

EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS AS EXPRESSED BY ADOLESCENT  
FEMALES AT A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER (RTC)

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of

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Doctor of Philosophy

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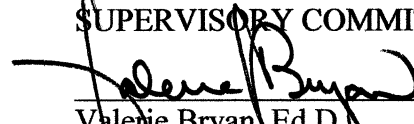
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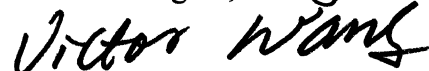
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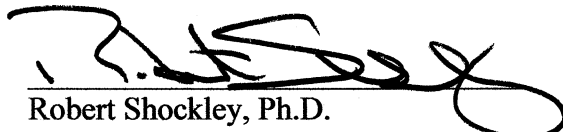
This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Valerie Bryan, Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

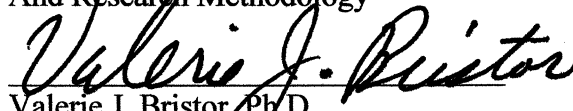
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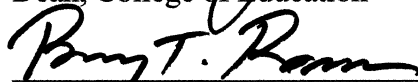
  
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## ABSTRACT

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This is a qualitative study examining the experience of students currently enrolled in Steppin' Stone Farm, a residential treatment center in central Florida. In addition to building a more solid foundation of literature in this field, this study investigates at-risk teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns were explored. This phenomenological study utilized a lens of critical theory to understand the meaning of girls' educational experiences at a residential treatment center.

The design includes studying 16 girls' formal, non-formal, and informal educational experiences as well as utilizing the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) tool to assess learning strategy preference. Results of the study

determined student perceptions regarding various educational environments and learning strategies at a residential treatment center. Analysis of interviews and data collected led to many significant findings.

Additionally, this study enhances knowledge in the field of residential treatment and has implications for those seeking residential treatment, working in residential treatment, and educators. Research in this field often focuses on outcome and effectiveness literature. This study provides insightful information incorporating the voice of students into the research.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

“When we are no longer able to change a situation . . . we are challenged to change ourselves.” ~Viktor Frankl (1946)

### **Introduction**

Changing oneself can be a difficult process. Whether young or old, the decision and dedication involved in changing a habit or lifestyle can be a difficult task. For many adolescents who find themselves in a residential treatment center (RTC), this is the challenge they face- they must change a destructive habit or lifestyle.

In today’s society, adolescents confront potential problems on a daily basis. Violence, drug and alcohol abuse, unsafe sex, and school underachievement often plague adolescents (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). According to Dryfoos (1990), about 50% of adolescents engage in two or more of these risk behaviors.

When these risky behaviors become more prevalent, caregivers often seek additional resources for adolescent care. Today, a wide variety of sources exist for helping adolescents. For instance, school-based programs, community programs, and inpatient programs are some of the most popular methods used for helping adolescents (Sturm, Ringel, Stein, & Kapur, 2001). This research focused on inpatient programs, often referred to as Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs).

Although the operational definition of residential treatment is vague (e.g., Curtis, Alexander, & Lunghofer, 2001; Le Griffith et al., 2009; Leichtman, 2006), the term

generally refers to congregate care for treatment services in a nonmedical environment. In reference to youth facilities, the RTCs generally employ a multimodal treatment method (Epstein, 2004; Money, 2007).

This treatment takes place in a therapeutic environment that fosters interpersonal relationships. Adolescents live together as “residents” or “students” and treatment methods often include a combination of therapeutic activities. Individual, group, and family therapy combined with recreational therapy, community involvement, and obligatory tasks are typical program components for adolescents at RTCs (Money, 2007).

In recent years, inpatient care of adolescents has increased. The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) estimates that there are approximately 10,000 public and private residential treatment centers in the United States (Drais-Parrillo, 2005). These facilities range in size. Some are as small as four bed group homes, and some are as large as 250 plus bed institutional facilities. These centers serve over 200,000 youth and children (Drais-Parrillo, 2005).

In the past 25 years, research in this field has grown significantly (Bettmann & Jaspersen, 2009; Le Griffith et al., 2009; Money, 2007). However, despite the prevalence of RTCs, research regarding success patterns and educational experiences within this environment is lacking (Bettmann, & Jaspersen, 2009; Money, 2007; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Within a residential treatment center, adolescents have access to formal, informal, and non-formal educational activities. Coombs and Ahmed (1974) suggest that formal education pertains to the institutional, hierarchical structure typically observed in traditional grade schools. Informal education involves the process whereby an individual

accumulates knowledge, skills, and attitudes from daily experiences such as conversations, reflection, reading, and exposure to the environment. Non-formal education is organized and systematic and occurs outside the framework of the formal system, such as 4-H, church, and group therapy. When considering education, it is imperative to consider all of these contexts in order to understand better the learning process.

When one considers educational activities and learning, it is also critical to consider the learners' processing of information. Through instrumented learning, one can gain understanding of self and others. Ausburn (2004) suggests that this process can enhance metacognition and improve performance. *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) is a self-assessment tool for assessing the method which one uses for processing information (Ausburn, 2004; Conti, 2009).

This instrument categorizes learners as either: Navigators, Problem Solvers, or Engagers (Conti, 2009). Learners who are result-oriented are referred to as Navigators and prefer planned efficiency and effectiveness. Critical thinkers, who prefer to explore options, consider multiple paths, and avoid speedy closure, are termed Problem Solvers. Finally, the third category of learner is the Engager. These are individuals who love learning and seek connectedness and high involvement in learning activities. The knowledge gained through this tool can prove beneficial to the learners by helping them recognize preferences and may assist parents, educators, and counselors seeking to help troubled adolescents in RTCs.

## **Problem**

Helping adolescents is both expensive and time consuming. Therefore, it is critical to assess the efficacy of specific learning environments and determine if there are success patterns related to educational environments within the residential treatment centers that house these individuals.

The price of residential treatment varies as do the types of payments that are accepted at these facilities. Prices for residential treatment centers range from \$10.00-\$60,000.00 per month for full service programs (SEO Services, 2011). However, the cost of a program does not necessarily correlate with the quality or success rate of that program. Many more expensive programs offer spa-like services, which do not necessarily produce better outcomes. Some accept insurance and some prefer payment for services up front.

Because these facilities often represent a “last resort” for high risk youth, caregivers are often willing to pay high prices and do anything necessary to help their adolescent. These youth have been typically unsuccessful in other less restrictive settings and often need the structure that an RTC can provide (Curtis, Alexander, & Lunghofer, 2001). Additionally, these programs are targeted at adolescent individuals who struggle with substance abuse, or who cannot form “age-appropriate relationships and those whose behavioral or emotional problems significantly affect daily functioning” (Curtis, Alexander, & Lunghofer, 2001, p. 380).

Methodologically, this will be a phenomenological study utilizing a lens of critical theory to look at girls’ learning strategies and the meaning of girls’ educational

experiences at a residential treatment center. The design includes studying girls' formal, non-formal, and informal educational experiences as well as utilizing the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) tool to assess learning strategy preference.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns were also explored.

In addition to building a more solid foundation of literature in this field, this study investigates at-risk teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns will be explored.

This is a qualitative study examining the experience of students currently enrolled in Steppin' Stone Farm, a residential treatment center in central Florida. Understanding students' experiences and perceptions may help to distinguish which educational program components are perceived to be most effective and efficient.

This study investigated troubled teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns was explored. Utilizing Coombs and Ahmed's (1974) educational environments as a foundational point, this study also incorporated Ausburn's (2004)



study by using the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) instrument. This tool was used for self diagnosis of preferred learning strategies.

Munday (2002) suggests that positive effects on academic performance can be seen when learners recognize their learning strategy preferences. Within the RTC environment, the knowledge of preferred learning strategies as Navigators, Problem Solvers, or Engagers as explained by *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) could possibly assist adolescents in program success. The tool offers the adolescents an opportunity to choose interpersonal and cognitive tools in their learning journey, which met their needs as they progress through the RTC program and in their future.

### **Significance of the Problem and Potential Contribution**

In addition to building a more solid foundation of literature in this field, this study focused on the voice of at-risk teens and aids in the understanding of what educational environments and experiences are perceived by these teens to be most beneficial. This may help target environments help at-risk youth to be more successful and save both time and money.

While there is significant evidence to conclude that RTCs do produce positive change in adolescents (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005; Hooper, Murphy, Devaney, & Hultman, 2000; Larzelere, Dinges, Schmidt, Spellman, Criste, & Connell, 2001; Le Griffith et al., 2009; Lyons, Terry, Martinovich, Peterson, & Bouska, 2001), research is lacking regarding those directly affected by these environments. Although the research in this field provides a good starting point, few studies take into consideration the “voice” of the

at-risk youth involved. This study was viewed as a possible means to fill this void and provide greater understanding of the perceived educational experiences within an RTC.

In addition, the specific educational environments, which may explain this effectiveness, remain largely a mystery. Because each component is costly in time and monetary manners, determining which educational components are most effective would increase efficiency and decrease costs. Additionally, knowledge of successful educational components may help to tailor treatment and maximize benefits for adolescent care.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What are the self –diagnosed learning styles of the females at a residential treatment center?
- 2) What are the Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal educational experiences of the females at a residential treatment center?
  - Is there a preference in learning experiences among the female residents at a residential treatment center?
  - Does the learning style of the female resident affect the preference?
- 3) Are there patterns of success for female residents at a residential treatment center?
- 4) Are there patterns of failure for female residents at a residential treatment center?

## Definitions

*Residential Treatment Center* generally refers to congregate care for treatment services in a non-medical environment. Adolescents live together as “residents” or “students” and treatment methods often include a combination of therapeutic activities.

In this study, *successful completion* of the residential program will involve the adolescent leaving the program with a “recommendation” from staff, meaning that the staff has agreed that the adolescent is prepared to leave the RTC environment and rejoin their caregiver.

*Formal education* pertains to the institutional, hierarchical structure typically observed in traditional grade schools. *Informal education* involves the process whereby an individual accumulates knowledge, skills, and attitudes from daily experiences such as conversations, reflection, reading, and exposure to the environment. *Non-formal education* is organized and systematic and occurs outside the framework of the formal system, such as 4-H, church, and group therapy. When considering education, it is imperative to consider all of these contexts to better understand the learning process.

*Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) is an instrument that will be used to identify learning strategy preferences. Learners will be classified as Navigators, Problem Solvers, or Engagers. Learners who are result-oriented are referred to as *Navigators* and prefer planned efficiency and effectiveness. Critical thinkers, who prefer to explore options, consider multiple paths, and avoid speedy closure, are termed *Problem Solvers*. Finally, the third category of learner is the *Engager*. These are individuals who love learning and seek connectedness and high involvement in learning activities.

Within the RTC environment, a *level system* establishes the length of time a girl has been living at the facility and recent behavior. A “thirty day girl” is the first stage of the level system. This is an adolescent who has arrived recently at the RTC. She is still shadowing someone to learn the rules and grow more comfortable with her new environment. As she learns the rules and behavior improves, she becomes known as a “new girl.”

A “new girl” is defined as an adolescent who has been at the facility for less than four months or whose misbehavior has lowered her status to that of someone who is new and has not learned the rules.

After four months in the program, evidence of personal change (as determined by demerits) and educational achievement (as determined by grades and teachers), the girl becomes an “old girl” and has additional responsibilities and privileges. She may become a supervisor for a particular chore or have the opportunity to ride horses. As additional time passes and the girl successfully completes the additional responsibilities (without receiving many more demerits) she becomes a leadership girl. She then begins to assist staff more frequently and has additional privileges in communicating with peers, correcting misbehaviors, and leading activities.

“Level 3” status is the highest level of achievement that the girls at this particular RTC can achieve. This is the most trusted position and has the most responsibilities and freedom. They attain additional time with their caregiver on the phone each week as well as additional visitation days.

*A pattern of success* for the purpose of this research will be defined by low

demerits, increased academic achievement and successful completion of the residential treatment program within a time period of less than one and a half years (which is the average stay at the RTC).

### **Delimitations**

First, this study focused on female adolescents at a residential center in Central Florida. Any generalizations are delimited to that specific population. The findings may not be generalizable to other populations.

Another delimitation involved the use of the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) tool. This self-assessment tool analyzed the method by which the learner processes information. The researcher utilized this tool for adolescents. Since this tool was developed with adults in mind, this could be considered a delimitation.

However, it has been used successfully with adolescents in previous studies.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to the methods, especially the use of interviews. The study involves a relatively small sample of 16 females. Creswell (2008) suggests that interview responses may pose limitations in the following ways: they are filtered through the view of the participants, interviews take place in a designated setting rather than a natural environment, the presence of the interview may bias responses, and participants are not likely to be equally articulate and perceptive. Additionally, since the researcher participated in the study, the researcher's experience and bias may have influenced data collection and analysis.

An additional limitation involves the honesty of the at-risk youth interviewed. The

*Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) tool is a self report measure and will rely on the honesty of participants. Also there may be a limit to the youths' willingness to open up and be honest about experiences.

### **Chapter Summary**

In chapter one a statement of the problem and the topics of troubled adolescents and treatment options were explored. Additionally, educational environments and learning strategies were addressed. The purpose and significance of the study was developed and many definitions were clarified to avoid confusion as the study progresses.

Chapter Two addresses a review of the literature regarding adolescence, treatment options, lifelong learning, adult education and the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) instrument. It provides a body of knowledge to use as a reference point for linking the data and findings from this study to previous research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

This study will investigate at-risk teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. A review of selected literature related to this study will be presented in this chapter. It begins with a discussion on adolescence and adolescent females. Then it continues with treatment options for at-risk adolescents and treatment effectiveness. Finally, program components, lifelong learning, adult education, and the *Assessing The Learning Strategies Of Adults* (ATLAS) instrument are discussed.

#### **Adolescence**

For most, adolescence is a period of time that involves both physical and psychological change. It can be defined as “the period within the life span when most of a person’s biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing from what is typically considered child-like to what is considered adult-like” (Lerner & Galambos, 1998, p. 440). This period in a person’s life can be filled with challenges as one adjusts to changes in oneself, family, and peer group.

Adolescence is generally considered to be the period between 13 and 19 years of age (Mannheim, 2008). This time usually involves changes in the school setting as youth transition to high school and later as they transition to college or a place of work.

Understandably, this time of transition and change can evoke feelings of excitement, anxiety, happiness, and worry (Mannheim, 2008). Lerner and Galambos (1998) suggest that “as multiple biological, psychological, cognitive, and social changes of adolescence simultaneously occur, the risk for potential problems also increases within the youth’s development” (p. 416).

### **Adolescent females.**

Although males and females face a multitude of problems, some difficulties are more prevalent in females. For instance, eating disorders are much more prevalent in young women than young men (American Psychological Association, 1996). According to the National Eating Disorder Organization (NEDA), 10 million females and 1 million males struggle with eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia. Disordered eating typically begins during adolescence because of a complex combination of factors including lower self-esteem and various external factors.

Lower self-esteem also affects more females than males during adolescence. Although research shows that after elementary school, both boys and girls suffer from decreasing self-esteem, the drop in self esteem for girls is more dramatic. Research shows that girls are more anxious, stressed, depressed, and distressed over appearances, compared with boys of the same age (American Psychological Association, 1996).

Additionally, adolescent females are considered to be at a higher risk for sexual assault than any other group (American Psychological Association, 1996). Over half of all of the reported incidents by adolescent females occur during dating situations, with dating violence affecting 10% of all high school students (American Psychological



Association, 1996). As one considers the vast changes that occur throughout the adolescent years as well as the risks that permeate our society today, it is not difficult to understand why some adolescents, particularly females, find themselves in dangerous situations and need help.

### **Treatment Options for Adolescents**

There is a wide variety of sources for helping adolescents. For instance, school-based programs, community programs, and inpatient programs are some of the most popular methods used for helping adolescents (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Addiction at Columbia University, 2011; Sturm, Ringel, Stein, Kapur, 2001).

It is estimated that approximately \$4 billion is spent yearly on school-based programs in the United States (Sturm, Ringel, Stein, Kapur, 2001). These programs come in the form of after-school care, school counseling, and other school-related services. This is the most popular of all methods for helping adolescents and accounts for about 60% of all mental health expenditures for young people (Sturm, Ringel, Stein, Kapur, 2001).

Community-based adolescent programs are also an option for those needing help. Independent organizations as well as churches offer counseling and programs to youth needing care. One popular organization, the Boys and Girls Club of America, offers programs and services that promote the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence (Boys and Girls Club of America, 2010).

In this research, the researcher focused on inpatient programs or Residential

Treatment Centers (RTCs) and not community based out-patient programs. In the RTC's, the treatment takes place in a therapeutic environment that fosters interpersonal relationships. Here, adolescents live together as "residents" or "students" and treatment methods often include a combination of therapeutic activities. Individual, group, and family therapy combined with recreational therapy, community involvement, and obligatory tasks are typically program components for adolescents at RTCs (Money, 2007).

**Residential treatment effectiveness.**

Over the years, critics have challenged the necessity and cost effectiveness of residential care; however the demand for this treatment continues to grow. The National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (2011) estimates that \$467.7 Billion per year in government funding is spent on substance abuse and addiction. Out of every dollar spent, 96 cents goes to cope with the consequences. Only two cents is used for prevention and treatment. This includes all funding spent on residential treatment as well as other methods.

Regarding necessity and program effectiveness, recent outcome literature for adolescent RTC illustrate client success in the areas of behavioral changes (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005; Lyons, Terry, Martinovich, Peterson, & Bouska, 2001) and increases in adaptive social and family functioning (Hooper, Murphy, Devaney, & Hultman, 2000; Larzelere, Dinges, Schmidt, Spellman, Criste, & Connell, 2001; Le Griffith et al., 2009). In fact, Epstein (2004) suggests that adolescent treatment in residential facilities is effective in treating a variety of behavioral problems including eating disorders and character abnormalities.

In several recent studies, outcome research indicates the success of RTCs. Reliable improvements in depression and psychotic symptoms were noted in one such study (Lyons, Terry, Martinovich, Peterson, & Bouska, 2001). Another study indicated that all participants demonstrated decreased maladjustment, delinquent values and behavior, less egocentricity, increased sociability, and increased ability to control aggression within six months of program participation (Mann-Feder, 1996). Additionally, Lyons and Schaefer (2000) compared the clinical characteristics of violent and nonviolent youth and found that those who were considered currently dangerous made the most substantial changes while in residential care.

In addition to program success while students are enrolled, studies also indicate the success of students after leaving the RTCs. One study conducted telephone interviews with adolescents and parents and found a statistically significant and clinically substantial improvement from admission to discharge. Adolescents involved in this RTC sustained these improvements for at least the year following discharge, which is the time that follow-up processes ended (Leichtman, Leichtman, Barger, & Neese, 2001). In another follow-up study, the effectiveness of a military-type RTC was examined (Weis, Wilson, & Whitemarsh, 2005). Through phone interviews and qualitative analysis as well as the completion of three quantitative surveys, adolescents who completed the program were found to have significant reductions in conduct problems and academic issues and increases in adaptive skills. This progress continued six months after discharge when the follow-up ended (Weis, Wilson, & Whitemarsh, 2005).

While there is significant evidence to conclude that RTCs do produce positive change in adolescents, (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005; Hooper, Murphy, Devaney, &

Hultman, 2000; Larzelere, Dinges, Schmidt, Spellman, Criste, & Connell, 2001; Le Griffith et al., 2009; Lyons, Terry, Martinovich, Peterson, & Bouska, 2001) the specific program components which explain this effectiveness remain largely a mystery. Because each program component is costly in time and monetary manners, determining which program components are most effective would increase efficiency and decrease costs. Additionally, knowledge of successful program components may help to tailor treatment and maximize benefits for adolescent care.

### **Characteristics which effect treatment outcomes.**

Several studies have contributed to the current knowledge base regarding the successful treatment of adolescents in RTCs. In one study, researchers examined clinical records and found that individuals who staff perceived as “most difficult” had the worst treatment outcomes. Defiance and resistance to treatment were found to be the greatest obstacle for adolescents (Colson, Cornsweet, Murphy, & O’ Malley, 1991). Another study found that those who have no history of abuse are more likely to demonstrate improvement after treatment in a RTC (Connor, Miller, Cunningham, & Melloni, 2002).

