workers participating in work-based learning. She said she did not participate in a work-based training program because her manager did not sign her up to attend. She said that due to what she perceived as "favoritism" in the department, not everyone was selected to attend work-based training. She used the analogy of her manager pulling names out of a jar. However, in this scenario, the same employees are always getting picked to attend the training. "If you don't give anybody else a chance to….I thought when one person gets something….it is supposed to be like I said, team – let everybody get a chance to pull out of the jar."

Ms. Joyce expressed her concern that the same employees are selected each time training is offered and called it discrimination and a challenge for those who want to attend training but are not selected by their manager for whatever reason. Although only one person mentioned it, the researcher thought it important enough to note as it ties back to one of Beders' (1990) findings on why people do not participate in basic adult education.

The perception that not everyone gets invited to training offered at work can be a demotivator for those employees looking at this practice as they contemplate ways to improve their employment standings. One hundred percent of the participants in this study confirmed they were informed of training classes offered at work through their managers, peers, informational boards, department flyers, and team huddles. However, there was the perception by some of the participants that the opportunities for training may be presented, but their organizations, in choosing who can participate, favor some employees over others for their training opportunities.

Research Question 2

What types of support systems do low-wage single adult female participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

During the interviews, the fifteen study participants' support came from various avenues. Participants in this study reported getting ongoing support from family, peers, managers, and philanthropic organizations. According to research single mothers have many competing priorities and helping them navigate increases their ability to participate in education (Clochard & Westerman, 2020; Grzankowska et al., 2018). The areas participants' in this study indicated needing the most support while pursuing work-based

training programs were childcare and finances. As noted during the interviews, the three groups that offered the most support to these study participants were family, peers, and their respective managers. Based on participants' feedback, the researcher will now discuss each of these three themes and concluding with the support the study participants received from external groups.

Family Support to Pursue Work-based Training

Besides public assistance and child support, the other support system that single mothers rely on is their parents or kin who provide financial or in-kind assistance and, often, normative supervision. The case study by Cerven (2013) of sixty low-income single mothers located in California concluded that the role of these mothers' significant others, i.e., family, friends, and peers, were primary to access and persistence in both practical and emotional support. This study had a similar finding. When it came to family support, eleven of the fifteen participants said that family stepped in to assist them as they attended work-based training, whether in the form of finances or babysitting.

Several participants in this current study discussed their individual family members who provided support, which helped them to be able to be gainfully employed. However, seven participants said the financial or childcare support they received from their families helped them pursue a work-based training program. During the interview with Ms. Brittany, she informed the researcher that "her dad's side of the family supported her" while she participated in work-based training, indicating that overall, she received more help than some of her peers. On the other hand, Ms. Cooper credited her father and grandmother, who provided childcare assistance that allowed her

to attend work-based training and take classes at night to obtain a certification as a Certified Nurse Assistant.

Another participant, Ms. Jackie, indicated that her child's father was the childcare provider while she attended work-based training and her stepfather assisted with transportation and finances. Additionally, Ms. Eva said she had a village of support to assist her. She indicated that her parents, friends, and older cousins "helped make sure I succeeded and took the time I needed to take care of personal and work business." She indicated receiving assistance from mentors, teachers, and friends who provided transportation, money, and childcare so that she could attend work-based training programs. Another study participant, Ms. Belle, said that her support came from her parents and her oldest daughter's father, who would "babysit while I attended classes at work".

Ms. Reese, on the other hand, explained that her "brother and sister watch her kid" so that she could attend classes at work. Ms. Toni explained that she too experienced a similar support system from her family as she exclaimed, "Yeah, my support system is amazing. I have many family members that help me out a lot". She further stated that she did not have to depend on daycare "since her family watches her child while she is at work." Ms. Toni said her three sisters, whom she is close to, help with babysitting while she attended training at work. Lastly, Ms. Nancy indicated that her "stepdad" supported her in attending work-related activities like training as she did not have a "mother or any other family members around". Besides family support, study participants specified that they received support from their peers as well.

Peer Support to Pursue Work-based Training

Participants described peer support in this study as taking place in the form of peers covering a coworkers' shift while they attended a class or training. Additionally, some coworkers made arrangements to babysit each other's children when one of them had to attend a work-based training that was outside of their regular work schedule. Moreover, some employees discussed that their coworkers provided support to improve their computer skills while participating in work activities. In this study, six participants stated that besides family, their peers were instrumental in supporting them. Through their peers' efforts of covering during emergencies and aiding them when they needed to attend a night class.

Ms. Cooper summarized this with her comment on how her peers work as a team to help those in need. She also credits her supervisor, whom she says is "an outstanding help… but we all help out as a team". This teamwork concept was evident by the narratives of three of the six participants who explained that their peers supported them with computer training, whether through hands-on training on 'how to' or being shown how to use a software program or navigating in the online training platform at work. Those study participants who expressed gratitude to their coworkers for their assistance with learning the computer were Ms. Eva, Ms. Lucy, and Ms. Toni.

Ms. Toni recalled her experience as a Supervisor at Starbucks, "getting help with learning Microsoft Excel from coworkers" greatly benefited her before taking her position in the hospital. She was able to complete the online training during her onboarding process with little effort. Ms. Toni mentioned googling "Excel for Dummies" to learn how to track products as learning and using Excel was part of her job

responsibilities. Another participant, Ms. Belle, said that her coworkers and friends who were also mothers, not only single mothers, would "babysit while I attend work training". A similar scenario was expressed by Ms. Reese, who said her "coworker Courtney" helped her by "watching my kid" occasionally while she attended training at work or took a class at night.

Manager Support to Pursue Work-based Training

Besides peer support, several participants in this study expressed their gratitude for their supervisor or manager who supported their needs in various ways. Extensive training involves employer investments in their employees' development, such as substantial support for on-the-job learning. Additionally, support from executives (supervisors or managers) played a massive part in supporting the single mothers in this study. Offering training sessions during employees' work hours was beneficial for many of these study participants since they were already at work. They did not have to find a babysitter nor pay additional dollars for that service.

Many participants in this study expressed gratitude that their training was held during their work hours. If training were not offered during work hours, says Ms. Abigail, a mother of five, "I would not be able to participate, just simply because of time and childcare needs." Eleven of the fifteen participants specified their managers' understanding of their situation as being instrumental in them participating in training. Being single mothers, the help they received from their managers enabled them to overcome some of the challenges they faced at work or home. There were eleven study participants who spoke on receiving support from their manager, and this section will highlight six of the participants to support this theme of Manager Support.

Ms. Abigail discussed the types of support she received from her manager when she cannot attend training due to "something is happening with one of my children." She states that her manager understands and will allow her to make up any training that she missed on a different day. Her manager allowing her to "go and take care of the situation at home…helps tremendously," she stated. She further declared that this support from her manager makes her want to learn more, so she learns any new work processes in the department that will help her develop more in her current role "because I feel like he sees me as a person ….not just as another girl running around in a blue shirt."

Ms. Brittany, another participant in this study, indicated that her boss makes sure that "we (employees) know that there are multiple pieces of training available." She said that her manager takes it a step further by ensuring that she and her colleagues are "on board with everything" taking place in the department and provide different methods to increase awareness (bulletin boards, flyers, department huddles) when training is offered. Ms. Brittany states her manager ensures that "everything is okay with her daughter and seeks to understand when she needs to take her days off" so that she is not scheduled to attend a training on a day that she cannot be at work.

The third participant, Ms. Cooper, shared that her manager has an open-door policy where she can discuss "personal or work-related matters". Ms. Cooper said her manager is "Always open to listening…gives good". She concluded her statement with the following "we got a job, but we also have a life too." Thus, her manager scheduling training during the workday has allowed Ms. Cooper to participate fully in the training offerings. According to some of the other participants such as Ms. Joyce, Ms. Anne, and Ms. Abigail, another caveat to this managerial support was that having an understanding

manager has helped them attend work-based training but also helped them retain their jobs.

Ms. Joyce said that her manager "gives me a heads up" that there will be training on a specific day so that she can line up a babysitter or transportation in advance. Ms. Anne explained that her manager would re-assign her work to another coworker when she participated in training at work. Other creative ways to have these participants attend work-based training programs came from Ms. Abigail, who said that her manager would only offer training during her working hours because coming in to work on her off days was not an option for her.

This sentiment was sprinkled throughout the various participant interviews when speaking on their manager or supervisor's support. Lastly, according to Ms. Joyce, she sought a third shift job to "spend more quality time with my kids since I am a single parent." She found a manager who was understanding and supported her needs. Thus, she is gainfully employed at a healthcare facility that offered healthcare jobs on all three shifts.

In listening to the participants speak on said topic, the researcher identified one additional category of support discussed in this paper. Beyond the support from family, peers, and managers that the researcher just discussed, external support such as local recreation centers and other philanthropic organizations are another crucial component of support for single mothers.

External Support to Pursue Work-based Training

The last category was support from philanthropic organizations, which the researcher titled external support. Ms. Cooper mentioned a philanthropic organization

that came to the hospital and shared information on various programs that could help

those in need of resources, i.e., finances, childcare, and food during the winter holiday.

She could not remember the exact name of the organization but indicated they were an

excellent support for her.

Ms. Eva states that she took advantage of community resources like the Urban

League and youth recreation centers to support her needs as a single mother of two.

Having her children participate in these two entities' activities allowed her to concentrate

on attending a class outside the job because she did not have to worry about childcare

when they were onsite at the centers. These entities allowed her children to "expend their

energy in a safe environment".

