# THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF STUDENT-PARENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION WHO UTILIZE THE CHILDCARE PROGRAM AT EASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Research Week 2024

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# Agenda

# Introduction

*" I want to provide a better life for my children, as I am the first of my generation to go to college and I want them to follow my example"*

*- Stephanie*

# Rationale for Study

## Practical Significance

Student-parents have garnered substantial attention in educational research; however, much is still unknown about their college experiences

This qualitative phenomenological study was significant because it addressed student-parents direct effects, barriers, and experiences

## Problem Statement

The problem was student-parent experiences using the childcare subsidy program are minimal

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of student-parents who use the Parents for Higher Education childcare subsidy program at Eastern Community College

# McClusky's Theory of Margin

## Theoretical Framework

•McClusky's (1965) theory of margin was utilized to determine student-parent responsibilities in obtaining a degree, learning resources and educational problems

•McClusky developed the theory of margin to explain economics; however it was vital to comprehend the balance between adult learning barriers and motivation (Chao, 2008)
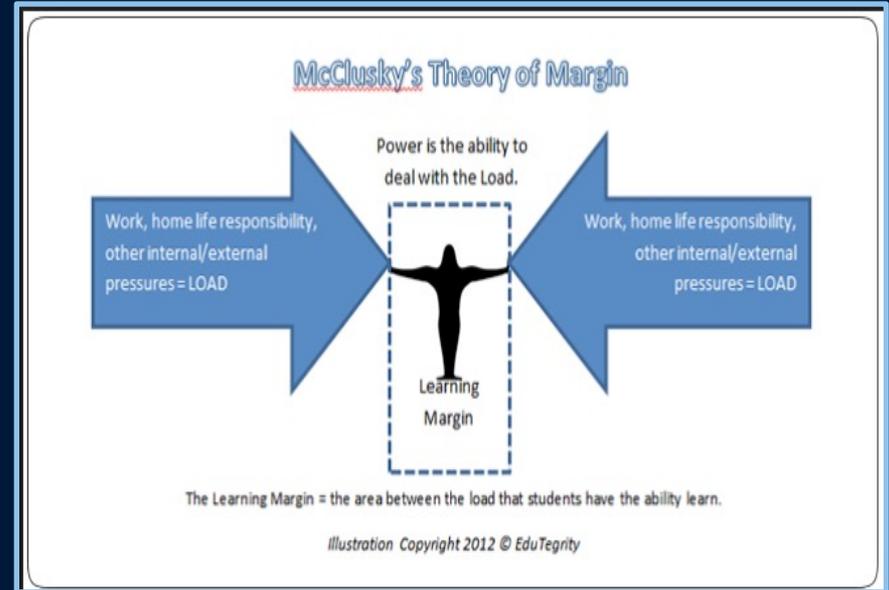
# Research Questions

Central Research Question:

What are student-parent experiences using the  Parents for Higher Education childcare subsidy program at Eastern Community College?

Sub Question 1: What are student-parent perceptions of participating in the Parents for Higher Education childcare subsidy program at Eastern Community College?

Sub Question 2: How does the childcare subsidy program impact student-parents persistence in completing academic goals?

Sub Question 3: What barriers were removed to allow student-parents to receive childcare grants?

# Methodology

Method: Qualitative Research (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Design: Transcendental Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994)

Data Collection: Interviews (Moustakas, 1994)
Focus Groups (Nyumba, 2018)
Observations  (Moustakas, 1994 )

# Research Design

Research Setting: Any US based community college (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Sample: 10 Participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