In addition to these basic elements that affect treatment outcomes, parental input has also been shown to result in a variance of treatment outcomes. A study of adolescent depression in RTCs found that perceptions of parental relationships account for a large variance in youth depression (Frank, Poorman, Van Egeren, & Field, 1997).

Additionally, another group of researchers found that family engagement and consumer satisfaction were highly correlated (Brinkmeyer, Eyberg, Nquyen, & Adams, 2004). In other words, this study suggests that parents who go into their child’s treatment with

positive expectations are more likely to participate meaningfully and thus be more satisfied with results.

Several studies also offer insight regarding gender differences in treatment outcomes. One study indicates that successful students are mostly younger, females with higher verbal IQs and reading skills (Hooper, Murphy, Devaney, & Hultman, 2000). After reviewing a variety of charts and records, another research group confirmed that female adolescents had a higher frequency of successful participation in RTCs (Wise, Cuffe, & Fischer, 2001).

### **Program components and treatment effectiveness.**

Although there are many studies which analyze treatment effectiveness, few studies and little research exist regarding efficacy of specific educational components within these environments. In an effort to understand whether a program component is successful, it is important to consider some literature in this area. Kazdin and Nock (2003) discuss the importance of studying “mechanisms.” They define this term as “those processes or events that lead to and cause therapeutic change” (p. 1117). In their research, it is suggested that “almost no studies to date provide evidence for why or how treatment works” (p. 1116). In another study, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) discuss the need for determining the success of program components in youth development programs. Program goals, atmosphere, and activities were found to be the most distinguishing factors for determining success in youth development programs. Although this work provides a good starting point for creating operational definitions in this field, one is still left with questions of what educational components of these RTCs are successful in the minds of the participants.

## **Lifelong Learning**

Many youth who find themselves in residential treatment centers find themselves in a state of addiction, often working through the 12 step program associated with Alcoholics Anonymous or a similar program. Through this process, they are encouraged to take it “one day at a time” with the notion that once they are an addict they will forever be a “recovering addict” (The Big Book, 2001). Lifelong learning is critical for youth in a residential treatment center to take the knowledge and changes from this environment and carry them into their adult life.

Throughout the world, lifelong learning has become a topic of interest in recent years. Lifelong learning is defined as a “process of gaining knowledge, and skills that continue throughout a person’s life” (Lifelong Learning, n.d.). In Thailand, the National Education Act BE 2542 of 1999 goes one step further and explains that lifelong education “means integrating formal, non-formal and informal education so as to create ability for continuous lifelong development of quality of life” (Office of the National Commission, 1999). In Europe, the European Commission defines lifelong learning as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competence, within a personal, civic, social, and/or employment related perspective” (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2007).

In today’s world of technological development and information overload, learning has become a key to personal success. Gross suggests that instead of focusing on schools or colleges, education has to become a lifelong activity throughout society (1999). “In the world of the future, the new illiterate will be the person who has not learned how to learn” (Gross, 1999, p. 5).

## **Adult Learning Theories**

Although some may dispute the inclusion of teenagers in adult learning theory, Shaw (2004) illustrates many reasons for assessing youth in alternative educational settings in a similar manner as adults. Contrary to the voluntary nature of adult learning is the pedagogical model.

In this model, teachers assume responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, and when it will be learned (Knowles, 1973). Teachers direct learning while students are passive recipients. Youth are required to adjust to an established curriculum based on the teachers experience and knowledge. The pedagogical model often times inhibits the learner from making a contribution to the learning process. In Shaw's study, he concludes, "As a result, many learners leave school having lost interest in learning" (2004, p. 138).

Even educators with good intentions can unknowingly suppress naturally inquisitive instincts of the students by controlling the learning environment. When this happens, some youth in transition to adulthood view learning as a chore and a burden. By viewing youth in alternative educational environments through the lens of andragogy, teachers may be more successful.

With the understanding that youth in this environment may benefit from some adult learning principles, it is critical to examine some of the most influential individuals in this field. Knowles, Rogers, and Tough are three foundational individuals associated with developing the framework to support adult education.

Knowles research suggests that adult individuals complete approximately eight learning projects per year (1973). Of these projects, only about 10% are associated with

educational institutions. This means that nearly 90% of educational experiences are taking place in non-formal or informal environments. Is this the same for adolescents in residential treatment?

Rogers describes his beliefs about learning in his book, *Freedom to Learn* (1969). In this book, he expresses the belief that humans have a natural potential for learning and that significant learning occurs when the learner regards the subject matter as relevant. This process also involves a change in self-organization and self perception. One assumption that Rogers suggests is that learning is often resisted, but this can be reduced when external threats are minimal and there are low threats to self. Another assumption Rogers explains is that in order to learn, the learner needs to participate responsibly. The most lasting and influential learning is self-initiated and involves both emotions and intellect. Lastly, learning how to learn better is the most socially useful learning in the modern world. Rogers suggests that it requires being constantly open to experience and incorporating oneself into the process of change.

Rogers' views regarding learning are grounded in the belief that the facilitator is responsible for setting the initial climate. He expresses that individuals are more likely to be motivated by things that have personal meaning, therefore, the facilitator asks about the general purposes of the group. Facilitators are resources for learning and make efforts to organize and make resources available for learning.

In 1979, Allen Tough wrote *The Adult's Learning Projects*. He explains how most adult learning takes place outside of institutional frameworks. Tough found that the overwhelming majority (about 70%) of adult learning takes place outside institutional frameworks. About 20% of the learning projects are supported by others who are not



professionals; these individuals included supervisors, colleagues, parents, friends, etc. Professional helpers, such as teachers, trainers, and counselors direct only about 10% of our learning. This could be attributed to factors such as: the learner having a desire to control the learning process, non-institutional learning allowing for a flexible time commitment or non-institutional learning being attainable at a low cost.

Tough illustrated that many adults are active, self-directed learners and they desire learning experiences. Adults have a large amount of knowledge and skills upon which they base further growth and development. They are motivated by careers and situations to apply new knowledge and skills immediately. Tough's recommendation is that educators should spend more time helping adults learn and less time teaching specific content.

### **Critical Theory**

Brookfield has spent many years establishing himself in the current adult education landscape. His work regarding adult learning and self-directed learning has been very influential. Brookfield (2005) suggests that one of the foundational elements of Critical Theory is that it joins theory with practice. This is often termed "Praxis" which is further explained as the "consequential validity" of a theory or a theory's "capacity to inspire action" (p. 25).

In *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* (1986) he introduced six principles of effective practice in facilitating adult learning: His first principle is that learning is voluntary, it may be that circumstances prompting this learning come from somewhere else, but in the end, the decision to learn is the learner's. The second principle involves the notion that there is a common respect for fellow learners. This does not

mean that criticism is absent from educational environments. It does mean, though, that an attention to increasing sense of self-worth underlies all teaching efforts. The third principle involves collaboration. This collaboration is constant, and is seen in the diagnosis of needs, the setting of objectives, and in generating evaluations. A fourth component refers to the continuous process of action, reflection, and experimentation. A fifth principle associated involves critical reflection. This involves the notion that everything should be questioned, everything held to be "true" needs to be recognized as temporary and relative. Finally, the sixth principle involves the idea that the aim of teaching is to nurture self-direction and empower adults. These adults will see themselves as proactive, initiating individuals engaged in a continuous re-creation of their personal relationships, and social situations rather than as reactive individuals, buffeted by uncontrollable forces.

Brookfield (2005) explains: “[The] second distinctive characteristic of critical theory is its concern to provide people with knowledge and understandings intended to free them from oppression. The point of theory is to generate knowledge that will change, not just interpret the world (p. 25).”

### ***The Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS) Instrument***

The *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS)* instrument is a tool developed to assess the learner’s processing of information. Learning strategies offer a means of addressing individual preference (Conti, 2009). They are the techniques and skills that an individual chooses to utilize in order to accomplish a learning task. This tool classifies learners as navigators, problem solvers, or engagers.

Through a series of multivariate statistical procedures, the tool was developed to be quick and easy to use. *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) is similar to the instrument called Self-Knowledge Inventory of Lifelong Learning Strategies (SKILLS). In fact, the construct validity was established through the categories already established in SKILLS research. Cluster analysis and discriminate analysis led to the identification of similar patterns of learning strategy usage (Conti, 2009). A list of research utilizing this tool can be found in Appendix F. This tool was originally created for adults, but has been tested and proven effective in adolescents as well (Shaw, 2004). Subjects select options from given choices that describe how they learn, what resources they use to learn and how they approach their learning. Through various selections the subjects arrive at the category of learning that best describes them.

One of the primary findings of Shaw's study was that people who are involved in alternative educational settings are usually Engagers (2004). These are people who need a relationship with others in order to initiate the learning process. They often do not receive this in the public school system, and as a result many are pushed out of the system. This study investigates whether individuals at an RTC have similar results.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Two has presented a review of the literature regarding adolescence, treatment options, lifelong learning, adult education and the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) instrument. This knowledge can be used as a reference point for linking the data and findings from this study to previous research. In Chapter Three, the researcher will provide an in-depth discussion on the research methodology used for this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Design of the Study

This is a qualitative, phenomenological case study utilizing a lens of critical theory to look at girls learning strategies and the meaning of girls' educational experiences at a residential treatment center. The purpose of this study was to understand residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns were also explored.

The design includes studying 16 girls' formal, non-formal, and informal educational experiences as well as utilizing the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) tool to assess learning strategy preference. Burnikovs (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) explains that the qualitative research material is "rich in description of people, places, and conversations and not easily handled by statistical procedures" (p. 32). Because this study is interested in the understanding of girls' perceptions of educational experiences at a Residential Treatment Center (RTC), qualitative inquiry is appropriate.

Qualitative research "helps us to understand the nature, strengths, and interactions of variables" (Black, 1994, p. 425). This methodology is often described as being better equipped to help researchers understand the complexities of human nature (Black, 1994; Burnikovs as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1997). Merriam (1997) suggests

that qualitative researchers “are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6).

Phenomenology involves the notion that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 106). The goal of the researcher is not simply to explain or analyze data, but rather to understand the meaning of events and interactions (Burnikova as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Researchers in the phenomenological perspective aim for “fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived” (Finlay, 2009, p. 6).