Another participant, Ms. Lena, mentioned her church as a mechanism of support

as well, whether it was in the form of childcare, transportation, or finances. She

explained, "I used to go and speak with leaders there – about things that would happen to

me….some people at church helped me with my situation". Additionally, she depends on

support from another external organization named CONCORD Counseling Services,

which is a local mental health counseling service that assists individuals needing social or

mental health services (https://concordcounseling.org/). According to Ms. Lena, she used

CONCORD while she was going through "a divorce, needing a job… help with mental

health issues". In actuality, CONCORD Counseling Services is a nonprofit mental health

center located in central, Ohio. Ms. Lena shared during her interview that she has mental

health challenges and that she has "a psychology doctor in CONCORD".

The desire to feel more competent at work can also motivate single mothers to

attend training. Wanting to maintain or improve their skillsets to move up in the

organization or into a different department was a significant motivator for these participants and was cited more frequently as to why they participated in work-based training.

Research Question 3

To what degree does participating in work-based voluntary training programs impact low-wage single adult mothers' future career plans?

The last central theme in this study was career aspirations. Interviews with the participants revealed that some participants had expectations of elevating their careers after completing internal and sometimes external (a local college) training. Helping single mother workers who may be at the bottom of the labor market achieve their career goals and allowing them to work on jobs with better wages and improved working conditions benefit them tremendously. This section showcases the career aspirations of some of the participants in this study.

Aspirations of Study Participants

Interestingly enough given that they work in healthcare settings in food or environmental services, several of the study participants were pursuing nursing certification. In general, several participants in this study indicated their desire to complete a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification course. Upon follow-up by the researcher during the member checking process, two of the study participants successfully obtained their CNA certification. Neither has been able to move to the nursing department yet due to the current pandemic. Thus, they were still working in the same departments as during the time of their interview. Both are waiting for a CNA position to open so they can apply.

For instance, Ms. Belle says she enjoys "working with the elderly in a hospital setting." She took classes to become a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), but she said "nursing is out of the question" because of her needle phobia. However, upon further discussion, she said that through work-based training and the support of her fiancé, she planned to interview for a Patient Care Technician position at the hospital where she currently works. She concluded our discussion with, "It's not going to hurt you to learn. It only hurts when you don't continue to learn".

Ms. Cooper, who is in a part-time lead role in Environmental Services when the regular lead is off duty, indicated a desire to work as a CNA too. She said that she had previous work experience in the nursing field, having worked previously as a home health aide at a local nursing home. On the other hand, Ms. Brittany said that she hopes to be "rich and retired. However, when pressed on what her career aspiration was, she indicated that her next step would be to pursue the Certified Nurse Assistant program as well. She shared her joy of being around patients and has been inspired by others who have moved up in the organization " I know housekeepers who have work their way up through the hospital like Liz, our HR Director, and Lawrence, who now works in payroll."

Ms. Lena had a similar goal to pursue a Patient Care Assistant certification once she decides to go back to school. She is unsure when that will be because she has expressed that she is working through mental health challenges. She is enrolled in a counseling service program mentioned in the previous section called "CONCORD," and they assisted her with some mental health issues that arose due to her divorce. Although single mothers are at greater risk for mental health disorders compared to married

mothers, especially depression (Subramaniam et al., 2014), Ms. Lena was the only participant who shared her struggle with mental health issues.

Another study participant, Ms. Jackie, stated she would like to go back to working in a daycare. It was her first job at the age of 16, and she worked there until her daughter was a year and a half, only leaving to work in healthcare, which has better benefits. Ms. Jackie says she has not figured out what she wants to do, but she will do something with her career for the sake of her young daughter. She pointed out that she really likes working with children after observing how a nurse at the same hospital where she works advanced through taking classes and training… "and is now a boss in the Administration Department," Seeing this nurse advance was the caveat. Ms. Jackie said she needed to take some additional training to pursue her goal of pursuing a certification as a Daycare Teacher. She worked at a daycare before taking a role in healthcare.

Ms. Nancy, on the other hand, inferred that she planned to "get my GED and work in criminal forensic" as a criminal psychologist. She stated she wanted to help find missing persons. She mentioned that she uses search engines like Google and YouTube to learn about forensic science and reads books on the subject. She discussed the impact that work-based training has on her aspiration to further her education due to exposure to computers and her success with learning new information from instructors using various teaching methods.

Ms. Stephanie, who recently started training in the dietary office as a Diet Clerk, said that someday she hopes to "work her way up to being a supervisor or something." Participating in work-based training has allowed her to move from a Food Service Worker to work in the hospitals' Diet Office. She aspires to stay in the department and

move into a management role in the future. Thus, she says, she will continue to learn and progress through the department's training until she reaches her goal. She, too, pointed out that she saw a coworker named Liz move up from a frontline worker to an HR Director role. This transformation for Liz inspires her to work hard and learn "the food business" so that she too can excel.

Another example of upward mobility was provided by Ms. Abigail who said she worked hard and moved into a full-time position after three months in the Environmental Services Department. Through work-based training, she learned how to clean the Obstetrics (OB) department. Moreover, now, she trains other frontline employees from Environmental Services to clean/sterilize in the OB department. She says she is constantly pushing herself to "go higher up the career chain." Her final comment on the topic was that she did not want to "stay at the bare minimum (wage job)... can't afford it".

Eventually, Ms. Abigail said she would like to be back in a large city and open up her "cake business again." She said that her current residency location would not support a cake business similar to what she had before, thus the need to relocate to a bigger city. Ms. Abigail did not give a timeline on when the move will occur but explained that she was concentrating on learning all that she can in the Environmental Services Department.

Ms. Toni, however, declared that she would hopefully be working at her current facility as she has "decided never to go back to school as she never liked school." She states it is nice to "just come in and punch in and be at my desk and not pay attention to everything else." Ms. Toni said she was content to come to work, get paid, and go home. She did not share any aspiration outside of the work she is doing currently.

Besides Ms. Toni, two other participants in this current study did not articulate a career goal outside of their current role. According to Ms. Anne, "I will remain in Environmental Services and retire" once eligibility for retirement is met. Ms. Lucy stated, "I really don't know what I will do…I don't want to be here, though". Ms. Lucy has worked in Environmental Services for the past eleven years. Likewise, Ms. Reece indicates a similar sentiment saying, "I see myself probably still working here".

However, Ms. Reece indicates a similar sentiment saying has yet to take advantage of her fiancé's support to allow her to attend night school. She said she planned to pursue a nursing certification program soon. According to Ms. Reece, her fiancé' will babysit her two children….when she decides to return to school". Ms. Joyce on the other hand relayed that she desired to be a "therapist" because, according to her, "everywhere she goes people talk to her about their serious personal problems… just out of the blue". She said because of her excellent listening skills, "if she can save a life and help change that person's frown into a smile… she is blessed".

Ms. Eva aspires to work in culinary as a certified chef. Said in the interim, she wants to drive a food truck selling "soul food, tacos, and coney dogs"… right now, due to the pandemic, she has to wait. Ms. Eva said, "right now it's hard….I have to pay rent and survive". Finally, Ms. Jess, who expressed her desire "to be a stay-at-home mom," said that she, too, will probably stay at her current place of employment. Her goal is to "try to move up in this hospital." She ends that she does not know what that job will be when asked about her job aspirations in five, 10, 15, or 20 years.

Summary

Chapter IV discussed the findings of this basic interpretive qualitative research study. This study sought to answer the question on barriers, support, and aspirations low-wage single mothers have while participating in work-based training programs. The research sample consisted of sixteen mothers working in low-wage healthcare jobs in Ohio and Michigan. All but one were single mothers at the time of the interviews. The one married participant did not indicate her status until the researcher completed the demographic questionnaire during her face-to-face interview.

In summary, the obstacles faced by low-wage single mothers revealed that they coincide with Cross's model of barriers towards participation in adult education and training. While a discussion of *"just being a single mom"* was not part of the researchers' proposal or the questions posed to the participants during the semi-structured interviews, several study participants discussed this as being an essential aspect of being a single parent. The top obstacles listed by participants were time poverty, lack of childcare, transportation issues, and inadequate finances.

As a result of the barriers they encountered, the research participants depended on various support systems to help them pursue work-based training programs. That support mentioned by participants included their family, peers, managers, and philanthropic organizations. Additionally, the study's participants were supported by their families, co-workers, friends, and others who sympathize with their single motherhood. Finally, the findings on participants' career aspirations indicated that they had various interests when asked where they saw themselves in "five, 10, 15, or 20 years".

Several participants stated they were interested in working in the medical field, primarily in nursing as a Certified Nursing Assistant. Other participants expressed interest in being a daycare teacher, baker, psychologist, or promoted to a supervisory role in their department. A few participants indicated they were unsure of their career aspirations, choosing the security of their current job with hopes to use it as a springboard to something else in the future.

Chapter IV provided a detailed description of the participants' responses and data analysis. Fifteen single mothers employed in a healthcare setting participated in the semi-structured interviews. The researcher reviewed each participants' responses and labeled each answer with a code using NVivo. The researcher used the codes to identify themes that emerged. Several themes emerged from the individual interviews referenced in the previous sections. Participants expressed their thoughts and feelings on participating in work-based training and the impact of barriers on them as single mothers. Participants discussed the support they received to help them pursue work-based training and their future career aspirations. Chapter V includes the significance of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter V presents the research findings, implications for further research, and suggest areas for future investigation. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the barriers low-wage single adult mothers experience and the strategies they adopt in their efforts to persist through work-based voluntary training programs. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What were the perceived barriers low-wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

2. What types of support systems did low-wage single adult female participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

3. To what degree did participating in work-based voluntary training programs impact low-wage single adult mothers' future career plans?

