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**PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING AND THE LEARNER WITH
REFERENCE TO THE CONCEPT OF ANDRAGOGY AND PEDAGOGY:
A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERS**

By

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING AND THE LEARNER WITH REFERENCE TO THE CONCEPT OF ANDRAGOGY AND PEDAGOGY: A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the learner perceptions of adolescent mothers with reference to Knowles' concept of andragogy and pedagogy. This qualitative research focused on adolescent mothers, 17 years and under, drawn from different service organizations operating in Ingham County, Michigan, that offer educational programs for adolescent mothers.

Responding to questions from an interview guide, a grounded theory methodology, the participants expressed their perceptions, aspirations, feelings and concerns as learners. These thoughts and ideas emerged as themes and were categorized according to those themes that referred to learning and those referring to themselves as learners.

Among the themes that referred to learning, participants expressed the idea that learning is a never ending process, learning is associated with schooling, and learning is undertaken to satisfy an existing need. On themes about the learner, the participants indicated that the learner has the ability to learn if interested, and the learner could receive

help from a variety of sources. Half of the participants had a limited learning agenda while the other half had a broad learning agenda.

In expressing their feelings, observations and learning preferences, it was apparent that adolescent mothers were pedagogical in their approach to learning and preferred learning from concrete examples. The research found that although adolescents have limited experience when compared to adults, they drew from past experience just like adults. The participants also indicated that in their learning they used reflection and they learned a lot from interacting with other adolescent mothers. However, they felt left-out if they were not involved in school activities such as homecoming, the prom or going out at night as they did before. In addition, they felt that as part of learning, they needed to be involved in real job situations to develop experience. Experience, they observed, was demanded by every prospective employer.

This study verifies that as adolescent mothers are in a transitional stage of development intellectually, socially and physically, they need to be exposed to as many ways of learning as possible in their quest for identity discovery. This necessitates a consideration of their pre-adolescent period as a vital transitional period for gaining exposure to as many career experiences as possible in preparation for the vital career choices they will make during adolescence. Such an exposure may be accomplished through involvement in community services as volunteers where they may also learn to focus on others.

As pedagogical learners, adolescent mothers need to be taught practical subjects in order to develop experience. With experience they tend to veer toward andragogical learning, the type of learning which fosters independent participation in society.

However, andragogical learning in skill acquisition will need to be applied in the classroom for it is the adolescent mother's preferred learning environment.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is a challenge to facilitate learning for adolescent mothers. However, it is essential that such a challenge be faced. The basis for this challenge is the concern that adolescent mothers are people who have been challenged to quickly jump ahead on the developmental “ladder” without the necessary accomplishment of developmental tasks along the way. This research attempted to develop an understanding of the effect such jumping ahead has on the potential of adolescent mothers to fulfill their roles as learners.

Knowles (1984) observed that learning in individuals follows a developmental pattern in that it begins at birth and lasts for a life time. Just as life is marked by different stages of development, so is learning. At birth one is very dependent but grows toward independence during progression toward maturation which occurs during adolescence. There are some assumptions that are held by Knowles regarding learners. He perceives that during the early years learners are very dependent upon instructors but they progress toward self-directing with maturity. The application of this type of transition to adolescent mothers, in the context of understanding their development as learners, creates some interesting dilemmas.

Adolescents are in a transitional stage of development intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically as they develop from childhood into adulthood. Intellectually,

the organization, collection and assimilation of knowledge changes from concrete thinking to abstract thinking in childhood and adolescence, respectively (Piaget, 1963, in Hitch and Youatt, 1995, p. 30). Socially and emotionally, adolescents are searching to know their identity if they successfully fulfilled the demands of the preceding stage of development (Erikson, 1963). Further, adolescents are capable of understanding what is ethical though they may not exercise that capability (Kohlberg, 1975). They also struggle to gain independence from parents while increasing dependency upon their peers. Physical development is rapid and can negatively affect female adolescents' self-image (Hitch and Youatt, 1995, p. 35). According to Knowles, adolescents are biologically mature due to the maturation of the reproductive system. However, the adolescent mother's development as a learner might not be nearly as adult-like due to a variety of transitional events they are experiencing.

This section briefly discusses Knowles' concept of andragogy and pedagogy, adolescent mothers, paradoxes of the andragogy and pedagogy concept with reference to adolescent mothers, implications on the application of the andragogy and pedagogy concept to adolescent motherhood and research questions. The second chapter, literature review, follows.

Knowles' Andragogy and Pedagogy Concept

To understand Knowles' concept of andragogy and pedagogy with reference to adolescent mothers' learning behavior, the following elements are briefly discussed: 1) pedagogy; 2) andragogy; 3) adolescent mothers; 4) paradoxes of andragogy and pedagogy

with reference to adolescent mothers and 5) implications on the application of the andragogy and pedagogy concept to adolescent motherhood.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the science of teaching children. There are six assumptions that are basic to the concept of pedagogy. These include assumptions related to the need to know, self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, learning orientation, and motivation. A brief discussion of each assumption follows.

The need to know. Under pedagogy it is assumed that learners do not choose their learning materials. Teachers are responsible for determining what is to be learned. The knowledge is for future application. Therefore, learners do not need to know how that knowledge will be applied.

Self-concept. It is assumed within a pedagogical view that the learner's self-concept is that of dependency upon the teacher who is the source of knowledge. With development, dependency is supposedly diminished as independence emerges. But culturally, Knowles concedes, this process is slowly permitted and as a result creates tension, resistance, resentment and often rebellion in adolescents.

Experience. The pedagogical view does not recognize the learner's experience. Learning materials such as books, audio-visual aids and the teacher are valued more than experience.

Readiness to learn. The teacher tells the learners what they need to learn in order to pass the examination.

Orientation to learning. What is important to the learner is the subject taught so that learning becomes subject-centered and acquisition of content becomes more important.

Motivation. Grades, prizes, rewards and parental pressure, all being external in origin, are the major sources of learner motivation.

Although adolescents' learning experiences are built on a dependency model, with development the adolescent begins to assume responsibilities. Some start quite early to be self-directing such as taking on part-time jobs and being responsible for certain duties at home. These activities add experience to their lives and facilitate development of self-directing learning. This means that in life situations, the more the adolescent assumes self-directed behaviors, the smoother the transition will be into adulthood.

Andragogy

Andragogy refers to the science of helping adults learn. Knowles states that there are three states of adulthood, including, physiological maturity, where one is able to reproduce, cultural maturity where an individual performs adult roles such as having a job, being a spouse, being eligible to vote, etc., and psychological maturity where one assumes responsibility for one's life and one becomes self-directing. From the andragogical perspective, the basic assumptions promulgated in the pedagogical concept are interpreted differently.

The need to know. In andragogy the need to know is determined by what the learner will benefit from the learning experience. Teaching begins where the learner is and continues to focus on him (Knowles, 1950).

Self-concept. The self-concept of the learner is increasingly self-directing while dependency may occur temporarily.

Experience. Experience among adults is the learner's valued identity. During small group sessions adults like to draw upon their experiences in interactive learning.

Readiness to learn. Readiness to learn is guided by existing needs that might be satisfied by new knowledge of skills. Learners sometimes need assistance to discover their needs.

Orientation. Orientation to learning is a process of developing increased competence to achieve full potential. Knowledge is acquired to facilitate living effectively.

Motivation. Motivation is internal and exerts a greater amount of pressure on the individual. It is an inner feeling of discomfort that drives an individual to seek ways of satisfying a need. In so doing, one develops one's potential in one's own style. Sometimes one may not have the skills and therefore learning veers more towards dependency until the acquisition of the needed skills.

Obviously, in adulthood, learning sometimes necessitates a dependency approach. This means that the concepts of andragogy and pedagogy are rather situational in which case the dominant view about learners is generally pedagogical during the early developmental period and primarily andragogical in adulthood.

Adolescent Mothers

Developmentally, adolescents are at a stage which ends childhood and marks the beginning of adulthood. According to Erikson (1963), adolescence is crucial in that it is

the period when a young person develops identity basic to the formulation of life's goals, beliefs and ideals. Knowles' concept indicates that during adolescence, an individual is basically mature but the western culture is not prepared to grant one full maturity status due to certain basic learning requirements needed to be fulfilled before assumption of adult roles. Adolescent motherhood, though an indication of biological maturity, comes at a time when an adolescent is still learning other skills necessary to facilitate adulthood demands. Knowles states that during adolescence, from middle school through high school age, adolescents perform both roles - as adults and also as children.

Adolescent mothers are individuals who generally drop out of school before acquiring basic survival skills needed for productive participation in society. Economically, they are still dependent upon their parents and/or society while socially they are rather isolated from their peers who are still schooling. Among younger adolescent mothers, the sexual contact they had with the baby's father often does not grow into a lasting relationship. At home, the relationship with parents and siblings is generally strained. In this situation, the adolescent mother feels lonely, forsaken, is often regretful and confused. Although physiologically mature, a significant proportion of adolescent mothers especially those aged fifteen years or under, sustain major health risks for both the mother and the baby due to the crucial demands required by the birth process (Lowe, 1977 in Bogue, 1977, editor, pp. 55, 56; American Dietetic Association, 1989 (89):104-108). Generally, adolescent mothers in society lack the necessary basic survival tools such as education, skills, an economic base and identified life goals progressively acquired during uninterrupted adolescence. Such tools facilitate transition into the adult world where adolescents have a right to fully participate.

Paradoxes of the Andragogy and Pedagogy Concept with Reference to Adolescent Mothers

Knowles' presentation of the concept of andragogy and pedagogy suggests that, ideally, by mid-adolescence an individual should become more self-directing. He asserts that society's demands in requiring a learner's mastery of certain skills, unnecessarily delay a learner's entry into the adult world of work (Knowles, 1984, p. 53). Adolescent mothers, unlike other adolescents, lack basic academic skills due to their dropping out of school. The minimal amount of experience they have further alienates them from being self-directing. Moreover, adolescent mothers are generally ignorant of the developmental demands required by a baby to grow up trusting. They themselves feel rejected and under a traumatic experience. They sense more rejection than acceptance. The baby arrives in a tense environment where it is supposed to obtain nurturance. Unfortunately, the nurturer does not have much to give due to lack of preparation for motherhood and deficiencies in biological and physiological maturity (Wodarski and Wodarski, 1995, p. 11; Kafatos, Christakis and Fordyce, 1969, in Scott, et al., ed., 1981, p. 110). Basically this is a result of a skip in development as opposed to the normal developmental pattern where entrance into adulthood is gradual with life goals defined and societal basic coping skills acquired.

In summary, adolescent mothers might not fully be capable of participating in the adult world of work and parenting responsibilities due to lack of both academic and job skills; basic education, economic base, experience and often, are in poor health. These deficiencies might act as hindrances to adolescent mothers' preparation for the adult world as her development as a learner might not be nearly as adult-like. Motherhood,

however, might act as an internal motivator to make adolescent mothers seek learning to help them cope with its demands.

This research was intended to shed light on the adolescent mother as a learner. What adolescent mothers did to learn what they missed or skipped; what they felt they needed to learn and how they went about learning it - whether from the view of andragogy or pedagogy.

Implications on the Application of the Andragogy and Pedagogy Concept to Adolescent Motherhood

Adolescent mothers are in a complex transitional state from the andragogical perspective due to the centrality it places on experience, and yet, experience is generally lacking in the adolescent mother. In the andragogical view, the learner is self-directing while the adolescent mother's learning experience is that of dependency. From the andragogical perspective, learning is undertaken to meet existing learner's needs. On the contrary, adolescent motherhood begins at a time when learning is undertaken to meet future needs that are, as yet, unknown to the learner. Adolescent mothers may not have established life's goals and values as they are still seeking their identity. Yet, the andragogical view is that learning is goal-oriented. Although adolescent mothers have developed an understanding of what is ethical and can understand fairness and justice so that they are capable of maintaining peer relationships (Kohlberg, 1975), their knowledge as peers is too similar to each other and may not contribute significantly to learning in groups - which is usually a function of the differences among adult members of the group. Under the andragogical view, group work enriches learning as participants are more heterogeneous in their experiences.

In summary, adolescent motherhood seems to be inappropriate for one to be self-directing due to lack of experience, a dependent personality, and a lack of established life goals as adolescent mothers are still searching to know who they are and what they want to be. Limited experiential variability among adolescent mothers is also a major disadvantage. This situation might make adolescent mothers' development as learners not be nearly as adult-like. And yet, it is essential for the adolescent mother to be in control of her own learning. This study attempted to better understand this dilemma by trying to understand adolescent mothers' situation as learners.

Purpose of The Study

The purpose of the study is to obtain a better understanding of adolescent mothers' perceptions of learning and the learner, regarding her:

(a) Self-concept. Is it self-directing or dependent personality? As mothers, do adolescents plan their learning strategies independent of adults? Further, the study intends to find out the implications of abruptly having a baby on the adolescent mother's life.

(b) Experience. With limited experience to draw from, what do adolescent mothers use as the basis for learning to function effectively in society?

(c) Learning orientation. Is the learning orientation of adolescent mothers problem- or subject-centered?

(d) Motivation. What are the adolescent mothers' sources of motivation? Are adolescent mothers internally or externally motivated?

Such knowledge will assist service providers and educators to apply relevant learning strategies in addressing adolescent mothers' needs, and facilitate their evolution into participating citizens in society.

Research Questions

Following are two main questions brought out by the concept of andragogy and pedagogy when adolescent mothers are considered. These questions were the basis for the inquiry of this research and have two points of focus. The first question focuses on learning perceptions. The second question, focusing on the learner, has four sub-sets that inquire about the self-concept, experience, learning orientation and motivation of the learner.

Question #1. What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of learning?

Adolescents' intellectual capabilities are developmentally changing from concrete operations of childhood to a theoretical base where they are able to understand abstract thought and draw relationships (Piaget, 1963). Theoretically, younger adolescents operate in both concrete and abstract terms. Adolescents are in a situation where, in attempting to establish their identity, they try to free themselves from parental control, a major childhood learning base, and establish new ties with their peers. Peers become a new learning source of nonformal learning, especially under strained relationships with parents. Generally, adolescents' self-concept plays a critical role in the physical, cognitive, social, personality and moral development, influenced by significant others, including, parents, peers and teachers. Muth and Alvermann (1992) observed that positive, supportive interactions with parents were associated with feelings of self-worth while lack of such interactions

diminished the feelings. Perceptions of a positive self-worth are basic to reflecting, analyzing one's situation and inquiring, vital elements that effect learning.

The development of accurate perceptions of learning involves judging factors such as task difficulty, circumstances surrounding the task, time limits, and past performance of similar tasks. Also important is self-appraisal, though its application is dependent on experience, an element yet lacking among adolescents. Knowles (1986) argues that children have been conditioned to extrinsic motivators such as pressure from parents, teachers, and the grading system. Adolescents generally become motivated to learn when they compare their academic ability and performance with those of peers. However, motherhood, discharges a girl from free interaction with peers due to isolation following pregnancy and the birth of a baby.

Worden (1991) states that the adolescent stage of development is stressful as an individual tries to cope with the physical, environmental and social pressures to bring about the developmental change. Individuality emerges under these circumstances with normal development. However, added stressors such as motherhood during this critical developmental period might interfere with the normal course of development. Consequently, individuals might not be capable of functioning at their normal developmental level where they can reason and make rational decisions. Such situations might negatively affect their perceptions of learning and hinder them from achieving adult status. Responses to this question will assist educators to better understand how adolescent mothers perceive learning.

Question #2 (a). What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner regarding self-concept? Is it a perception of a self-directing or a dependent personality?

In a study of pregnant adolescent girls aged 14 to 18 years, Waxler (1978) found that 14-year-old pregnant adolescents expressed fears that referred to their families while older adolescents in the study expressed fears that referred to themselves. This finding suggests that younger adolescents might be very dependent on their families while older adolescents are more self-directing. Intellectual dependency is characteristic of 15 year old children but they distrust themselves emotionally (Ames et al., 1995). Emotional instability marks adolescent behavior so that sometimes they might be independent while showing dependency at other times. Hardy and Zabin (1985) argue that self-concept is influenced by social or cultural environment, including the immediate setting of the family, the influence of peers, the interaction of the biological maturation and environmental setting, and the direct influence of hormonal development. Knowles (1980) sees a self-directing learner's self-concept as an independent personality, characteristic of the adult. An adult plans one's own learning strategies independently after identifying one's needs through reflection. By indicating if they plan independently, adolescent mothers will demonstrate that their personality is more self-directing.

Question #2 (b). What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner regarding experience? Do adolescent mothers use experience as a basis for further learning?

Knowles (1980) states that children have not had the experience of making their own living, marrying, having children, taking real community responsibility, or being responsible for the welfare of others. Adolescent mothers, with an abrupt experience of having a baby, might not be aware of their experience because of their pedagogical orientation while schooling, where a learner does not draw on one's experience as the basis for learning (Knowles, 1980). To function effectively, adolescent mothers need to

reflect upon their past experience, including motherhood, and draw from it lessons to facilitate further learning. Do adolescent mothers use their experience as the basis for learning?

Question #2 (c). What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner regarding learning orientation? Is the learning orientation of adolescent mothers problem- or subject-centered?

In his study of adults' learning projects, Tough (1979) observed that adults undertake learning to solve existing problems. Self-directing learners' plans emanate from the encountered problems and, therefore, want to use the new acquired skills to solve existing problems (Knowles, 1980). As such, adults' pursuit of learning shows a degree of urgency. Do adolescent mothers plan in terms of subjects or are their plans based on existing needs and situations?

Question #2 (a). What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner regarding motivation? Are adolescent mothers' sources of motivation internal or external?

Adult learners are motivated to learn to satisfy an existing need, an internal motivator. Ultimate needs of individuals are to achieve a complete self-identity through the development of their full potentialities after meeting basic needs (Knowles, 1980; Maslow, 1970). Consequently, learning is undertaken so that knowledge or skills obtained may facilitate meaningful living. To do this, adults have a self-induced dissatisfaction with the present inadequacies and the knowledge of what ought to be done to improve the condition is what motivates them to learn (Knowles, 1980). Adolescents are generally motivated by grades, prizes, compliments, etc., which are generally referred to as external motivators. Do adolescent mothers use internal motivators to facilitate their learning?

Limitations of The Study

Although adolescent mothers in the United States constitute about ten percent of all women who give birth each year, they are not easily accessed due to the sensitive nature of the issue in society. Being minors, most adolescent mothers remain in their parents' or guardians' homes after the birth of the baby and continue with schooling. By not being the decision makers on issues that affect their lives, adolescent mothers' channels of communicating their feelings, including their perception of learning, are limited. Also, even if service organizations that assist adolescent mothers are identified, the legal implications associated with protection of the individual rights of privacy, further obstruct accessibility of adolescent mothers or information on them.

Possible bias is another major limitation in the study sample. By requesting their voluntary participation, it is possible that the sample might be biased. The research participants, volunteers, were at learning centers and, therefore, were probably already motivated to learn. The geographical location of the study, a single county in a mid-western state of the United States, might limit the application of the findings to other settings.

Assumptions

The principal assumption of this study is that adolescent mothers' perceptions of learning need to be known by service providers and educators, alike. Such knowledge will assist both the providers and the learners to address those needs and help the learners to realize their potentials and play an active role in society. Thus, adolescent mothers will have an opportunity to practice democracy.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined only as they will be used in this study.

Adolescence

Adolescence refers to the age categories less than 20 years, subdivided into three categories, namely: early adolescence (10-14 years), middle adolescence (15-17 years) and late adolescence (18-20 years). During adolescence, the youth try to discover who they are socially, vocationally and sexually and make commitments by choosing goals, values and beliefs to guide them through life. In this study, adolescence refers to the age categories 18 years or less.

Cognitive questions

Cognitive questions are questions that detect what a respondent knows or thinks about the object (Sudman and Bradburn, 1989, p. 123).

Developmentalists

Developmentalists are theorists who believe that under normal conditions, each stage or category of human development has its unique characteristics that must be fulfilled sequentially before proceeding to the next higher stage. If a stage is skipped, adverse consequences are expected in that individual and might negatively affect development.

EFNEP

EFNEP is an acronym of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. It is a Federal aid program that targets families with children by assisting them to improve the adequacy of daily diets through increased knowledge and skills development in food preparation. Participants are taught to plan and prepare nutritious low-cost meals. In

Ingham county, where 73 percent of the participants are on WIC, EFNEP participants average about 12 percent (Ingham County's Summary of Adult Participant Profiles, Reporting period: 09/01/1994 - 08/31/1995).

Motherhood

Motherhood refers to women who are either pregnant or have had a baby.

Psychosocial development

Psychosocial development refers to a characteristic of the adolescent where a sense of role identity develops socially, vocationally and sexually. Failure to accomplish this aspects of development leads to confusion as to who one is socially, vocationally and sexually (Erikson, 1963).

WIC

Federal nutrition assistance, Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children. It targets low-income women of child-bearing age and are at nutritional risk; and children from birth to five years also at nutritional risk. Nutrition education, referral services and health monitoring are the services provided by WIC with food supplement being the strongest element of the program.

Qualitative interview

Qualitative interview is a method of interviewing a participant so that other observations are made. Questions may be planned as well as spontaneous; in either case, a participant is given an opportunity to express his/her views of the situation with minimal interference from the interviewer (Casley and Kumar, 1989).

Interview guide

An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored during an interview (Patton, 1987). It is prepared to help guarantee that the same type of information is obtained from a number of people. The interview guide also assists the interviewer to remain focused when used as a checklist during an interview to ensure all important points are covered.

Overview of The Study

This chapter has presented Knowles' concept of andragogy and pedagogy, adolescent mothers' characteristics, paradoxes of the application of andragogy and pedagogy with reference to adolescent mothers, and implications on the application of the concept to adolescent motherhood. Also presented were the purpose of the study, the research questions, limitations of the study, assumptions and the definition of terms. The next chapter, Chapter Two, will present available information from a review of literature. Chapter Three presents the research methods that were applied in collecting data, Chapter Four discusses findings and Chapter Five presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learning occurs throughout the different stages of life and at each stage learning may have a specific purpose. Adolescent mothers assume the adult role of motherhood during the period of their identity formation (Erikson, 1963), as they learn both academic and non-academic skills required by society. Such skills facilitate their participation in adult life. This research investigated the effect “jumping ahead” on the developmental milieu had on adolescent mothers as learners.

To better understand an adolescent mother’s situation and how it might impact learning, the following issues are briefly examined: 1) adult learning 2) adolescents 3) adolescent development; 4) adult development and adolescent motherhood; 5) learning styles and 6) problems of adolescent motherhood.

Adult Learning

Knowles (1984) suggests that differences exist in learning styles of adults and children. He notes that adult learners manifest greater learning variability among themselves than younger learners because of the varied experiences adults have acquired by having lived longer. Further, learning is frequently undertaken by adults to satisfy an existing need and generally ends as soon as that need is quenched. However, satisfaction

of a need creates an awareness of other needs of a different nature, so that learning of a different nature is usually undertaken. Adult learning emphasizes situations and not subjects and while focusing on the learners, specifically, the curriculum for the adult is structured to target the learner's needs. In addition, learning among adults, is viewed as an act of free-will, a cooperative venture in a non-authoritarian informal manner, with a chief purpose of discovering the meaning of experience. Affirming that education is life, Lindeman conceived it as a process coterminous with life and that it revolves about non-vocational ideals (Lindeman, 1926). Dewey (1905) in Knowles (1984) saw learning as occurring through experience, democracy, continuity and interaction among learners. Knowles (1984) views learning as a continued process of development where learners become more independent and self-directing as they accumulate experience. Adults may be dependent only temporarily while developing competencies but generally are self-directing learners. Rogers (1969) in Knowles (1990) defined the following elements of experiential learning: it has a quality of personal involvement, it is self-initiated, it is evaluated by the learner and its essence is meaning.