### **Research Questions**

- a) What are the self –diagnosed learning styles of the females at a residential treatment center?
- b) What are the Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal educational experiences of the females at a residential treatment center?
  - Is there a preference in learning experiences among the female residents at a residential treatment center?
  - Does the learning style of the female resident affect the preference?
- c) Are there patterns of success for female residents at a residential treatment center?
- d) Are there patterns of failure for female residents at a residential treatment center?

### **Participants**

Participants were selected from currently enrolled adolescent girls at the RTC and an interview was conducted at the facility. All engagements with the adolescents followed strict IRB protocol as to how to deal with these subjects. Trust was established with the students and their parents prior to the interview process through engaging in conversations and joining in a luncheon at the RTC. The researcher worked around each individual's schedule to make it as comfortable for them as possible. Each girl was interviewed individually for a time period of approximately one hour.

### **Sampling Plan**

The participants were chosen from a convenience sample of at-risk females living at Steppin' Stone Farm, a RTC, which utilizes formal, informal, and non-formal learning environments. Unless otherwise advised by staff at the facility, participants were interviewed in seniority order based upon who had resided at the residential treatment center for the longest time.

A convenience sample was the chosen method for interviewing students because it was important to the researcher that a student's daily schedule not be interrupted. The students at the RTC work well in an environment with structure and scheduling. Therefore, the researcher sought to be understanding and encouraged staff to advise her if seniority order was not conducive to the schedule for students.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through a variety of methods. First, each participant took the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) assessment to distinguish their individual learning style. In this research, ATLAS was used as a vehicle for analyzing and making sense of the data. Then participants were interviewed and asked fourteen

questions. Students then participated in an activity, drawing a concept map to illustrate their view of educational experiences. Then the interview concluded with five additional questions. This engaged process helped the participants become more at ease with the study process. Finally, through document review, success and failure patterns were determined.

Interviews utilized standardized protocol and open-ended questions. Each interview was tape recorded on a standard cassette and transcribed by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher took notes during interviews in an effort to record changes in body language or non-verbal cues.

In order to analyze success patterns, the researcher examined records of previous students. The researcher examined the records of 15 adolescents to determine whether there are patterns for successful completion or quicker release from Steppin' Stone Farm. Records of five students who excelled in the Formal education environment (as determined by Grade Point Average, GPA) were assessed. Also, the records of five students who excelled in the Non-Formal environment of 4-H and showed a steer in competition during recent years was examined. Finally, five other random student records were assessed to determine if successful program completion or length of stay at the residential facility was connected with formal or non-formal education achievement.

### **Instrument**

This study utilized the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) instrument to assess adolescents' individual learning strategy. This instrument was used to classify girls into Navigators, Problem Solvers, or Engagers. Students completed the instrument and received their results through a booklet, which the interviewer

administered. Once interviews were conducted, the researcher compared and contrasted the ATLAS results with the interview answers.

Reliability for this instrument was established through the test-retest method. The coefficient of stability for these two tests were .88 ( $p < .001$ ) with 110 (90.9%) responding the same on both tests.

Table 1

*Instructional Strategies as Prescribed by Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults*  
(ATLAS)

ATLAS Group	Instructional Strategy
Navigators	Schedules and deadlines are helpful. Outline of objectives and expectations, summary of main points, prompt feedback, and instructional situations for subsequent lessons are provided.
Problem Solvers	Provide an environment of practical experimentation, give examples from personal experience, assess learning with open-ended questions and problem-solving activities.
Engagers	Provide an atmosphere that creates a relationship between the learner, the task, and the teacher. Focus on learning rather than evaluation and encourage personal exploration for learning. Group work also helps to create a positive environment.

Table 1 provides a list of instructional strategies for each of the three preferred learning strategy groups. This information was provided to students as they completed the survey.

**The Researcher’s Role**

The preconceptions of the researcher regarding adolescent residential treatment centers has been influenced by examining existing literature and through her own work in treating at-risk youth in a Residential Treatment Center. For four and a half years, the



researcher worked at a residential treatment center as both a house parent and house parent supervisor. However, the interviewer did not interview any students with whom she has previously worked with. Although it has been five years since this experience, the experiences at the RTC still reside in her memories. Phenomenological exploration requires that the researcher's opinions, thoughts, and biases be examined and suspended; therefore, the researcher made concerted efforts to be open to violations of her own beliefs.

One important preconception held by this researcher involved her belief that RTC's provide a positive environment for at-risk youth needing help. Although the researcher's memories and experiences were mostly positive at the RTC, she looked forward to hearing about the experience of living in a Residential Treatment Center (RTC) from the participants' perspective whether positive or negative. Regardless of whether these experiences were positive or negative, the researcher believed learning about the educational experiences of these students would be beneficial.

### **Analysis**

In accordance with Colaizzi's phenomenology data analysis model (as cited in Valle & King, 1978) the following activities were implemented:

- The researcher read and reread the transcribed interviews to make sense of them and acquire a feel for each description.
- The researcher extracted significant statements, which pertained directly to the proposed phenomenon.

- The researcher formulated more general meanings after analyzing each significant statement.
- The researcher organized the formulated meanings into clusters, which allowed themes to emerge.
- The researcher integrated themes into an exhaustive description.
- The researcher made a concise statement of the exhaustive description and provided a fundamental statement of identification.
- The researcher presented a concise statement of the exhaustive description to the original participants of the study in order to verify the statement.

Colaizzi (as cited in Valle & King, 1978) suggested validating the information by asking the subject, “What aspects of your experience have I omitted?” (p. 62). In this study, this process was modified a bit in an effort to ensure that all interviewees received this in a timely fashion. Since some students were scheduled to leave the RTC within several weeks, the interviewer sent copies of the transcriptions (in a sealed envelope) and asked this question.

The researcher searched for common themes or redundant experiences throughout each of the interviews. Table 2 illustrates some of the educational activities that the researcher heard from the youth at the residential treatment facility. These lists are not exhaustive, however any additional activities mentioned by the youth were classified using the definitions of formal, non-formal and informal education in Chapter One.

Table 2

*Educational Environments*

Formal Education	Non-formal Education	Informal Education
Traditional Grade School	4-H activities	Peer conversations
Traditional College Courses	Church	Reflections
	Group Sessions	Reading
	Youth Group	Environmental Exposure

In order to enhance validity the researcher kept a journal to ensure an audit trail and conduct member checking to ensure accuracy of transcripts. Member checking was conducted through sealed envelopes which students were asked to review. The students were asked to review the accuracy of the transcription, provide any necessary feedback and return the sealed envelope within two weeks.

**Chapter Summary**

In Chapter Three, the researcher provided an explanation of the research methodology used for this study. The design of the study was discussed as well as the analysis process. In Chapter Four, the researcher will present data and discoveries.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Results of the Study**

This was a phenomenological study utilizing a lens of critical theory to look at girls learning strategies and the meaning of girls' educational experiences at a residential treatment center. Using Colaizzi's method of analysis, the researcher explored student experiences in formal, non-formal, and informal environments at a residential treatment center and understanding the meaning of learning settings for a group of teenage girls living at a RTC.

The purpose of this study was to understand residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns were also explored.

An interview guide was designed to answer the research questions "What are the Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal educational experiences of the females at a residential treatment center?" and "Is there a preference in learning experiences among the female residents at a residential treatment center?" as well as "Does the learning style of the female resident affect the preference?" Questions and activities were designed to explore participant's perception of the learning experiences within the residential treatment center.

In addition to interview questions, activities were also utilized during the interview process. The researcher used the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) instrument to allow students to flip through a booklet and determine the learning strategy which she prefers. Additionally, students were asked to complete a concept map to provide greater insight into learning preferences.

Data was collected based on the criteria outlined below:

a) Survey Participants

- Fifteen girls currently residing in the residential treatment environment
- Represented a wide spectrum of seniority levels (lengths of stay from 2 months- over 2 years depending on the girl being interviewed)

b) Document Review

- Five students who excelled in the Formal education environment (as determined by Grade Point Average, GPA)
- Five students who excelled in the Non-Formal environment of 4-H and showed a steer in competition
- Five other random student records.

### **Findings**

Results of the study determined student perceptions regarding various educational environments and learning strategies at a residential treatment center. Analysis of interviews and data collected led to several significant findings.

## **Interview Findings**

Participants began the interview by assessing their learning strategy utilizing the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) Instrument. This information was utilized in an effort to answer research question one.

One major finding comes from this portion of the interview. This instrument categorizes learners into Navigators, Problem Solvers, or Engagers. Sixteen youth were interviewed for this study. Of these, two individuals classified themselves as “Navigators”, three related most with the “Problem Solver” description, and eleven adolescents categorized themselves as “Engagers”. The majority of students (11 of 16) identified themselves as “Engagers”, this is similar to the findings of Shaw’s study (2004) and indicates that relationship is a major driving force for their learning. This is an interesting finding because in Conti’s research he has found that generally the distribution is approximately 31.8% (2009). The percentage of engagers in this study is more than double that at 68.75%.

### **Learning strategy and environmental preference.**

Another major finding became evident as the researcher began extracting significant statements from the interviews. This assisted in answering research question number two. As students discussed their favorite experiences and important learning experiences, it became evident that a participant’s learning strategy played an important role in her desire to learn in a particular environment.

For instance, all students who identified themselves as “Engagers” preferred non-formal or informal learning environments. They made comments such as, “I really like being with the animals because they teach you a lot about patience...” or

I’m from the city so 4-H was... huge! I definitely love animals and I’ve learned that it’s one of my passions! I love getting up and picking up and I have to finish a job all the way through. I have realized that I love getting outdoors and working and helping the animals or just making sure that the community looks good....

Another student mentioned “4-H has taught me not to give up on something, not to get discouraged or give up on a goal that I have”.

Informal learning environments were also mentioned such as when a student confessed, “I really love journaling, I really have a passion for it...I feel like that’s the best way for me to learn...” Although 4-H was mentioned frequently additional non-formal learning environments were also mentioned such as the kitchen. One student said, “You learn more in the kitchen—more than I would’ve ever thought you’d learn. You have to learn personal space, responsibility, respect, and honesty”.

It was apparent throughout the interviews that “engagers” embrace non-formal and informal learning environments and often types of learners focus on the relationship forming that occurs in these environments. The importance of relationship was often vocalized with these individuals as well. Many students mentioned things such as “I love being in situations where you can get other people’s opinions and then bounce yours off of them and see where you really stand in a situation”.