This study was conducted using a basic qualitative research design methodology. The findings of this study were compared and contrasted with existing research studies (Buddeberg, 2019; Flynn et al., 2011; Gorges, 2016; Lim, 2020; Patterson, 2018). This

current study used Cross's (1981) theoretical framework on barriers to learning to guide this research.

There are four main sections in Chapter V: (a) summary of the results, (b) implications for practice and research, (c) study limitations, and (d) recommendations for future research. The next section of this chapter summarizes the results and discusses the themes that emerged for each interview question.

Summary of the Results

This summary of the research results section provides a recapitulation of the need for the study and justification for the study's significance. Additionally, this chapter will provide a brief examination of the literature reviewed and discuss the new literature found on the topic since the initial review of the literature in Chapter II. Furthermore, there will be an explanation of the methodology and theoretical framework used in this study. This section will conclude with the study findings.

Significance of the Current Study

Due to the increasing demands of a global society where the state of the economy dictates that for a person to be self-reliant, a college degree is an essential commodity in the workplace. Mainstream society has benefited from the improvements that have and are occurring in the workplace. Workers can hold fulfilling positions that provide for themselves and their families, allowing for self-sufficiency. However, some individuals are only able to participate in the workforce marginally and thus have not benefited from fulfilling employment and other opportunities. Included in this number are those who work in some of the service industries (Swanberg et al., 2016; Lopez et al., 2014; Dill & Morgan, 2018); single mothers (Richard & Lee, 2019; Gioiosa & McCambly; 2015;

Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018); and those without a high school diploma or its

equivalent, such as the General Educational Development Test (GED) (Chappell et al.

2015; Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016). Cross (1981) described that barrier preventing

adults from participating in learning are often situational and dispositional in nature and

stressed the role institutional barriers play as a majority of lifelong learning activities

occur at work.

According to Beder (1991), if people place very little value on adult education or

had a negative experience with education and do not enjoy it, they may not participate.

Furthermore, the value of education for adults may be impacted by basic needs or social

standings (Patterson, 2018). Thus, there is a need for work-based learning opportunities,

which might motivate some to learn. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (2017) define adult

motivation to learn as "the tendency to find learning activities meaningful and

worthwhile and to benefit from them" (p.5). Lyonette et al. (2015) noted that a significant

number of single mothers who continue their education past high school could improve

their employment opportunities through learning, earning stackable credentials, and

possibly degrees to credential their learning (Carnevale et al., 2013a; Ginsberg &

Wlodkowski, 2010; Hansman & Mott, 2010). Elevating low-wage workers skill levels is

necessary to enhance their potential earnings and benefits the economy. Therefore, it is

vital to examine participation in adult education.

Participation in adult education has been an important area for researchers, and

studies in participation have increased in recent years (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

During the last three decades, adult education researchers have focused their attention on

participation in adult education and the barriers to participation. According to White

(2012), participation in adult learning has been "well documented over the past two decades, with researchers using large-scale survey data from several sources to compare the characteristics of those who participate in episodes of learning during adulthood with those who do not" (p. 155). Understanding barriers to adult learning and participation patterns in learning opportunities is essential in adult education and is a crucial step in addressing the needs of working single mothers.

Several adult education scholars have shed light on the obstacles adult learners encounter as they participate in learning activities and their persistence as adult students (Caffarella, 2001; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Flynn, et al., 2011; Hansman , 2010; Saunders, 2019; White, 2012). For example, Cross (1981) classified barriers that impacted the persistence and retention of adult learners into three categories: situational, dispositional, and institutional. These barriers challenge adult students as they attempt to enroll and persist in college. However, little is known whether these barriers pertain to working adult single mothers as well.

Using Cross's (1981) three classifications of obstacles that deter adults from participation in organized learning activities as the theoretical framework, this researcher sought to expand upon the current research on barriers low-wage single mothers encounter while learning at work. Cross's three classifications: situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers, were analyzed and addressed in this current study. This current study findings are significant because they addressed the gap in the current literature about barriers that impact low-wage, single mothers engaged in work-based voluntary training programs in a healthcare setting. The findings in this study will be discussed in the next section.

Findings

The data in this current study was collected from single mothers working in low-wage healthcare jobs in Ohio and Michigan. Through this basic qualitative study, the researcher investigated these participants' experiences in work-based training programs. Inclusion criteria identified participants who were single mothers employed in Food & Nutrition Services or Environmental Services who had engaged in at least one voluntary work-based training at their workplaces. First, this study sought to understand the barriers that impacted single mothers working in a healthcare setting while pursuing work-based training. Second, this research study sought to understand the support these participants' received while pursuing work-based training that allowed them to preserve or not. Finally, this study sought to learn the career aspirations of these single mothers in five, 10, 15 or 20 years.

A semi-structured interview form was developed to address the three research questions. For this study, the researcher collected data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews in February and March of 2020 to address the questions posed in this research study. The interview questions were designed to determine single mothers perception of the barriers impacting their participation in adult learning, the assistance they receive while pursuing work-based education, and perceived benefits from completing training at work.

To answer the three research questions the participants were asked a series of open-ended interview questions and encouraged to answer in detail. Responses were recorded and transcribed through a transcription service. Using Cross's (1981) three barriers as major themes, the researcher coded the subthemes using NVivo. Eight major

subthemes emerged from coding the responses: (a) just being a single mother (b) time poverty (c) lack of childcare (d) inadequate finances (e) transportation issues (f) lack of motivation (g) weariness of school, and (h) work practices that exclude participation. Other subthemes that emerged from this research study that differs from Cross's (1981) deterrents to learning included: feeling of the lack of recognition, technology challenges in the workplace, need for nonstandard work schedules, and managers' discrimination and racism. Through these themes, the researcher was able to answer the three research questions and provide recommendations for policy changes and workplace modification to support low-income workers' participation in work-based training.

Due to the pandemic of 2020, the researcher was not able to conduct face to face member checking as a follow up with participants. Instead, the researcher re-connected with participants through text messages, emails, and telephone calls in late March of 2020 and again in February 2021. All but three participants responded back to the researcher through one of the methods mentioned above regarding their interviews. However, when the researcher tried to reconnect again with all of the study participants in March of 2021 to determine their career progression, only six of the fifteen responded. The data analysis results were interpreted and summarized in the proceedings below.

Discussion of the Study Results

The researcher answered the three research questions independently using the participants' responses and overall themes that emerged from the data analysis. This section provides an interpretation of the results as they relate to this study's research question.

Research Question 1 Findings

What are the perceived barriers low-wage, single adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

Situational Barriers. The data that emerged from this study revealed that there were barriers that single mothers experience while participating in work-based training programs. The first major theme, situational barriers, which was taken from Cross's (1981) classification of barriers, was coded further into the subthemes: just being a single mother, lack of time, lack of childcare, lack of finances, and transportation issues. Insufficient amount of time and finances were two categories participants discussed most often during the interviews in this study. The subthemes affected all of the participants to different degrees and add stressors in their lives as they struggle to balance work and family life usually without being able to bank on the physical, emotional, or financial support of the male who fathered their child(ren). Several of the participants spoke on the above barriers as the ramification of "just being a single mom". The lack of time was the most insidious of all the barriers reported by participants in this study.

Six of the fifteen participants shared their difficulties completing tasks as caretakers while being employed. The ability to stay on task at work was a struggle as they were contemplating all that they had to do as caretakers once they got home. One of the participants discussed time constraints that left her mentally drained with no energy to pursue education outside of what is offered at work. Participants indicated that it was difficult for them to toggle between work and attending school or participating in training at work if it was not during their regular shift. Eleven of the fifteen study participants

expressed gratitude or stated that their managers' understandings of their situation (being a single mother with limited support) allowed them to work through their barriers to participate in work-based training.

One strategy that single mothers in this study used to cope with their time constraints and accommodate their home schedules was to work off shifts -second or third shifts, which were especially helpful when their children were younger (Sanchez, 2015). The participants in this study expressed their devotion to their children. They would seek out jobs that offered second and third shift so that they could spend quality time at home and participate in their child(ren) school activities. Two participants mentioned resigning from their previous jobs because there was no flexibility to work off shift hours. Working in a healthcare environment allows employees to work all three shifts, which is beneficial for single mothers who may experience limited access to community resources and support.

Although not initially part of this research study, interestingly enough, the literature reported that time constraints impact why single mothers neglect their health. They may find it difficult to access healthcare institutions during regular business hours (Osam et al., 2017), and further single mothers might find it challenging to access healthcare institutions during regular business hours due to time constraints. However, in this current study, only one participant, indicated that she neglected her health.

However, the participant's stated the reason for neglecting her health, upon further investigation, was not due to time constraints but to her lack of finances. According to this study participant, she did not have the funds to purchase her prescription drugs, so she stopped taking the medication she needed for depression.

Psychiatric disorders such as depression, have been shown to be more prevalent in single mothers than married mothers (Subramaniam, et. al., 2014). None of the study participants indicated that they neglected their children's health, although many indicated that reliable childcare was a barrier.

Single mothers need supports that provide stable housing, employment with reliable income, transportation, and childcare (Beeler, 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2013). Therefore, employees who offered training during regularly scheduled work hours were beneficial for many of these study participants since they were already at work, they did not have to find a babysitter nor pay additional dollars for that service. All but three of the study participants reported a lack of reliable childcare as a barrier.

