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# *The Lived Experience of Pregnant Adolescents Living in a Group Home*

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**This presenter has no conflicts of  
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# Objectives

- Identify adolescent pregnancy as a national public health problem
- Describe the challenges adolescent mothers face after the birth of their babies
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of qualitative research design
- Reflect on the adolescent mother's lived experience of living in a group home
- Summarize nursing implications of research findings

# Background of the Problem

Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood are national public health problems  
Are topics of debate in the U.S. (Childs, Knight, & White, 2015; Solomon-Fears, 2015).

Impacts the physiological, emotional, social, and economic well-being of the adolescent and her child and ultimately the nation (Boonstra, 2014).

Many types of parenting programs are available to the adolescent mother. No one approach has emerged as most effective in decreasing subsequent pregnancies and improving mother and child health (The National Campaign, 2014).

One program known to specifically support pregnant adolescents is *the group home experience*.

The lived experience of pregnant adolescents' living in a group home setting has not been studied.

# Purpose of the Study

To describe the experience of pregnant adolescents participating in a group home parenting program.



# Qualitative Study Design

- Descriptive Phenomenology
  - Husserl's Phenomenology
    - describe what it means to be a pregnant adolescent living in a group home
  - Giorgi's data analysis method

# Participants & Data Collection



- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
- Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
- Recruitment – Flyers
- Participants - Eight adolescent mothers from 2 different group homes (5 Hispanic, 2 White, 1 African American)
- Current age at time of interview ranged from 18-20 years, age at which they became pregnant ranged from 13-17 years
- Informed consent was completed prior to the in-depth interviews using a semi-structured guide
- Theme redundancy (AKA “saturation”) occurred with the eighth interview
- Bracketing was used to suspend pre-conceived notions

# Standards of Scientific Rigor

- **Credibility**: Sufficient time was spent with each participant to establish rapport (45- 75 min interviews); intense engagement with raw data. Field notes and reflective journaling
- **Dependability**: Using a consistent format of coding for each interview, extracting key phrases, formulating meaning units, themes, and subthemes
- **Confirmability**: Was supported with participants verbatim quotations
- **Transferability**: Was enhanced through purposive sampling, rich, thick, weighty descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

# Results:

## Three Major Themes Emerged

1. *The group home environment with its rules and structure was experienced as either supportive or not supportive in day-to-day living.*
2. *Balancing adolescent expectations and needs impacted pregnancy and parenting.*
3. *Defining motherhood focused on the basics and was influenced by the participants' own mothers.*

# Theme 1:

*The environment with its rules and structure was experienced as either supportive or not in day-to-day living.*

- 1.1: Support was used to gauge and describe many emotional and relational processes that influenced their experience.
- 1.2: Rules permeated day-to-day living and dictated the structure.
- 1.3: On reflection, the environment was a haven of protection from harm.

*Support was used to gauge and describe many emotional and relational processes that influenced their experience.*

- *Support* was a constant and all-encompassing theme throughout all interviews
- *Support* was used to denote numerous interpretations: behaviors, feelings, thoughts, of both the participants and the staff
- *Support meant a good or a bad experience*
- *Support:* staff, school, parenting classes, and the nurse and social worker

# Support

Tiffany,

*“Staff, social worker, nurse, everybody supported me. The nurse would teach me about all kinds of things like shaken baby syndrome, safety, and how to give the baby a bath. It was really helpful to me...Support from the staff felt good because I didn’t have my mom there to support me...Sometimes the staff would help me feed the baby and show me how to do it. That was very helpful in the beginning.”*

## Non-Supportive Environment

- Staff
- Rules and regulations
- “Not being understood”
- “Rude and judgmental staff”
- “Punishing”
- Staff: *“prison guards”*



# Theme 2:

## *Balancing adolescent expectations and needs impacted pregnancy and parenting*

- 2.1 Participants vacillated between adolescent expectations and their experience with pregnancy
- 2.2 Peers relationships were significant in their adjusting to the group home experience and their new role as mother



*The adolescent vacillated between adolescent expectations, needs and wants, and their experiences with pregnancy, and mothering.*

Jenny,

- *“Even though you have a child, you are still a child yourself. I needed someone to help me that knows what is going on with me...The staff didn’t know anything about what I was going through...They needed to go to school to learn about adolescents and what they are going through before they could help me.”*

# Theme 3:

*Defining motherhood focused on the basics and was influenced by the participants' own mother*