“Navigators” seemed to have the most diverse experience with learning environments. Both navigators mentioned in a various situations that they enjoyed

learning in all environments. They would remark “I think they set it up to where you learn everywhere so that you can change and make yourself more focused on what needs to be done and so you don’t let your mind wander”.

Additionally, remarks were made such as:

Well, I feel I am learning all throughout the day. I feel I’m always learning something new in each place. Like school: every day I learn something. Then, at 4-H: I learn how to do something new. . . And then, when we change chores and I might learn how to do a new chore.

Conti suggests that “Navigators” thrive on organization and clear direction.

Having worked at the RTC for four and a half years, the researcher can attest to the fact that this environment provides great structure and clear direction. It is the researcher’s belief that this environmental atmosphere plays a great role in the ability for these “navigators” to learn continuously throughout each day.

All three “Problem Solvers” seemed to enjoy the atmosphere of the academic classroom, a formal learning environment. These individuals like seeking alternatives, resources, and critical thinking. Therefore, the environment in the classroom was preferred. They mentioned that school at the RTC is, “Really different, not like a regular classroom. It’s one on one. If you can’t figure out for yourself, you go and get help...you actually learn...so you can continue to expand your mind, learn more, and go on to bigger things like higher education.”

### **Relational importance.**

Regardless of the individual’s learning strategy, when the discussion focused on learning, relationship was often an important factor. When it came to speaking about the



staff who worked with them daily, they often focused on those that they had the “best relationship with”. One student remarked, “Each staff has a different perspective...it’s always something different and new. It makes you feel like there’s a relationship...you can talk about anything...they don’t criticize you...they’re people too.” In addition to staff, the students often made comments about learning from other students. Comments such as “I really like talking one on one with people and learning how they do stuff...when they tell you how and what they learned” were frequently made during many interviews.

### **Life lessons.**

In addition to the common thread of relational importance, another common point of conversation during interviews was the significance of profound learning experiences or “life lessons”. When asked about how her learning has changed since coming to the RTC, one girl mentioned “it’s taught me to think about the purpose of moments...”. Another girl echoed this sentiment by speaking about one of the things she has learned while at the RTC, “I’ve learned that hard work leads to- I guess you can call it success...and the feeling you have inside once you’re done with a task- it’s really good.” Yet another girl mentioned that

...everyone’s goal (or at least it should be) should be to go home and fix the issues you came here with...learn from mistakes that you’ve made and others mistakes...having that goal in mind, talking with staff and my parents can help me set my route. I have tried my own route, going my own way, and it crashed and burned.

Another component that was often echoed revolved around the Christian atmosphere of the RTC. Students said things such as “It’s not just like we go to church once a week. Church- the whole ‘Christian Thing’ - is central to your life here”. During these interviews, the researcher heard stories about “life lessons” far more frequently than stories about passing a class or learning math equations.

### **Classroom learning.**

Although the students frequently told stories relating to “life lessons”, when asked about when the most learning occurs, nearly all the students (14 of 16) mentioned school. The formal learning environment of “the schoolhouse” continues to be the place that comes to mind when thinking about the greatest quantity of learning experiences. This was an interesting finding because so many students preferred alternate learning environments.

### **Relevance of learning.**

Throughout the interviews, the researcher consistently heard comments regarding the relevance of material that they were learning. One student phrased it in this manner: “If I don’t think it (the topic) is important, then I don’t even try—if I don’t think it’s going to help me in any way, then why would I do that?” This mindset not only applied to the topics of interest for the girls, it also applied to the individuals that they consider to be the most influential teachers in their life.

When asked to recall an influential teacher in their time at the RTC students often spoke about two individuals. These staff members currently work at the RTC but had previously completed the program at this RTC. Students spoke about the idea that these

two staff members had relevant experiences and they could “relate because she has had some of the same problems”.

### **Document Analysis**

Analysis of documents collected revealed several commonalities amongst leaders in formal and non-formal educational environments patterns of success and patterns of failure within the residential treatment environment at the residential treatment center. Additionally the researcher analyzed the conceptual maps that students completed during the interview process. This led to conclusions regarding the continuity between conversation and illustrations.

#### **Document review.**

The researcher conducted a document review of 15 students who have successfully completed the program. This review included documents such as: Student transcript, entry and exit forms, and demerit log information. The information collected answers the research questions: “Are there patterns of success for female residents at a residential treatment center?” and “Are there patterns of failure for female residents at a residential treatment center?” By looking at 15 students who completed the program successfully, the researcher expected to find some patterns associated with excelling in a formal or non-formal learning environment.

Table 3

*Characteristics of Girls Excelling in Academics*

	<b>Girl #1</b>	<b>Girl #2</b>	<b>Girl #3</b>	<b>Girl #4</b>	<b>Girl #5</b>
<b>GPA</b>	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.1	3.8
<b>Demerits</b>	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
<b>Program Completion Time</b>	14 months	13 months	11 months	13 months	11 months

Table three illustrates the characteristics of girls who excelled in academics during their stay at the RTC. Some girls had extremely high grade point averages (GPA) when arriving and others significantly improved their GPA while at the program. Regardless of the ending GPA, all were recognized by the principal as having excelled in academics while at the RTC.

The table illustrates some common characteristics associated with excelling academically. All of these individuals had low demerits (averaging less than 300). They also had significantly shorter stays at the RTC than those completing the program without excelling academically. The average stay for girls excelling academically was 12.4 months.

Table 4

*Characteristics of Girls Excelling in 4-H*

	<b>Girl #1</b>	<b>Girl #2</b>	<b>Girl #3</b>	<b>Girl #4</b>	<b>Girl #5</b>
<b>GPA</b>	3.3	2.6	3.3	3.46	2.05
<b>Demerits</b>	Middle	Middle	Low	Middle	High
<b>Program Completion Time</b>	27 months	22 months	11 months	24 months	24 months

Table 4 illustrates the characteristics of girls excelling in a non-formal, 4-H environment. In this group of girls, there were more diversity in GPA, demerit count, and program completion timeframe. Although most have a middle range of demerits (300-700), there are also those who have low demerits (under 300 demerits) and high demerits (over 700 demerits). In addition, there is great diversity in the length of stay for girls who excel in 4-H. The average of the length of stay for these girls was 21.6 months, significantly higher than the academic or randomly selected girls. One possible explanation for the longer program completion time frame associated with this group of students involves the notion that students in this group are responsible for raising and showing a steer at a local 4-H festival. Since this festival only occurs once a year, a student may choose to stay longer than necessary in order to complete this goal.

Table 5

*Characteristics of Randomly Selected Girls*

	<b>Girl #1</b>	<b>Girl #2</b>	<b>Girl #3</b>	<b>Girl #4</b>	<b>Girl #5</b>
<b>GPA</b>	3.0	3.0	2.6	2.7	1.8
<b>Demerits</b>	High	Low	Middle	Middle	High
<b>Program Completion Time</b>	11 months	16 months	19 months	12 months	17 months

The table above (Table 5) illustrates the data collected for students who were randomly selected. These girls have significantly lower GPA's than the previous two groups. They also average middle to high demerits. The average length of stay for those randomly selected equates to 15 months, which is longer than those who academically excel, but shorter than those who excelled in 4-H.

Given the previous tables, one may presume that if someone excels in 4-H, their length of stay at a RTC will be longer. Also, those students chosen randomly illustrate higher demerits and lower GPA's. This answers research question number Four, which asked, "Are there patterns of failure for female residents at a residential treatment center?" However, with regards to the students who excel in 4-H, there may be alternative incentives which keep students motivated to stay at the RTC longer. Some motivating factors may include recognition at the local festival, commitment to the animal that they are raising, or various other factors. This may indicate some differences in the way students' measure success and RTC success indicators.

### Activity review.

During the interview process, in addition to completing the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) activity, the girls also drew a conceptual map illustrating the learning environments that are most influential in her life. Below, you will find several examples of these conceptual maps. When compared with the conversations with students these diagrams align very closely.

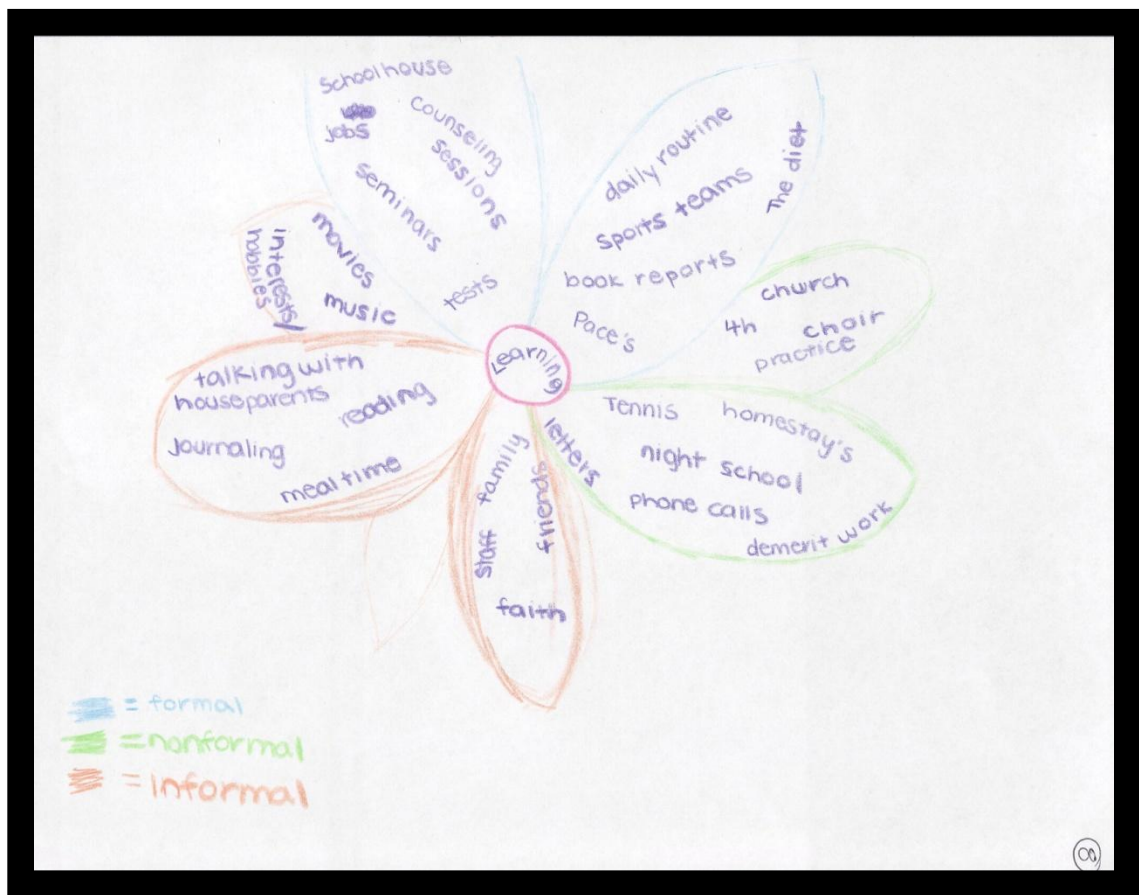


Figure 1. Conceptual map for student Eight.