Although childcare is an issue for all parents, according to current research, a vast number of single parents cannot afford high-quality daycare, which impacts their ability to attend career development and skills training programs and maintains employment (Beeler, 2016; Charity, 2015; Kerka, 1988; Lee, 2017). Not having adequate childcare or inconsistent childcare, or just persevering through the training program(s) when you are exhausted from all of the duties and responsibilities single mothers carry, most time alone, can take its toll (Osam, et al., 2017; Lee, 2017; Patterson, 2018; Selekman & Ybarra, 2011). These barriers are often unmeasurable yet ever-present.

Single mothers are the sole providers for healthcare and childcare needs for their children. When their children are sick or unable to attend their arranged daycare, single mothers must change their work or school schedule to accommodate the burden of lack of childcare support (Beeler, 2016). Mothers in this current study described being constrained in their choice of childcare by their work schedules, primarily due to the

difficulty they had in matching work schedules to their childcare arrangements in the evening, working weekend hours, and the high cost of childcare during nontraditional times.

This lack of available and affordable childcare during late hours or off-hours, sick days, or even holidays created problems for the study participants, since having access to reliable childcare for emergencies was few and far between. According to two of the study participants, inadequate childcare interfered with their career pursuits because classes were held at night, and they did not have reliable childcare. Several participants in this study relayed that their childcare dollars were eaten up due to their work hours, leaving very little for external activities, including school. Besides childcare issues, all of the participants reported experiencing financial strain.

Economic strains disproportionally impact single mothers due to their sole responsibility for their households' financial needs. Additionally, single mothers are more likely to be employed in lower-wage jobs than their partnered peers (Pollmann-Schult, 2018). The majority of the participants earned $30,000 or less annually. Several of the study participants voiced their concern about the expense of childcare and relied on others to assist them financially. Two of the participants were employed in second jobs by another employer outside of their healthcare role to assist them in meeting their financial needs. Another participant in this study indicated her dependency on a public assistant (welfare) program to supplement her income, while others were reliant on family and friends to provide for them monetarily. In addition to barriers of lack of time, childcare, and finances, another theme emerged from the interviews—the challenge of reliable transportation.

Research implies that education attainment will continue to elude disenfranchised mothers, especially single mothers who wear many hats and face numerous obstacles, such as time constraints and transportation issues (Osam et al., 2017). Several of the participants in this study, although they could drive, could not afford a vehicle. Thus, they depended on public transportation or rides from family, friends, and co-workers. Several study participants expressed their use of public transportation to get back and forth to work and get to their medical appointments. According to some of the study participants, their dependency on public transportation was also a deterrent to participating in educational activities at their local university. A recommendation that came out of the interviews from one of the participants was the concept of carpooling with co-workers to attend training if someone did not have a vehicle.

Dispositional Barriers. The second major theme that materialized from the study participants' interviews were dispositional barriers, which is the second classification of deterrents to learning by Cross (1981). Dispositional barriers refer to the perceptions or attitudes about oneself as a learner. They are the personal qualities or personality traits acquired through early education experiences, concerning one's ability to succeed, belief that one is too old to return to school. Rabourn et al. (2015), found that adult learners are faced with further barriers towards their learning, these obstacles can be related to lack of self-esteem and fear of being incapable of succeeding in their learning. There were four subthemes that emerged from this study as it relates to dispositional barriers: lack of motivation, weariness of school, lack of recognition and technology challenges.

One participant expressed that she wanted to go back to school to work on a nursing certification. However, her insecurities from previous negative experiences in a

learning environment prevented her from pursuing a certified nursing assistance

certification at a local college. Edwards and Duncans (2013), indicates that those who

fail in the school system have no desire to repeat that failure, thus single mothers need to

be motivated to pursue adult education programs based on the research of Petty and

Thomas (2014). Their research suggests that motivation helps adults to overcome those

obstacles that impede participating in education.

Dealing with competing struggles including family, working, studying, and other

important commitments. Beder (1991) implies that motivation is the force that helps

adults overcome barriers to participation. Other subthemes that emerged from the study

participants' interviews in this research that were not named in Cross's (1981)

dispositional barriers to learning included stigmas or stereotyping of single mothers,

feelings of lack of recognition in the workplace, and technology challenges in the

workplace.

Stigma or Stereotyping of Single Mothers. Studies are mixed as to whether

stigma against single mothers is still prevalent with low-wage women. The current

economic context in the US has stigmatized women's singleness as not being a desired

state regardless of how it was acquired; whether intentional or not (Baranowska-Rataj et

al., 2014; Broussard et al., 2012; Rousou, et al., 2013; Platt, et al., 2016; Shachar et al.,

2013). Accordingly (Broussard et al., 2012), single mothers may internalize the social

stigma from the negative stereotypes placed on them by society, i.e., being seen

mistakenly as promiscuous, rebellious disrespectful of cultural norms.

Two participants in this study did express being stigmatized and experiencing

humiliation because they were single mothers. The participants described their general

mental pain of being a single mother, often feeling overlooked by those they worked with on the healthcare team or making them feel uneasy due to negative posts on social media feeds. Nevertheless, according to these participants, they develop resilience and strategies for "bouncing back" from these adverse situations.

The resiliency of the current research participants in the face of opposition is supported by the study by McCleary-Sills et al.,(2015), who reported that "Women who are educated are healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better healthcare and education to their children compared to women with little or no education." (p. 69). Likewise, this current study coincides with Bandura (1977) and Carvalho et al., (2019) as well, who indicated that mothers are more resilient when facing challenges of parenting or adverse situations regardless of their socioeconomic status.

On the other hand, these participants' feelings of "being overlooked" coincided with some participants' statements of feeling that there is a lack of recognition at work by managers towards their employees. Although the statements fall more in line with single mothers' barriers in general, it is still worth mentioning due to the number of participants who mentioned it and how the literature relates the high turnover rates in the healthcare industry to motivation and lack of recognition. Two new subthemes emerged under dispositional deterrents in this current study. They were the feeling of lack of recognition and technology challenges in the workplace.

Feeling of the Lack of Recognition. One of the participants in this study said that as a relatively new employee of ten months, she has not seen her co-workers receive the recognition she felt they deserved for their hard work in the department. As a result, she

says, people do not stay here (meaning on the job); instead, they resign within their first few months of employment. Participants shared that no one wants to work on a job that makes them feel inferior or insignificant. Research suggests that engaged employees lead to higher productivity in the workplace (Dill & Morgan, 2018). Motivation can be a valuable tool to trigger the intention and tendency to start or continue a task. It can increase an employees' confidence and inspire the workforce in an organization (Chiat & Panatik, 2019).

Another issue raised during the interviews that can negatively impact learning came from a participant who mentioned that some of her co-workers were illiterate, and therefore using online learning as a training tool was an issue for them. Research implies that workplace learning should be about achieving continual learning through various mechanisms like social collaboration, teamwork activities, and peer-to-peer learning, which may have become decentralized or nonexistent due to the increasing use of technology (Dearborn, 2013; Tynjälä, et al., 2014; van der Stappen & Zitter, 2016). However, several participants in this current study indicated that their training curriculum heavily relied on technology. The following section will go into further details on this topic.

Technology Challenges in the Workplace. Employees will attend fewer scheduled classes and online training sessions and instead, short videos, game-like simulations, and peer communities that offer networking, information sharing, and informal coaching will engage workers by delivering anyplace, anytime learning (Tynjälä, et al., 2014; Scott, 2015). Therefore, employees like the coworkers of the participants in this study being asked to sit in front of a computer and follow the prompts

in the online training modules and not being able to read pose a challenge for not only the illiterate employees but the employer as well who depend on this technology to onboard and train their staff.

One study participant indicated that sitting and listening to the online training caused her to experience boredom and to daydream and, on occasion, fall asleep during the training. When asked, nine out of the 15 participants in this study indicated that they learned best through hands-on activities. The majority of the participants in this current study indicated that their talking did not help them learn but being able to see and touch during the training helped them grasp the new concept. Using videos as the medium to train new hires did not work, one participant indicated, further stating that it takes days to complete all the videos in training, but she retained very little because she kept falling asleep. She said that she had to view 12 to 14 hours of videos during her first two weeks of employment and that the content of the videos became blurred because there were so many. In essence, the information in the video blended together, and she could not remember what she watched or learned.

Several participants indicated that they used technology in some form, which helped them navigate through their online training at work. Some participants mentioned using Google to search for information and Facebook to keep in touch with their online community groups. However, at least three of the fifteen study participants mentioned their lack of computer skills and relying on coworkers to help them navigate their online training. Moreover, when asked how they learn best, at least half of the participants indicated they learn best through hands-on and working closely with peers. It is important that trainers use various teaching methods as people do not all learn the same way. The

last major theme under barriers in this current study is what Cross (1981) termed institutional barriers.

Institutional Barriers. Institutional barriers are practices, policies, procedures, or situations that systematically disadvantage some groups of people over others through exclusion or discouragement. Institutional barriers in this study showed up as the perception by some participants that the opportunity for training may be presented, but organizations, in choosing who can participate, favor some employees over others for their training opportunities. Ninety-three percent of the participants in this study confirmed they were informed of training classes offered at work through their managers, peers, informational boards, department flyers, and team huddles. However, not everyone was selected to attend work-based training.