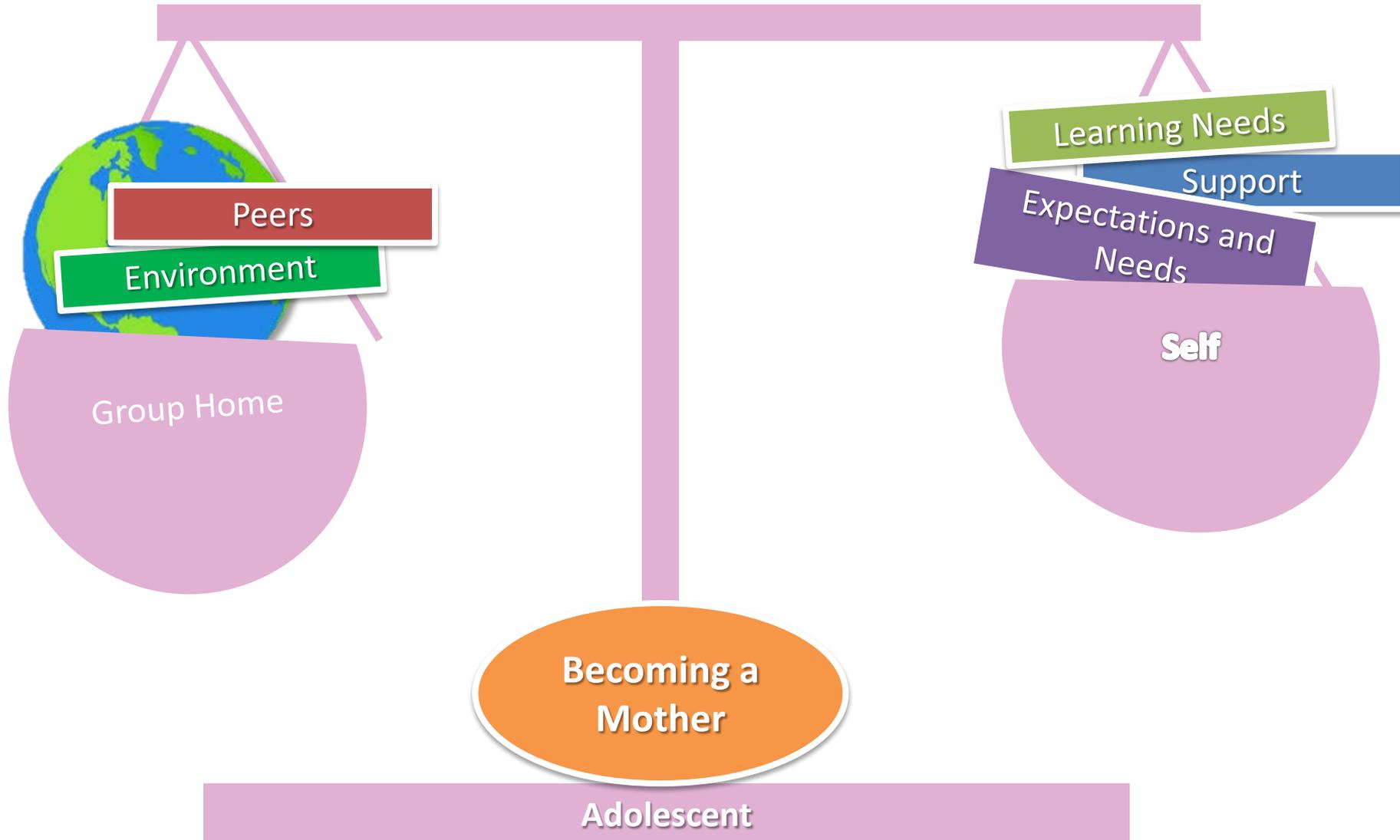
- **Subtheme 3.1** Reflection on becoming a mother was influenced by their own mothering
- **Subtheme 3.2** Learning the basics of taking care of their infants was the main focus of learning to parent while in the group home
- **Subtheme 3.3** Striving to be a good mother meant putting the baby first and being responsible for another human being.

**Striving to be a good mother meant putting the baby first and being responsible for another human being.**

Rose,

“It’s so many words, so many things. I need to be everything for her. Being a mom is like being somebody’s hero. Being somebody’s role model; to give them guidance. It is to be there every time that they want to go to bed, need to be held or hugged, or they want something. It’s to be there by listening to them and talking to them. That’s what they need most.”

# Results



# Limitations

- Retrospective
- Adolescent fathers were not included in the study

# Discussion

- Support was a key finding in this study and was important to the pregnant and parenting adolescent in transitioning into the mother role.
- A significant amount of literature on the adolescents' need for support during the pregnancy experience was supported by the study findings. *Support was received from the staff, nurse, social worker, and peers within the group home setting.*
- *Supportive relationships assisted the adolescent to learn about their new environment and the new mothering role.*

# Discussion

- Similar to evidence from the literature:
  1. the adolescents in this study were motivated to be “*good mothers*”
  2. they wanted to be better mothers than what they had experienced in their own childhood
- *Another key finding:*
- *However, the description of “good mothering” for participants in this study related only to tasks of basics, like feeding, but did not include the emotional aspects of good mothering, such as bonding and attachment*

# Discussion

**Two main theories were explored to illuminate the study's findings**

- *Erikson's Developmental Theory*: can be seen as a way to understand the identify issues especially around independence that emerged in the study's subthemes(Erikson, 1968)
- *Mercer's Maternal Role Attainment Theory (Becoming a Mother)*: Mercer's work clearly explained how difficult attaining the mothering role was for these adolescents in the face of anxiety and limited resources, stressful situations can threaten the mothering role (Mercer, 2004)



# Implications for Nursing

- **Practice:** Nurses are well-poised to develop supportive relationships and assist the adolescent to build upon their own strengths and optimize their own developmental outcomes.
- **Nursing Education:** Nurse as educator: to teach staff in the group home, and undergraduate nursing students to provide respectful, unbiased adolescent-friendly care.
- **Health Care Policy:** Nurses to advocate for policies and programs that focus on the impact of disadvantages and prejudices on young families.
- **Future research:** Program Evaluation
  - Determine best practices for pregnant and parenting adolescents. The effectiveness of these programs need to be rigorously tested.

# Conclusion

1. The findings of this study shed light on specific aspects of adolescent mother's **experience of living in a group home.**
2. Findings may be used to improve the transition to motherhood for the adolescent and for refining nursing curricula.
3. Findings may be used to improve and change current practice in the group home setting.

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# Questions?