This conceptual map was drawn by a student with preference for informal learning and a learning strategy of Engager. As evidenced by the petals on her flower she emphasizes informal learning by creating more petals representing this dimension.

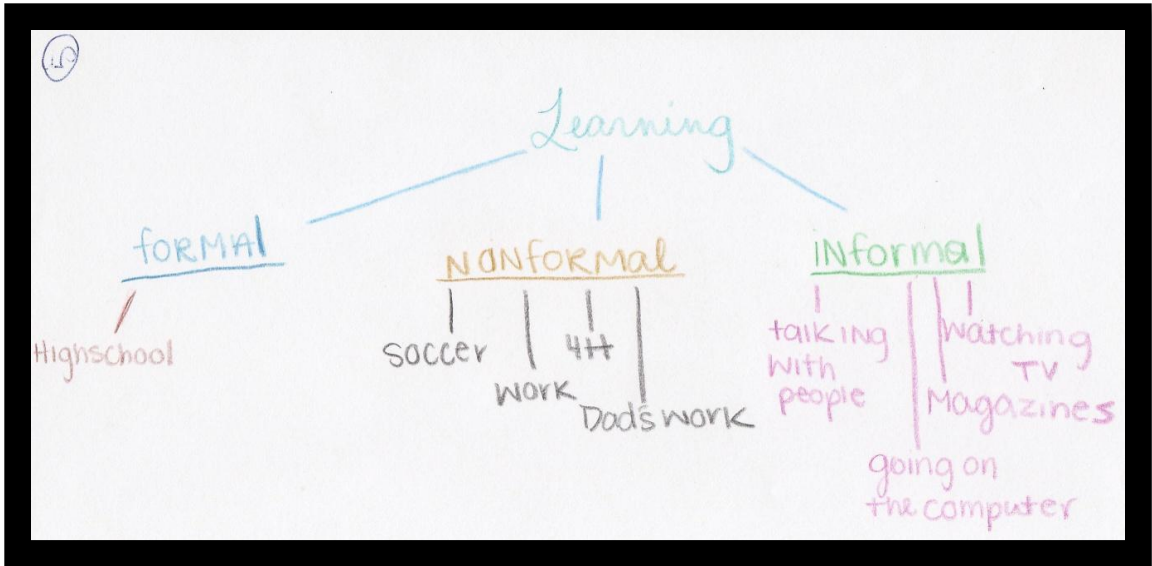


Figure 2. Conceptual map for student Five.

This conceptual map is for an individual identified as an Engager. Her preference was for more informal learning and non-formal learning. She often spoke of 4-H, work, and talking with individuals one on one.

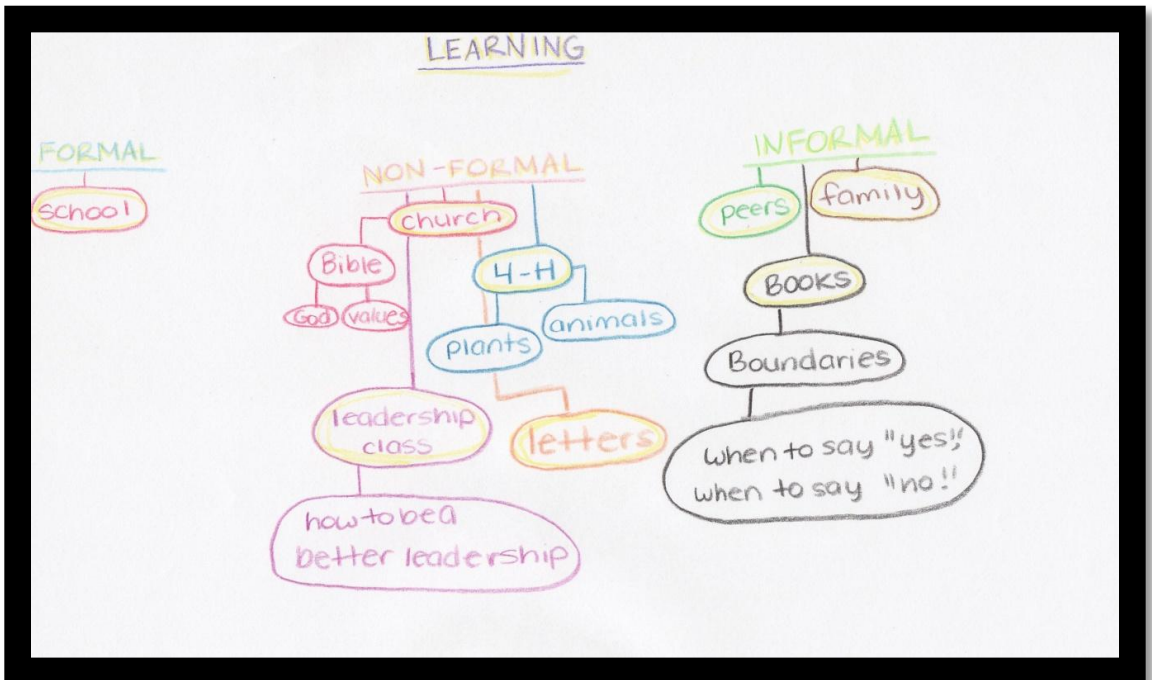


Figure 3. Conceptual map for student Nine.



The conceptual map in Figure 3 is for a student who spoke often about non-formal and informal learning experiences. She spoke of her experience working with horses, 4-H, and the informal learning experiences within the “farm environment”. This is emphasized and detailed on her conceptual map.



Figure 4. Conceptual map for student Ten.

This conceptual map illustrates informal and non-formal learning environments, but does not even list formal learning. This participant categorized herself as an “engager” and often spoke about 4-H and informal learning. The formal learning environment was so unimportant to her that she did not speak about it in her interview and reiterated this in her diagram.

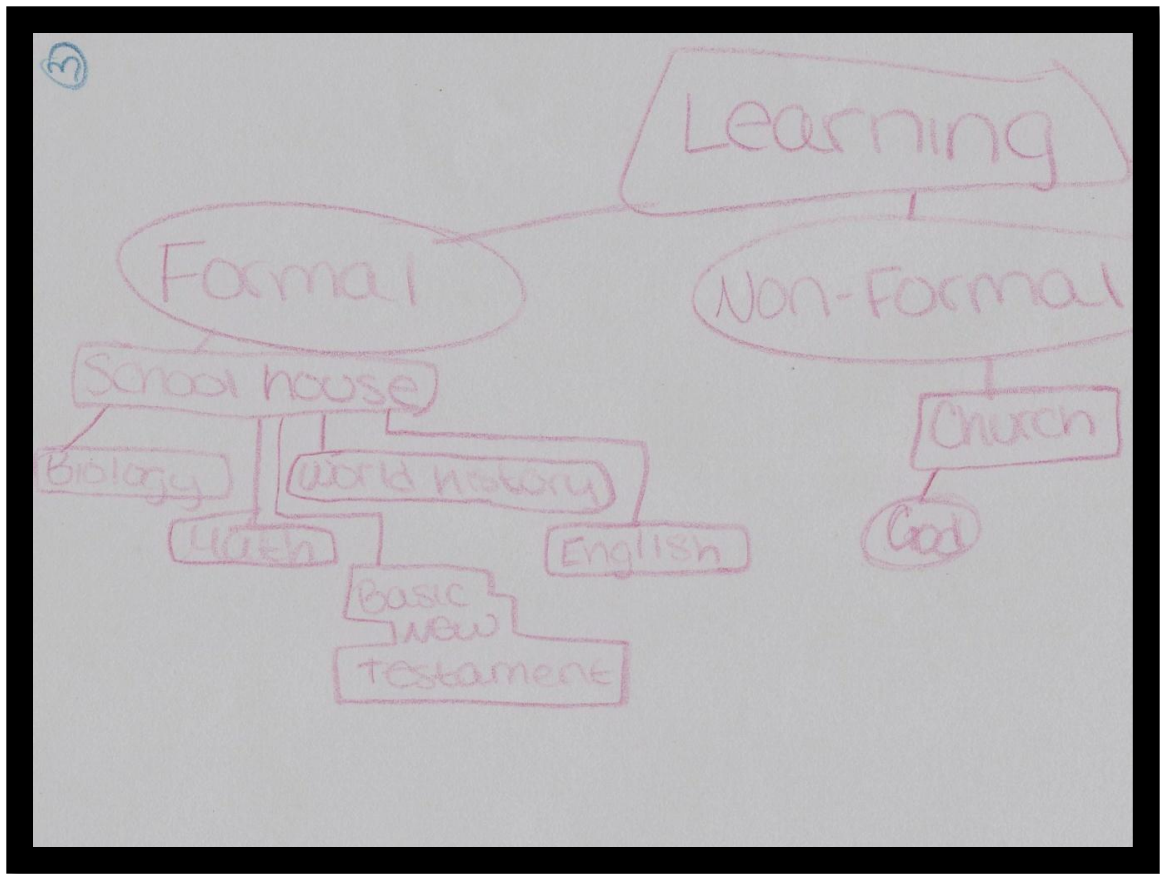


Figure 5. Conceptual map for student Three.

This conceptual map illustrates an individual with the learning strategy of problem solver. Her favorite learning environment was the formal school environment and this is evidenced in the conceptual map above.

Additional conceptual maps for students are located in Appendix G. Each map was crafted by the students in this setting during their interview session.