Reasons given as to why some participants did not attend voluntary work-based training included: being overlooked because they were single, managers favoring someone else over them (not being selected to attend), and work schedules, which can impede their attendance (time that training is offered). Two other subthemes that emerged under institutional deterrents in this study were the need for nonstandard work schedules and the concept of favoritism by managers.

Need for Nonstandard Work Schedules. Nonstandard (NS) work schedules refer to work outside of the daytime business hours. Usually, Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Nonstandard work schedules could pose difficulties for single mothers as they navigate housework, family, and childcare (Barnes & Helms, 2020; Presser & Ward 2011). Understanding the impact of nonstandard work schedules on childcare arrangements is crucial, as one in five U.S. workers operates on a

nonstandard work schedule (Enchautegui, 2013; Enchautegui, 2015) and childcare during NS work hours is limited (Pilarz et al., 2019). The occupations in which low-wage workers usually work with nonstandard schedules are in the service industry. Specifically, jobs such as waiters, laborers, nursing and health aides, food services, retail, and janitors (Barnes & Helms, 2020).

Several participants mentioned a desire to improve their employment status and wanted to participate in higher learning. However, the struggle to juggle multiple competing priorities was mentally draining. Participants in this study discussed how exhausting it was for them to try to work, attend school, and take care of their home-based. For this reason, some of the participants indicated they were just "too tired to try" to do anything other than work and take care of a home. Five other participants shared during the interview that their work schedules inhibited them from having time for anything besides motherhood. Single mother families often face structural disadvantages due to having lower-income and less time together with their children. The ability to spend quality time with their children was raised as an issue more so than pursuing education outside of the training they received at work. To accommodate their home schedules, some mothers in this study chose to work off-shift hours.

Some participants shared that they had to look for jobs on the third shift to spend quality time with their children. However, another participant, the mother of an eight-month-old, discussed the ideal hours for her to work were from eight am to five pm; otherwise, any hours outside of that cause disruption to her home as a single parent. Other participants in this study expressed gratitude that their training was held during their work hours. The workplace offering training during employees' work hours was

beneficial for many of these study participants since they were already at work. Several participants said that they did not have to find a babysitter or pay additional dollars for that service when training was offered.

If training were not offered during work hours, some participants said it would be a struggle to attend the training. Similar to current research, participants in this study listed the lack of time as the primary caretakers and the cost to find childcare when their money is already stretched trying to meet their financial obligations. One qualitative study (Carrillo et al., 2017) found that more stable and predictable work schedules led to more regular care at home, including parental tag team arrangements or care by family members. However, more unstable, and unpredictable work schedules lead to challenges in meeting the demands of work or a childcare scramble. In this current study, participants discussed the need for work schedules that were conducive to them being single parents. One way that single mothers in this study coped with their time restraints and could accommodate their home schedules was to work second and third shifts. One participant said that the idea schedule for her was between the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. The ability to work NS work schedules allowed the study participants to spend more quality time with their children.

However, more unstable, and unpredictable work schedules lead to challenges in meeting the demands of work or a childcare scramble. Thus, navigating childcare for parents working nonstandard work schedules is a public health issue that is important for employers, childcare providers, and public policymakers to understand given the impact on a large sector of the labor force and the future success of the nation's youngest persons (Barnes & Helms, 2020). The last situational barrier that the researcher will discuss based

on the participants' interviews is the concept of managers' favoritism when it came to who could attend work-based training classes.

Concept of Favoritism by Managers. The perception that not everyone gets invited to training offered at work can be a demotivator for those employees looking at this practice as they contemplate ways to improve their employment standings. One hundred percent of the participants in this study confirmed they were informed of training classes offered at work through their managers, peers, informational boards, department flyers, and team huddles. However, there was the perception by some of the participants that the opportunities for training may be presented, but their organizations, in choosing who can participate, favor some employees over others for their training opportunities.

One of the participants expressed her concern that the same employees are selected each time training is offered and called it discrimination and a challenge for those who want to attend training but are not selected by their manager for whatever reason. Although only one person mentioned it, the researcher thought it important enough to note as it ties back to one of Beders' (1990) findings on why people do not participate in basic adult education, they either lack the motivation to attend, are deterred, or are unaware of the programs.

Research Question 2 Findings

What types of support systems do low-wage single adult female participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

The major theme in this section, support, was further coded into four subthemes, which were family (including boyfriend or fiancé'), peer (co-workers), manager and external (church, and other philanthropic organizations) support to pursue work-based

training. Single mothers often have no division of labor with the other parent, who is absent for numerous reasons. Thus, by default, being a single mother and having to work with limited support is almost always unavoidable. Furthermore, research suggests, single mothers may experience limited access to community resources and support (Napora, et al., 2018; Richard & Lee, 2019). Support in the form of assistance with childcare, transportation, finances that can offset those barriers.

In this current study support from family, fiancé' or boyfriends was reported in the form of assisting with childcare, finances, transportation, and being a sounding board for these single mothers. Support from peers included covering duties at work while the participant was attending training, childcare—sometimes babysitting for each other, being a mentor, peer to peer training, helping the participant to navigate in the department, and encouraging each other to succeed.

Support from managers was reported in the form of allowing some flexibility when training was offered, consulting with participants on their best days to complete work-based training, purchasing meals at work if they had no money, and sharing information on various training taking place as well as external resources to assist those in need. The last type of support mentioned by these study participants came in the form of external sources, which encompassed assistance with food, shelter, transportation (bus passes), childcare (vouchers), counseling, sense of community, and being a sounding board.

Research Question 3 Findings

To what degree does participating in work-based voluntary training programs impact low-wage single adult mothers' future career plans?

Besides financial and childcare support, other critical elements to help single mothers are career development, employment, economic security, and career education, which can improve these participants' physical and emotional well-being. A positive finding from this study was that several of the participants indicated that they were encouraged to pursue opportunities outside of their department due to learning about the promotion of their co-workers into other roles such as human resources, payroll, switchboard operator, and nursing. This next section discusses the findings in more detail.

Study participants expressed their career aspirations during their 30–45-minute interview based on the following question when answering where they envisioned themselves in 5, 10, 15, or 20 years. Four of the fifteen participants indicated a desire to obtain a nursing certification as either a Certified Nursing Assistant or Patient Care Assistant. Upon follow-up, after the interview, two of the four had secured the nursing certification and were waiting for openings in a hospital.

Other respondents in this study shared their career goals with the researcher, and they were: Daycare Teacher, Criminal Psychologist, Chef, Entrepreneur, Supervisor, or Manager in some capacity at the hospital. Three of the participants stated they wanted to retire in their respective departments, and one indicated that she did not know her career goals for the future. Upon further review of the current study participants, the researcher created two matrices. The first matrix (Appendix H) sought to determine if there was a correlation between the last time participants completed work-based training and their career aspiration. The second matrix (Appendix G) sought to understand if there was a positive correlation between the study participants' career aspirations and the length of

time they were employed in their current role. The following section discusses the results of these two matrices.

The Results of the Ratings

The rating of "ability to achieve goal" for each study participant used in both appendix G and H was based on a seven-point Likert scale, with one to three being the low achievement of their aspiration, four to five being medium achievement, and six to seven being the high achievement of their aspiration. The researcher also created a rating scale of one to eight to apply to the timing of the most recent training participation.

The chart in Appendix G displays a scatter plot of the ratings of participants' ability to achieve their career goals against the number of years in their current role. There does not appear to be any relationship between these two variables. The study participants who had less than one year rated higher in their career aspiration than those employed for two or more years, except for Ms. Lena. She wanted to pursue a nursing certification in healthcare and recently took a work-based training class within the last month of the semi-structured interview.

Seven of the 15 study participants rated low in their achievement of meeting their aspirations. Some of the reasons they were rated low by the researcher included: not articulating any career goals during their interviews and not pursuing the education they would need to matriculate into their stated career. For an example of low-rated participants, Ms. Anne, when asked where she saw herself in five, 10, 15, or 20 years, said, "I have no idea of what I want to do in the future". Another low-rated participant, Ms. Jess stated, "when I hear the word training…I think of being stressed….If I get all the babies I want, I won't be here. I will be a stay-at-home mom".

Those participants in this current study who were rated as medium ability to achieve their career aspiration could articulate to a degree what it would take for them to meet this goal, i.e., hard work, dedication. They currently work in healthcare; thus, it would not be a considerable stretch to transition into their identified new role. The participants with medium ability to achieve were familiar with the course requirements, having inquired from the learning institution themselves or being familiar with the requirements due to knowing coworkers who completed a similar training/certification.

However, these individuals had not started or completed the program at the time of the interview. Four of the study participants fit this category. During her interview, Ms. Abigail, who fell into this category, indicated that she "wants to run a cake business again". She previously ran a cake business in a larger city and hopes to one day return. Ms. Abigail left her cake business due to a divorce and relocating to a rural area of the state. However, she was not able to articulate her plan to relocate back to the larger city. The last group that will be discussed in this section was those who were considered high achievers.

There were four participants in this study who met the criteria of high ability to achieve career aspiration. During her interview, Ms. Stephanie, who fell into this category, indicated that "she liked food service...was training in the diet office as a Diet Clerk and plans to work her way up the chain to a supervisory role in the department". Three other individuals desired to become nursing assistants. They all worked in healthcare were familiar with the nursing certification, which would allow them to work as certified nursing assistants. Two of them had already taken the necessary coursework and were waiting for an opening in the hospital for a Certified Nurse Assistant or a

Patient Care Assistant. According to research by Clum (2008), there are a significant number of single mothers who are employed as certified nursing assistants (CNA). However, to obtain a higher-skilled, better-paying job, these single mothers working as CNAs will need additional credentials or degrees. Thus advancement in a CNA role does not always lead to career ladder advancement.