Adolescents

Contrary to adults, adolescents are in the process of acquiring skills and/or experience. Petersen and Leffert (1995) argue that capacities of adolescents and areas in which adolescents are immature ought to be considered, despite the visual impression of adult status they might give. Developmentally adolescents seem to be unstable as they try to establish their identity in society. Consequently they tend to vacillate in behavior so that at times they act like adults by distancing themselves from parents and at other times

they are more like children when they manifest closeness to parents (Worden, 1991, p.4). Worden further states that puberty makes adolescents separate themselves from parents and adults, and look to peers for emotional support. Thus, peers become the major out-of-school source of learning. During this transitional period, turmoil is characteristic and sometimes creates a crisis as adolescents try to discover themselves socially, vocationally and sexually within the family setting (Erickson, 1963).

In a family situation, identity formation may either be stimulated if differences are accurately perceived among members or it might be inhibited if differences are not permitted (Worden, 1991, p. 3). Adolescence is thus a period of instability, experimentation with, and establishment of, sexual relationships, discovering self, acquiring skills and developing life's goals. Failure to successfully develop skills and formulate life's goals limits the adolescents' potential for success in school, home and communities thus becoming a national risk.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education in their report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983)* quoted by Serna and Lau-Smith (1995), identified the at risk youth as those with limitations due to specific ecological, social, and psychological problems exhibited through negative behaviors including suicide, school dropout, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, behaviors associated with child abuse and health problems due to sexual transmitted diseases (including AIDS).

Lack of skills and a sense of hopelessness were identified as major elements that prevent at risk populations from realizing their potentials (Serna and Lau-Smith, 1995). Further, the researchers reported that students who succeeded and overcame life barriers had access to supportive and encouraging teachers, many appealed to ministers, older

friends and models for emotional support. They also exhibited good social skills, were able to set goals, problem solve and persist toward attaining what they believed would help them achieve a positive and meaningful life.

Knowles (1990) sees different definitions of 'adult,' including biological, legal, social and psychological. Biological adulthood is achieved when an individual is capable of reproducing. This may occur during early adolescence. Legal adulthood refers to the age at which an individual may vote, get a licence or marry while in social adulthood an individual becomes an adult when he/she is able to participate in the job market, can become a parent or can vote. The psychological definition of an adult refers to the time when one becomes self-directing and is responsible for one's life. All these definitions of an 'adult' occur during adolescence.

Adolescent Development

According to Petersen and Leffert (1995), adolescence is the period of development between the ages of 10 and 20 years, organized in three different phases. From infancy, it is the second fastest growth period. Adolescence is affected by development in childhood, and shaped by subsequent prospects of adulthood as children gradually achieve social and emotional maturity. Elliott (1982) argues that the onset of adolescence has been shown to be a critical time in the development of self-concept. The way self is presented portrays one's behavior identity so that others may access elements of self which are considered appropriate. Elements selected for presentation may or may not correspond to the actor's perceived real self. The actor sometimes creates impressions believed to be inaccurate reflections of the real self-image. Sometimes, to impress, an

adolescent may project an impression of self to which one aspires with little hope of achievement.

Elements of adolescent development to be briefly discussed below include: stages of adolescent development, identity formation, adolescence and psychological development, adolescence and cognitive development, and adolescence and psychosocial development. This study focused on the first two phases of adolescent development.

Stages of development

Petersen and Leffert (1995) outline the following phases of adolescent development and their effect on the psychological, cognitive and psychosocial development: a) early adolescence (10-14 years); b) middle adolescence (15-17 years) and c) late adolescence (18-20 years). In addition, identity formation is also presented here. Hardy and Zabin (1991) observe that for most individuals, the developmental stage one is at, either limits or facilitates one's ability to handle some tasks in a given situation, and yet each task accomplished is seen as an important prerequisite to the structuring of the next task, as might be seen in the discussion at each of the following developmental stages.

Early adolescence (10-14 years). The early adolescent phase is characterized by pubertal development manifested by increased physical growth that demands greater intake of nutrients. There is apparent somatic characteristics triggered by hormonal changes that result in rapid growth of height, weight and other physical characteristics including sexual maturity. The average American girl adds more than 10 inches in height and 40-50 pounds in body weight during the 5 adolescent years of greatest growth, from ages 10-14 (Christian and Greger, 1994, p. 540). The timing of these pubertal changes is different with individuals and impacts other aspects of adolescent development. Pubertal

development does not produce maturation in other areas although it affects one's self-concept.

However, in cultures with Sahelian economies like the Housa of Nigeria, the adolescent stage of development in girls is compressed so that at age 11, a girl is old enough to marry and is expected to assume adult responsibilities (Bledsoe and Cohen, 1993). The western view of development and the importance of self-concept might not be applicable in this culture. In cultures with industrially influenced economies, the view of adolescent development may be applied. Steinberg (1981) in his study of adolescent boys noted that pubertal maturation has substantial social and psychological consequences.

Muth and Alvermann (1992) observed that self-concept, also referred to as self-esteem, plays a critical role in a young adolescent's physical, cognitive, social, personality and moral development. It defined a person's perceptions of him or herself. One's facets of self-concept are increased with development and perceptions of an individual's self-concept are influenced by the evaluations of significant others such as family members, peers and teachers. Simmons and Parsons (1983) noted that the locus of younger adolescents was external while that of older adolescents was internal, meaning that younger adolescents were more influenced by others than other adolescents.

Hardy and Zabin report their observations of the effect of pubertal development on self-concept as follows:

“Social or cultural environment, including the immediate setting of the family, the influence of peers, the interaction of biological maturation and environmental setting, and the direct influence of hormonal development all affect sense of self at puberty. A past history of achievement or failure, of cognitive and psychological tasks completed or incomplete, and of aspirations or expectations that grow out of that history all affect the crucible in which those influences are translated into action. Thus,

individuals are not seen simply as products of biology, family, or culture, but as interactive agents whose ability to resist the pressure of society and of their pubertal development are, and remain their own.” (Hardy and Zabin, 1991, p. 27).

Pubertal change has an effect on body image and self-esteem in that it is generally viewed more negatively by girls because they become dissatisfied with their height and weight. Also, girls who mature early tend to date more and spend more time with friends (Muth and Alvermann, 1992).

Puberty also disrupts adolescents’ family routine in that they begin to participate in family meals less frequently due to outside engagements such as jobs, school functions and time to be out with peers. Such engagements contribute to popularizing snacking, with fast foods being a major source. Studies indicate that girls aged 11-16 tend to have the poorest diets of any age or sex group in the United States (Christian and Greger, 1994, p. 541). This increases an adolescent mother’s chances of having an infant born at risk because at this stage, many adolescents have not fully learned about basic nutritional needs for themselves (Honig, 1978, p. 118).

Middle adolescence (15-17 years). Middle adolescence is characterized by dominance of peer orientation and moral development. According to Kohlberg (1976); Petersen and Leffert (1995), there is a shift from the primitive preconventional modes of reasoning, observed during childhood, to those that are more sophisticated, principled, and rise during early adolescence. During this phase, adolescents can better understand other people’s wishes and perspectives. Conflict with parents which starts during the pubertal

stage reaches a plateau as adolescents try to discover themselves socially, vocationally and sexually.

During this period, adolescents are trying to gain respect, trust, and some independence (Call, 1996). Further, Call states that having images of possible selves help to direct behavior as adolescents are motivated to pursue and realize the goal they set for themselves. In a study of helpfulness at home among 9th and 10th grade girls, Call found that competence and helpful acts were reciprocally related over time. When they were in 12th grade, the same adolescent girls were given more responsibilities at home and were relied upon more. The results showed that the autonomy they were given fostered their feelings of competence. Similarly, 11th grade boys' competencies that were observed, were related to the perceived support from their fathers, and in 12th grade, their perceived competencies were from having support from both parents.

While Gilligan (1982) sees major gender developmental differences, Waterman (1985), however, observes that substantial research on both genders covering both individuation and interpersonal aspects of identity formation indicate more gender similarities than differences. Identity formation involves a series of particular interrelated tasks by which an individual establishes personal goals, values and beliefs. Sometimes adolescents defy authority to demonstrate how they feel and think about themselves (Sander, 1991, p. 34). Gibbered (1988) notes that sometimes adolescents continually charge at the teacher with arguments and insolence as a test of his integrity, and a way of discovering their own will, and developing their morals and intellects.

At age 15 adolescents begin to be aware of values, skills and may make occupational choices (Waterman, 1985). This phase of development becomes

foundational to adult transition with appropriate pubertal experience. If lacking such experience, the adolescents' cognitive abilities and decision-making capacities are curtailed. Crites (1989) in Stern and Eichorn, eds. (1989) states that evidence suggests that adolescent females often change their consistent career choices at the beginning of junior high, to choices that conform with sex stereotypes in senior high school. Crites notes that vocational development among adolescents occurring through the labor market and paid jobs is important during adolescence.

With increased experience, adolescents become more aware of the risks and acquire the capacity to think about the future, leading to the development of a reasoning ability comparable to the adults.' Honig (1978) maintains that in order for an adolescent to develop into a reasonably self-reliant, adaptable, creative and self-disciplined person, there must be many opportunities to learn these patterns during developmental years.

Late adolescence (18-20 years). Late adolescence is also known as the early adulthood transitional phase (Levinson, 1978). Psychosocial development manifests itself through decreased conflict with parents in late adolescence. Autonomy leads to decreased parental supervision as adolescents establish other stronger heterosexual relationships that advance to marriage. During this phase the adolescent enters the adult world of work and plays adult roles of voting and establishing one's own family after exiting from parental custody (Knowles, 1984). Learning during this time might be situational in that it is career-oriented, offering an adult the needed economic base.

Identity formation

As components of the developmental process, the biological, social and individual dimensions influence the emergence of one's personality. According to Erikson (1968)

cited in Waterman (1985), during development, the biological dimension partially dictates an individual's gender role identity. Regarding the social dimension, society is responsible for enhancing the development of personality by providing individuals with opportunities to explore appropriate alternatives that lead to productive lives. Adolescents raised under highly punitive, erratic or indifferent family situations may have less self-esteem and fewer internal resources to help them deal responsibly with parenting (Honig, 1978, p. 115). Referring to the individual dimension, Erikson suggests that individual uniqueness demands a selective, reflective approach over the past, present and future important experiences, a process that requires an individual's resistance to peer pressures while responding to appropriate life's models. The self-consciousness of puberty, parental and peer pressures, media influences and underdeveloped cognitive skills may prevent an adolescent from discovering an appropriate sex role to enhance personal fulfillment.

Marcia (1966) in Waterman (1985) developed a method of assessing identity formation. Four stages of identity are suggested, including: 1) **identity achiever** - an individual who explores and develops commitments that translate into actions that are undertaken. Identity achievers demonstrate a sense of confidence, stability and optimism about the future; 2) **moratorium stage** - a state of crisis one experiences to arrive at a choice. To resolve the crisis, information is sought through reading, taking course work, talking with friends, parents, teachers and experimenting with different life styles. Moratorium may not provide answers, but may influence one to decide; 3) **foreclosure** - a stage in which one never experiences a crisis, but develops commitment to particular goals, values or beliefs modeled by significant others such as parents, siblings, teachers or media figures. A foreclosed individual steadily sets and fulfills the goals once they are set

and 4) **identity diffusion** - an individual does not have firm commitments. No decisions are made regarding goals, values and beliefs. There are no thoughts about the future but one may engage in activities in response to external pressure.

Lack of a sense of identity leads one to develop negative emotional states including pessimism, apathy, boredom, unfocused anger, alienation, personal confusion and feelings of helplessness or hopelessness. Some individuals continue to experiment or explore without commitment. Although identity formation cannot be predicted, there are specific patterns by which it emerges. Adolescents follow different identity developmental patterns that are maintained by social supports.

Adolescence and psychological development

The timing of developmental changes during adolescence varies in individuals. Developmental changes impact other aspects of development such as body image and self-esteem that increase with adolescence. Increased maturation among girls might be viewed negatively and is generally associated with more negative psychological outcomes. This aspect might be the crucial factor in the development of psychological problems (Petersen and Leffert, 1995). Echoing the same sentiment, Hardy and Zabin (1991) note that factors such as an underdeveloped sense of identity, or an immature perception of personal risk and the added pressure of early maturation compound a young girl's need for contact and affection. These factors may accelerate a young girl's sexual experience before she is emotionally prepared to understand its implications. This can short-circuit the completion of the psychological process of her individuation. Jones and Battle (1990) argue that adolescents need to see that it is to the best of their interests to delay pregnancy and that it is the role of educators to convince them that there are more positive activities in which

they could engage to gain feelings of hope, competence and optimism that translate into delayed parenthood. Activities known to foster development of positive feelings include: basic knowledge of problem-solving skills; understanding growth, development and health risks; understanding the value of work, developing healthy work attitudes by exposure to a variety of jobs; understanding the role of an individual in society and identity formation.

Contrarily, Waterman (1985) indicates that the knowledge that one's goals, values and beliefs are still indefinite gives rise to feelings of anxiety, frustration and a sense of urgency especially during a crisis such as adolescent pregnancy or motherhood. As a result an adolescent mother seeks to acquire information, non-formally, through reading, taking relevant course work, talking to parents, friends or other people knowledgeable in the area of interest deemed useful in resolving the crisis. Waterman (1985) further suggests that, although at 15 an adolescent may be capable of making occupational choices, if not made, occupational indecision might reflect identity indecisiveness. Such a condition might lead to ambivalence in making appropriate learning choices to abate an existing crisis.

Adolescence and cognitive development

Muth and Alvermann (1992) suggest attention, perception, memory, decision-making and planning as important cognitive elements. Adolescents have sophisticated capacities for decision-making but lack of experience taxes their cognitive abilities and decision-making skills and reduces the cognitive capacity (Santelli, et al.; Petersen & Leffert, 1995; Kohlberg, 1976). Consequently, adolescents might respond impulsively to situations without consideration for the effects. Piaget (1963), in Hitch and Youatt

(1995), observes that adolescent cognitive development involves changing from operating through concrete examples to applying abstract thought.

Muth and Alvermann further note that some adolescents only consider their view point, egocentrism. They suggest that this behavior is due to a failure in separating themselves from others and the rest of the world, during development. As a result, some adolescents focus on an imaginary audience by feeling that everybody is concerned about their behavior. Meanwhile, under normal conditions, the adolescent cognitive development parallels psychological changes leading to the development of a stable self-concept that enables the adolescent to make crucial decisions in the development of internal standards that direct one to practice democracy (Kohlberg, 1975). However, in early adolescence, such a state might not yet be quite accomplished. Allen (1964), reported by Honig (1978), observes, in his study of low-income girls aged 12 to 20 years, that at first these girls lacked the indices of emotional maturity. They had a very short attention span, were in perpetual movement, found it difficult to tolerate frustration, had intense conflicts in their families so that it was difficult to arrange a meeting with the mother and were filled with complaints against different adults. After a few years of working with them, the same girls were able to stabilize and have a new concept of time and planning, and could talk with each other without fighting. With time, the girls achieved the necessary cognitive development. Another aspect of adolescent development involves their belief that they are invincible. This leads to risk-taking behaviors including those that result in unwanted pregnancies (Hardy and Zabin, 1991, pp. 20-23).

Adolescence and psychosocial development

Socially, adolescents are characterized by greater compliance with the peers' dictates while distancing themselves from adults' counsel. Ironically, sexual activity becomes part of the relationship expression and experimentation with the opposite sex, practices that are without financial backing and devoid of parenting skills required for the inevitable outcome (Jones and Battle, 1990). Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood occurring during this critical period of development is characterized by inadequacies and deficiencies in preparation for the ensuing adult role of parenting. Negative outcomes of these inadequacies and deficiencies include low self-esteem that develops and a discontinuation of the interactive communication with other adolescents (Freeman et al., 1992, pp. 123-140). Furstenberg (1987) found that the stress adolescent mothers were under as teenage parents passed on deficits to their offspring, which even the parents' eventual success could not ameliorate.

Adult Development and Adolescent Motherhood

Developmentalists (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1975; Levinson, 1978) observed that life was marked by different developmental phases, that were long and stable, and were separated by rather short and unstable transitions. A transition terminated the existing developmental phase and facilitated the emergence of a new one. Levinson (1978) noted that definite characteristics unique to that phase were framed in a stable phase that preceded and followed a transition. The emergence of new phases after stable periods enabled individuals to perform new tasks (Lasker, et al. 1980, p.15). Children assumed more responsibilities as they acquired a mature status. Maturity along the developmental continuum led to adulthood. Prochaska, et al. (1994), confirm that it is through the life's

transitional phases that change in a person occurs, including the change that occurs during adolescence.

Adolescence is, therefore, a transitional phase that spans childhood and adulthood during which childhood behavior gradually gets phased out as more adult roles are acquired. On the other hand, motherhood, intrinsically known as an adult role, has no typical transition (Furstenberg Jr. 1987, p. 21). Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood are situations that surprise unsuspecting girls during transition to adulthood. They might, therefore, be viewed as detours along the life journey of an adolescent girl whose apparent sexual maturity generally is a mismatch to other immature aspects of development such as social, vocational and emotional, needing further maturity before assumption of adult responsibilities. Consequently, families, communities and society through such organizations as public, non-governmental and volunteer, have attempted to find ways of best assisting adolescent mothers get back on course by helping them achieve economic independence, self-reliance and fulfillment of their psychological and economic needs required to mature and become self-directing adults.

However, the alarming increase in adolescent motherhood as the age at which adolescent motherhood begins continues to decline, indicates that such efforts still have a long way to go to make a significant impact on the situation. Freeman, et al. (1992) suggest the following factors as contributory to the reduced impact in services offered to assist adolescent mothers: (a) lack of focus on social policies that negatively contribute to the situation; (b) lack of input from adolescent mothers themselves or those close to them; (c) lack of inclusion of the clients' affective reactions such as their lack of hope, their fears, and conflicts about the completion of their education; (d) programs are located in

areas that have negative connotations for many clients and (e) staff are not representative of the client group they serve (Freeman, et al., 1992, p. 132). Factors such as these deter adolescent mothers from becoming self-directing learners as learning is also affected by personal history that might include previous experiences, childhoods, formal schooling, etc. (Apps, 1991, pp. 37-43).

Seeing that self-directing learning may be facilitated by different learning styles, a brief discussion of learning styles follows.

Learning Styles

Adults are comfortable with the learning method they know although exposure to different methods may help them discover which method is better for them. They prefer to have some control over place, pace at which learning is presented and time for learning. Problem-centered learning is preferred so that it may have immediate application. According to Brookfield (1986), a collaborative mode of teaching and learning enhances the self-concept of adult learners and results in more meaningful and effective learning.

There are four learning styles suggested by Krietlow (1987) in Klevins, Editor (1987), namely: individual, small group, large group and mass education. Each learning style is briefly discussed in the following text.

Individual learning

There is an inherent openness between the teacher and the learner in that both feel free to stop, start, back up or change direction of learning, if necessary. The teacher facilitates the development of educational experiences for the learner by working together

with the learner in planning and setting learning goals. The learner suggests to the facilitator what works best for him/her.

Small group learning

Adults prefer participating in what is taught and also like to help teach. The small group is the preferred learning style for adults due to availability of resources. Adults are interested in seeing the immediate outcomes from the learning experience. The facilitator in small group learning must be a patient listener who will allow group participation and questioning to occur. Learner participation is the most important factor in small group learning.

Large group learning

Large group learning may be challenging to both the learner and the facilitator in that the group is unfamiliar and lacks the closeness of the small group. Specialists may be brought in and more materials and visual devices may be used to make the sessions more interesting. Generally, large groups are also broken into smaller groups and responsibilities are delegated to the learners.

Mass learning

Organizations and agencies plan to teach through this style and learners are generally anonymous. New means to reach large numbers of learners are carefully organized through radio, television and satellite communication. Sometimes other styles of learning are blended into mass communication to achieve the desired learning outcomes. By getting feedback from learners, mass learning may be more personalized.

Learning may be undertaken by using different styles. The preferred learning style for adults is the small group. Learner participation is the most important factor in small

group learning. As adolescent mothers become isolated from their peers due to motherhood, individual learning techniques might be more suitable for some instruction but a combination of techniques in which different learning styles might be applied may enrich the learning experiences of adolescent mothers.

Problems of Adolescent Motherhood

Campbell, et al. (1986) notes that the adverse consequences of teenage motherhood include the risks leading to poor health and inappropriate physical development of both the offspring and the mother. In both developed and developing countries, adolescent fertility is generally perceived as a moral problem: one of illicit sexual activity (Bledsoe and Cohen, Eds., 1993:1-9; King, 1990:36). Besides health problems, teenage motherhood's problems that impact society include both economic and social problems. Following is a brief discussion of some of the adolescent mothers' health, social and economic problems impinging upon U.S. adolescents.

Adolescent mothers' health problems

Honig (1978) reported that, healthwise, adolescent mothers in the U.S. had a maternal death risk which was 60 percent higher than that of mothers in their twenties; and if pregnant, those 15 years or younger were at a higher risk for preeclampsia - high blood pressure accompanied with urinary protein loss - which led to premature births. As they were confronted with multiple complications, adolescent mothers sought information on mothering from their sexually active adolescent peers (Honig, 1978; Furstenberg Jr., 1987; Salholz, et. al. 1990).

Lewit (1992) observed that teenage pregnancy required a full complement of prenatal care services to maintain health because the teenager herself was still a child. However, he noted the following problems in assuring adequate medicare for adolescents: adolescents were generally uncomfortable with the traditional healthcare settings and had inadequate resources to pay for the care; some services required parental consent and physicians were uncomfortable with adolescent patients. In addition, Lewit noted that negative outcomes such as increased pre-term births, low weights, infant death within the first year and, often, emotional problems at school were common among children of adolescent mothers.

A 1988 study of the participants of the Federal nutrition assistance Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) disclosed that 10 percent of all WIC women participants were under the age of 18 years at their certification and about 80 percent of them were single (PC 88, 1990, Vol.1, p. 1). The same study revealed that 60 percent of the children on WIC, 4 months and younger, were at nutritional risk.