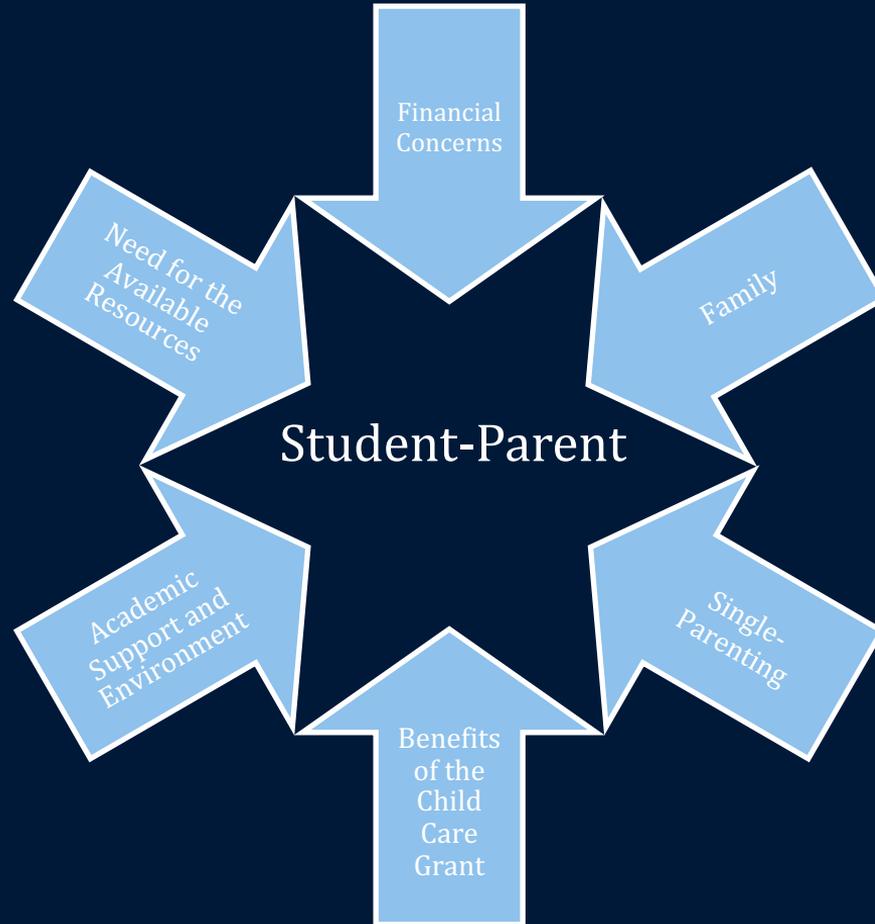Timeframe: Data Collection: 10 weeks

Data Analysis: 10 weeks

# Qualitative Data Analysis

## Approach

Moustakas (1994) and Van Kaam's thematic analysis:

- Member-checked transcription
- Read transcription
- Color-coded similar statements
- Axial coding
- Review themes
- Horizontalization
- Cross-Analyzed
- Delve Tools

# Findings



Student-Parent

- Financial Concerns
- Family
- Need for the Available Resources
- Academic Support and Environment
- Benefits of the Child Care Grant
- Single-Parenting

# Findings

## Financial Concerns

- -Economic Hardships
- -Fear of Living in Poverty
- -Inability to Provide for their Families

"It scares me to think I won't be able to provide for my family"
(Amanda, Interview)

# Findings

### Family

- Motivation
- Commitment toward their families
- Improve their family life

"My parents always provided a life for us, but I could see how much they struggled, and so Iwanted to try to do better and be better a little bit in that regard" (Yolanda, Interview)

# Findings

## Single-parenting

- Parental duties
- Financial responsibilities
- School/Work

"It is tough being a single parent because I have to do everything myself. I must figure out how to get the kids to and from school" (Amanda, Focus Group)

# Findings

Benefits of the childcare grant

- Parent Meetings
- Inconvenient and Costly Alternatives
- Affordable childcare

"I need assistance with childcare, I don't have family here, so I have to have a way for childcare and the county list is so long" (Elgin, Observation)

# Findings

## Academic Support and Environment

- Series of program and services
- Success coaches
- Physical learning environment

"I feel like the school has already provided a good foundation and the appropriate classes and education opportunities"
(Amanda, Interview)

# Findings

## Need for the Available Resources

- Off-campus childcare services
- Community college resources
- Limited and long waiting lists

"Work study, financial aid, and even counseling are all resources I rely on"
(Brandy, Observation)

# Discussion

## Interpretation of the Findings

- Revealed how the lived experiences of student parents align with McClusky's theory of margin.

- Confirmed through lived experiences how student-parents balance load and power.

- Resource for phenomenological research by giving a voice to student-parents participating in a childcare grant program

# Limitations & Delimitations

## Limitations

➢ Participants must earn an associate's degree

➢ A limited number of student-parents (10 participants)

## Delimitations

➢ Only explore student-parents in the childcare grant at Eastern Community College

➢ Selection of phenomenological study

# Recommendations for future research

- ✓ Focus research on single, never married parents
- ✓ Economic disadvantages and the availability of financial assistance to student-parents in the community
- ✓ Future studies to explore community resource demographics of student-parents receiving resources from the local Department of Social Services
- ✓ Examine the demographics of student-parents who are on the waiting list
- ✓ Include experiences of all student-parents at community colleges
- ✓ Conduct quantitative method of student-parent lived experiences
- ✓ Research focus on student-parents from all economic backgrounds (low, middle and high)

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others"

Phillippians 2:4, KJV

# References

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Thank you !