Therefore, as part of their career development, the participants in this study will need to be self-motivated to further their education. Career development is crucial for employees who strategically plan, create, and explore their future work by designing their individual learning goals to achieve their potential while fulfilling the organization's mission where they are employed. Career development is also a way to promote an effective workforce through succession planning and strategic training that support a productive and motivated workforce. In analyzing how work-based training impacts single mothers' career aspirations, the researcher found that those participants in this current study who have done the following rated high in their ability to achieve their aspiration: They have:

- Taken the time to research the position that they want to obtain
- Completed some or all of the necessary classes in the field of study
- Currently, they work in the area of interest and are seeking promotional opportunities within their department or
- Are actively interviewing for the position of interest.

Those participants who received a medium rating by the researcher expressed that they knew that hard work, consistency, and dedication were necessary; however, they did not articulate a plan for achieving their goals. In addition, one study participant indicated

she had to put her dreams on hold as she expressed her financial struggles as a significant barrier. She further indicated that her hard-earned dollars had to go towards rent, transportation, childcare, and meals. Two of the study participants discussed working their way up in their current department and were being trained to take on a lead role. If they continue in this vein, their ability to achieve their career aspiration could be attainable.

Finally, those participants who received a low rating did not articulate any career aspirations when asked. One participant worked in a vocation very different from her career aspiration. This new role would require a bachelor's and master's degree with a clinical internship before practicing in psychology. Another prime example is Ms. Eva, employed in environmental services for the past 11 months. She indicated that she wanted to become a certified chef, yet she has not researched the skillsets needed to become a chef or have taken any classes in the profession. The last study participant mentioned under this rating is Ms. Jess, who indicated that she becomes apprehensive when she hears the word training and says…." it's a lot of mind work. I never liked school". She summed up her experience in school as "I was a bad kid who didn't want to be there". As previously stated, participants' ratings in Appendix G showed no significant relationship between years in their current role and their ability to achieve career aspirations.

The rating of "recent training participation" was graphed against the rating of "ability to achieve aspiration goal" and is shown in Appendix H. Although there is no causal relationship between the timing of training participation and participants' abilities to achieve career aspirations, there is a positive trend noted in the graph. Based on each

of the study participants' ratings by the researcher (see Appendix H), this graph demonstrates that the timing of training participation is related to participants' ability to achieve career aspirations. Those study participants whose last work-based training took place 31 days or more from the date of their interviews were rated between one and three. Those participants who completed work-based training between 16 and 30 days from the date of their interview with the researcher received a rating between four and six. Lastly, those participants who completed training between one and 15 days were rated as highly like to achieve their career aspirations.

It could be that these study participants self-efficacy played an integral role in their ability to achieve their career aspirations. This data indicates that single mothers who pursue and are successful in their career aspirations are driven by internal motivators, especially when coupled with exposure to peers who have successfully matriculated from the department where they both worked to other areas of the hospital, such as payroll, nursing, switchboard operator or human resources. Because this was a qualitative research study, the researcher did not inquire about the number of training participants completed. Nonetheless, this phenomenon certainly bears further review and research by looking through the lens of quantitative research. If it turns out that work-based training is a significant factor in advancing single mothers' careers, this has significant policy implications.

Discussion of the Findings

Understanding the lived experiences of single mothers working in healthcare environments is essential to informing how organizations, states, and the country can serve this segment of the population and promote their ability to be successful

contributors to society. The following sections will discuss how research and practice relate to the three research questions posed in this qualitative research study.

Barriers to Participating in Work-Based Training

The results of this current study and literature review suggest that single mothers are challenged with numerous barriers, as stated in the literature review and result section of this research. These barriers, according to Cross (1981), can be situational, dispositional, and institutional. Some of the impediments that the participants in this study faced included time poverty, childcare, financial, and transportation issues. Other subthemes that emerged were lack of motivation to learn, technology issues, and the need for nonstandard work schedules.

Implications for Program Planners and Leaders. Based on the literature review and the participants' interviews in this study, the researcher recommends that career educators advocate for public policy changes designed to impact single mothers positively. Policies that establish equitable education and economic climates for all genders and ethnic groups and recognize single-parent families as a viable family form will benefit society.

The need for talent continues to be a prime focal point with human resources, as is the need to attract, develop and retain a quality workforce (Crouse et al., 2011; Manuti et al., 2015). The implication of this study's results could benefit human resource professionals, program planners, and policymakers due to their interest in frontline workers; especially single parents (women), because of the impact these workers have on the quality of care and patients and the fact that single women presence in the workplace is the fastest growing population in the hospitality and healthcare industry.

Single mothers face many barriers that inhibit their ability to participate in adult education and training. Additionally, single mothers juggle many hats as single parents to reconcile their time at work and home. The barriers to participation routinely reported in the literature (Adams-Gardner, 2018; Árnason & Valgeirsdóttir; 2015; Beder, 1990; Cross, 1979; Cross, 1981; Hearne, 2018; Idoko, 2018; Petty & Thomas, 2014) describe problems that participants and potential participants (those considering participation in adult education) encounter when trying to gain access to lifelong learning (Roosmaa & Saar 2017). The participants in this study were no different as they shared their barriers (see Chapter 4) and the impact these obstacles had on their lives. Lack of childcare, transportation, finances (all but one earned minimal wage), lack of motivation due to negative experiences towards re-entering education, lack of support (at times), and lack of abilities were all cited as barriers in this study.

Recommendations to address the barriers faced by single mothers is for organizational policies to address single mothers' issues through supporting interventions/learning programs that would first help learners develop self-confidence, self-efficacy, and agency before training programs so that single mothers feel more confident in learning new skills. Perhaps this concept can be tied into adult learning theory transformational learning (promoting transformation in single mothers to take more agency over their lives). Additionally, organizations should consider when and how learning programs are offered, infusing adult education principles and theories into planning programs to promote learning (self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformative learning, etc.,). However, despite the wealth of information about the relationship between race, family structure, and poverty, critical gaps remain in

researchers' understanding of how work benefits vary across race for single mothers (Damaske et al., 2016, Kim et al., 2018b).

Program planners must plan workplace training programs that will empower learners. Research does suggest that healthcare organizations need to explore the feasibility of career ladders, which help managers develop talent in-house and act as a pipeline or feeder to fulfill openings in other areas of the healthcare system. A final recommendation is that healthcare organization should explore mentoring programs, whether peer-to-peer or some other organized structure. Mentorship opportunities could benefit single mothers, especially new hires who are learning how to successfully navigate in their roles and the healthcare system in general.

Support Needed to Participate in Work-Based Training

To overcome the barriers previously discussed, single mothers need support. The support that these study participants suggested they needed to address these barriers are classified in the literature as government support (Barnow & Smith, 2016; Powers et al., 2013) and social support (Blundell et al., 2021; Dankyi et al., 2019; Richard, 2018; Richard & Lee, 2019). Government support refers to receiving support through public programs such as TANF, food stamps, housing vouchers, and supplemental income (Grant et al., 2019; Jones-DeWeever, 2007; Pavetti, 2018; Seefeldt, 2017).

Although only one participant mentioned receiving some government support in this study, research suggests that government support is crucial for low-wage single mothers (Seefeldt, 2017). Some several services and programs assist single mothers, including government agencies and college campus programs. Social support, on the other hand, comes from family, friends, and philanthropic organizations. Some existing

programs that service single mothers include employment services such as The Beyond Jobs program at Goodwill, Mom Corps, and MomFair by MomAngeles (Ashena, 2014). All of the current study participants discussed the importance of social support to combat their barriers.

Create Partnerships with Childcare Agencies

Based on current literature (Adams et al., 2016; Adams & Spaulding, 2018; Pilarz et al., 2019) and participants' responses from this study, there is a need to create partnerships with childcare agencies within proximity of the physical location where they work. Adequate and quality childcare was one of the most significant obstacles cited by the study participants. In addition, program planners need to seek grants from philanthropic groups to offer bus passes, and reduced-price meals to their low-wage employees would offset the financial burden that many of the participants mentioned during the interviews.

There is also a need to offer training during times when single mothers are already scheduled to work. Several participants in the study mentioned having difficulty juggling work and home during their interviews as their nonstandard work schedules caused barriers for them to participate in work-based training. Nonstandard (NS) work schedules refer to work outside of the daytime business hours. Usually, Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Nonstandard work schedules could pose difficulties for single mothers as they navigate housework, family, and childcare (Barnes & Helms, 2020; Presser & Ward, 2011). Understanding the impact of nonstandard work schedules on childcare arrangements is crucial, as one in five U.S. workers operates on a nonstandard work

schedule (Enchautegui, 2013; Enchautegui, 2015) and childcare during NS work hours is limited (Pilarz et al., 2019).

Implications for Public Policy. There are limited programs available to address the specific and unique needs of single-parent caregivers. Thus, this research is recommending the following to address the needs of single mothers: Conduct a national survey of single-parent caregivers to determine their specific stressors and needs, encourage policymakers to look more closely at the single mother caregiver population in order to determine factors that this group will impact as they are the fastest growing demographics in the healthcare space. Lastly, there is a need to create resources and materials that address best practices and information on being a single mother caregiver.