Social problems

Besides the WIC program, there were other public aid programs in which qualifying mothers on WIC also participated. Some of these included (Table 2.1):

Table 2.1 Public Aid Programs In Which Some Mothers on WIC Participate

<u>Type of Program</u>	<u>Percentage of WIC Participants</u>
Food Stamps	46
Medicaid	46
AFDC	32
National School Lunch	27
Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program	20
School Breakfast	16
EPDST	12

A study by Broman (1981) found that the deficits associated with teenage motherhood seven years after the birth of the first child included: 1) low educational level, 2) failure to get married so that the child is raised by a single parent and 3) continued dependency on public assistance. Polit (1987) also noted that the ages of the mothers and their youngest children were among the most important predictors of welfare duration. It was further indicated that more than one-half of all the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) expenditures were for households in which the mother was a teenager at the birth of the first child (Polit, 1987). Adolescent motherhood diminished a young woman's educational and vocational achievement. In addition, Polit further pointed out that teens lacked educational credentials, work experience, and only had limited job skills. Continuing along the same thought, Reis, et al. (1987) reported that teenage parents were widely regarded as being atypical at child rearing due to emotional immaturity or low ego development, lack of child development knowledge and general inexperience with child rearing. Bierman and Bierman (1978) assert that an adolescent mother's developmental tasks make it difficult for her to give optimal mothering to her child. In some cases, adolescent mothers acquire unrealistic expectations and make excessive demands that interfere with children's growth and development. Bierman and Bierman further suggest professional intervention, education and support for both the mother and the child during the first few years of the infant's life. Intervention by a psychiatric worker is advised when social interaction of the adolescent mother with her child or with her own mother breaks down. Black and Bentley (1995) argue that adolescent parenthood is inconsistent with the tasks of education, career development and independence.

Although adolescent motherhood might be viewed as a problem of teenage girls, its consequences negatively impact families, communities and society as a whole. The complex situation deters adolescent mothers from completing basic education, high school, and establishing vocational goals. Developmentally, the normal transition from childhood to early adulthood is disrupted and subsequently new conditions that threaten society are created. These include: a) increased number of immature single mothers; b) increased welfare recipients; c) increased lowly paid and unskilled employees and d) increased number of immature infant births requiring constant specialized medical attention. With reference to single parenthood, a study on the use of time by single parents (Chia-Yu Liu, 1986) found that adolescent mothers spent more time watching the television than on other household tasks. Studies suggest that adolescent motherhood creates perpetual welfare recipients because when the children grow up, they also fall in the same trap of not graduating from a life of poverty as they too become teenage parents before acquiring the basic, and yet, necessary survival skills. Furstenberg Jr. (1987) found that early parenthood had a higher risk of disrupted homes where children ended up in foster care. Adolescent mothers fell short of achieving economic independence as at least 30 percent of them were on public assistance and remained there for the next 17 years. The extended stay on welfare disrupted the natural progression of an adolescent from the childhood phase to early adulthood.

Economic problems

Adolescent mothers generally terminate their formal education before completion because they drop out of school upon becoming pregnant, a known leading cause of school dropout (Honig, 1978; Roose, 1984). It was reported in a study by Moore, et. al. (1979)

that girls who bore a child at 15 or younger completed only 9 years of schooling on the average. Those who had a first birth at 16 or 17 completed 10½ years, on the average. Age at first birth was the strongest influence on a young woman's schooling. The same study found that women who achieved at least a high school education were only half as likely to receive AFDC. Not even half of teenage mothers aged 17 years or younger manage to complete 12 years of education. Also, the study found very little evidence that teenage mothers were able to catch up later with their peers who delay childbearing. Early motherhood is also associated with larger families later in life, thus teenage mothers face heavy economic demands.

Under normal development, at the age of about 16, an adolescent depends more on peer approval, tries to "experiment" with sexual life, searches for vocational identification and advances towards establishing intimacy (Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978). Motherhood at this stage prevents the adolescent from acquiring basic skills to facilitate life's early transition stage into adulthood. This break in preparation for full participation in society robs an adolescent mother of independence, self-esteem, and control over her life. Such a teen faces limited life options and is at most risk of early parenthood (Adams; Adams-Taylor & Pittman, 1989). As mentioned earlier, parents, government and private organizations are aware of the problem adolescent mothers face and are working towards ameliorating its adverse effects. As a solution to the problem, some adolescent mothers remain at their parents' homes to continue with schooling. However, Furstenberg Jr. (1987) and Black and Bentley, (1995) argue that co-residence tends to foster continued dependency so that adult responsibilities are not fully assimilated. Such an arrangement robs an adolescent of an opportunity to maximize development of one's parenting skills,

including potentials. In addition, Montemayor (1983) noted that community effects upon adolescents were not explained by the education level of their parents, suggesting that the community has a greater influence on adolescents than their parents.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative interview method using the grounded theory approach was applied. In this section, the qualitative research method, qualitative interviews, rationale for the research methodology and the development of research questions are presented. In addition, population, sample, instrumentation, data analysis, validity and reliability are explained.

The Qualitative Research Methodology

Van Maanen (1983) quoted by Schmoll (1993) states that qualitative research seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of certain more or less, naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. There are four major types of qualitative research, namely: (1) case studies; (2) life histories; (3) ethnography and (4) grounded theory.

Case studies

Case studies are reports with rich detailed descriptions so that the reader may share the described experiences. Case studies can be used to generate sources of data that can be subjected to constant-comparative analysis (Schmoll, 1981). Several case studies in a

given situation can be used to identify common concepts that may, in turn, serve as a basis for a theory.

Life histories

Life histories are detailed sequential accounts of events in a person's life that may be either autobiographies or biographies. Life histories cover peoples' lives rather than historical points as is the case with case studies.

Ethnography

In ethnography, data in the form of detailed notes are compiled over a long period of observing the subjects and are constantly analyzed to draw meaning from them (Schmoll, 1981). Interviews, generally, add an inner perspective to outward behaviors. In this way, interviews are a source of meaning and elaboration for program observations. Entities that cannot be directly observed are interviewed (Patton, 1987).

Grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967), also, Strauss and Corbin (1990) observe that the grounded theory method is deductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. Through systematic data collection and analysis, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified. One begins with what is and then what is relevant emerges. Statements with similar properties rising from the data are grouped to form a theme or a category with enough features in common. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that a theory evolves through a simultaneous data selection, coding and analyzing and reflecting on what has been done. The researcher's theoretical sensitivity derived from both personal and professional experiences, plus literature review are incorporated during the process. The process between data selection and analysis is dynamic in the development of a

theory. A well constructed grounded theory has the following characteristics: (1) it fits; (2) it has understanding; (3) it has generality and (4) it is controlled. The grounded theory illuminates the area under study.

Qualitative Interviews

This research used the individual interview technique. Patton (1987) indicates that the purpose of interviewing is to allow individuals to enter other people's perspectives. The interviewer undertakes the task of making it possible for the interviewee to bring the interviewer into his/her world. Thus high-quality information may be obtained by talking to people who have the information. Three suggested approaches to collecting qualitative data using in-depth, open-ended interviews include: 1) the informal conversational interview; 2) the general interview guide and 3) the standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 1987). Following is a brief discussion of each interview approach.

The informal conversational approach

In this type of interview, the person(s) being interviewed may not know that they are under observation and there are no questions planned for the interview ahead of time. Several interviews with each person are necessary for the researcher to collect enough data, therefore this method becomes useful if the researcher is available for a long time. The long period of time it demands is the major disadvantage.

The Standardized Open-Ended Interview

In the standardized open-ended interview, the participants are asked the same questions that are systematically arranged so that basically the same information is sought and thus minimize variability and bias. It is appropriate when several people conduct the

interview as it serves as a control in minimizing interview effects by asking the same questions. Probing questions are incorporated in the interview at designated points. A major disadvantage of this method is that it restricts further pursuit of spontaneous unanticipated issues.

The interview guide

The interview guide is a list of questions or issues to be explored during an interview. It is prepared to ascertain that the same information is obtain from different interviewees and that basic elements of the questions are covered. The advantages of the interview guide are that it makes the interview to be more systematic and focused and allows the individual perspectives and experiences to emerge in response to the open-ended questions that are generally asked during the interview. Casley and Kumar (1989); Scheaffer, Mendenhall and Ott (1990) state that qualitative interviews require the interviewer to frame questions on the spur of the moment and yet obtain responses with deeper meanings, in-depth descriptions and explanations. They further suggest three major interview considerations for effective results. These include framing questions in an understandable way, phrasing questions to elicit detailed responses and avoiding confusing the participant by asking two or more questions simultaneously. This study used the interview guide.

Rationale for the Research Methodology

The interview guide protocol was preferred in this research because it was the method that would allow the participants to express themselves fully, rather than respond to a predetermined list of options. The sequence of questions was not predetermined and

additional questions were asked to pursue additional leads so that the information sought would emerge and produce a grounded theory. The research intended to uncover some thoughts, feelings, experiences and needs of adolescent mothers, the knowledge of which would assist educators in appropriately targeting the adolescent mothers' learning needs created by the "jumping ahead" in their development.

The researcher was the only person who conducted the interview. The primary advantage of the personal interview is the high response rate, once the subjects have agreed to participate, and the ability of the interviewer to note specific reactions and eliminate misunderstandings about the questions asked (Scheaffer, et al., 1990). The interviewers, if not trained, are a major limitation because any movement, facial expression, or statement could affect the response. However, Dillman (1978) states that evidence suggests that response rates on face-to-face interviews are on the decline and researchers operating from university settings face higher refusal rates and increased resistance. But this was not the case in this research.

Development of Research Questions and Generation of The Grounded Theory

The development of research questions and generation of the grounded theory were conducted in three different phases.

Phase I - Identification and development of research questions.

This phase focused on the different aspects of the adolescent mother's anticipated behavior in the interview. The literature review on the concept of andragogy and pedagogy suggested that adolescent mothers were inexperienced dependent learners with a subject-

centered learning orientation. Using this information, several questions focusing on adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner and learning were identified. Through analysis and reflection over the information gathered, two major research questions evolved. To refine the questions and the questioning technique, five people were interviewed and their responses facilitated the generation of the following two questions:

1. What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of learning?
2. What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner regarding:
 - (a) Self-concept. Is the self-concept of an adolescent mother that of a self-directing or a dependent personality?
 - (b) Experience. Does the adolescent mother use experience as a basis for further learning?
 - (c) Learning orientation. Is the learning orientation of an adolescent mother problem- or subject-centered?
 - (d) Motivation. Are adolescent mothers' sources of motivation internal or external?

Phase II - Identification of themes.

Five adolescent mothers aged between 16 and 17 years, with similar experiences regarding the number of pregnancies, grade-level, etc., as the research sample were interviewed using the above questions. Besides using the interview to refine the questions, it was also used to identify some perceptions and trends of thought of adolescent mothers regarding learning.

The five adolescent mothers were asked to explain what they thought of learning. This question was informally presented in that the interviewer first asked the respondents to describe themselves as learners and gradually steered them into explaining what they thought of learning. They revealed their thoughts on each of the four components of the

second question, i.e., self-concept, experience, learning orientation and motivation. As the participants responded to the questions, more than 40 statements emerged among which were recurring statements. The recurring statements were analyzed through triangulation and screening to see which statements were mentioned more frequently.

Twenty-six such statements emerged and were categorized as themes. The themes were then matched against and arranged as components of the research questions. These themes formed the template upon which responses of the subsequent interviews were coded. Appendix G is a compilation of the 26 themes that formed the template.

Phase III - Identification of the most frequently mentioned themes.

Fifteen adolescent mothers with similar characteristics as the five whose interview responses formed the template, were again interviewed. The interview protocol of the 15 participants followed the same procedure as that of the five interviews. In response to the questions, the participants explained their thoughts and feelings towards learning and their perceptions of the learners also emerged. The emergent themes were then coded against the corresponding themes on the template. Some themes had more respondents than others, indicating their popularity among adolescent mothers. The emergent themes were regarded as popular if they were mentioned by more than 30% of the participants, indicated by the number of codes recorded against them on the template. Each code number also designated the number of responses. For example, if three was coded against a theme, it meant that three respondents referred to that theme. Themes referred to by less than 30% of the participants were not discussed because there were too many for all to be included. Twenty-four themes reemerged as the most frequently mentioned ones and, in

addition, four other themes surfaced that were not on the template. The most popular themes, those most frequently mentioned by the participants, are presented in Chapter IV.

Population

The population for this study is single adolescent mothers aged 17 years or under. Research indicates that adolescent mothers today face obstacles without the marital support which was available to young mothers in the past, because today, about 80 percent of young mothers under the age of 17 are single (PC88, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 1). Also, motherhood comes at a time when adolescent girls are developing coping skills, maturity and are still in the process of discovering their identity needed for a psychologically healthy life. Such development is necessary for positive parenting (Wodarski and Wodarski, 1995, pp. 10, 11).

Sample

Twenty adolescent mothers aged 17 years and under, who were or had become pregnant at that age, were drawn from different service organizations, both public and private, that operate in Ingham County, Michigan, and through which educational programs for adolescent mothers are offered. Upon contact with an identified service organization, the researcher requested the service providers to suggest ways of reaching their clients. At a meeting with some of the providers, it was suggested that a formal request be presented to the participants and that they should volunteer to participate. The service providers were then given a letter requesting the adolescent mother's participation and their guardian's permission (Appendices B and C), which they were asked to give to

their clients if they were willing to participate. In response, interested participants contacted the researcher. Initially, about thirty prospective participants were contacted but due to the sensitive nature of the group under investigation, being minors, some of them were not permitted by their guardians to participate. Twenty adolescent mothers were finally accessed. Five of them were interviewed first and their data formed the template for recording the data from the subsequent interviews, the remaining 15. The 15 adolescent mothers' interview responses provided the bulk of the data of this research.

The service organizations from whom the sample was drawn include: Haslett Center for Community Education; Black Child and Family Institute; MSU Extension Service, Building Strong Families and The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP); Ingham County's Women, Infants and Children Education Program (WIC), Teen Parent Network, Women's Health Clinic and Public Health Nurses; OBGYN Clinic, Sparrow Hospital and Stepping Stones. Appendix is an appointment schedule of the visits to these service organizations. Following are brief descriptions of the participating service organizations.

Haslett Center for Community Education

A component of Haslett Public Schools, the Center for Community Education provides alternative high school education to participants in the community. The Center offers programs that assist the participants to continue with academic course work and are exposed to career guidance as well. Parenting classes offered at the Center accommodate teen couples in addition to targeting adolescent mothers only. A major feature of the Learning Center is the provision of a daycare that acts as a great facilitator to adolescent

mothers to graduate from high school and be guided into a career of their choice. The majority of the participants were drawn from the Center.

Black Child and Family Institute (BCFI)

Operated by a non-profit organization(s), the BCFI offers enrichment after-school educational programs during the year and also in summer, to black children in a low-income neighborhood in Lansing. Science and computer technology are some of the subjects receiving special attention. Teen parenting classes and the WIC program housed in the same facility specially target adolescent mothers.

MSU Extension Service, Building Strong Families (BSF)

BSF is an educational parenting program developed at MSU and targets low-income, low-literacy-level parents of children from birth to 3 years. The goal is to empower parents to positively effect their children's futures by assisting parents in literacy skills as a learning process. The program helps parents in child development, discipline, focusing on positive interactions and setting realistic goals for themselves.

MSU Extension Service, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

EFNEP, like the BSF program, targets low-income households in assisting them in basic food preparation and nutrition principles. Paraprofessionals work with participants either in small groups sometimes based in schools, or individuals in their own homes. Adolescent mothers also are the major participants in this program.

Food and Nutrition Education Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC is a Federally-funded food and nutrition program that targets the nutritional needs of women of child-bearing age, infants, and children, five years or under, by assisting them with benefits. The benefits include food packages, nutrition education

sessions, monitoring the growth profile of a child from birth till age five. Eligibility is determined by a competent professional authority in the state, and once attained is transferable to any state in the U.S.. About 10% of all WIC participants are adolescent mothers under the age of 18 (PC 88, 1990, p. 4).

Teen Parenting Network

Teen Parenting Network is funded by Ingham County and operates as a support system for teen parents by addressing their social needs. The program fosters interaction among teens by organizing programs such as workshops where the participants meet other teen parents, learn more about children and are connected to area resources.

Ingham County's Women's Health Clinic and Public Health Nurses

The Women's health Clinic and Public Health Nurses attend to the health needs of adolescent mothers either at the clinic or at home during pregnancy or after delivery. They assist in arranging for the nurses to visit younger mothers in their homes as a way of educating them on how to take care of the baby and themselves.

OBGYN Clinic, Sparrow Hospital

The OBGYN clinic at Sparrow hospital serves women generally on Medicare including adolescent mothers.

Stepping Stones

Operated by a non-profit organization, Stepping Stones serves as a shelter for women including adolescent mothers who may need a place to stay temporarily until they find a permanent place.

Research Design

To obtain interview data on adolescent mothers' perceptions of learning and the learner, the research had two major thrusts in data collection. One thrust was the data obtained from adolescent mothers while the other was the data collected from service providers. Data from adolescent mothers were collected through individual interviews and a group discussion while the service provider's data were collected through a group discussion only.

Research Procedure

Preparations for data collection among adolescent mothers began in January, 1996, with initial contacts of Ingham County's EFNEP personnel. These contacts facilitated further contacts with the supervisors of the Pregnant and Teen Parenting programs of the Haslett Public Schools, The Black Child and Family Institute and Stepping Stones in February. In June contacts were made with WIC, Sparrow Hospital and Ingham County Nurses.

During the initial contact, the researcher explained the objectives of the study and solicited the participation of the service organization. Their role was to explain the research to their teenage clients, hand them a consent form if interested in participating and request them to contact the researcher for further information on the research. Each organization was given about 20 consent forms for the prospective adolescent mothers and their guardians to sign. The researcher collected some of the forms that were signed from the service providers and in some cases the service providers mailed the forms or informed the researcher that they had been turned in. About a dozen prospective participants were

obtained through these channels. Sometimes the prospective participants would sign the consent forms and leave them with the service provider, in which case the researcher would collect the forms from the service provider. One service organization had several forms filled out at the same time and interview appointments were scheduled immediately. A total of twenty-seven prospective participants were identified.

There were three major problems in accessing adolescent mothers after the consent forms were signed. The first problem related to family members. After the consent form was signed, the candidate also provided the researcher with a contact telephone number so that arrangements for the first meeting would be made. However, on several occasions when the researcher tried to contact the candidate, a family member would get the phone and tell the researcher that the candidate would not participate. Without explanation, they would hang up the phone.

The second problem related to the adolescent mothers themselves. Often at the participant's suggestion the researcher would schedule an interview to be held at a specified time and place but the researcher would not find them because they would be at another appointment. This would happen without communicating with the researcher, in spite of their having the researcher's telephone number. This observation supports Landerholm's findings in which she reported that many teens were quite unreliable in keeping appointments (Landerholm, 1984, p. 356).

The third problem related to other interferences. Where interviews were scheduled to be conducted at home, it was difficult to control other elements such as noise from a TV and interference from other people or children during the individual interview.

All individual interview data were recorded on a cassette tape, with the participant's permission. Another source of data on adolescent mothers was provided by the literature review that focused on the topics of adolescent development, adult development and adolescent motherhood, learning styles and problems of adolescent motherhood.

Instrumentation

To obtain the necessary data in this study, three instruments were used, namely: (1) the interview guide for adolescent mothers (Appendix D); (2) a demographic questionnaire for adolescent mothers (Appendix F) and (3) group discussion guides for both adolescent mothers and service providers (Appendices D and E), respectively.

Interview guide for adolescent mothers

The interview guide for adolescent mothers (Appendix D) was used during the individual interview. The individual interview technique is based on the Rogerian principle that individuals are the best observers of what is going on within themselves. Adolescent mothers responded to questions developed to collect information on what they were experiencing, thinking, their concerns and beliefs about learning. Important questions to yield crucial data were thus covered. Questions were designed to yield information on whether adolescent mothers were dependent or self-directing in their learning; if they were internally or externally motivated; if they use experience in their learning and if their learning orientation was problem- or subject centered. With the flexibility of the interview guide, some questions were expanded for further probing. The

average time for the individual interview was about 40 minutes. All the interviews were taped with the participant's permission.

Interview Guide for Service Providers

Service provider's perceptions on how adolescent mothers learn and how they might be better assisted were valuable to the research. Their input was solicited through an interview guide designed for a group discussion (Appendix E), sent to the service providers earlier on during the first contact. When they met, they responded to the questions they were already familiar with. The participating organizations were requested to send a representative to a meeting scheduled to convene at the Haslett Center for Community Education on the 9th of October, 1996, at 12:00 noon. Six members representing five organizations met and discussed for about 35 minutes. During the group session the researcher requested to record the discussion to assist with the clarification of the notes taken. The participants were assured of protection of their identity to ensure privacy.

Adolescent mothers' discussion group

A group discussion of eight adolescent mothers, mostly research participants and one adolescent father, was conducted. The interviewer asked the participants a few questions from the individual interviews that were not clearly answered. The discussion lasted about 45 minutes. The group discussion was used to have participants provide further clarification to the interview responses, have participants help draw meaningful conclusions on the findings and provide feedback to the participants on the findings in order to help them reflect on the findings and draw meaning for themselves. This session was also recorded.

Demographic questionnaire for adolescent mothers

At the beginning of each interview, each adolescent mother responded to a short questionnaire that sought demographic information about her (Appendix F). The information collected included age, education level, job status, parity, and their current thoughts on their future.

Data Analysis

Patton (1987) states that there is no precise point at which data collection ends and analysis begins for ideas about analysis and interpretation occur during data collection and they constitute the beginning of analysis. To organize data for analysis, the research questions and insights emerging from the interviews were basic to the analysis. Data in this study include demographics, explanations and descriptions of experiences or situations surrounding adolescent mother participants that emerged as recurring themes during the interviews. Different approaches of analysis included: descriptive statistics for demographics, qualitative descriptions to provide a whole picture of experiences or events in the lives of the participants, quantitative analysis to explain the numeric values of some responses and grounded theory to facilitate the generation of themes, concepts and theory. The emergent themes were included in the individual descriptions if they were referred to by 30% of the participants or above. Themes with less than 30% of the responses were too many to be included in the discussions. Validity and reliability concepts, also applied, are explained below.

Validity

This means the extent to which the interpretation of the results of the study follows from the study itself and the extent to which the results may be generalized to other situations (Shavelson, 1988, p. 21). In this study of finding out the learning and learner perceptions of adolescent mothers and the effect motherhood has on the potential of adolescent mothers to fulfill their role as learners, validity was attained by the adolescent mothers themselves. They expressed their feelings in response to the questions on their experiences with and attitude towards learning while performing the motherhood role. Seeing that individual attitudes were explored, the validity of such responses was partially established through the responses obtained from the group discussions that followed the individual interviews. The results are generalizable to other adolescent mothers in the same age-range and with similar background and experiences.

Reliability

This refers to the ability of a measuring instrument to produce the same results continuously. The interview guide designed for the examination attempted to achieve this because the respondents were asked the same types of questions and the interview time was about the same. However, individual differences in response to the same questions might have affected reliability. The researcher was the only interviewer, therefore, the conditions of the interview were as close as possible among the participants. In quantitative research, administration of pre- and post-tests and then measuring the correlation of the score means of the test would yield a correlation score. This would indicate whether the test has a high or low reliability (a score of 0.6 and above is reasonable to high while 0.5 and lower is low and very low). For qualitative research this

is not possible. The subjective nature of the observations and explanations depend on the interviewer's perceptions, a weak element in the method.

Protection of participants' privacy

All the participants volunteered to participate and gave the researcher their phone numbers which have been kept separate from the interview data. Personal names were not used in the report and the participants were assured that their responses would not be linked to them as individuals. The interviews were conducted in privacy and the interviewer was solely responsible for data collection.

Service providers and individual interview schedules

Interview schedules with service providers were arranged between January and July, 1996. From more than a dozen service organizations contacted, nine volunteered to participate. Table 3.1 on the following page shows their appointment schedules.

Adolescent mothers' schedules were made individually upon contact. Their interviews started on July 7, 1996, and ended on October 9, 1996. A total of 24 interviews were made. Three of them were used for the researcher's practice at interviewing, five were used in Phase I and one, although interviewed, was not reported because she became pregnant at 19, therefore did not qualify.

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative method of data collection using individual and group discussions. Research terms which have been explained include: qualitative research method, population, sampling, research procedure, instruments and data analysis.

Grounded theory, validity and reliability concepts in data analysis have also been described. The next chapter presents the results of the study.

Table 3.1 Appointment Schedule for Service Providers

Service Provider	Date	Accomplishment
Ingham County, EFNEP	1/19/96	Met coordinator, arranged with
	to	EFNEP para-professionals for
	2/20/96	possible contacts
Haslett Center for Community Education	2/26/96	Met coordinator, positive
Stepping Stones	2/29/96	Talked to supervisor, interested
Ingham County, WIC	6/10/96	Met coordinator, interested
Black Child & Family Institute	6/14/96	Met parenting coordinator, inter.
Sparrow Hospital	6/17/96	Met delivery ward supervisor and colleague, both supported and referred researcher to the clinic.
	6/19/96	Contacted clinic coordinator, set an appointment for 6/21/96.
Ingham County Public Health Nurses	6/24/96	Met coordinator, arranged a dept. meeting with other nurses and was invited to attend next meeting.
	7/02/96	Explained research proposal to Public Health Nurses.
Ingham County Community Health Outreach Program	7/15/96	Met coordinator.
Teen-Parent Network	7/16/96	Met coordinator.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Interview results from fifteen adolescent mothers provide the major findings of this study, and are presented in this chapter. The study aimed at investigating learning and learner perceptions of adolescent mothers and the effect jumping ahead on the developmental “ladder” has on them as learners. This chapter presents the research questions, discusses each participant’s characteristics, including her orientation toward learning, and also presents the themes that emerged from both the individual and group interviews of adolescent mothers. Observations from the service providers’ group are also presented.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to illuminate the learning and the learner perceptions of the adolescent mothers as they emerged during the individual interviews.

1. What are the adolescent mother’s perceptions of learning?
2. What are the adolescent mother’s perceptions of the learner regarding:
 - (a) Self-concept? Is the self-concept of an adolescent mother that of a self-directing or a dependent personality?

(b) Experience? Does the adolescent mother use experience as a basis for further learning?

(c) Learning orientation? Is the learning orientation of an adolescent mother problem- or subject-centered?

(d) Motivation? Are adolescent mothers' sources of motivation internal or external?

Participant Characteristics

A total of 20 adolescent mothers, including five Phase II and 15 Phase III participants from Ingham County, Michigan, took part in this research. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present their demographic data. Their ages ranged between 15 and 18 years. For all the qualifying participants, the age range for the first pregnancy was between 14 and 17 years.

Table 4.1 Demographic Data of the Five Phase II Participants

Name	Age	Grade	Job	Age at First Pregnancy	Number of Pregnancies	Number of Children	Place of Residency
Anna	16	10	No	15	1	1	Foster Care
Bernice	16	10	No	16	1	0	Parent(s)
Cathy	16	9	No	14	2	1	Parent(s)
Della	16	11	Yes	15	1	1	Parent(s)
Elsie	17	9	No	16	1	1	Parent(s)

Table 4.1 shows that among the participants, the one who became pregnant at 14 reported a second pregnancy at 16. Four out of five participants were staying with their parents and the fifth one was at a Foster Care.

Table 4.2 Demographic Data of the 15 Phase III Participants

Name	Age	Grade	Job	Age at First Pregnancy	Number of Pregnancies	Number of Children	Place of Residency
Fisha	17	12	No	14	2	1	Independent
Gladys	17	11	No	15	2	1	Parent(s)
Havila	17	11	No	15	2	1	Parent(s)
Inora	17	10	No	17	1	1	Parent(s)
Jarlin	15	11	No	15	1	1	Parent(s)
Kathy	17	11	No	15	1	1	Parent(s)
Loree	16	11	No	15	1	1	Parent(s)
Mercy	18	12	Yes	17	1	0	Parent(s)
Neria	19	12	No	16	3	2	Boyfriend
Orean	17	12	Yes	14	1	1	Independent
Pearl	18	12	No	17	1	1	Parent(s)
Ramona	17	11	No	15	1	1	Parent(s)
Sheila	17	11	No	17	1	0	Grandmother
Terese	17	12	No	16	1	1	Parent(s)
Ursa	18	12	Yes	16	1	1	Parent(s)

Table 4.2 shows that over 90% of the participants were in 11th and 12th grade and the majority of them were 17 years old; 75% were unemployed, 80% resided at either their parents' or grandparents' homes. None reported being married although one was staying with a boyfriend.

The section that follows provides a short description of each participant. Real names have been changed to protect their identity.

Fisha

Fisha, a 12th grader, first became pregnant at 14 and had her first child at 15. At 16 she became pregnant again and was expecting at the time of the interview. She is now 17 years old. Fisha believes that learning is an ongoing process and she would like to learn different ways of parenting. She prefers learning from someone who can show her. Fisha wants to share her parenting skills with other adolescent mothers who are younger than she is. She stated that she is a good learner who mostly listens, and believes she learns a lot by networking with other adolescent mothers. Fisha has negative memories of her childhood in that she said her life was hard because her dad did not want her to be with other people. When she was 12 years old, while baby-sitting her younger brother, sisters and a niece, Fisha desired to have a baby of her own. This desire led her to becoming pregnant at 14.

Fisha seems to be a very dependent learner who prefers to learn from concrete examples. When asked about her preferred method of learning, Fisha stated, "I would rather have someone in front of me to show me." Also, Fisha has a very small learning agenda in that she said, "I have taken all the classes I need to know." Her mother and the counselors are her greatest assistants in learning. Although she occasionally makes contradictory statements, Fisha currently learns to satisfy her basic need of being a better parent.

Gladys

Gladys is a 17 year old pregnant adolescent mother in 11th grade. She first became pregnant at 15 and currently she stays at home with her mother, a younger brother and her two year old daughter. Gladys views learning as schooling. While schooling, Gladys and other learners are taught and they take tests to see if they have learned what was planned for them to learn.

Gladys believes that taking classes and focusing are important to learning. It is also her belief that learning helps one become “somebody” in adulthood. Gladys plans to be either a lawyer or to earn a college degree. She sees learning as a never-ending process with focusing as its important element. In addition, Gladys would like to do a lot of things such as reading, writing, sewing clothes, besides learning about the history of black people.

Havila

Havila has a very limited learning agenda for herself - finish high school and get a job. Also, she plans to learn a trade after high school, but does not intend to earn a college degree because she wants to be at home for her daughter. At 17, she is in 11th grade and has a 15 month old daughter. Coming from a divorced family, she misses her dad and has a strained relationship with her mother, a career woman. Havila resents college education because she feels that as a child, her mother neglected her, her brother and twin sister when she went to college. Havila listens to her role models, evidently not well educated, who advise her to go to college because they are being laid off their jobs due to insufficient training. She likes to seek advice from counselors and has an extensive learning agenda - she would like to learn plumbing, working on cars, TVs, VCRs and radios. As a learner, Havila prefers hands-on experience to academic classes.

Inora

Inora is 17 years old and she became pregnant at 15. She stays at home with her mother and a brother. From several career interests, Inora indicated that she would like to be an accountant in order to do people's income tax forms at home and thus make a living. On the questionnaire, Inora stated that she wants to prove that with education, women can have

better paying jobs than men, therefore, she would like to learn so that she can be among the better paid women.

Jarlin

At 15 Jarlin has a two month old baby and stays at home with a 12 year old brother and her parents. She is in 11th grade and basic to her learning is schooling. Jarlin would like to learn so she can get a good job and start a business. She has a limited learning agenda in that she aims at completing an associate degree at Lansing Community College before starting her own business.

Jarlin wants to learn so she can get a job. She believes learning is facilitated by textbooks, teachers, friends, parents and oneself. She also says that one can learn enough and there is no need to learn extras. Jarlin does not enjoy schooling but acknowledges that she has been helped most by teachers although she also likes talking to counselors. Jarlin believes no one can help anybody learn; she enjoys reading and thinks it is because her parents read to her as a child.

Kathy

Kathy, an 11th grader with a baby boy, sees learning also as schooling. She states that one may learn from parents, teachers, reading, following directions and being taught by a close friend. She doesn't want to be in school, although she knows that the knowledge she learns now will be useful in the future. Kathy believes that learning using visuals helps one understand and that no one can learn enough. She also thinks that if one can learn to make a dress then one has learned enough. Her mother has been her greatest help in learning.

Loree

Loree is 16 years old and has a nine and one-half month old baby. She enjoys schooling and plans to be an occupational therapist. Loree's model is her mother, who works with deaf and blind children whom she sometimes brings home for a weekend. Both of Loree's parents have remarried so that she is at home with her stepfather. She states that she learns better when she participates and watches the instructor. She feels that one understands better when one actually tries to do it. Working with disadvantaged children makes Loree happy. She has a broad knowledge of learning resources for the deaf and blind.

Loree also believes that, being constantly judged by society, teen parents need coping classes and people who will listen to their parenting problems as they talk to them. She also believes that adolescent mothers are quite capable of raising their children.

Mercy

Mercy is 18 years old and pregnant. At home she stays with her mother and two younger brothers. Mercy knows that people learn in different ways and realizes she is a sequential visual learner. She has a broad view of learning and says that how she approaches it can effect how her child will approach learning.

Mercy has a concrete purpose for learning and that is to get a diploma so she can get a job in the future. She is internally motivated and sees learning as more than just schooling, which she sees as limiting. Mercy defines good teachers as those who try to understand the learner's capabilities in order to facilitate learning. Mercy sees her mother as the most important person to help her learn because she has a better knowledge of her.

As a learner Mercy feels that she chooses whether to pay attention or not depending on how useful the material is to her personally. She strongly feels society in general gives

adolescent mothers a bad name that they don't really deserve. She feels that adolescent mothers can succeed if they want to. It may take them longer to finish college but still they can do it. Mercy plans to complete at least an Associate degree and wants to get married.

Neria

Neria is a 19 year old 12th grader who became pregnant at 16. She has two boys aged 3 years and 3 months. She stays in an apartment with a boyfriend, the father of the 3 month old, who also cares for the 3 year old. She graduates this year and plans to train as a registered nurse.

As a learner Neria believes that one can only learn if interested and that interest stems from knowing the benefits that are derived from learning. She wants to learn because she sees it to be the only way she can improve herself. She, therefore, plans to earn a college degree in nursing. Giving up her teenage life at 16 and having to care for her baby is regarded as the greatest learning experience in Neria's life. She feels she learns more now because she knows that what she learns has immediate application and sees herself as a fast learner.

Neria believes that networking among adolescent mothers, when, sometimes they meet and just talk, is very supporting to the participants, especially younger mothers without the support of the baby's father. Such informal meetings help them talk about their experiences. Inexperienced adolescents find role models at such meetings, that tend to become their best learning sessions on motherhood.

Orean

Orean is 17 years old and has a two year old daughter. She is in 12th grade and wants to major in either political science or psychology after graduating from high school. In learning, Orean prefers to read and she says that she learns some other stuff without realizing

that she is learning it. She mentioned that she has learned a lot from her grandfather, a WWII veteran.

When asked why she learns, Orean said that she wanted to get a job and have money. Her interest in politics is a result of her desire to be involved and hence she wants to know who runs her country. Though not old enough to vote, Orean feels she can attend Democratic party conventions and lobby for them as a volunteer. She tells her mother who to vote for as Orean is more knowledgeable in politics than she is. In college Orean plans to get an internship in the Democratic party.

She participated in Close-Up last year and had an opportunity to observe the political machinery in session in Washington, D.C.. She also visited the Lithuanian embassy, and talked to Michigan politicians. From this experience, Orean believes individuals affect change. She thinks that good teachers, family members and access to materials facilitate learning.

Pearl

Pearl became pregnant when she was 17 years old. She is currently in 12th grade and has a 4 month old son. Her son's dad supports her and they plan to get married in January. Pearl plans to graduate in March. As a learner, Pearl stated that by listening to different people's experiences, one can learn from them and that she also learns from her son, her fiancé, and her parents. Pearl adores her fiancé whom she claims built her self-esteem by being there for her. As a victim of rape in high school, Pearl felt worthless until her fiancé came along.

Pearl prefers visual learning; and she learns to get a career job. She sees herself as a sequential learner and finds written instructions difficult to follow. If financially able, Pearl

plans to work at home so that she can best care for her child. If not, she would like to be a veterinary technician.

Emotionally, Pearl says she needs to learn to control herself from crying and feels that she needs to be a bit more assertive. Also, since the arrival of her son, Pearl is searching for a church she wants to take him to because she, herself, never went a church before. She believes her son will be somebody if he gets baptized. Pearl notes that adolescent mothers generally have negative experiences with their families and society and feels that they need to be better understood.

Ramona

Ramona has a baby daughter who is one year old. An 11th grader, Ramona plans to take nursing in college after she graduates from high school. Planning to graduate early, Ramona is in school for longer hours each day than other students and is too busy to do things with friends. In learning, Ramona mostly observes and practices on her own because she is deaf in one ear, a factor that makes audio instructions to be difficulty to understand. She sees herself as more of a visual learner because she is able to follow diagrams although she lacks good reading skills. She sometimes makes her own notes or concept diagrams of what she sees. After graduating from nursing, Ramona hopes to have a better life for herself and her son. She wants to help others, too.

To be an effective learner, Ramona says that one must have the desire to learn and should know one's strengths and weaknesses. She says learning becomes boring when one learns things that are just required but she prefers fun learning and is valuable to her. She states that when individuals learn fun subjects, they remember them for a long time. She focuses on learning positive issues as she feels society unnecessarily judges adolescent

mothers. Ramona feels that negative comments affect their learning ability for they tend to believe the negative things said about them. She advises adolescent mothers to overcome their problems by focusing on positive issues.

Sheila

Sheila is 17 years old and pregnant. After she became pregnant she decided to return to school after being a drop-out for two years. She stays with her grandmother and has a younger brother, 15, who is with their parents at home. When she found out that she was pregnant, Ramona started to learn about babies' names and wanted to know more about herself, biologically. She believes that learning enhances an individual and that anything learned will be useful sooner or later. Learning is seen as schooling. Sheila observes that her interaction with teen mothers has helped her learn. At the age of 14 and 15 she babysat her cousin's children and she counts that experience just as valuable. She says her parents are her role models.

Sheila sees learning as being more interactive and believes that anyone can learn from anybody. Personally, she has been helped in learning by her family, friends, and teachers. She sees no end to learning and says that she learns better now because she reflects on what is taught. If something is not clear, she asks and pays more attention than before she became pregnant. Underlying this transformation is the belief Sheila now has, that learning helps one make something better out of oneself and his/her child. She is, thus, pursuing the belief.

Terese

Seventeen year old Terese became pregnant at 15 after she went through an ovarian cancer operation that had been diagnosed when she was 14. She had one ovary removed. Afraid that the remaining ovary might also be infected and that as a consequence she might

not be able to have children in future, she decided to have a baby while she still had the remaining ovary. She did. Being the youngest in a family where she has an older brother and sister who are both married and with children, Terese attested that it was hard for her to have a baby at that age and living with her parents. She said she had planned to have the baby and 'would not give him up for anything!' However, the family is adjusting to the situation and Terese is in 12th grade.

As a learner, Terese says she needs people to interact with so that she makes sure she is getting the right concepts, as a result, she does not want to use a video when learning. She prefers hands-on experience and learns mostly from her mother and teachers, for personal and academic issues, respectively.

Also, the baby's father assists, so that Terese wants to graduate, attend college and establish a career in the medical field.

Ursa

Ursa is an 18 year old 12th grader who became pregnant when she was 16 and has a 10 month old daughter. She graduates this year. Ursa stays at home with her mother because her parents divorced when she was five. Ursa associated learning with schooling so that when asked as to how she learns she indicated that when at school teachers show and tell her. She tries to learn alone, sometimes, or reads books and watches other people. She said that her main reason for learning is to have a career job to support herself and her child.

Ursa has unpleasant childhood memories due to her parent's divorce at an early age. After she started school she had no friends because she put anyone she made friends with in trouble. She basically did not care about school. She had a truancy officer come to her home at an early age, but she neither received help from her mother nor the school. Now that she

has her own child, she wants to help her by disciplining her - a learning strategy she never received from her mother.

After high school graduation, Ursa plans to take elementary education in college so that she can be her child's teacher. She sees no end to learning, attends all classes, as a result, she does really well. She resents her childhood experiences but thinks she will be a better teacher and mother. She maintains that teen mothers are not different from anyone else except that they have a lot more going on in their lives.

Summary

Referring to their different experiences, mostly negative, adolescent mothers stated their views, goals, beliefs, their perceptions of the society regarding their situation and their aspirations as learners. In their approach to learning, they reported that they have a new determination, they pay more attention, and spend more time. Consequently, they have become better learners than they were before they became mothers. For the majority, a college degree for a better job in the future, and a subsequent better life for themselves and their children, is the ultimate goal for learning.

Discussion of The Themes

In their responses to the interview questions, adolescent mothers interviewed in Phase II expressed some of their beliefs, perceptions, aspirations and concerns about learning and their plight in society. After reflection and analysis of these responses, some of these ideas emerged as recurring statements related to research questions. They were matched as themes under the corresponding questions, and used as a template on which responses from the participants were coded. The number of codes, indicating the number of participants

referring to a theme, ranged between two and 14. Twenty-four themes and four other observations thus emerged from the template as the 15 participants opened-up and talked about their experiences, perceptions of learning and the learner. It was apparent that some themes were more popular than others, signified by the number of codes they received. Further analysis revealed that the 24 themes that emerged from the participants comprised two major groups. One group were themes that related to learning, a total of 11 themes, and the other group had themes that relate to the learner, a total of 13 themes. Following is a discussion of the themes that related to learning.

Themes Relating to Learning

As mentioned above, there were 11 themes that emerged that related to learning. Three of the themes had the highest number of codes that ranged between 12 and 14. The same number of codes signified the number of the participants who mentioned that theme in their responses during the interview. According to the established criteria, the three themes were the most popular for they were each mentioned by either 80% or 93% of the respondents. Table 4.3 below shows how the participants responded to each theme. Nine participants (60%) referred to more than 50% of themes about learning. Discussion of important themes follows the table.

Learning is a never ending process

Due to their limited experiences, adolescent mothers seem to view learning differently from adults. However, when asked by the researcher if they can tell when they have learned enough, 93% indicated that learning is a process that never ends and therefore, no one could possibly learn enough, an awareness that is very crucial to adults. Expressing this sentiment are the following quotations from the participants:

Table 4.3 Participants' References to Themes About Learning

Themes:	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	Total
Learning is never ending	x	x	x	x	.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Learning associated with schooling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	.	x	.	.	x	x	x	x	12
Learning is used to satisfy a need	x	.	x	x	x	.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	.	12
Learning is for a single concrete purpose	.	x	x	x	x	.	x	x	x	.	x	x	x	x	.	11
Learning best accomplished through concrete examples	x	.	x	x	.	x	x	x	.	.	x	x	x	x	.	10
Learning linked to past experience	x	.	x	.	.	.	x	.	x	x	x	x	x	.	x	9
Learning helps one make something out of oneself	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	x	x	6
Learning is facilitated by focusing	x	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	x	.	.	.	.	4
Learning by anybody is not helped by anyone	.	.	.	.	x	x	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
Learning is guided by external benefits	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
Learning is complicated by individual differences	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	2
Total by respondent	6	4	7	6	4	5	7	4	8	5	6	7	7	6	4	86

Key: F = Fisha I = Inora L = Loree O = Orean S = Sheila
 G = Gladys J = Jarlin M = Mercy P = Pearl T = Terese
 H = Havila K = Kathy N = Neria R = Ramona U = Ursa

Fisha. "You never learn enough.... You can never stop learning because there are always things you never know about. I mean you can never stop learning nothing. There is always something for you to learn. No body knows everything."

Gladys. "I wouldn't know because one doesn't stop learning, you know. There's just too much stuff you can learn.... I know you can learn a lot and most people never stop learning, they just keep on learning." In the next response, the participant sees the vastness of what is available in learning and the opportunity one has as a learner.

“I haven’t learned enough. I know that there’s a lot more I need to learn because with the kid I need to know how to bring him up. There is a lot in a baby being born.

Probably you never stop learning for you learn something everyday.”

Another participant responded to the same question of whether one knows when they have learned enough by capitalizing on the dynamic nature of learning under different situations when she said,

Inora. “I don’t think really anyone does (know). I mean, basically, until they die, I don’t know. I guess. if you want to be a doctor, there is something new in medical, there is always something new wherever you work. You know laws are always changing, jobs are getting advanced, so really, you don’t ever learn enough. You cant know about everything. I don’t think there is ever enough time in a life time.”

Lindeman (1926) stated that education (learning) is coterminous with life. Echoing this same sentiment, one of the participants stated,

Loree. “You learn something new everyday and I don’t think you ever stop learning anything. So you never stop learning because there are so many different ways to learn.”

Neria. “There is always something more that you could learn,” is another way of expressing the challenge learning poses. She continued by stating, “One continues learning.”

Orean. She sees learning as being controlled by the learner when she expressed, “I don’t think that you can ever learn enough of anything. I think that you should never stop learning.... But you should never close off that door and say you know everything.”

Tough (1975), in a study of 16 year old adolescent boys' and 10 year old children's learning projects, observed that a 16 year old spends far more time at sustained learning efforts than a 10 year old in order to handle more effectively his new responsibilities and major problems and decisions not faced by a 10 year old. He saw that in many ways, the 16 year old is closer to the adult than a 10 year old who tends to chose an activity, hobby or sport for fun, and not consciously because it will produce knowledge or skill.

In these few examples, adolescent mothers confirm that learning is never-ending as long as one is alive and one has the capacity to control what he/she wants to learn. This, however, in an adolescent, is dictated by the experiences he/she is going through and the decisions that have to be made, a capacity not yet developed by a 10 year old who, we are told, just learns for fun.

Learning is associated with school

Eighty percent of the participants expressed that learning is associated with schooling. As adolescent girls become mothers while in school, it is apparent that schooling becomes a major source of learning they can relate to. When asked as to who helps them most in learning, 67% mentioned teachers while 40% mentioned parents. Family members were mentioned by 30% and peers by 7%. When asked how they learn, adolescent mothers responded as if they were responding to a schooling question. The following excerpts exemplify how they responded.

Ursa. She stated, "Just by (doing it) like in school, teachers showing me how to do it and telling me. Just by doing it myself if I can know the basics of how to do it I can just keep on trying and trying, from reading like in books, how to do stuff in school."

When asked why she was learning, she responded, “So I can get out of high school and out of college; be able to have a career job and support myself and my child.”