Career Aspirations of Single Mothers Employed in a Healthcare Setting

The literature review yields limited research on the career aspiration of single mothers working in healthcare. Most of the literature focused on single mothers and higher education. Thus this study contributes to the body of knowledge on this growing population of single mothers who are entering the workforce at an unprecedented rate. All but two of the fifteen participants in this research study shared their career aspirations. However, most of the participants attended work-based training because of the mandates in their respective departments, not because they were seeking to learn to advance their careers.

Therefore workplace learning that is designed to assist with career development can help women develop career-related self-efficacy and may provide opportunities for its participants to advance their careers, grow personally, and achieve job satisfaction in addition to benefits afforded from postsecondary education degrees, if attainable (Blau &

Kahn, 2017; Hegewisch et al., 2018; Sharif, 2019). Thus, listening to single mothers at every level and allowing them to share their narratives will produce a culture of inquiry that can positively influence practices and policies for this group of individuals.

Implications for Program Planners and Leaders. All participants shared with the researcher that they aspired to improve their status in life, if not for themselves, then for their children's sake. As the sole support of their families, single mothers are concerned with obtaining good jobs and achieving economic independence. However, when contacted eleven months later, only two of the participants completed their career aspirations (as stated to the researcher) at the time of their study interviews. Whereas barriers, and in particular dispositional barriers, deter participation for rural adults, according to Beder (1991), "motivation is the force that helps adults overcome barriers to participation" (Petty & Thomas, 2014, p. 475). Besides planning programs and events to boost motivation such as matching students' learning capability with the right types of learning activities (Chung & Chow, 2004), formal and informal learning through discovery at work (Darden, 2014), earning stackable credentials (Carnevale et al., 2013a), other recommendations include job placement and on-the-job training.

Job placement and job training can be effective in the long run if other needs that single mothers require are also addressed. Program developers should consider the following needs as they work with single mothers: childcare, transportation, self-concept building, emotional support, skills assessments, parenthood education, how to work through challenges of work and family responsibilities, enhancement of federally funded programs targeting single mothers, and career development programs. This list is not

exhaustive of all of the areas that could benefit single mothers. Nonetheless, these could be a great starting point.

Implications for Public Policy. Single mothers bring their whole selves with them to work, and in order to serve single parents well, there is a need to consider all of their roles and identities. Developing case studies documenting the outcomes, action plans, and lessons learned from work-based training programs, which target this specific population should be shared with policymakers, funders, and investors so that financial allocations target single mother employees' personal and professional development.

Limitations of Study

The researcher used a basic qualitative interpretive research design that aimed to fill a gap in the literature on understanding the barriers low-wage adult single mother service workers encounter while participating in voluntary workplace learning programs and the support that allowed them to persevere. This studys' limitations were that the researcher focused on single mothers from two Midwestern states. Second, the study sample size was small, with fifteen participants. There is the possibility that bias (tendency to seek information that confirms pre-existing beliefs or assumptions) may have played a role, although every effort was taken to reduce it. Additionally, the interpretation of the interview data and the development of codes and subthemes were subjectively derived, which may introduce research bias. Therefore, the researcher established clearly defined, measurable interview criteria against which all participants were evaluated.

Another potential limitation could be that some participants may not have been candid or forthcoming with their responses or comfortable sharing their lived experiences

during their face-to-face meeting with the researcher. Thus, the findings of this study may not be able to be generalized to the entire population of working single mothers, but it provides insight into how single mothers navigated through barriers to learning and the support they received that helped them pursue work-based training programs. Despite these limitations, the results from this current study indicate that further investigation to inform practices, policies, and the allocation of resources for working single mothers is warranted.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study had three goals, to focus on the barriers, support, and aspirations of low-skill single-mother workers 'employed in a US health care setting. As a result of this study and given what we have learned from the participants in this study, it appears that interventions to address the dispositional, situational, and institutional barriers that single mothers faced should focus on support systems that help to remove barriers to participation in work-based training and adult education programs in general. These supports may include training on time management or energy management, childcare, transportation, financial management and budgeting, ongoing mentoring, mental health, and access to knowledge on resources designed to support single parents (Agnafors et al., 2019).

In addition to addressing the barriers to single mothers' access to higher education, it is essential that the current literature on barriers is complete and encompasses the service industry that employs this population. To shed more light on this problem, the roles of employment status, employee age, and workplace tenure on receiving training also deserve further investigation. Additionally, the reason various groups of single mother

employees accept or decline training warrants additional examination. It is also reasonable to expect that some workers want training more than others and that employees in specialized industries or occupations will need more training than others. Thus, more research examining organizational values and managers' views concerning how decisions are made concerning who gets to participate in training, how the managers function as gatekeepers, and how they view themselves as part of planning workplace learning, is needed.

Another suggestion for future research is a focus on how the women arrived at being single mothers, their locus of control over what happened, and their agency and self-efficacy in facing the future. Additionally, as organizations plan their workplace training programs, examining the types of training programs offered, and as well, how they are offered (i.e. time of day, etc.) will assist organizations to better support their workers. Organizations should further examine if these programs promote single mothers' self-efficacy and locus of control. An exciting nuance based on the statements by some of the research participants was that they participated in work-based training because it was mandatory, so more research should focus on the impact of workers choosing training programs versus being "forced" into training. Additionally, organizations can ask workers to complete assessments of job fit /career fit so participants may self-assess what they want and do not want in a job and their abilities to find a better fitting vocation.

Future research should also examine the contexts of different organizations in supporting (or not) single mothers through workplace learning. Examining different organizations, the types of programs they offer, and as well, any situational and structural

barriers will illuminate what new policies and programs that should be developed to better support single mothers in workplace learning. Thus, examining the types of workplace learning programs offered at different institutions/organizations to understand better what is there to make recommendations for more supportive programs would be beneficial.

There is also a need for organizations to invest in program developers. Single mothers' barriers, support, and resilience require attention concerning their career development. Ellemers (2014) suggests that the gender differences in career development and organizational success are that males are favored over female employees in work organizations. Therefore, organizations need to secure program developers to ensure that some aspects of career development are included in workplace training programs. Program directors can help employees recognize their actions and attitudes that could be roadblocks to their success and provide helpful strategies to navigate organizations' policies and rules effectively. Additionally, further research is necessary to examine organizational values and managers' views concerning how decisions are made concerning who gets to participate in training, how the managers function as gatekeepers, and how they view themselves as a part of planning workplace learning.

A final finding from this current research study alluded to the influence study participants' children had on their understanding of success. While the participants disclosed feelings about their co-workers who were able to matriculate in the hospital in relation to their career aspiration and potential success, their children seemed to play a larger role in the overall narratives. Therefore, the final recommendation for future

research would be to conduct a study to further probe the specific role participants'

children played in shaping their perceptions of their own success.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Questions

Please answer the following questions about yourself. Your responses are completely confidential, and your name is not required.

1. What is your highest level of education? _____?

2. What is your age range? Circle one.
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-35
   c. 36-45
   d. over 45

3. What is your race/ethnicity? Please circle one.
   a. Asian-American
   b. Black/African American
   c. Caucasian
   d. Hispanic/Latino
   e. Native-American
   f. Other _____

4. What is your estimated total household income? Circle one.
   a. Less than $25,000
   b. $25,000 - $30,000
   c. $30,000- $35,000
   d. $35,000 - $40,000
   e. $40,000 - $45,000
   f. $45,000 - $50,000

5. What kinds of voluntary work-based trainings have you been involved in as an

   adult?

   _____

   _____

Miscellaneous

1. To protect your identity, your real first name will not be used in this study. Please

   select a different name: _____

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APPENDIX B

General Questions

1. Tell me about yourself?
   a. How long have you worked in ABC healthcare organization? _____?
   b. How long have you worked in this department? _____ years _____months?
2. What comes to mind when you think about the word training?
   a. What kinds of activities or feelings are associated with this term?
3. What is your definition of work-based training? _____
4. How did you feel about learning new information? (Do you find it useful, are you happy to learn about it/them, did you want to search for some more?).
5. What tools help you to learn the information being taught in work-based trainings? (Is it pictures? seeing the text? hearing the information? touching or using the equipment?)
6. What kinds of work-based training have you been involved in as an adult?
   a. (adult development education programs or classes, life skills classes, job training, OSHA 10, CHESP, etc.?) and why?
   b. In your current role? In other companies or organizations? Was the training voluntary or required? _____
   c. What topics/skills did you learn through your work-based trainings?
   d. Who provided the training? (How were they involved in the training? (Do not provide specific names)
   e. How did the teacher share the information with you (lecture, hands on, peer training, combination of one of these?)
7. When do you participate in work-based trainings? is it during work, after work or on the weekend?
8. How do you first learn about trainings offered at work?
   a. What source do you use currently to learn about trainings in the department? (supervisor/manager, coworker? friend? Department meeting? Flyer or other announcements?
9. Can you tell me about a time when participating in work-based training helped you do your job better?

   _____
10. Why are you participating in work-based training s? (Is it for personal reasons, you like learning, the job requires the training, to get ahead in life, etc.?).

APPENDIX C

Research Questions

Research question 1. What are the perceived barriers low wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?

1.   Tell me about any barriers (hinderance) you have experienced while attending a work-based training? Childcare barriers? Transportation barriers? Housing Barriers? Time conflicts?
    a.   Of the barriers you mentioned, what did you do to remove or decrease these barriers?
2.   What barriers exist, which keeps you from learning? Unpleasant experience with education in the past? unpleasant experience with teachers? You learn differently than others? It takes you time to learn new information?
3.   Are there situations in your life that limits your ability to take part in work-based trainings? Can you give me some examples of those limitations?
4.   Have you experienced barriers from supervisors/managers? If so, tell me more?
5.   Have you experienced barriers from coworkers? If so, tell me more?
6.   What types of structures (policies or practices) that exists with Supervisors or Managers who created barriers for you while participating in work-based training? (How was the class organized, what time did it start, how was the program developed?).
    a.   Can you share a story of someone who helped you to decrease these barriers? (Significant other, family member, teacher, friend, etc.?).