Sheila. She indicated that she asks a lot of questions from the person who is teaching, such as a teacher, if she is learning something in school. She stated, “You have to learn math so you can add, learn how to subtract or some kind of science....But for me, things I want to learn like reading, writing, math or anything like that because you are going to use it all your life no matter what. There’s no getting around it.”

Neria. She believes that interest is what guides one in learning (at school) when she stated, “May be if they apply themselves. If they really want to (learn) because the interesting part about people is, if they don’t want to learn to do it probably they aren’t going to do it. They have to want to learn how to do it so that they apply themselves and really find and take information and put it in their learning. That will be very much better.... So if you like math may be you will pay more attention on what’s going on and really try hard.”

Mercy. She wants to learn (go to school) so she can have a job in future and also she wants to be the role model to her child. She indicated this when she said, “Because if I don’t learn, I wont be going anywhere in the future. Probably I will have a job which will not amount to anything and studies show that if I don’t want to learn, that more likely my child will not want to learn and that will not end with me, it will stay like a trend.”

Loree. She saw only a class as a place for learning when she proposed the following: “....And I think that a lot of mothers, even teen fathers, should be able to have some type of a class to which they can go in and feel that they can say, ‘ This is really

bothering me and I need to deal with it before something happens to my child.' I feel every teen parent should have a regular parenting class because it's not having to do anything with your child or your son that you are not dealing with them but you are because people are judging you, because you are so young with a child and it is hard to make it these days alone without a child. A class like that would probably work . A lot of teen parents would probably like it."

Kathy. She also views a school as a place to learn when she says, "Well, I usually learn things in school. (I) listen to teachers like when they are explaining directions." When asked the reason for learning, she responded, "To get education for a better job....If you learn earlier, you can use some of those skills later ahead in life."

Jarlin. She saw that learning at school is a way of developing survival skills in society when she said, "Because if you don't know anything like your basic stuff, you're not gonna be able to survive in the world and if you can't read anything, you're not going to be able to get the kind of a job except fixing a burger or something and that isn't going to pay very good the rest of your life. You need a job with insurance and everything."

Inora. She also spoke of the classroom type of learning when she said, "I would rather have someone teach me....I need to touch up on my math skills, but after, I'll remember it, you know. I can remember numbers really well."

When they spoke of learning, many participants, thought of schooling. They might have mentioned other types of learning, but when they cited examples, they tended to limit themselves to school situations.

Learning is used to satisfy an existing need

This study revealed that most adolescent mothers embark on learning with a new commitment and determination to achieve the goals they set for themselves. They feel that schooling is important in the process of making-up what they have missed, therefore, plan their learning experiences around schooling. This thought was expressed by 80% of the participants. Responding to why they were learning, this is what they said:

Fisha. “To be a better parent because I have one and another on the way. That’s going to be hard for a teen mom. I worry about school, and worry about this baby. I worry about different things. If I go to the hospital, who is going to be with my kids? It’s lots of things that you have to learn about. You can contact a lot of good people that can give you a lot of resources that will help you with the problem.”

Gladys. She sees that in order for her to participate actively in society, she needs to be a lawyer. She therefore, attends school so that eventually she can train as a lawyer. She stated: “Ever since I was nine years old, I wanted to be a lawyer because we’ve got judges, we’ve got doctors, we’ve got nurses, we’ve got all these other roles and all the trainings, but we’ve got no lawyers!”

Havila. She feels that she has a responsibility to society. She stated, “Well, I think nowadays you have to learn something to explain to society. You can’t get a job right if you don’t know how to read.... So I am not interested to just sit back and want to drop out of school and just give up on everything because I’ve got to go and like I want to accomplish and in order to do that, I have to go to school.”

Inora. She wants to learn so that she also can make a contribution to society by joining society’s work force through the filing of people’s Income Taxes. She said:

“Why am I learning? Because I need to. I want to graduate if I want to take care of my baby it will help me.... Doing people’s Income Taxes, that’s why I want to learn accounting....I want to try my own business and make good money.”

Jarlin. She stated that she needed to learn so she could get out of school. By this, she will have learned survival in society. She said: “Then I’ll be able to go on. I’ll be able to know things and get a job.... Survive in life, basically.”

Neria. She believes that learning makes it possible for one to be somewhere in society. She rhetorically asked, then responded, “Why do I want to learn? I don’t want to be stupid.... If you don’t learn, you don’t go anywhere.... I really like to get an RN and work in the delivery room.”

Pearl. She wants to learn because she believes it might be helpful in life to learn for a job. She said, “It might be helpful in my life knowing that or something that I enjoy. If I needed it for my job I would learn it.”

Ramona. She likes to work with people so she sees learning as a facilitator in her acquisition of the people skills she needs. Therefore, she stated, “Well I want a better life for myself and my child and some day, hopefully, I’ll be an RN and be able to work with people and I just like that place where you can; it is like a rush. Sometimes you might be sad, other times you are making other people happy.... It makes me feel good to know that I helped someone else and it is something that I can do.”

Ramona wants to learn math and computers, reading and writing (schooling) because she believes that such knowledge is useful to life and in helping people. She expressed, “You need math for everything. You are not getting around it and also like reading, you know, a lot of people don’t know how to read. They are illiterate and it’s

pretty sad. But for me, things I want to learn like reading, writing, math or anything like that because you are going to use it all your life no matter what. There's no getting around it.... That's why I am taking computers, learning more about computers. Everything is going to be computerized, sooner or later.... If you take time out for someone, help them with something; if you are on one on one with them, if you have patience with that person, it helps that person learn more."

Terese. She wants to learn for herself and her child because she feels a good skill will earn her a good job. She responded, "The thing is learning to know a specific skill that you are good at will benefit you and your child because if you can learn that skill better than others then you can make a good job out of it, may be. You can make money for your child and just to make yourself happy, feel like you accomplished something. I like that."

Ursa. She desires to learn to get somewhere by knowing how to work with people. So she stated, "So they get somewhere because if you don't know anything, you can't get anywhere, really. You have to know how to do things and how to work with people, otherwise you wont get anywhere."

The adolescent mothers' recounts of the different reasons they would like to learn, i.e., to be of service to society in different ways, and be able to support themselves and their children, indicate that most of these needs are primarily social, according to Maslow (1970).

Adolescent mothers are operating at this third hierarchy, suggesting that the lower level needs, physiological and safety, are already satisfied.

Learning is for a single and concrete purpose

The purpose for learning expressed by 73% of the participants is to enhance their employability in career jobs. Dissatisfied with their current job eligibility status, at McDonald's or Burger King, the majority feel that learning, generally viewed as schooling, is the only available channel to professional jobs. In the following responses, the quest, to prepare for a better job, emerges.

Gladys. She said, "Because if you want to learn something, it is best to learn something so that when you grow up you could be somebody. A lot of people, they just don't want to learn nothing. And indeed you don't want to be nothing.... I want to learn so I can complete a college degree."

Havila. She listens to advice from family members and relatives regarding the importance of earning a high school diploma. She reported, "I have seen some people that do not have education; I know that they will be around twenty or twenty-one years old, but as they got older, their jobs went off because they don't have a high school diploma or they don't have a college degree and they can lose a job because of that....so they say to me, 'All these people are replacing me because they have diplomas and I don't. You need to go to college, get yourself a degree.' All of them will be like, 'You need to graduate, you need to get a diploma because you can hardly get a job without a diploma, at least not a good one.' I kind of listen to stuff like that.... It's hard with a child, you know, and with no transportation, but I just keep on going because I have that role model."

Inora. Her reason for learning is also to get a job. She too listens to what people tell her and this is what she said, "If you want to go further in your life, if you want to go

to college and all that, and make something out of yourself, have a good paying job, that's why someone will want to learn more.... I think the more you learn the more people will want to hire you, whatever your qualifications are."

Jarlin. Her purpose for learning is rather limited and to the point. She stated, "I know that I have to get my education done to survive in life. But I am only right now in school basically, perhaps, and am only going to learn what I have to learn to get out and survive later on. I am not going to go any farther than I have to because I mean if I know what I need to know to survive in life, why do I have to know anything else?" Earlier on, Jarlin stated that she is learning to pass tests and exit school. As to what she will do after passing tests she indicated, "Then I'll be able to go on. I'll be able to know things and get a good job."

Loree. She enjoys working with children that have hearing or speech defects, actually her mother's job. Her purpose for learning therefore, focuses on what she does as she assists her mother during the times when she is not at school. To prepare for a career in this type of work, she stated, "I enjoy school. I will, hopefully some day, become an occupational therapist and work with children that have or they can't hear or speak. They have physical things wrong with them. I would like to do that. At times I will go to LCC and transfer all (credits) to U of M to take classes to be in occupational therapy."

Mercy. She wants to learn because she wants to model her behavior to her children and also because she wants to get her diploma. In her own words, she said, "If you take a family that doesn't know how to read, I would say, their children probably may

not learn how to read. And I want to learn because I want my diploma....If I don't learn probably my job in future will not amount to anything."

Neria. She feels that she needs to learn how to deliver a baby because she delivered her own and yet, she never had a chance to observe the process. This is what she said as to why she wants to learn that. "I would like to know more about the process of delivering a baby, what happens to your body when you go into labor, things like that, I would like to know. To learn that, I have to go to school or ask a doctor about that. Read books, watch movies, read English novels.... I think nursing will make me happy in life. So that is what I want to be."

Pearl. She sees learning as a way of fulfilling one's desire for enjoyment and also for fulfillment of a job requirement when she said, "It might be helpful in my life knowing that or something that I enjoy. If I needed to know it for my job I would learn it."

Ramona. She likes to work with people so she sees learning as a way of working towards achieving her goal. She responded, "Well I want a better life for myself and my child and some day, hopefully, I'll be an RN and be able to.... work with people."

Sheila. She believes the whole world is moving towards computerization and to prepare for that, she is learning math, reading and writing. She alleged, "But for me things I want to learn like reading, writing and math or anything like that, because you are going to use it all your life, no matter what. There's no getting around it.... That's why I'm taking computers, wanting to learn more about computers. Everything is going to be computerized sooner or later."

Ursa. She suggested that learning may be embarked on for the benefit of both the mother and the child when she said, "Personally they may want to be a good parent.

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You may want to learn for yourself and your child....If you can learn a skill and be better at it than others, then you can make a good job at it. You can make money for your child and just to make yourself happy, feel like you accomplished something.”

Learning is best accomplished through concrete examples

Piaget (1963) maintained that during adolescence, the intellectual developmental capabilities of children are changing from concrete, a characteristic of childhood, to abstract thought. Adolescence is the age when the concrete stage, embarked on at age seven by a child, changes to a more abstract form of reasoning (Kohlberg, 1975). The child develops capabilities in reasoning abstractly in adolescence.

In this study, although most of the participants enumerated several learning styles, the popularly preferred method of learning was the one in which individuals used concrete examples or the information was demonstrated. The participants indicated a special preference for involvement through hands-on experiences during learning. The following quotations are examples of the participants’ expressed thoughts on learning through concrete examples as the preferred method.

Terese. She responded, “They can ask someone, some people can learn better by others teaching them and I think some learn better by just reading about it or doing it on their own. I need people to tell me how to do things, to teach me. I don’t like doing just book work.... I think I need people to talk to, to make sure I’m getting it right.” When a video was suggested for learning, Terese responded, “That might help more than reading to me. But I would still rather have a person I could get answers from if I had a question.”

Sheila. She learned how to care for a baby while babysitting her cousin's children and interacting with other teen mothers. She said, "Being with my group (teen moms) right now because I'm a teen mother, my cousin was a teen mother and I used to go over to her house and watch her kids for her and lived there for a little while so that I could help her out with everything. I would get up in the middle of the night and take care of everything.... Even if I wasn't a teen mother. Just when I got older, if I had a kid, I would somewhat know how to hold her and do something to help the baby."

Ramona. She said that she was a visual learner, when asked to explain how she learns. She argued, "That is how I do because I am deaf on my left ear, that is how I learned just the other day. I was putting one of my daughter's toys together and all I had to do was to look at the picture, I didn't read any directions or anything.... I cannot put all those words if I look at a piece of paper, it is just like all blurry to me. I learn better by just looking at something and doing it."

Pearl. She also saw herself as a visual learner when she replied, "I think I am a visual learner, I have to see things in order to learn them. I like to go over and over it. I can read things to learn too but prefer more seeing it done.... I would like to see things more being done.... I don't like it when teachers stand up there and say explain it like step by step than when you just have to read and answer questions. I would rather do book work."

Mercy. In response to the same question as to what type of a learner she is, declared, "I'm more of a visual, hands-on learner, I'm not the type of a person who can read something in black and white and know exactly how to do it. For instance, like an assignment that has multiple directions, instead of knowing all the directions, I would

want to know one portion of the directions at a time to make sure I know how to do it.”

Loree. She explained how someone can learn a skill in the following response, “First they have to see that they know what they are doing. I think it’s more like hands-on and watching what they are doing. I think its easier for me to learn like that and may be for a lot of other people. Its because you hear and see and you are doing what people are telling you on the board. It’s not like drawing it and showing it on the board because you can actually see it. It’s not like reading it from a book... I think you can understand it better if you are actually trying it instead of trying it in your head. Because you can’t obviously know everything about it if you are actually doing it instead of your head.”

Inora. She responded to a similar question on the type of a learner she is when she indicated, “I know I learn best with someone showing me out.... I would rather have someone teach me on one to one and not with a video.” Inora further described herself as a learner and said, “Oh I’m a visual learner. I’ve got to see it to know how to do it.”

Havila. Her favorite method of learning is the close-up method. She had this to say, “I mean I want to do everything close-up like in science they like to show you how the stuff is done. In class you only show how one works instead of reading it or just looking it up in a book. Actually, you spend half of the time per day. I say that is the best way to learn. After it has been arranged, you see it happen. It is quite true, it’s one of the best ways.”

Fisha. She also prefers being shown to learn rather than reading from a book or watching a video. When asked about using a video to learn she said, “Oh ya! They can watch a video but I don’t think that too much will help. I would rather have someone in front of me to show me.”

Learning is linked to one’s past experience

Although adolescent mothers have limited experiences, Knowles (1984), 60% of the participants’ past experiences emerged as being influential factors in their current learning undertakings. In most cases, the same experience led to a career choice or the situation in which one operates. In the following quotations, adolescent mothers related their experiences and how they have effected their present condition.

Ursa. She skipped many classes both the elementary school and high school because she was neither disciplined by her mother nor the teachers at school. She says:

“I got switched in my freshman year to a new school, bigger school. I didn’t know no body, so I was in the wrong crowd. I skipped school.... I never got in trouble for skipping school or nothing from my parents.” This year Ursa plans to graduate but she had to make up what she missed. She said: “I’ve learned now this year not to skip a lot. Not for my daughter, if she started doing that then I will know what will happen to her. I will end up disciplining her because I will know all signs that lead to that.... I want to actually get somewhere in life...(by) coming to school and doing my work.”

Ursa plans to train as an elementary school teacher so she can monitor her daughter’s school attendance by being her teacher.

Sheila. She babysat her cousin’s children referred to the experience positively. She said, “Even if I wasn’t a teen mother, just when I got older and had a kid, I would

somewhat, know how to hold her and do something to help the baby.” Sheila also explained another change she has made regarding learning, before she became pregnant and now. She said, “I think I’ve become a better learner. Before I was just pretending I was learning but really I was not....And now I’m just growing up, I want to learn more. I want to learn everything than before I wasn’t (pregnant). I haven’t been in school for two years. I just came back because I am having a baby. I don’t want to be in this world without education or anything with a baby. I want to make a better person out of myself for me and for this child....I am trying to do the best for my child so I’ll try to go to all parenting classes.”

Ramona. She explained a similar situation. She reported, “Well back then I wasn’t really focused on anything else, you know.... Now because I have my child and everything, I want to learn as much as I can.... I learn better because I know how I learn. I pay attention.”

Pearl. She said that her current interest in literary arts stems from grade school. She reported, “I did poetry in grade school and I won an award for it. That helped my self-esteem.” Referring to her present learning experiences, she said, “Depending on the subject, science I need them to show me but if it is English, I don’t care. I just love doing it. I love English, writing poetry, that kind of stuff I can just do it.” Further, Pearl explained how she learned from experience after she met a young man became the father of her child. She said, “It was in the past and I learn from my experiences and now I can forget about them (past experiences). He helped me a lot in my self-esteem and I care more about school now. What I’d wanted to be has changed. I want

to stay home as mom now because I believe it is a lot important to be with my son.... I am the only one that can teach him when he gets to know.”

Orean. Though she values the experience she gained when she went to Washington on Close-Up, stated that the greatest experience she has had was having a kid. She said, “Well I think like having a kid. How I have learned. Not just about parenting, but I think hopefully it makes you realize that you need to know about everything once you are a parent. You need to have much knowledge if you can, so you can give it to your child.... Giving birth...you have to feel yourself. I consistently tell my friends not to get pregnant but I know it is not going to help because I can’t make them feel what I am feeling.” As a learner Orean said she does more than what is required. She plans to start college in January and said, “I know I’m going to be something and I want to give back to the system.... I think the best thing is to prevent teen pregnancy altogether, but who knows how to do that? Education is the only way I guess.”

Neria. Her experience was having a child. She stated, “I can’t think of anything . I just know a major learning experience in my life was having a baby. Being a mom that young, you know, I pretty much gave up my teen age life to have a baby. I had to learn everything.” As regards learning, Neria stated, “But now I do know that I have to know how to do that stuff in the real world, so I do apply more time to it and try to learn more about it.”

Loree. She is deeply involved with her mother’s work with blind and deaf children. In reporting her experiences with the children she said, “To see someone do something they could never have done without you helping them, it makes me feel good.... My mom has done a great job, teaching me. It’s not that she is forcing me but

I want to learn and I have been around her all my life.” Because of the experience she has had with the children, Loree is planning a career in the same field. She said, “I will, hopefully, some day become an occupational therapist and work with children that can’t hear or speak. At times I will go to Lansing Community College and transfer all (credits) to the University of Michigan (where I will be) to be in occupational therapy.”

Havila. She looks more at role models as she continues with learning. They advise her to graduate from high school and go into college. This is what she said about the role models, “I kind of like to listen to stuff like that because if they, the people that I look up to, have a high school diploma, they are doing this, they are doing that, that is one of the reasons why I keep on going, because I am looking at how good they are living and all stuff like that makes me keep on going. It’s hard with a child, you know, and with no transportation, but I just keep on going because I have that role model.” Regarding how she learns, Havila stated, “When I was younger, I used to play. I never really paid attention to teachers and staff. But now I realize how really important it is because I am 17 and will finish at 19.... I just try to get my work done.”

Fisha. She started learning parenting skills at an early age, 12, when she was watching her younger brother and sisters. Currently when asked why she was learning, she said, “To be a better parent because I have one and another on the way. That’s going to be hard for a teen mom.” At 17, Fisha wants to assist younger adolescent mothers. She said, “Some females don’t know exactly what parenting is and by me knowing because I’ll be much older than other young girls who are 12 or

thirteen, I can talk with them about what they will be going through and what being a mom is.”

Learning helps one make something out of oneself

Many adolescent mothers believe that without learning they should not have any opportunity. Some of the feelings 33% of them expressed during the interviews showed that they were in a critical situation because they felt, ‘life was over’, or ‘life didn’t matter anymore’ or they were destined for a life of poverty because they had a baby. The following excerpts express some of these sentiments.

In response to why someone would want to learn, this is what some said:

Ursa. “So they get somewhere because if you don’t know anything, you can’t get anywhere, really. You have to know how to do things and how to work with people, otherwise you won’t get anywhere.” On a personal note, she said, “So I can get out of high school and out of college, be able to have a career job and support myself and my child. To be able to make it through schooling, you have to learn. I am talking of most people, to be able to work not just at McDonald’s or Burger King, you have to learn to do like a normal career job.... I want to actually get somewhere in life. Not just be nobody like a lot of my friends. I want to be able to help my child live well off.... I just want to have a career, have a big house and that kind of stuff.”

Terese. She wants to feel a sense of accomplishment through learning. She responded, “Well I want to be smart, I want to know things. You can make money for your child and to just make yourself happy, feel like you accomplished something. I like that.” Terese lost her friends when she had a baby. Of this experience she said,

“Even when I had cancer, I learned that my friends would be there for me. It was an emotional thing with them.... I was kind of weird though because my friends were there for me then and after I had my son, I only have like two really good friends still. They can’t relate like (to) me any more..... May be I am worried about getting good grades, I am because I would like to make something out of who I am.” She plans to be a surgeon or ‘may be an aid in delivering babies.’

Sheila. She had been a school drop-out for two years and responded, “I just didn’t want to learn before....” When she became pregnant, this is what she said, “I just came back (to learn) because I am having a baby. I don’t want to be in this world without education or anything with a baby.... I want to make a better person out of myself for me and for this child. Like I am a student now, better than I was before, you know, I take into consideration what the person is saying...now I ask questions or ask them to repeat.” She wants to be a role model to her son and get a career in computers.

Ramona. She responded similarly, “Well I want a better life for myself and my child and some day, hopefully, I’ll be an RN and be able to work....I want to learn to be an RN, through college I will do everything.... I like to give to people, I feel better.” Of her learning experiences, she said, “Well, back then (before the baby came) I wasn’t really focused on anything else. Now, because I have my child and everything, I want to do something, I want to learn, I want to learn as much as I can.” She suggested the following to other teen mothers, “May be just to keep positive. Don’t focus more on the negative than positive because focusing on the positive will help them learn more and not be so bitter towards their child because they will be able to know different

ways to handle the child and the situation that might come up.” Ramona’s determination to graduate and succeed surfaced when she said, “I go to school eight hours instead of six like a lot of these kids. There’s another extra hour that I go to so that I can graduate earlier.... Sometimes I’m quite exhausted but I can deal with it.”

Neria. When asked why she was learning, she abruptly responded, “I don’t want to be stupid.... If you don’t learn, you don’t go anywhere,” she further said. She shared some of the teen mothers’ concerns about their new role in raising a baby. She said, “May be by themselves, they feel like their lives are over...they are not going to be able to go anywhere, not even into college.” Neria is focused on what she is doing, what she wants to be and believes that she learns more from other teen mothers. She indicated it was important that they continue learning from each other when she said, “It’s just you learn from each other because you’ve been through the experience. I still learn things from people like I have a three year old, I learn things from people with a one year or a two year old, like if their child is learning something, you ask when did he start that? It is just (that) kids have different levels when they learn, so I ask them how they got to do that or what made them do that and you know then I actually learn from them.”

Inora. She stated that learning was a need for her as she responded as to why she was learning. She said, “Because I need to. I want to graduate. If I want to take care of my baby, it will help me....” She is 17, in 10th grade and not yet decided on a particular career.

During the individual interviews of their learning experiences, adolescent mothers reported that they see learning as a never-ending process, they learn for a specific purpose, to

get a job. Generally, learning is viewed as schooling. The belief that learning helps one make something out of oneself, propels adolescent mothers to embark on learning. However, they are still undecided on the mechanism by which they could better themselves, a career choice. The remaining four themes are not discussed as they were only referred to by less than 30% of the participants.

Themes Relating to The Learner

There are 13 themes that relate to the learner. Six themes met the criteria established for this study, whereby a theme has to be referred to by 30% of the participants or above, for it to be included in the discussion. Two themes out of the six were referred to by 73% of the participants. In these themes, the adolescent mother's views, abilities and how she learns surfaced. Some themes that are not so strong, those with less than five participants, are not discussed. Only two participants (15%) referred to more than 50% of the themes about the learner. Table 4.4 summarizes these themes and how the participants responded to each theme.

The learner has the ability to learn if she wants to

In defining their abilities as learners, 73% of the participants felt that they were capable of learning and that capability emanated from their level of interest. Among these, 14% felt that they were highly capable if it was within their area of interest. In their own words, this is what they said:

Fisha. "I'm a good learner. I will sit and listen; I'm not the type that will argue with you. You might have different opinions from mine, so I might not agree with you but

I will not sit there and fuss giving my opinion because it is not going to make any sense.”

Table 4.4 Participants' References to Themes About The Learner

Themes:	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	Total
Learner has ability to learn if she wants to	x	x	x	x	.	.	.	.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	11
Learner sees sources of help other than teachers	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	.	x	.	x	x	.	.	11
Learner has limited planned learning agenda	x	.	x	x	x	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6
Learner has broad learning agenda	.	x	x	x	.	.	x	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	6
Learner uses reflection in learning	.	.	x	x	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	x	x	6
Learner has unpleasant childhood memories	x	.	x	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	x	5
Learner views peers as sources of learning	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	x	.	.	.	x	.	.	4
Learner wants to learn parenting skills	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	.	4
Learner wants to learn to help others	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	3
Learner as parent models behavior	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	3
Learns by networking with other teen mothers	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	3
Learner needs to know much to be able to impart to a child	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	3
Learner views self as highly capable of learning	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	2
Total responses	9	3	6	6	2	1	6	3	4	5	2	3	7	5	5	67

Key: F = Fisha I = Inora L = Loree O = Orian S = Sheila
 G = Gladys J = Jarlin M = Mercy P = Pearl T = Terese
 H = Havila K = Kathy N = Neria R = Ramona U = Ursa

Gladys. “Actually it was easy for me to learn.... All you’ve got to do is to take care of one side. If you stick to it, you do it, but if you don’t, you just talk about how you can do it and you will not get up there to do it.”

Inora. Her learning experience is also under a structured class situation and this is what she said about her learning ability, “I need to touch up on my math skills, but after I learn all that I’ll remember it, you know. I can remember numbers really well.”

Neria. She expressed how interest may affect someone’s learning when she said: “Maybe if they apply themselves, if they really want to because the interesting part about people is if they don’t want to learn to do it probably they aren’t going to do it. They have to want to learn to do it....It depends on what I want to learn. If it is something like in school, if I like it I pay attention and if I have questions I ask the teacher and I ask him to coach me so that I understand it more.... But if they want to learn then they will pay more attention, you know, push themselves to learn it.”

Orean. She explained why she thinks it is important to be challenged when learning and how she goes about it when she said, “I also just think of instilling work ethics. Someone, see, not everyone wants to learn. I take classes that are really very hard. I don’t need to, I don’t need to take any that aren’t required but I am taking them because I want to learn and letting kids know how important it is to learn. I think a lot of kids don’t. They take the easy way out.”

Pearl. She stated how her level of interest influences her learning when she said: “And when I really want to know something, I try hard to learn everything, but if I don’t want to know it, I then kind of slack off on it. But if I really want to know when

I learn, I'll do everything and then some day know it. But like math, I don't even care."

Ramona. She believes that learning occurs when there is an interest or desire. She said: "First you have to want to learn. If you don't want to learn you can't learn. You have to be open to different ways to learn.... If you look forward to it (learning), you should at least have fun. If it's fun you will learn and you will remember it, something that you will remember for a long time."

Sheila. She saw the learner's interest as the key to learning when she said, "There are different ways in which you can learn to do something if you really want to learn.... I just listen and take notes. I guess if I really want to learn something, that is what I will do. So I will take notes and listen carefully.... I've been reading ever since I found out I was pregnant."

Terese. She explained her abilities as a learner by saying: "I like to learn. I ask a lot of questions when I need to because I want to know and I need to know those things and I could be afraid if I couldn't learn. I think that I am a good learner if I have the right people to talk to, like if I would have just read all that information, I wouldn't have known it very good. But I had people to talk to about it if I had a question I would ask then I would retain that. I think I am a good learner when I have someone to talk to, someone on one on one."

Ursa. She talked about her abilities as a learner and asserted, "There are those days when I don't care and I don't pay any attention. If I actually want to learn and am interested in what I want to do, I can do it well.... But otherwise I think I'm a good learner.... I am smart, I guess, I can do my schooling and get good grades, if I want to."

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She further stated that school attendance and doing what is supposed to be done helps her succeed.

The learner sees sources of help other than teachers

Over 70% of the adolescent mothers interviewed stated that they seek assistance from sources other than teachers, such as, supervisors, counselors, tutors, pastors, peers and family members. Having someone to turn to for advice or support seemed to be very important. In their own words, this is what they stated:

Gladys. She cited her mom as the one who helped her most. Other sources of help she said, “My cousin and even some teenagers...some girls who would come around and we would talk and a lot of them would come and pick me up and we would talk. Those who are like we would go some place, they’ll help you.” Also, Gladys mentioned that she learn from church. Probably it is from her pastor or the Sunday school teacher.

Havila. She found it difficult to pick an individual who has helped her most in learning. So she said, “So all I can really say is pretty much all the teachers here. I would take Greg. He is not a teacher but he is a supervisor here. He tells me about all these different things I can do in order to get a pass, you know, your actual credits. He is one of the nicest people I have met...plus sometimes a social worker, I mean a counselor, who comes here and talks to teen moms twice a week.”

Jarlin. She stated that if she sought help, she could ask her friends or parents, besides teachers. Regarding asking friends to help, she said, “If you don’t know something you can ask them (friends). They might know. And if they know it, now you know....

Or if you go to church or something, your pastor can instruct you...or you might have a counselor at school.”

Loree. She mentioned the qualities of the people who can assist learner, rather than mentioning individual job titles. She referred more to people who would work with deaf and blind children. Describing them, she said, “Caring people that sympathize for (with) children like that. You have to care, you have to have a lot of hear, dedication and you should want to do it.” She named her elder sister as the person she would pick to assist her. Explaining why her sister, she said, “For something different, I would want my older sister. She’s helping me deal with my daughter as she gets older. So whatever she’s gone through already, I am facing soon or now.”

Mercy. She answered the same question as to what type of people could help a person learn by saying, “People who are understanding what a person could do. People who are open-minded instead of closed minded. An open-minded person is more likely to listen even if they do not agree with what you are saying....” Mercy said she has learned most from her mother. Also, she mentioned that she has taught herself too.

Ramona. She claimed that everybody assisted her in learning. She stated, “Sue, she helps me a lot with parenting things.... And I would say I’ve taught myself quite a bit of things I learned myself. You learn from everybody, you might not think that you learned, anything, everybody does. You watch them what they are doing, what they are saying, like your mother, my daughter, for sure I learn from her.” She failed to pick an individual to learn from because she figured that one learns many things so would need more than a single person.

Sheila. She stated the qualities of people who help others learn. She said, “If I see someone smiling...then I quickly go to the one who was smiling because they seem to be more warm-hearted, more understanding, wanting to help you.” She said that she receives help from family members, friends besides teachers. She too, declined to pick a single individual who has helped her most because she felt that there are more people and have different abilities. On the support that adolescent mothers need, Sheila further stated, “Teens need a lot of support. They need someone there they can call other than their mothers or fathers. They need somebody because sometimes the parents are not there for them.... Well I was going to these classes for support because if your parents are not there for you or didn’t know about it, you may not know how to tell them or whatever, they supported you. It is called Shared Pregnancy.”

The learner has a limited planned learning agenda

In expressing their learning aspirations, 47% of the adolescent mothers suggested that they set a limited learning agenda for themselves. Following is how some of them express their learning plan.

Ursa. She stated the reason for learning when she said: “So I can get out of high school and be out of college; be able to have a career job and support myself and my child.... To be able to make it, most people have to learn. I want to be an elementary school teacher so I can have the same schedule as my child.”

Neria. She has a single purpose for learning and this is what she said: “After (high) school I want to go on to college. I really like to get an RN and work in the delivery room because I’ve had two children of my own, I think that is really neat. I’ve never

watched a baby being born so I think I will be able to do so.... that (nursing) is what interests me and I think nursing will make me happy in life.”

Mercy. She also had in mind a single purpose for learning when she stated: “And I want to learn because I want my diploma.” She advocated seminar type of classes because she felt they were more focused than those at school when she said, “Because when you go to a seminar, you attend one class and it’s over while as in school it’s repetitive.” In this case Mercy implied that one could target only his/her area of need in planning a learning agenda.

Jarlin. When she was asked if she thought she had learned enough, she indicated that she had a limited learning agenda in her response. She said, “I would feel that I would have learned enough. You can always learn more but if it is just for attached you don’t need to study a whole country if you just need to know one city in that country.... So then you would have learned enough by knowing that city.” Elsewhere Jarlin stated, “I feel when I was little I didn’t know anything and I wanted to know things. Now that I know things, I don’t need to study.”

Havila. She expressed her need for short-term type of learning in the following words: “If you have a job already, I don’t think you will learn for too long. Me personally, I have to; I mean that is the only way I can answer for it because I don’t want to go to college. My mom went to college.... She was never home...I don’t want to do that to my daughter. So I am just going to get like a trade and just I mean I must get my goals accomplished if I get a trade instead of going through all those years of college.”

Fisha. She felt that she did not need to learn anything else besides the classes she had already taken. She said, “Well, I don’t know. I have basically taken all the classes I need to know....I have to wait until that time comes before I can see it (what I would like to learn next).”

Kathy. She argued that it was not really her choice to take classes, it was her mom who wanted her there when she said, “I didn’t want to be at school because I don’t know that I need education. I don’t work right now but later on I need a good job. The stuff I can learn now I can use later in life.”

Table 4.5 summarizes adolescent mothers’ learning plans, five years and ten years from now, as indicated on the demographic questionnaire. Some adolescent mothers are quite consistent on what they want to learn while others are not.

The learner has a broad learning agenda

Besides schooling, about 40% of the adolescent mothers interviewed, show interest in learning in other areas. Sometimes these interests do not even include the areas originally mentioned in the demographic questionnaire. This gives one the impression that adolescent mothers have not quite decided as to what they actually want to learn. The responses below demonstrate some of the adolescent mothers’ perceptions of their learning agendas expressed during the interviews.

Terese. She plans to be a surgeon. In responding on how one knows if they have mastered the skill they set out to learn, she said, “Some things you never really know, like parenting. I think you can never know enough because there is always more to

learn...but other things, once you have mastered the skill you can do it....We are going to do autopsies on humans this year. I feel confident I can do it, just like the skills we

Table 4.5 Adolescent Mothers' Plans as Learners - Five Years and Ten Years

From The Day of The Interview

Name	Five Years From Now	Ten Years From Now
Fisha	Be a pediatrician when I grow up happy family.	Marry a wonderful man and be a
Gladys	Go to college to be a lawyer.	Live in own house as a lawyer.
Havila	I would like to be an accountant.	I would like to be an accountant.
Inora	Taking classes in production of music, television or videos	Producing music or movies.
Jarlin	Out of community college and become involved in business administration service & my own business.	Working full time on my own business on my time.
Kathy	Already have my high school diploma, probably be living with my fiancé.	Be married to William, might have another kid.
Loree	I would like to be an occupational therapist studying in college with a masters.	Steady with a job somewhere, hopefully, working at the school for the blind and deaf in Flint.
Mercy	I want an associate degree, at the least.	I want a full time career, I want a house and a family.
Neria	A nurse.	A registered nurse.
Orean	I want to be either a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. or a psychologist. I want to get my Master's in political science or psychology.	Makings six figures, possibly having another child and married.
Pearl	May be a stay-at-home mom if financially possible.	Same as above (at five years) answer.
Ramona	I want to be finishing up my Bachelor's degree in nursing.	Working at Sparrow, hopefully, in pediatrics or ICU.
Sheila	A good role model for my son. Studying about computers.	Having a better job in dealing with computers. Being a good role model still.
Terese	In college, living in a home with my son and my husband.	Graduated from college. Being a surgeon or an aid delivering babies.
Ursa	Just graduating from college.	Being married with another child and a teacher for young children.

are doing (learning) in histology, cutting on a microtome, once you can do it, you know the pieces are cut evenly... I think you can never learn enough because there is always something more to learn.”

Loree. She associates learning with life itself. When asked if there were other things she would like to learn, she responded, “Yes, there are so many things. I want to learn how to speak fluent Spanish. I want to learn more about the world. I want to become a police officer, may be.... As I get older and retire, may be I would want to travel the world and learn different cultures and the way different people deal with children with disabilities.”

Inora. She was unable to indicate an individual from whom she could learn something because she did not know what she might want to learn. In response she said: “I don’t know. Probably I may have to wait. It will really depend on what I want to learn. As a view of someone who doesn’t know what you want to learn, there ain’t going to be very much to understand.” Later, Inora stated, “I think it would be interesting to learn more about the things they have not yet discovered in the deep seas or travel. I mean because I do not know much more about Africa or even the States I live in. Even you could read books as a child to learn more about a child.”

Gladys. She did not seem to really know what she wants to learn in life when she responded, “I would like to live and watch my two kids grow well to be somebody. Sometimes I go to visit some of my friends and others I stay with here. What I would like to do, I still want a lot of stuff, read, write...it’s like I want to do a lot.” Later, she stated, “What I really want to learn (is) how to make clothes. That is what I want to learn what to do...but when you learn that, you have to stick to it. You just can’t do

all other things, you just have to stop. You just stick to it and keep on going.” Again when asked if there were other things she wanted to learn, Gladys stated a different learning agenda when she said, “What I really, really want to learn about is the social background, the history of black people.... They do not teach that in school.” One does not know actually what Gladys wants to learn because her learning agenda is very broad.

Havila. She is in a similar situation. She indicated earlier on that she would like to learn a trade to shorten her years spent in studying so she could spend more time with her daughter. When asked later what she would like to learn, she responded, “I would like to learn how to work on cars, I would like to learn plumbing, I would like to learn how TVs work, I would like to learn VCRs, radios. It is, in fact, so much. I want to learn how doctors know what, where and how doctors (they) know.” The fact in this case is that the learner does not know what she wants to learn and yet on the demographic data she indicated she wanted to be an accountant.

The learner uses reflection in learning

Motherhood influences adolescents to consider their lives and assess where they are at as compared with where they want to be. Forty percent of the participants indicated that they decided to learn after thinking seriously when they became pregnant or had a baby. In finding solutions to their problems, they go to school or ask questions from adults. When asked what they do to learn, this is what some of them said:

Havila. She referred to her role models and said, “All of them will be like, ‘You need to graduate, you need to get a diploma....’ I kind of listen to stuff like that and that is

what keeps me going.... Now I realize how important it (learning) is and I don't try to get caught up in class problems. I just try to get my work done."

Inora. She also listens to what people say about the importance of college. She said, "(It) helps you learn more, I guess.... After everybody is telling you that college is the way to go.... I want to graduate if I want to take care of my baby, it will help me... I have been thinking strongly about it (accounting) and that is what I want to do.... I think it will be something I will enjoy doing."

Loree. She strongly feels that teen parents need special emotional support. She expressed, "I think a lot of mothers, even teen fathers should be able to have some type of a class to which they can go in to feel that they can say, 'This is really bothering me and I need to deal with it before something happens to my child.'" On child custody, she said, "When they are not (fathers) until (the child is) two or three years old, they all want to come back. That is very emotionally damaging for that child because they've never known this person..."

Sheila. She returned to school after she became pregnant, a different person than she was before she dropped out. She commented, "I am a student now, better than I was before, you know. I take into consideration what the person is saying and if I don't understand it, now I ask questions or ask them to repeat it. Or I just take time enough into what I'm doing now than I had (done) before.... I want to learn everything now." With a new zeal for learning, she said, "I would like to learn a lot about computers...if you have to make it, you have to know something about computers.... Like parenting, too. I will go to all these classes because I want to be a good parent for my child."

Terese. She feels the loss of her friends who supported her when she had surgery.

Now that she is a mother, they are not there but feels she has to be herself again to win them back. She complained, "I was kind of weird though because my friends were there for me then and after I had my son, I only have like two really good friends still.

They can't relate like me anymore. I am worried about getting good grades, I am because I would like to make something out of who I am. I want to really, really try.

If they got a child I think they would be more worried about where they are going in life.... You want to be part of them but it is hard sometimes if you are out like you

have to be home by nine because your babysitter is going to be gone." As a learner

Terese. She said, "I feel confident that I can do something. I think mostly it has to be something real that you can see and has to be in your head to help you see that you have perfected something. On a seven page exam I took last week, I did really good and felt really confident with what I wrote. But I had people to talk to about it and I thought about it over and over."

Ursa. She stated that she was a bad kid at school but received no assistance from her mother or teachers when she skipped school. She said, "I would just go sit at home or sleep or go to friend's houses because I preferred not to be in school." Referring to the changes she has made, she said, "Because I have realized my mistake, I have my child and I look after her and bring her up.... I am the same type of a learner, I just can make myself do it, though. I didn't used to go (to school). I could do it if I was there and wanted to do it. Now I look back and see what the problem was, but then it was just normal."

Inora. She believes in informal communication among adolescent mothers through unstructured discussion sessions. In this way of communicating, she said, “We have casual stop down sometimes. We don’t even actually have to sit down like when we are eating lunch sometimes we just start talking about it. Somebody in the room will be pregnant or they just had a baby, has all of us moms assisting with her baby or is talking about her experiences.”

The learner has unpleasant childhood memories

About 40% of the participants expressed they had unpleasant childhood memories due to divorce in their families. Generally, the father was not there for them. In some cases, although they would stay at home with the mother, they would not get along with the mother or other siblings. Such situations contribute to an environment eclipsed with unpleasant memories that might have effected the adolescent mother’s learning experiences.

Havila. She stays at home with a brother and a sister. Disclosing her childhood days, she said, “My mother, she went to college, she had three of us and she was never home because she had two jobs when she was going to college. I don’t want to do that to my daughter.... I can’t say I learned too much from her (mother). She is dedicated, she has her degree, but she likes her own world like she thinks negatively about everything. I am completely opposite to that because I like to think positively about almost everything so I don’t really learn too much from her because we don’t pretty much get along.”

Ursa. She said that her parents divorced when she was five years old. She was the youngest among three children who were 11 and eight years older than she was.

Describing her life with her mother when she was in elementary school she said,

“When I was little, my mom didn’t really (spend time with me), I would get out of school, she would come, pick me up after work, we go home, couple hours after, we go to bed.... (Before bed time) she would go in her room and watch TV. I would do my own thing.... This is how I grew up...from like second grade on, so it was just normal to me. Now I look back and see what the problem was.... I even got a truancy officer because I was under age and skipping so much but she (mother) never helped me or nothing.... Mom got letters but she didn’t care. For the most part she gives me a hard time about graduating because as soon as I graduate, she doesn’t get any more money.” Ursa says that her mother gets about \$500.00 per month for child support.

Fisha. She grew up in a home where the father had a different religion, Islam, and viewed things differently than her mother. This is what Fisha said about her childhood years, “When I was a kid growing up, my father is a Moslem, so basically I had a hard life. He basically wouldn’t let me do any thing, he wouldn’t let me talk to anybody except myself and my household all the time....”

Pearl. She was harassed at school. She said, “I used to not care what happened to me because I was basically raped when I was in 10th grade and that made my self-esteem plummet...kids talked about me...and a lot of times I see teachers showing a lot of things, seeing sexual harassment going on...they just sit there and look at you. Kids harass each other and for a lot of teenagers it is a lot of hell to go to school. It’s especially worse for teen moms. You have a baby watching. You are scarred for life. Words hurt worse than other things.”

Loree. She recounts her life as being a member of two families. She said, “I am the baby from my parent’s first marriage...my eldest sister is 24.... From my dad’s second

marriage, I have a four year old brother and one that will be three and a younger one.

He is two months old.”

Adolescent mothers explained how they learn, related their concerns, experiences, mostly negative, and how they reflect on them. In some cases, they got the impetus to learn from those experiences. The next section deals with other ideas that emerged from the participants’ interviews.

Other Ideas and Concepts That Emerged

Several other observations surfaced from participant interviews. Table 4.6 below is a summary of these additional observations. The following themes emerged from only 12 of the participants (75%) and six of them (50%) contributed to 50% or over.

Table 4.6 Other Observations Drawn From Participant Interviews

Observations:	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	Total
Participant makes contradictory statements	x	x	x	.	.	x	x	.	x	x	.	x	.	.	.	8
Participant feels judged by society	.	.	x	.	.	.	x	x	.	x	x	x	.	x	x	8
Participant feels life is over due to motherhood	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	.	x	2
Participant reports bad experiences with family	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	x	.	.	.	x	2
Total Observations	1	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	0	1	3	20

Key: F = Fisha I = Inora L = Loree O = Orean S = Sheila
 G = Gladys J = Jarlin M = Mercy P = Pearl T = Terese
 H = Havila K = Kathy N = Neria R = Ramona U = Ursa

Two of the observations, participants’ making contradictory statements and their feeling of being judged by society are discussed. Contradictory statements were made by

60% of the participants. It was also observed that, in relating their perceptions of society and experiences with their families, adolescent mothers tended to be quite emotional. A discussion of the two themes follows.

Participant makes contradictory statements

Sometimes the participants made statements regarding their careers that were unrelated to what they had indicated on their demographic data. For instance, one participant stated at the beginning of the interview session that she would like to be a lobbyist in Washington or be a psychologist. At the end, however, she said, "I don't want to live in Michigan. I want to go and live in a jungle for one day then ...travel.... I've always been fascinated with travel."

Another adolescent mother when asked what type of people help one to learn responded by saying that you can't help anybody learn. Shortly after making this statement she indicated that her friends try to learn from her. Later, she also stated, "But the best learning experience I've had is being around other moms because I know that I am not alone.... It's just that you learn from each other because you've been through the experience." Below are examples of what they said.

Fisha. She expressed how difficult it was to grow up at home due to her father's strictness in that she was not allowed to be with other people except her family members. So when asked if she learned anything from her peers, she said, "Not really, nothing, I didn't learn anything from peers. Nothing at all." Earlier, she stated that she learned from taking classes, her mom and counselors. When asked about the Teen parenting Network, she said, "You learn different things from them like how some people treat their children, basically how they go about it." In this situation she says

she learns from peers, other teen mothers. Later, when asked if she changed as a learner, she responded, "I haven't changed as a learner. I keep learning. I don't know everything. When asked if she thought people change as they learn, she said, "Some people change, you know, if you learn a lot of things that you haven't learned before, you might change your ways. It depends on what you are learning. Some people learn things and they change. I've changed as I have learned a lot of things."

Gladys. She stated early in the interview that she would like to be a lawyer. Later, when asked what things she would like to learn in life, she said, "What I would like to do, I still want a lot of stuff, read, write, I teach my little girl.... What I really want to learn how to make clothes. You just can't do all other things, you just have to stop. You just stick to it and keep on going."