Research question 2. What types of support systems if any, do low-wage single, adult mothers participants receive while pursuing work-based voluntary training programs?

1.   What do you think are the factors that motivated/ motivate you to attend classes and getting more training?
2.   Tell me about the support that you receive while participating in work-based training programs that helps you to handle the barriers you experience? Financial support? Family support? Do you take a test or pass certifications? If so, do you need study time or extra tutoring for any reason?
    a.   What do you think would make these work-based training experiences better for you? (Did you need help? did you understand the information presented, etc.?).
3.   Did a supervisor/manager provide support through your training? If so, tell me more.
4.   How did /do your teacher/instructor motivate you to succeed in work-based training?

5. Tell me about your most useful experience participating in a work-based training? (Why did you find them useful, was it too much information, was the teacher helpful to your learning, etc.?).

6. Give me examples of what would make these work-based training experiences better for you? In what ways would these examples help you personally and why? (Family support, teacher support, job, etc.).

7. Some employees who attend work-based trainings drop out and do not finish the class(es). Why do you think this is?

Research question 3. To what degree does participating in work-based voluntary training impact low-wage, single, adult mothers' future career plans?

1. Do you think work-based trainings helps you to get ahead in life? (Do you think it is important for you to succeed in your job or everyday life?). Please explain your answer

2. Do you see any links (ties) between your classroom learning and real-life?
   a. How does work-based training programs connect classroom learning to real life?

3. Do work-based training programs encourage adults to get their future education (academic) and career plans? If so, how?

4. Are all employees encouraged and given an opportunity to attend work-based trainings? (Is it just a few employees? who decides who attends the trainings? Can you share an example of when you personally seen this happen?

5. How does work-based trainings create opportunities for participants to move from entry-level positions to lead positions or even into management positions?

6. What aspects of the work-based training is not beneficial to helping you succeed in your future education (academic) and career plans, please explain?

7. In your opinion how can the quality of training reduce employee turnover or affect employee turnover?
   a. Has your work-based training experience help make you want to stay in your current position or another position in the organization?

8. Did anyone get a better, higher-paying job? A promotion of any kind from participating in work-based trainings?
   a. Any interest in taking your skills elsewhere or working in another department? If so, tell me more.
   b. Any interest in staying with the organization because of the training that you are receiving? If so, tell me more.

9. Thank you for all that valuable information, what else would you like to tell me about work-based learning s that we have not already addressed or discussed? (Is there anything we might have missed or anything you would like to add at this time?).

APPENDIX D

Permission from ABC Healthcare Organization to Implement the Research

THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN

LOW INCOME SINGLE ADULT MOMS

To Whom It May Concern:

Mrs. Lorna Fuller is granted permission from the _____Healthcare

Organization to conduct research for the study: The Impact of Participating in Adult

Education Program on Low Income, Single Moms.

Participation in this study will be voluntary by all individuals and an Informed Consent to

Participate will be obtained for each person. A copy of all Informed Consent documents

will be kept on file at Cleveland State University in a locked file cabinet.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the

following telephone number: 216 xxx-xxxx.

Thank you,

Lorna Fuller

CSU Doctoral Student

APPENDIX E

Consent Form

Cleveland State University
Consent Form

Dear Representative from ABC Healthcare Organization:

My name is Lorna Fuller, and I am a doctoral student in Cleveland States' College of Education and Human Services. I am inviting you to participate in a study regarding the work-based training programs in Environmental Services at ABC Healthcare. The study will include questions about your involvement in the training activities in the department, any barriers you may have faced while participating and the support system, if any you have while completing the training. It is my goal that the information from this study will contribute to a better understanding of how frontline workers like to receive trainings and what mechanisms we should have in place to assist learning. This is NOT an evaluation of the work-based trainings programs in existence at the facility.

Participation in the study includes multiple touch points. First, participants will be asked to complete an initial research question on their demographics, which should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Second, participants will be asked to select a date, time, and location for an in-person interview with the researcher. This interview is expected to last between 45 minutes to one hour. Third, participants will be asked to select a date and time for a follow-up telephone interview, which is expected to last about 15 to 30 minutes and will occur a few weeks after the initial interview. In both the in-person and the telephone interviews, participants will be asked to provide details of specific scenarios that are crucial to their learning in either their training or potential professional development.

Your participation in these activities over the next several weeks are an important component of the research design as it will allow you (as the participant) to develop a rapport with me (as the researcher) and will allow you the necessary time to reflect on your work-based trainings and to provide me with answers that you have carefully considered before responding.

As a participant in this study, your responses will be held confidentially. Neither your name nor the place where you work will appear anywhere in the final written dissertation, and complete privacy will be upheld. Potential risks you might encounter by participating in this study includes potential psychological or emotional discomfort in disclosing your educational or training experiences, but no risk greater than the risks of daily living.

There are no guaranteed direct benefits for participation, although the researcher will offer participates a $10.00 gift card for participating in the study at the end of their interview process. However, indirect benefits may be useful to improve the trainings and development opportunities of frontline employees based on the results of the study.

Participants will be given a chance to review the initial findings and provide feedback and clarity on their responses prior to submission of the final report. The final results of this study will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Education – Leadership and Lifelong Learning at Cleveland State University. Participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time during the study. As a participant, you may also decline to respond to particular interview questions and decline to be audio taped. There is no reward for participating outside the $10.00 gift card or consequence for not participating.

For additional information regarding this research please contact Lorna Fuller at (216) xxx-xxxx/ l.p.fuller@vikes.csuohio.edu, or Dr. JoAnne Goodell at (216) xxx-xxxx/ j.goodell@csuohio.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

You are receiving two copies of this letter. After signing each, keep one copy for your records and return the other one to the researcher as indicated below. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support of this research.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by signing below.

I am 18 years of age or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate.

Name (please print):

_____

Signature:

_____

Date:

_____
Contact Information:

Phone_____

_____

Email

_____

Return to me in person or electronically to: l.p.fuller@vikes.csuohio.edu

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions Matrix

	RQ 1	RQ2	RQ 3
Research Question 1			
What are the perceived barriers low wage, single, adult mothers face while participating in work-based voluntary training programs offered by their employers?	x		
Tell me about any barriers you have experienced while attending a worked-based training program? Childcare barriers, transportation barriers? Housing barriers, time conflicts?	x		
What barriers exist, which keeps you from learning? Did you have an unpleasant experience with education in the past? Unpleasant experience with a teacher? You learn differently than others? It takes you time to learn new information/materials? Can you explain your answer?	x		
Are there situations in your life that limits your ability to take part in work-based trainings? Can you give me some examples of those limitations?	x		
Have you experienced barriers from supervisors/managers? If so, tell me more?	x		
What types of structures (policies or practices) exists with Supervisors or Managers who created barriers for you while participating in work-based training? (How was the class organized, what time did it start, how was the program developed?). Can you share a story of someone who helped you to decrease these barriers? (Significant other, family member, teacher, friend, etc.?).	x	x	
Research Question 2			
What types of support systems if any, do low-wage, single, adult mother participates receive while pursuing work-based voluntary trainings?	x		
What are factors that motivated/ motivate you to attend classes and getting more training?	x		
Tell me about the support that you receive while participating in work-based trainings? Financial support? Family support? Do you take a test or pass certifications? If so, do you need study time or extra tutoring for any reason?	x		
What would make these work-based training experiences better for you? (Did you need help, did you understand the information presented, etc.?).	x		
Did a supervisor/manager provide support through your training? If so, tell me more.	x		

	RQ 1	RQ2	RQ 3
How did /do your teacher/instructor motivate you to succeed in work-based training?	x		
Tell me about your most useful experience participating in a work-based training setting? (Why did you find them useful, was it too much information, was the teacher helpful to your learning, etc.?).	x		
Give me examples of what would make these work-based training experiences better for you? In what ways would these examples help you personally and/or professionally why? (Family support, teacher support, job, etc.).	x		
Some employees who attend work-based trainings finish and other drop out of the class(es). Why do you think this is?	x	x	
Research Question 3			
To what degree do participating in work-based voluntary training impact low-wage, single, adult mothers' future career plans?			
Do you think work-based trainings helps you to get ahead in life? (Do you think it is important for you to succeed in your job or everyday life?). Please explain your answer.			x
Do you see any links (ties) between your classroom learning and real-life? How does work-based training programs connect classroom learning to real life?			x
Do work-based training programs encourage adults to get their future education (academic) and career plans? If so, how?		x	x
Are all employees encouraged and given an opportunity to attend work-based trainings? (Is it just a few employees? who decides who attends the trainings? Can you share an example of when you personally seen this happen?		x	
How does work-based trainings create opportunities for participants to move from entry-level positions to lead positions or even into management positions?			x
What aspects of the work-based training is not beneficial to helping you succeed in your future education (academic) and career plans, please explain?	x		x
In your opinion how can the quality of training reduce employee turnover or affect employee turnover? Has your work-based training experience help make you want to stay in your current position or another position in the organization?		x	x

APPENDIX G

Participants' Ability to Achieve Career Aspirations

APPENDIX H

Training Participation vs Ability to Achieve Career Aspirations

Training Participation vs Ability to Achieve