Havila. She said she would like to learn a trade so as to spend less time in college. This is what she said, "I am just going to get like a trade and just I mean I must get my goals accomplished if I get a trade instead of going through all those years of college." As she tried to pick a trade, she could not settle on one for she still had so many options. She said, "I would like to learn how to work on cars, TVs, VCRs, radios. I like engineering but you have to be really good in math. I am not extra in math but I get through it." It seems that if she starts learning these things, she might spend a life time! It is hard to tell if she really knows what she wants.

Neria. She seemed to contradict herself when she stated, "You can't help somebody learn. It depends on what someone wants to learn. If someone wants to learn how to take care of a baby, she should go to somebody that already has children, has more experience." Later, she stated, "But the learning experience I've had is being around

other moms because then I know that I am not alone. I know that they've gone through before me and there are those who will go through after me. It is just you learn from each other because you've been through the experience."

Orean. She said she enjoys reading but seemed to contradict herself when she said, "I read a lot. There isn't very much that I want to learn." Next when referring to giving birth, she said, "How I have learned! Not just about parenting, but I think hopefully it makes you realize that you need to know about everything once you are a parent." Later when asked as to what she wanted to learn, she responded, "I just like to learn about people, and cultures, and things like that.... I've always been fascinated with traveling...."

Pearl. She feels that she needs to develop assertiveness so that she is not as sensitive. On this she said, "I am really sensitive. Sometimes I cry over things, I like to learn how to control that." When asked if she has made any changes in life, she said, "I have a lot more self-esteem now.... I can stick up for myself a lot more than I used to be." She strongly feels she needs to stay home and teach her son. She will only pursue a career if she has to." On the issue of motherhood, Pearl said, "We do not need to be looked down upon because we can just be good mothers like anyone else. Just because we are younger doesn't mean anything." Contrary to this, commenting on what would be helpful to teen mothers' learning, Pearl stated, "I think a lot of teen moms actually need to be a little more mature.... They should not talk rumors."

Participant feels judged by society

Fifty-three percent of the adolescent mothers interviewed expressed concern that they felt they were looked down upon or judged by society as a whole. This is what they said:

Ursa. She senses that society treats teen parents differently. So answering to that she said, "As far as we are (concerned), we are not any different from anybody else. We just have a lot more going on in our lives." Earlier on, responding when asked if there were some problems that were unique to teen moms, she said, "Ya!. They give them a lot of harder time at home. Whether it's their parents. Teen moms have to deal with the father, child support, custody and all that stuff. So that should be unique to teen mom, that makes it harder. They are worried about their kids and stuff like that."

Terese. She stated, "A lot of people looked down on me, but they have to see what I see, not what they are seeing. What they are seeing is, you know, she's a junior, she's still in school, she doesn't have money, but I am seeing the rest of my life, I want to have children, I don't want to miss out on that.... As a parent, you should support them no matter what, if they want to be anything in life. You should support them." She later indicated that she meant acceptable behavior.

Ramona. She expressed her feeling on being judged when she stated, "By not judging them first because a lot of people judge teen mothers more than they would 20 year old mothers. You know it is a lot harder to people around teen mothers are hard on them. It makes you feel bad. It makes you feel like, well why should I learn, may be I should be like they think I am. So I think teenagers should look at the positive side and not focus too much on what people say because they do say really harsh things, you know...."

Orean. She believes people discourage teen mothers from achieving. Asked to advise adolescent mothers, she said, "I think just how they always just look at the big picture where everyone tells you, like I am 16, 'You are going to end up on welfare,

you cannot graduate, statistics tell you that you are going to get pregnant.' You need to fight. Don't buy into what they are saying. They don't want you to succeed because if you succeed, people will look at you, teen age mothers will look at you and say, 'She succeeded and why not I.' They will bring up an epidemic of teen mothers...."

Pearl. She had this to say, "You do not need people bringing you down all the time, telling you that you are smart or that. You made a mistake but now you have to live with it. We do not need to be looked down upon because we can just be good mothers like anyone else. Just because we are younger doesn't mean anything. I'm doing my best to try to get out on my own, make a life for my family, so it is just the worst thing in the world to be looked down upon by anyone. It is a horrible feeling....Like if you go out to dinner with your son, people really strain out to look. Sometimes its full of bad experiences, especially with your family. I've got an uncle who wont even talk to my family now."

Mercy. She feels that society tends to think that teen mothers are stupid and cannot make the academic grade. She said, "I think society as a whole tends to give teen mothers more of a bad name than they really deserve.... I don't know things like a 30 year old would know how to raise a child better than an 18 year old. Just because they are older. Well they generally say teenparents are all on welfare and that babies born to young mothers don't have a future. I would say that if you want to succeed, if your integrity is there, you can succeed. It may be harder but I know that people can do it. You can still go to college, it might take you two, three years more than it should, but you got through."

Loree. She feels there are many people who judge her. Suggesting the things that can help a teen mom learn, she said, "May be just trying to be strong.... There are so many people nowadays that judge you before they know you and for you to be able to deal with the stresses from that, they should have classes for teen moms.

Havila. She notices change in people's attitude towards her. This is what she said, "I can't really say because everybody that I have known that has sat down to talk to me ...they have completely changed... they are so sweet at first when I first meet them and they all talk to me and teach me all these things. They have completely changed like they don't practice what they preach...."

Other ideas expressed are also important although not many adolescent mothers mentioned them. What was clear in their perceptions of society was that they tended to be very critical but the majority did not mention their mistakes. The next section is the service providers perceptions of adolescent mothers.

Service Providers' Perceptions of Adolescent Mothers as Learners

During research preparations with the different organizations, arrangements were made that at the end of the interview with adolescent mothers for service providers to participate in a group discussion with other providers. This meeting convened at the Haslett Family Learning Center, Meridian High School, on October 9, 1996, from 12:00 noon until 12:45 p.m.

Six individuals, representing five organizations out of the ten that took part in the study, participated in the meeting. They represented EFNEP, WIC, BSF, Haslett Family Learning Center and Teen Parent Network. Most of the participants, five ladies and one

gentleman, knew each other. They all instruct adolescent mothers, sometimes at their organization's premises, at the clients' homes or in the classroom. They all know the clients well.

Service providers' knowledge of adolescent mothers as learners

The information on adolescent mothers was obtained through a group discussion. To start the discussion, the researcher reminded the participants the objectives of the research before asking them what they thought of adolescent mothers as learners, especially their attitude towards learning. In response, there was a general feeling that, somehow, adolescent mothers do not open-up. Some service providers noted that some adolescent mothers preferred to appear dumb in the presence of their boyfriend, or they gave the impression that they knew everything, so did not want to learn. Also, an attitude of being suspicious or hostile with those in authority was detected. Following is how some of the observations were reported in response to the question on the learners' attitudes towards learning.

NO. "It seems to me like always, one or the other tries not to outbid the other one so it doesn't seem to work well together. Every time I've seen that a lot... It seems that the girls are really sharp and ready to learn but when the boyfriend is present, she will really bring herself down and try not to be as smart as he is. She tries to look dumber than the boyfriend."

BE. "It is something that I see. That attitude is kind of interesting. For some kids, they do not feel they need instruction in nutrition. OC responded, 'Exactly.' So if you know everything then you don't need to learn a whole lot. So it's just like wasting their time."

OC. "They don't know the value. They do have attitudes."

BE. “That’s sometimes. There are other kids who are very eager, they know they should read the handout for when they should give vegetables. They know it.”

OC. “That ties in with a couple qualities I believe I have identified. One is the tendency to be suspicious of authority figures. Also hostile or unwilling to open-up with authority figures.”

The researcher then asked what they thought of their abilities as learners. Service providers observed that adolescent mothers were bright but other things complicated their lives so that they were ‘in trouble focusing.’ They also expressed that lack of goal-setting contributed to their becoming mothers. However, service providers observed that adolescent mothers needed to be motivated to set their goals. It was also expressed that sometimes adolescent mothers did things ‘just for the baby.’ The following text is the service providers’ expressions of some of these sentiments.

ND. “I know that there is stereotypes of a lot of people who don’t want to listen to others, must be not too good, right. And it’s not my experience at all. They are very bright but I think though that they have a lot of other things on their minds, other than school.”

BE. “Their lives are very complicated...some of the children are in trouble focusing...but I think they are bright in quality if you get them to focus.”

When asked about adolescent mothers’ abilities at goal-setting, the providers’ responses were quite revealing. Below are examples of some of the responses.

BE. “I see with WIC, it is just not in importance. There are too many other important things going on, housing, their emotional status, education in WIC, probably, is not one of their top priorities.

ND. "Furstenburg notes that part of the reason they end-up teen parents is that if they had a long term goal, by becoming teen parent, it would interfere with that goal. If you do what you want to do, you don't become a teen parent, in most cases."

AS. "I think some kids, as soon as they have a child, they want to do everything right, they do fall in line but if they decide to be lazy, they are just lazy. Sometimes kids want motivation to get goals set."

OC. "I think developmentally speaking, they are too self-focused, and they live for the moment, and those things do not mix well with parenting..."

ND. "Sometimes they say, 'You know, I wont do this for myself,' but, somehow, it breaks through enough, that they know they need to do it for their child."

NO. "All I could say when we come in, they are not studying, of course. But even to get a goal, we talk to them and we all do the same thing, reassure them that they're setting goals and that they'll be respected for that by everybody. Pretty soon after that goal-setting, it is stolen."

The researcher asked if there is a difference between teen parents in school and those who are not. To this, service providers unanimously responded, "Very, very! Just like night and day!" Service providers noted that adolescent mothers in school were moving away from living by the day and were planning for future participation in society while those not in school were only existing, basically without a purpose in life. This is how they expressed their observations:

OC. "They are overcoming the natural tendency toward self-centeredness and not looking beyond the next week-end and fun activities they got planned till then."

BE. “I think the ones too that are in school think that they are going to... ‘fall in love and live happily ever after.’ I think the ones in school have hope while those not in school don’t..., they don’t have that strive. They are just going to live, they are just going to be system people the rest of their lives. They choose to be system! That’s what I see the big difference is... One feels like I’m going to live in society and the other says I am part of society.”

Service providers were asked about the society’s perceptions or community’s views of adolescent mothers in general, as learners. Their responses to this question suggested that the girls needed to demonstrate who they actually were and what they were trying to accomplish. It was clear that society was pretty negative towards teen pregnancy and that agencies tended to project a superior attitude towards adolescent mothers. A prerequisite to learning, having the basic needs met, was also mentioned. In the following responses, service providers express these sentiments.

NO. “I think it is hard to give the people in the community or to put across what the girls are accomplishing as opposed to getting the girls to come in and do it.”

OC. “Teen pregnancy plays on the weak. People have strong reactions to it. Some of them irrational...I guess I was thinking of agency people...building a sort of a strong desire to reach out to teen mothers...but one of the hindrances out there is that there tends to come across a superior attitude towards teen moms...” Other issues raised were: OC, “Agency persons don’t return calls, the nutrition staff return calls, people tell them (adolescent mothers) regulations without explaining.”

AS. “Even if our agency spoke of the healthy girl, there still would be skepticism because they are afraid we would track them down and force them into school.”

In the following text, service providers shared what they felt were adolescent mother's major hindrances to effective learning.

OC. "I think their basic needs have to be met before effective learning.

BE. "That's my basic feeling too."

ND. "I think we are to state that someone like that really understands the way we see it, between that, so that it connects with what they get from school based programs..."

NO. "They have to have somebody to come in and take care of their child or children so they can study...if you have work, sure, then if you have no work...plenty of time for child care."

BE. "I just have a laundry list here written down: boyfriends, feelings of low self-esteem, feeling overwhelmed, feeling trapped and resentful, a desire to have more freedom for fun and feeling judged or devalued.

Other observations made by providers were that some adolescent mothers wanted to have babies and that education is related to the community where they live. In other words, communities have a capacity to either advance or repress learning.

Service providers believe that adolescent mothers are quite smart when they want to learn but do not show it when they are with their baby's dads. At the same time, adolescent mothers are suspicious of authority, hostile and unwilling to open-up while some of them choose to have babies. Though they are very bright, they don't set goals and they have a lot of things on their minds. Meanwhile, society reacts strongly towards teen pregnancy, sometimes, irrationally, and yet they want to assist. It was also expressed that education is related to the community.

Adolescent Mothers' Group Discussion: Perceptions of Learning and The Learner

Following the interview with the service providers, adolescent mothers were interviewed through a discussion group. The group was composed of eight of those who had participated in individual interviews. In addition, a teen father whose girlfriend had participated in an individual interview, but could not attend the group session, attended.

As an introduction, the interviewer asked the participants how they chose what they learned. Several of them indicated that they did not choose, but rather, they were told what to learn. When asked what would make one want to learn, the response was that they felt they needed to. As an example of what would make one want to learn, one of them exclaimed, "OK, I'll tie that to this class. If someone is pregnant, they have to know how to take care of a child, they have to know what type of food to eat, whatever, if you don't know anything, you have to learn it!"

This response shows that learning is sometimes undertaken to satisfy an existing need, in this case, lack of skills in child care due to early motherhood. When asked as to what type of things adolescent mothers wanted to learn, the response suggested that most 16-year-olds did not like to sit in the classroom and learn, as one participant stated, "No, but I'm just saying that most people when they are 16, they don't like to sit in the classroom learning, really. I mean this is just in general." When asked about the type of things adolescent mothers liked to learn, they mentioned cooking, sewing and making things. This response suggested that practical training or skill development, in this case general household chores, was the preferred type of learning the participants felt they needed and they expected it to occur in the classroom.

Adolescent mothers were asked on the society's understanding of their situation. They indicated that they were not understood. To explain what they actually meant, they stated that society was ignorant of what adolescent mothers went through. Also, society, including their parents, did not understand a lot of things because things had changed a lot from when the adults were young. As an example of the changes that had occurred, some adolescent mothers disapproved the way their parents expected them to raise their children when they stated, "They don't know what we are going through, they just sit there and look down on us because we are kids, so young, and because we are teenagers. Ya! They were teenagers but we are entirely a different age. Things are different now for us than when they were our age. That also accounts for how we want to raise our child. The way we want to raise our child is different from how we were raised. Our parents want to raise our child like they raised us and that is kind of hard especially if you are living with them. Very hard!"

Referring to service organizations like WIC, the group felt that they were not taken seriously and sometimes they were brushed off because they did not want to listen to adolescent mothers. Further, the participants suggested that WIC personnel were disrespectful to them when they asked questions on how to get on the program. One participant stated, "What I am saying is that we have trouble to get assistance from WIC. From when I have tried to call and get information, it seems harder for me to get it than when I ask my mom to do it." When asked to suggest how society could be more understanding, they said, "Be patient with us and listen to what we are saying. Don't be in a hurry to get us off the phone. May be they need younger people, people that have gone through it. For teen moms, may be they should have people that were teen moms before. Actually that will help."

Asked as to what suggestions they had for other organizations, they exclaimed, "Simplify some of the rules! Like when you are on Social Services, they have a lot of legal things you have to go through and if you don't understand, you are going to get penalized, somehow, and if you get penalized because you do not understand, and even if you ask them to explain, they do not explain it to you. It is not fair that I am going to get penalized for it. It seems like one rule has 500 other sub-rules!"

Adolescent mothers' perceptions of society that surfaced during the discussion were neither understood nor listened to. Also, referring to some service providers, adolescent mothers felt that some of the rules in executing the services were so complex that they needed simplifying to be understood by them.

When asked if they were needed in society, unanimously the group responded, "Oh, yes! We are the future! They (adults) are not going to live forever!" Further, adolescent mothers indicated that society did not show that they needed them. Asked as to what society could do to demonstrate that they needed them, they demanded, "Give us free scholarships to college!"

During individual interviews, adolescent mothers saw a college education as 'the best way out of the situation.' In stating that society should give them free college scholarships, adolescent mothers reinforced their realization of the importance of academic education. In this response, they demanded to see concrete evidence of society's support through scholarship gifts. In this response, it appears as if they were operating more in concrete terms rather than abstract in demanding to see a evidence of society's support.

In addition, adolescent mothers analyzed their current learning experiences and found that they lacked relevancy. To express this sentiment, they stated, "If we can get like

computer classes, if you get a job later on, like in computers, they are teaching us to work on computers, but (do) you know what they should do in those computer classes? Get office jobs then go and try us in a position there.” Adolescent mothers’ plea was to be in a real work situation as part of learning. They indicated that they wanted to gain experience in career jobs when they stated, “Give us office work or something so we can see how it works! I don’t want to work where I work...I mean, I don’t like going, but I need some money. Currently we are working in restaurants.”

Adolescent mothers felt that it was easier for the school to arrange job experiences for them even if the type of jobs arranged would not be their career choices, they would still benefit from the experience. As to the relevance of such an experience in one’s life, they stated, “Even if you do not get that particular job, at least you have some kind of experience you can say, ‘well, when I was in high school, I did this and had some experience.’ Everybody wants someone who has had experience. That is why it is so hard starting-off due to lack of experience to start-off with.”

During the group discussion it was evident that in terms of modes of learning, adolescent mothers in this study preferred relevant hands-on experiences. Looking at their suggestions, it seems as if this particular group would like to follow the old home economics curriculum where the suggested practical skills in sewing and cooking were the core in the curriculum. In addition, they realized that times have changed and, therefore, computer skills were also necessary.

The participants seemed to view themselves as part of society and as such, they wanted to participate in it. This confirms service provider’s observation. However, without a high school diploma and a college certificate or degree, adolescent mothers saw their chances

for full participation in their society minimized, thus they decided to return to school. In school they saw lack of connection between what they were learning and after-school life, therefore, they suggested that the curriculum could be more relevant if they included practical subjects and were exposed to career jobs through practical training so as to gain experience.

On motherhood, they expressed a need for learning how to take care of a child but that type of learning was never considered to be included in the curriculum. In this case, adolescent mothers failed to tailor their learning experiences to meet existing needs; they were thus operating pedagogically, according to Knowles (1984). Motherhood gave them a chance to analyze their curriculum and see what would best meet their needs after they left school. In this case they were partially andragogical in their approach but failed to assume full responsibility for their learning. In many cases, they demonstrated dependency upon the school, teachers and society, thus suggesting that their development as learners might not be nearly as adultlike. Adolescent mothers need to learn to be responsible for their learning by operating more andragogically. To do this, they themselves will need to assume full responsibility without expecting society or their parents to do things for them.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings in the study of the perceptions of learning and the learner, with reference to the concept of andragogy and pedagogy. The study attempted to reveal the learning perceptions of adolescent mothers under the age of 18. To do this, an interview guide was used to develop three types of questions relating to experience, feelings and knowledge. These questions were the focus of the research. Framed in such a way that the participant was able to express her feelings, perceptions, experiences and aspirations, characteristic of the grounded theory methodology, the interview revealed some aspects of these behavioral manifestations from the emergent themes. Twenty-four major themes and four other observations emerged. These are vistas to the inner echelons of the learning perceptions of adolescent mothers under investigation.

Summary

The 24 major themes were subdivided into two categories; themes that related to learning, 11; and those that related to the learner, 13. It was obvious that some themes were mentioned more frequently than others, giving them more precedence. Such themes received credence in this study if they were referred to by over 30% of the participants. Thirteen themes, seven relating to learning and six relating to the learner, qualified

according to the criteria. It was noted that the participants also raised certain issues unique to their situation and are titled, 'other observations.' Themes that related to learning are summarized and discussed first, including the participants' orientation with reference to the assumptions of andragogy and pedagogy concepts, learning perceptions of adolescent mothers, learner perceptions of adolescent mothers and other observations. The conclusion and recommendations follow the summaries.

Themes Relating to Learning

Among the themes that related to learning, the learning is a never-ending process theme was mentioned by 93% of the participants while two themes, learning is associated with schooling and learning is used to satisfy an existing need, were each mentioned by 80% of the participants. A range from 40% to 73% of the participants mentioned other themes which included learning is for a specific purpose, learning is best accomplished through concrete examples, learning is linked to past experiences and learning helps one make something out of oneself. The high percentage of the participants who mentioned the first three themes on learning is evidence of the themes' importance to the participants. The following discussion is a comparison of adolescent mothers' understanding of learning, as it emanated from the themes, with reference to Knowles' concept of andragogy and pedagogy.

In referring to learning, Knowles (1980) argues that it is an internal process that is controlled by the learner and engages intellectual, emotional and physiological functions in order to meet needs. This means that learning to an adult begins with an evaluation of one's experience so that one's situations are addressed in overcoming problems (Lindeman, 1926, in Knowles, 1980:56).

In her view of learning, an adolescent mother sees it as something that is external and overwhelming as indicated in this expression by a participant, "There is so much of it out there that one cannot learn enough of it." While an adult learner focuses on problem-solving, the majority of adolescent mothers, although overwhelmed by the magnitude of what is available to learn, engage in the type of learning that does not directly address their existing motherhood needs. This might be due to their development as learners that it might not be nearly as adult-like due to a variety of transitional events they are experiencing. Learning is thus undertaken for future use. To underscore this fact, in response to why one would embark on learning, one of the participants gave external sources of the reasons for learning, such as, "To prepare for the changes that might occur in the work place, also to prepare for new knowledge that might be discovered." The adolescent mother's interpretation of learning is rather pedagogical, according to Knowles (1984). It exemplifies more of a 'banking type of education' where the learner, on the receiving end, sees learning as an open door that remains open for further learning (Freire, 1970:58, 60). This type of learning generally occurs with an undefined purpose and ignores the learner's current needs. This study observed that, although during the group discussion it was mentioned that learning was sometimes undertaken to meet an existing need, the idea was never applied by the participants to solve their current motherhood needs.

The adolescent mothers' orientation to a pedagogical type of learning was further illuminated by their associating learning with schooling. In explaining how they went about learning, some of the participants said that they were told or shown by teachers. To reinforce this understanding, during the group discussion, adolescent mothers stated that

they were told what to learn. Conducted at school, learning was organized around subject areas that the participants felt were necessary. By focusing on schooling, especially college education, the majority of adolescent mothers ignored addressing their current needs as unskilled mothers. Though one participant indicated a need for a parenting class, it was clear that what prompted its suggestion was the emotional needs that resulted from the feeling of 'being judged by society,' and the introduction of such a class might address the participants' needs by assisting them talking about their feelings.

Rated like schooling, the theme 'learning to satisfy an existing need' was also highly regarded. Adolescent mothers felt that they needed to make-up what they missed when they became mothers. However, they focused on making-up schooling rather than to learn motherhood skills. The later was often excluded in their learning plans. And yet, from this study and the review of literature, it was found that the younger the adolescent mother, the more frequent the births, i.e., younger adolescent mothers had a second baby soon after the first, unlike their older counterparts. This means that instead of learning to cope with being a mother of one baby, in many cases younger adolescent mothers have two or more babies to care for. As a result, the majority of them terminate their learning. Those who embark on schooling, like the participants of this study, believe that through schooling they will be able to cope with both their and their children's economic demands in the future as what they are learning now does not directly address their motherhood needs.

Childhood development is progressive, and therefore, the preparations adolescent mothers are making for the future will have ignored the babies' current needs of developing trust in the mother, autonomy and initiative through constant nurturing

(Erikson, 1963). This nurturing by the mother might only be partially accomplished currently due to mothers' schooling obligations and development that might not yet be adult-like. Failure to base their learning on the results of assessing their present situation makes adolescent mothers appear to be more like pedagogical learners. If they were andragogical they might have devoted more time to motherhood needs than is now the case, i.e., the best times of the day would be devoted to learning to be better mothers while actually taking care of their babies, and engaging in schooling later.

To fulfill the schooling need, adolescent mothers become fully dependent upon their teachers whom they consider to be the sources of knowledge. At home, also, they are dependent upon their parents for assistance with the baby. This dependency, both at home and school, delays the adolescent mothers' exit from their parents' homes and entry into the adult world. As a result, the parents' responsibilities are prolonged and extended.

Knowles (1984) suggests several concepts of adult learning. As learners, adults prefer to engage in mutual inquiry as a way of fulfilling their need of being self-directing. As adults explore knowledge, they sometimes temporarily seek assistance from someone, although they prefer to solve their own problems. Adults also enjoy operating independently of their teachers and prefer analyzing their experience while they learn and base subsequent learning on it. Unlike adults, adolescent mothers in this study expressed the feeling that they needed the teacher to demonstrate and use concrete examples in teaching, although they, too, drew from their past experiences like adults. In fact, regarding experience, the participants requested a curriculum that offered some practical subjects, so that they might acquire some valuable experience.

Experience, unlike other concepts, was generally referred to just like adults.

Though they have limited experiences, adolescent mothers seemed to benefit from them. To express the importance of experience to learning, they expressed that they needed to learn practical subjects that would assist them to build skills. Referring to computer classes they were taking, they felt that they needed to be deployed in real job situations to gain experience that is believed to be valuable. To some, a past experience was the only salient avenue to a career they intend to pursue.

Adolescent mothers' perceptions of learning. Although it was not said directly, the study provided insight that adolescent mothers feel they are off-track and believe that schooling will put them back on course and 'make something out of them.' They feel that schooling will salvage them and help them to be useful in society. Adolescent mothers manifested learning perceptions that were, in many cases, contrary to those of adults except for experience. The adolescent mothers' learning, generally for a future job, is preferred to be undertaken within a school setting. They prefer blending into the group when working with peers and desire to know who else is doing what.

Learners should constantly engage in evaluating their situation to determine what they need to learn next. Unfortunately, learning is not situational among adolescent mothers. The learners try to fit into the existing situation, schooling, and learn what is offered because they feel that without it there is no future for them. Adolescent mothers rely on what is taught in the curriculum and learning outside the curriculum is, therefore, disregarded.

Contrary to adults, adolescent mothers' perceptions of learning indicate that rather than embarking on learning to address the problems they are experiencing, they focus on

schooling and revere subject matter. This observation was manifested through the participants' preference for teachers' presence and demonstrations.

Adolescent mothers' perceptions of their learning needs. Human needs are believed to exist in different categories. Maslow (1970) hierarchically classified human needs into five different categories that were sequentially satisfied upon the satisfaction of the need in the lowest category. The five levels of needs, in order of their importance include: physiological, safety, social, self-esteem and self-actualization.

Physiological needs involve basic human need of food. These are commonly known as methods of survival. All efforts are directed towards satisfying this need before one can attempt to solve the next need which is the need for safety. Safety, the second order need, involves protection against danger, threat or deprivation. One develops a sense of security once this need is fulfilled. The third order needs are social. They involve finding one's position in society, such as ability to earn an income, to participate comfortably in different ways as deemed by society, including, belonging to associations and being accepted by social groups.

The fourth order need, self-esteem, deals with an individual's feelings that may result from being recognized or appreciated. This, in turn, may result from actively participating in the previous category. The fifth order need, self-actualization, is the highest an individual may achieve and is only achieved after satisfying all other needs in the lower categories on the hierarchy. A self-actualized individual accepts oneself, others and nature. One is more optimistic in perceptions of situations including natural phenomenon. Seeing that one feels good about oneself, one likes people and appreciates being alive. One is an autonomous individual and works towards assisting others.

Adolescent mothers' needs seem to be more in the social realm of the hierarchy. Their first and second level needs, physiological and safety, respectively, are satisfied in that food and shelter are provided for at their parent's homes where 80% of them stay. During the interviews, there were no indications of need for these two basic categories. The needs that surfaced were basically social. They involved engaging in learning that would facilitate one to find a position in society and actively participate in it, render services to people and be able to make it in life. Adolescent mothers did not talk about being involved in higher level activities such as working towards recognition or reaching out towards helping others in need, indicating that their needs at the level they are currently functioning, have yet to be satisfied. Also, adolescent mothers surmised that society was harsh toward them. They felt isolated from it, implying that they lacked a sense of belonging, confirming the type of the need as genuinely social.

As the adolescent mothers' learning needs are basically social, the learning endeavors that are undertaken are intended to satisfy those needs, though not immediately. Adolescent mothers know that they need to learn to be good mothers. However, their continuing with schooling is not intended to address their present motherhood needs. Instead, their learning is a continuation of what they had started before they became pregnant. Some of the participants said that they were pursuing their childhood dreams of a profession they liked before, while another saw motherhood as 'a mere detour to learning and not a road block.' Schooling is thus perceived as a survival strategy in society, that entails following the traditional curriculum of graduating from high school and proceeding to college. Adolescent mothers in school are determined to pursue schooling and, in the

process, ignore the essence of motherhood as their perceived learning needs focus solely on schooling.

Themes Relating to the Learner

Themes about the learner are quite significant in that they portray the learner as being the major control of learning. With interest, available resources, having either a broad or a small learning agenda, the learner feels confident and comfortable to learn. The participants were equally divided on the issue of the learning agenda. Forty percent had a narrow agenda, suggesting that they were focused on a single item they wanted to learn while others either felt that they did not aim at learning extras or did not know what they wanted to learn. The learners with a broad learning agenda sometimes did not know where to stop. At their age, it might be possible that they might not have decided, or they are still discovering their identities as their development might not as yet be adult-like. This finding suggests that to appropriately assist adolescent mothers, some topics on career choices should be discussed both formally and informally with concrete examples that might include making field trips to different establishments. In addition, adolescent mothers should be offered opportunities to engage in community volunteer services for exposure to as many available careers as possible. The andragogical approach to learning emphasizes learner involvement for learning to be meaningful. By being involved, adolescent mothers will acquire experience that will be basic to further learning.

Other Observations

More than 60% of the adolescent mothers made contradictory statements. What was stated at the beginning of the interview was, at times, quite the opposite of what was expressed at the end. A closer observation revealed that the discrepancies were basically

in their career choices and not in their analysis of the situation. The majority of the participants are in the process of forming their identities. As such, they try different roles but fail to make a single career choice because they are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the things they would like to learn. Another observation was that the participants felt they were unfairly judged by society. Some of them alleged that even at home they were given a hard time. In addition, one of them stated that she believes that people discourage adolescents from achieving. Another adolescent mother stated that if she went to dinner, people strained to look at her. Summing it all up, an adolescent mother enumerated the following problems adolescent mothers have to deal with: rejection by the baby's father, child support, custody battles, tough times at home, worrying about the baby, and exclusion in the homecoming activities of the school. This situation was confirmed by service providers.

In their discussion of the situation of adolescent mothers, service providers noted that adolescent mothers live complicated lives and, as such, have problems in focusing. They further stated that adolescent mothers were too self-centered and live for the moment. They did not set goals, and if they did, they did not operate according to those goals. However, adolescent mothers in school were seen as moving away from "living by the day and were planning for future participation in society while those not in school were only existing, basically without a purpose in life."

Regarding society, service providers felt that society was pretty negative towards teen pregnancy and that agencies tended to project a superior attitude towards adolescent mothers. As an example, it was revealed that agencies did not return teen mothers' telephone calls. Other comments included: people had irrational reactions toward teen

pregnancy and basic needs had to be met first before effective learning could occur. Also, service providers suggested that there needs to be a visible connection between school based and other service programs. Such a linkage may be established through involvement in practical experience. Their indication of a need for such an experience as a component of learning affirms their need for this aspect of development in their lives. Service providers also saw the following hindrances to adolescent mothers' learning experiences: boyfriends, feelings of low self-esteem, feeling overwhelmed, feeling trapped and resentful, desire to have more freedom for fun and being judged by society. Further observations made were that some adolescent mothers opted to have babies and that learning was related to their communities.

One of the important findings of this research is that adolescent mothers feel and think that everyone is critically watching them. According to Muth and Alvermann (1992), adolescent mothers react in this way because they are unable to separate themselves from others and the rest of the world while developing their social cognition. Consequently, they focus on an imaginary audience. To overcome this, Muth and Alvermann recommend that adolescent mothers be given an opportunity to grow and develop. In a learning situation, they need to be given responsibilities such as participation in community volunteer services so as to learn to look outward and beyond themselves. Rendering services to communities will improve their image within their respective communities. This recommendation endorses a need for practical training as a component of developmental experiences adolescent mothers need to have in their lives.

Conclusions

In examining the learning and learner perceptions of adolescent mothers, the following conclusions are made from the analysis of the interview data:

Conclusion #1. Adolescent mothers are committed to learn.

According to this study, adolescent mothers who have decided to return to school demonstrate a new commitment and determination to make something out of themselves. At the same time, their development as a learner might not be as adult-like due to the transitional events they are experiencing and their limited experience. Seeing that adolescent mothers draw upon the limited experience they might have had, it becomes necessary for education planners to design curricula with broad opportunities for experience, to be undertaken during the pre-adolescent or early adolescent years. Such a base will facilitate adolescents in career choices because they will have been exposed to as many available options as possible. Moreover, having a career choice made as they enter their adolescent years will help them to focus on goals they will have learned to set for themselves. Such experiences, hopefully, will facilitate the adolescent mothers' achieving their identity, a positive hallmark of adolescent development.

With an identity achieved, an adolescent mother will demonstrate a sense of confidence, stability and optimism about the future (Erickson, 1963, 1965, in Hardy, 1991, pp. 21, 22; Waterman, ed., 1985, p. 13). Such development is necessary in pre- or early adolescence because it serves as a prerequisite for both the cognitive and psychological development of the adolescent. When identity is achieved early in life, a young person, a foreclosed individual, may adopt similar values, goals and beliefs as those of his/her parents (Waterman, 1985, p. 12). Once goals are set and young people work towards

meeting those goals, most of them will be too busy to become adolescent parents (Furstenberg, 1987). Adolescent mothers are in a crisis, a moratorium state, and are seeking alternatives to resolve their problems. Meanwhile, they see schooling as the only salient way for them to learn.

Conclusion #2. Adolescent mothers prefer the traditional type of learning that occurs at school.

Although the parenting class for adolescent mothers was mentioned far more than other classes the participants were taking, it was not regarded as a useful coping strategy. When talking about the preparation for life careers, parenting was never mentioned as an area one would consider pursuing. Probably its relevance was only perceived as temporary, while the learners were in the moratorium stage, and it would diminish with the birth and growth of the baby, the cause of the crisis. Failure to recognize the importance of parenting skills as a vital area one would need to learn underscores that learning using the traditional curriculum is greatly esteemed as the recognized learning channel for adolescent mothers. Lack of inclusion of parenting skills in the traditional curriculum prevents adolescent mothers from including it in their learning designs.

Conclusion #3. Adolescent mothers feel that society treats them differently.

Another learning element that was argued by the participants was that they feel society treats them differently and yet they are not different. They are just like anybody else of the same age. This thought has other implications as to how adolescent mothers view themselves. Some of them try to use school learning as a way of escaping motherhood. Where such behavior was suggested, the baby was not mentioned in the mothers' plans for the future and as far as they were concerned, having a baby did not

change their identity as ordinary teenagers. They feel hurt when they cannot participate in the social events at school, as Terese expressed, "My boyfriend and I will go to a football game sometimes and like this coming Friday is homecoming. I want to go but I don't, I wish I was part of it. But it's hard sometimes to blend in, and you want to be part of them. Sometimes you are out like you have to be home by nine because the babysitter is going to be gone like." Occasions like this are external motivators. Feelings of being left-out indicate that they still need to be externally motivated, a characteristic that changes with maturity when one seeks to satisfy internal motivators.

To meet some of their social needs adolescent mothers sometimes try to go out but because of their obligation with the baby, they do not fully blend in with other adolescents. When that happens, they feel they are missing out. Such a feeling suggests their lack of understanding of who they really are. This might result from their development as it might not yet be as adult-like for if they were adults they would understand their situation instead of complaining and feeling left-out as they do.

Recommendations

From this study, it is clear that adolescent mothers are in a transitional stage of development intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically. As such they need to be exposed to as many ways of learning as possible in their quest for identity discovery. It becomes necessary to consider their pre-adolescent period as a vital transition period for them to be exposed to as many career experiences as possible. To do this they need to be involved in community services as volunteers so that they learn to focus on others and they should also learn some practical subjects at school to develop experience. It appears that

adolescent mothers are basically pedagogical learners in many ways but with experience they tend to veer more towards andragogical learning. Adolescent mothers' perceptions of learning are that learning occurs in school and teachers are central to the learning phenomenon. This perception implies that adolescent mothers lack the capacity of taking charge of their own learning. Seeing that it is necessary that they develop to be independent participants in society, they need to develop this quality earlier and it becomes necessary for planners of learning opportunities for adolescents to facilitate such development by giving them opportunity to participate in different ways, so that they might, eventually, realize their full potential. In addition, planners should conduct such learning programmes for adolescent mothers in the classroom as it is their preferred learning environment.

More research on adolescent mothers needs to be conducted. This research attempted to peer into the vistas of the adolescent mothers' learning domain. Seeing that learning is just as complex as the adolescents themselves, it will be necessary to specify the type of learning to be investigated such as skill development or preferred subjects among adolescents.

Also, a longitudinal study that would trace the development of pre-adolescent girls into adulthood might be useful in that a corresponding group might be observed. In which case, the experimental group will be offered the different learning opportunities available in the community as suggested in this study, while the control group will be without the special programs. At different stages of their development, comparisons in identity discovery and career choices made will need to be made between the experimental and the corresponding control group. Such knowledge will be useful in that it will give a sense of

direction to both the planners and providers. Eventually, the potential of the adolescent girls will be appropriately harnessed to render service to the community where they have a right to participate and thus contribute toward social well being.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Service Provider's Consent Form

In improving our approaches to meeting the learning needs of adolescent mothers, as educators, it becomes necessary to seek input from them. This research is designed to investigate what the adolescent mothers think they need to learn to be effective participants in society.

Your input as a Service Provider will be very valuable to the researcher for it will clarify some facts raised by adolescent mothers. The researcher, therefore, requests your perspectives on the attitudes, abilities, motivation and adolescent mothers' willingness to learn. This information will be collected through an interview lasting 45 to 60 minutes. All information given will be kept confidential. There will be no costs involved during participation, and you may discontinue participation at any time, if you so desire.

Please indicate your willingness to participate by signing below. If you have any questions regarding this request please call or contact the researcher at the following address:

Alice Nkungula
Department of Agricultural and Extension Education
410 Agricultural Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

Telephone: (517) 355-6580 or: (517) 353-6849

Thank you for your willingness to participate.

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Guardian's Letter of Consent

To The Guardians of Prospective Research Participants Consent Form

Name of prospective research participant

The above named person has been invited to participate in a research study that seeks to better understand the learning needs and learning styles of adolescent mothers. In improving our approaches to meeting the learning needs of adolescent mothers, as educators, it becomes necessary to seek input from them. This research is designed to investigate what the adolescent mothers, aged 17 years and under, think they need to learn to be effective participants in society. Individual interview sessions lasting for 45 to 60 minutes are planned for the research. A group discussion will follow individual interviews and if the participant volunteers to participate in the group session too, an extra hour and fifteen minutes will be necessary. All information will be kept confidential.

During the interview, the participants will be assured of safety and voluntary participation. There will be no costs for the participants, and they will be free to discontinue participation at any time during the research period, if they so desire. A small token of appreciation, worth about \$5.00, will be presented to the participants.

Seeing that the participants are minors, we request your permission for their participation. Please indicate your consent by signing the guardian section below and mailing it using the stamped envelope provided or returning it to the service provider. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact either:

S. Joseph Levine
Professor
Department of Agricultural and Extension Education
410 Agriculture Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
Telephone: (517) 355-6580

or: Alice Nkungula
410 Agriculture Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
Telephone: (517) 355-6580
or: (517) 353-6849

Thank you for your support of this important research.

Guardian's signature _____

APPENDIX C**Participation Request and Consent Form for Adolescent Mothers****MEMORANDUM**

To: Teen-age Mother
From: Alice Nkungula
Subject: Request for you to participate

Date: June 28, 1996

This is a request for you to participate in a study on learning among teen-age mothers. Alice Nkungula, a student researcher from the Department of Agriculture and Extension Education, Michigan State University, will ask you a few questions in an interview lasting about 30 minutes, on what you think teen-age mothers need to learn to be able to participate in society. You are free to quit any time you do not feel like answering the questions. Your answers will help educators understand the learning needs of teen-age mothers, making your participation very important to both you and educators. You will be protected from being associated with the answers you give, also, a small token of appreciation worth about \$5.00 will be given after the interview.

To participate please call Alice Nkungula for details at: Telephone: (517) 355-6580 or (517) 337-8789 during the day; or (517) 353-6849 at night.

To show your willingness to participate please write your name and phone number on the blank line of the consent form and sign at the bottom of the form. Tear off the consent form and give it to Alice or the person who gave you the memo.

Thank you.

Participant Consent Form

I, (your full name)_____Phone ()_____have read the memo and the researcher has explained the questions to me. It is with the understanding that I am free to quit participating any time during the interview if I so desire. I am signing this consent form to show my willingness to participate.

Please sign your name here

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide For Adolescent Mothers

Perceptions of Adolescent mothers as Learners

Explain what learning means to you.

How do you view/see yourself as a learner?

Discuss what you do to learn.

Self-directing vs Dependency

Explain how you decide on what you are going to learn.

How do you know that what you have decided to learn is the right thing to do and that will make you happy?

Experience

Discuss if you see any connection between what you have done or learned in the past to what you decide to do or learn now.

Explain how learning has benefited or is benefiting you.

Internal vs External Motivators

What things or situations make you decide to learn?

What do you like to learn?

Explain some of the challenges you face when learning.

Suggest ways in which you think you might be assisted in learning.

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide for Service Providers

Perceptions of Adolescent Mothers as Learners

Discuss your views on adolescent mothers as learners with reference to:

- attitude
- ability
- determination
- willingness
- motivation
- goal-setting

Discuss their hindrances to effective learning.

What do you consider might enhance learning?

Perceptions of the Program

Discuss what you consider to be the major contribution of the program to the learning experiences of adolescent mothers.

What might enhance the program's effectiveness?

Perceptions about Society's Approach in Facilitating Learning Among Adolescent Mothers

Discuss your community's view of adolescent mothers as learners.

What are the major hindrances in adolescent mothers' lives to effective learning?

APPENDIX F**Adolescent Mothers' Demographic Data**

Please fill in the blank spaces to supply the information requested.

1. Your age _____
2. Your grade level _____
3. Are you employed? Yes ____ No ____
4. Age when you first became pregnant _____
5. How many times have you become pregnant? _____
6. How many children do you have? _____
7. Where do you live?
 - a) In an apartment, alone _____
 - b) At home with my parents _____
 - c) At my grandmother's house _____
 - d) At a foster care facility _____
 - e) In my own apartment with my husband _____
 - f) Other, please name it _____
8. What thoughts do you have about the future regarding what you want to be :
 - a) 5 years from now _____

 - b) 10 years from now _____

The information supplied **will be kept confidential**.

Thank you for responding.

APPENDIX G

Emergent Themes from Phase II Interviews, Arranged as Components of The Research Questions

Below are 26 themes matched with the corresponding research questions. These themes emerged as responses to Phase II interviews (5) and they formed the template on which themes arising from the subsequent (15) interviews were coded. The coded themes provided the bulk of this research.

Question #1. What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of learning?

- 26. a. Focusing/goal-setting seen as important elements in learning.
- 26. b. Focusing/goal-setting not important elements in learning.

- 9. a. The learner has an extensive learning agenda for herself.
- 9. b. The learner has a small learning agenda for herself.

- 4. a. The learner knows what she wants to learn next (has a perspective of the future).
- 4. b. The learner doesn't know what she wants to learn next.

- 10. a. The purposes for learning are concrete in nature.
- 10. b. The purposes for learning are concrete in nature.

- 3. a. The learner has the ability to learn (if she wants to).
- 3. b. The learner does not have the ability to learn.

- 11. a. The learner views herself as being highly capable of leaning.
- 11. b. The learner does not see herself as being highly capable of learning.

- 8. a. The learner has a role in teaching/helping others learn.
- 8. b. The learner does not have a role in teaching/helping others learn.

Question #2. What are the adolescent mother's perceptions of the learner regarding:

(a) Self-concept. Is the self-concept of an adolescent mother that of a self-directing or a dependent personality?

- 12. a. The learner is self-directing/internally motivated.
- 12. b. The learner is dependent/externally motivated.

- 15. a. Parents and teachers are valuable learning resources.
- 15. b. Parents and teachers are not valuable learning resources.

- 17. a. The learner sees teachers at school as the only source of help.
- 17. b. The learner sees other sources of help other than teachers.

- 24. a. The learner makes contradictory statements.
- 24. b. The learner makes steady statements.

- 25. a. The learner prefers to learn by concrete examples.
- 25. b. The learner does not indicate a learning preference.

(b) Experience. Does the adolescent mother use experience as a basis for further learning?

- 2. a. Learning takes place in many locations.
- 2. b. Learning takes place at only special locations (e.g. schools).

- 13. a. Past experience is connected to what the learner is doing.
- 13. b. Past experience is not connected to what the learner is doing.

- 18. a. The learner reflects on what she learns.
- 18. b. The learner does not reflect on what she learns.

- 21. a. The learner has pleasant childhood memories.
- 21. b. The learner does not have pleasant childhood memories.

(c) Learning orientation. Is the learning orientation of an adolescent mother problem- or subject-centered?

- 1. a. Learning has a major role in helping her get to where she is.
- 1. b. Learning did not have a role in helping her get to where she is.

- 6. a. There is a single purpose for learning.
- 6. b. There are multiple purposes for learning.

- 16. a. Assistance sought is to complete high school and college.
- 16. b. Assistance sought is how to be a better mother for the baby and how to be independent.

- 22. a. Learning stems from an existing need.
- 22. b. Learning stems from the curriculum.

- 23. a. Needs to learn methods of birth control.
- 23. b. Does not mention need for knowledge of birth control.

(d) Motivation. Are adolescent mothers' sources of motivation internal or external?

- 5. a. Learning is ongoing - doesn't stop.
- 5. b. Learning is short term - terminal, it ends.

- 7. a. Schooling is associated with learning.
- 7. b. Schooling is not associated with learning (instead it is associated with jobs).

- 14. a. The learner capitalizes on external benefits of learning.
- 14. b. The learner capitalizes on internal benefits or learning.

- 19. a. The learner decides what she wants to learn.
- 19. b. The learner does not decide what she wants to learn.

- 20. a. The learner sees peers as sources of learning.
- 20. b. The learner does not view peers as sources of learning.

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