### Summary

In Chapter Four the data were presented and analyzed to answer the research questions and topic of inquiry. A deeper understanding of students learning strategies,

learning experiences, and patterns of success and failure were developed with regards to the girls in the RTC.

In Chapter Five, the findings in relationship to the research questions and prior research on the topic will be addressed. Conclusions and recommendations will also be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations**

This study focused on the learning strategies and preferences of troubled youth in a Residential Treatment Center (RTC). In addition, perceptions of formal, non-formal and informal learning environments were sought. This research expands on studies previously conducted focusing on learning strategies (Shaw, 2004) as well as success patterns and educational experiences within the RTC environment (Bettmann, & Jaspersen, 2009; Money, 2007; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to understand residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns were also explored.

The research questions answered in this paper included: "What are the self – diagnosed learning styles of the females at a residential treatment center?" "What are the Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal educational experiences of the females at a residential treatment center?" "Are there patterns of success for female residents at a residential treatment center?" and "Are there patterns of failure for female residents at a residential treatment center?"

#### **Learning Strategy Conclusions**

The study supported Shaw's findings that most youth in alternative learning environments have "Engager" learning strategies (2004). The majority of students (11 of

16) identified themselves as “Engagers”, this indicates that relationship is a major driving force for their learning.

This research went one step further and determined that a participant’s learning strategy played an important role in her desire to learn in a particular environment. All students who identified themselves as “Engagers” preferred non-formal or informal learning environments.

“Navigators” seemed to have the most diverse experience with learning environments. Both navigators mentioned in a various situations that they enjoyed learning in all environments.

All three “Problem Solvers” seemed to enjoy the atmosphere of the academic classroom, a formal learning environment. These individuals like seeking alternatives, resources, and critical thinking. Therefore, the environment in the classroom was preferred. This study illustrated the connection between learning strategy and learning environment preference.

Regardless of the individual’s learning strategy, when the discussion focused on learning, relationship was often an important factor. In addition to the common thread of relational importance, another common point of conversation during interviews was the significance of profound learning experiences or “life lessons”.

Throughout the interviews, the researcher consistently heard comments regarding the relevance of material that they were learning. If material or individuals were viewed as “important” or involved similar experiences, they were regarded much more highly and spoken of more frequently. For example, when asked to recall an influential teacher in their time at the RTC students often spoke about two individuals. These staff members

currently work at the RTC but had previously completed the program at this RTC. Students spoke about the idea that these two staff members had relevant experiences and they could “relate”. Brookfield (2005) suggests that one of the foundational elements of Critical Theory is that it joins theory with practice. His first principle is that learning is voluntary, it may be that circumstances prompting this learning come from somewhere else, but in the end, the decision to learn is the learner’s. Students illustrated this principle consistently during the interview process.

Although relationships and life lessons seemed prominent throughout the interviews, when participants were asked “where the most learning occurs” nearly all participants focused on the school environment. The formal learning environment of “the schoolhouse” continues to be the place that comes to mind when thinking about the greatest quantity of learning experiences. This was an interesting finding because so many students preferred alternate learning environments.

### **Document Review Conclusions**

Document Review found that those who excel academically tend to represent the most successful students (as evidenced by length of stay in the RTC). All of these individuals had low demerits (averaging less than 300). They also had significantly shorter stays at the RTC than those completing the program without excelling academically. The average stay for girls excelling academically was 12.4 months. Conversely, students who excelled in 4-H had the longest average length of stay at 21.6 months. This finding may be explained by the commitment level and desire to complete and “show” the steer. Or possibly students who excel in this non-formal manner need

additional time to learn from the relational components that non-formal learners spoke of frequently during the interviews.

### **Activity Review Conclusions**

When compared, the interviews and students' diagrams aligned very closely as did the results reflected from the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) instrument results. For example, if a student spoke frequently about 4-H learning experiences and stated that their favorite learning environment is 4-H, they nearly always include the most details in the 4-H area of their conceptual map. For most of the student this parallel was also indicative of the learning strategy.

### **Discussion**

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings from this study pertains to perceptions of learning experiences versus preferred learning environment. The idea of education being something that takes place in the classroom is an idea that penetrates society. However, learning opportunities exist in every environment including formal, non-formal, and informal. Nearly all participants in this study reported that most of their learning occurred in the school environment; however the school was frequently marginal in their phenomenological recollections.

Many students feel the need to justify or apologize for learning something new while in a recreational activity, sharing a hobby with a loved one, or simply reading alone. It is possible that due to the importance placed upon the school environment during the early childhood years, adolescents develop the notion that these formal experiences should have more value. Unfortunately, this idea may prevent learning in the informal or non-formal environments.

## **Recommendations**

Based on results of this study, the following recommendations would be pertinent for those considering residential treatment for their adolescent, those currently working in residential treatment centers, and educators. First, for those considering residential treatment, this study suggests that students who excel academically may be more successful in completing the program in a timely manner. Next, for those currently working in residential treatment centers, participants' responses illustrate the importance of relationship building with regards to learning in the RTC environment. Additionally, since many students are "Engagers" and illustrate preferences for informal and non-formal learning, those working in RTCs would benefit from incorporating many experiences of this nature. Finally, the results of this study provide evidence for educators regarding the need to encourage students to make connections to learning, whether formal, informal or non-formal. Educators need to persuade students to experience learning in all environments, not merely occurrences in the classroom.

For individuals considering residential treatment for an adolescent, this study suggests that students who excel academically may be more successful in completing the program in a timely manner and without incurring many demerits. However, there is significant evidence to conclude that RTCs do produce positive change in adolescents (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005; Hooper, Murphy, Devaney, & Hultman, 2000; Larzelere, Dinges, Schmidt, Spellman, Criste, & Connell, 2001; Le Griffith et al., 2009; Lyons, Terry, Martinovich, Peterson, & Bouska, 2001) regardless of the timeframe for program completion or demerits attained. Therefore, although academically successful students may complete the program at a quicker pace, the long-term success of a student may not



be determined by academic achievement. Informal and non-formal learners may benefit as much or more from the RTC environment.

In addition to this recommendation for parents, this research also provides insight for those currently working in residential treatment centers. Participants' responses illustrate the importance of relationship building with regards to learning in the RTC environment. Students often mentioned valuing relationship in the RTC and the powerful contribution that these added to the learning process. Additionally, since many students are "Engagers" and illustrate preferences for informal and non-formal learning, those working in RTCs would benefit from incorporating many experiences of this nature. It would also benefit students to recognize their own learning preferences while in the RTC environment, current RTC employees could assist in this learning process. Munday (2002) suggests that positive effects on academic performance can be seen when learners recognize their learning strategy preferences. Additionally, through instrumented learning, one can gain understanding of self and others. Ausburn (2004) suggests that this process can enhance metacognition and improve performance, thus enhancing the students' experience in the RTC. This research illustrates that learning logs, conceptual maps, informal, and non-formal activities add value to the RTC experience. The insight gained from this research may aid those working in RTC's world-wide.

The results of this study also assist educators. Understanding the importance of supporting students in all educational environments regardless of whether they are formal, informal, or non-formal, should be the primary goal of educators. Educators need to encourage students to make connections to learning in all environments. They need to persuade students to experience learning in all environments, not merely in the

classroom. In turn, this will inspire students to learn in all circumstances and may change student perception.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

It is suggested that the general body of research regarding Residential Treatment Centers would benefit from additional research which considers the voice of those participating in the RTC environment. Continued research into the educational environments at RTC's, learning strategies and perceptions of residential experiences will help inform treatment for students in these environments.

This research focused on hearing the voice of those who are currently enrolled in a particular RTC, Steppin' Stone Farm. It would be beneficial to hear from additional facilities and more students regarding their own experiences and educational perceptions. Research that considers a broader spectrum of facilities would help inform the field.

In addition to considering more facilities in future research, it may also be valuable to consider additional components when determining patterns of success and patterns of failure. This research took into consideration GPA, length of stay, and demerits when considering patterns of success and failure, but future studies could include other components. RTCs incorporate so many components including individual, group, and family therapy combined with recreational therapy, community involvement, and obligatory tasks (Money, 2007). It may be beneficial to consider more components when measuring patterns of success and failure.

Another option for future research involves the idea of transformative learning. The notion of transformative learning may be interesting to consider because of multiple

students mentioning the life lessons and changes in perspective that they experienced while at the RTC.

Additional research regarding 4-H students who excel in these activities may help inform future studies and possibly improve treatment at RTC's. Research in this area could expand knowledge and understanding regarding how 4-H affects learning and motivation.

### **Summary**

The significance in doing this phenomenological study was to investigate troubled teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies, and success patterns was explored. Utilizing Coombs and Ahmed's (1974) educational environments as a foundational point, this study also incorporated Ausburn's (2004) study by using the *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) instrument. This tool was used for self diagnosis of preferred learning strategies.

This study provides an understanding of what it means for a teenage female to learn in a residential treatment center through the voice of those who are currently in this position. Participants in this study vocalized perceptions and preferences regarding learning environments and learning strategies.

Additionally, this study enhances knowledge in the field of residential treatment. Research in this field often focuses on outcome and effectiveness literature. This study provides insightful information incorporating the voice of students into the research.

## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Protocol**

**Title:** Experiences and perceptions as expressed by adolescent females at a Residential Treatment Center (RTC).

**Time of interview:**

**Date:**

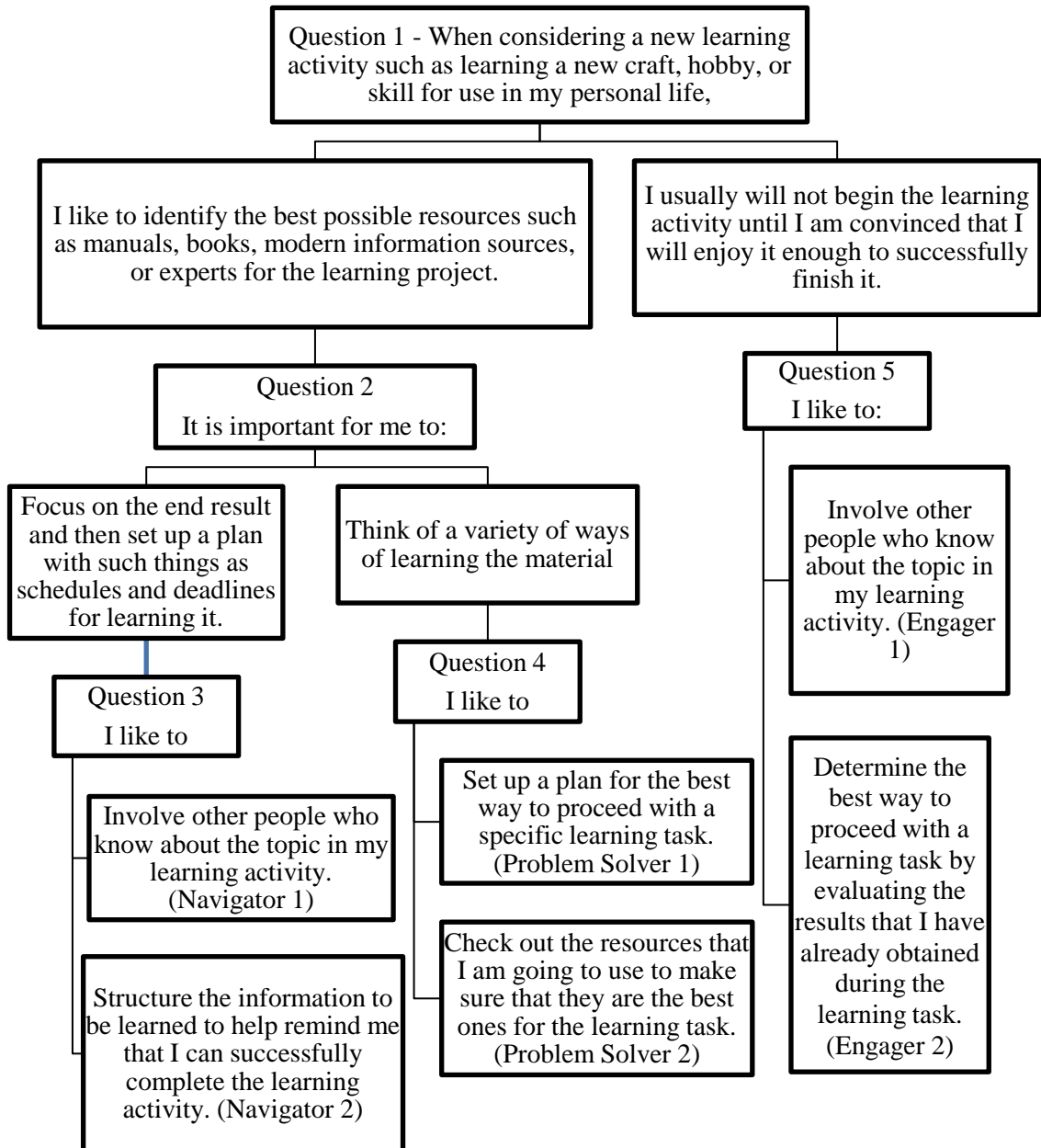
**Interviewee:**

This study investigates at-risk teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-formal experiences, preferred learning strategies and success patterns will be explored.

**Introduction:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am currently a researcher at Florida Atlantic University working on my doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to better understand the educational experiences of youth living in a residential treatment facility. It is important for you to know that all the information that will be discussed in this interview will be kept confidential. I am interested in your experiences and stories. Your opinions and observations will not be disclosed to the residential treatment facility. If at any time you feel uncomfortable and would like to opt out of this interview, you can do so with no penalty. I expect the interview should last no longer than one hour. Do I have permission to audio tape this interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

First we will begin with assessing the learning strategy you prefer. Please contact the author for a copy of the booklet used. It will walk you through the following process:

ATLAS Flowchart



Questions:

1. What learning strategy do you feel best describes you?
2. As you consider this learning strategy description, what do you most identify with?
3. How do you think your learning strategy preference affects your daily learning experiences?
4. Do you think your learning strategy preference affects your learning here at the RTC?
5. Has this RTC environment changed anything about the way that you learn?
6. Can you give me an idea of your typical day?
7. When would you say that most learning occurs?
8. What are some of the educational experiences that you have had while being at the RTC?

I would like to understand more thoroughly what it is like to learn in the following environments:

school, 4-H, church, group sessions, and in one-on-one basis here at the RTC. So now I will be asking a few questions regarding these environments.

9. What is the school experience like at the RTC?
  - a. How do you feel about the learning in this environment?
10. What has your experience been regarding 4-H?
  - a. How do you feel about the learning in this environment?
11. What has your experience been regarding church?
  - a. How do you feel about the learning in this environment?
12. What has your experience been regarding group sessions?
  - a. How do you feel about the learning in this environment?
13. What have you experienced with regards to informal learning? Examples of informal learning would be: conversations, journaling or reflection, reading, letters, or exposure to the environment.
  - a. How do you feel about the learning in this environment?
14. Do you have a preference regarding the environment in which you learn?

Now that we have discussed some of the learning environments here at the RTC, I would like to pause the interview and spend some time drawing a conceptual map of the environments where you feel like you learn the most. Feel free to be creative and include any environment that you feel is important to you!

After the conceptual map is complete: Let's finish the interview with a few more questions regarding the educational environment at this RTC.

15. Have there been any influential "teacher/s" in your life while at this RTC?
16. Can you tell me about a time while at the RTC when you have learned something that you consider important?
17. What about your experience at this RTC do you consider most meaningful?
  - a. Least meaningful?
18. What educational policies or practices do you feel would benefit adolescents in this environment?
19. Is there anything that you would like to add that I may or may not have asked?

(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews)

**Appendix B**

**Letter of Cooperation**

December 30, 2011

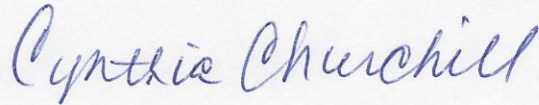
To the Florida Atlantic University (IRB):

I am familiar with Krista Allison's dissertation project (Dr. Valerie Bryan-committee chair) entitled Experiences and perceptions as expressed by adolescent females at a Residential Treatment Center (RTC). I understand Steppin' Stone Farm's involvement to be: providing archival data, allowing students to be observed, interviewed, and draw diagrams. In addition I am aware that photographs of educational settings will be taken.

I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that participant involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary and provides confidentiality of research data, as described in the protocol.

Therefore, as the institutional authority of Steppin' Stone Farm, I agree that Krista Allison's research project may be conducted at our agency.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Churchill

Executive Director of Steppin' Stone Farm



## Appendix C

### Child Assent

#### Experiences and perceptions as expressed by adolescent females at a Residential Treatment Center (RTC)

Researchers from Florida Atlantic University college of education are trying to learn about perceptions or views of your educational experiences at a residential treatment center.

You have been invited to participate because you currently reside in a residential treatment center. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an instrument that identifies how you learn. You will also be interviewed by one person and asked to draw a picture or concept map (diagram showing the relationship) of some of your educational experiences. The researcher will take notes during the interview and may write down nonverbal cues in a journal. This will enable her to better understand the audiotapes in the future. These activities will take approximately one hour.

You will also be asked about your learning experiences at the residential treatment center. Some things may make you uncomfortable such as sharing stories about experiences that you found good or bad. If at any time you would like to not participate in this study, you may choose to do so with no problem. This study will take place in a private office and should take about an hour of your time.

The researchers hope this study may help identify how to make the education more successful. You may help to create better learning opportunities for other adolescents in residential care facilities.

You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to and you can quit the study at any time. If you don't like a question, you don't have to answer the question and, if you ask, your answers will not be used in the study. No one will get mad at you if you decide you don't want to participate.

Other than the researchers, no one will know your answers, including, staff, teachers, friends, etc. If you have any questions, just ask Krista Allison.

This research study has been explained to me and I agree to be in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature for Assent Date

*I may \_\_\_ may not \_\_\_ be audiotaped.*

Check which applies (to be completed by person conducting assent discussion):

The subject is capable of reading and understanding the assent form and has signed above as documentation of assent to take part in this study.

The subject is not capable of reading the assent form, however, the information was explained verbally to the subject who signed above to acknowledge the verbal explanation and his/her assent to take part in this study.

Name of Person Obtaining Assent (Print)

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent Date

Approved on: 4/17/2012

Expires on: 4/16/2013

Institutional Review Board

## Appendix D

### PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

**1) Title of Research Study:** Experiences and perceptions as expressed by adolescent females at a Residential Treatment Center (RTC)

**2) Investigator(s):** Faculty Advisor: Dr. Valerie Bryan; Student: Krista Allison

**3) Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to investigate at-risk teenage female residents' perceptions of educational experiences within a residential treatment environment. The relationship between formal, informal, and non-informal experiences, preferred learning strategies and success patterns will be explored.

**4) Procedures:** As part of this study, your daughter will participate in two activities. First, each participant will take a learning assessment to distinguish individual learning style. Then, participants will be interviewed and asked to draw a concept map (diagram showing the relationship) of their educational experiences. The process will take approximately one hour and the interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. The researcher will keep a journal to record any nonverbal cues and notes during the interview process. This study is optional and if your daughter chooses not to participate, no recourse will be taken. Your daughter will not be penalized if she, or you, choose not to participate in this research.

**5) Risks:** All data collected will be kept confidential. The risks involved with participation in this study are minimal. It is unlikely your child will experience any harm or discomfort. Counseling will be provided by house parents if necessary.

**6) Benefits:** Knowledge of successful educational components may help to tailor treatment and maximize benefits for adolescents in residential care. The potential benefits to your child are: 1) her learning about her individual learning style may help her academic performance. Previous research by Munday (2002) suggests that positive effects on academic performance can be seen when learners recognize their learning strategy preferences.

**7) Data Collection & Storage:**

Any information collected about your child will be kept confidential and secure and only the people working with the study will see your child's data, unless required by law. The data will be kept for 5 years in a locked cabinet [or password-protected computer] in the investigator's office. After 5 years, paper copies will be destroyed by shredding and electronic data will be deleted. We may publish what we learn from this study without your daughter's name or identifying information. If we do publish the study, we will not let anyone know your child's name/identity unless you give us permission.

**8) Contact Information:**

For questions or problems regarding your child's rights as a research subject, you can contact the Florida Atlantic University Division of Research at (561) 297-0777. For other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator(s), Dr. Valerie Bryan at (561)799-8639 or Krista Allison at (561)313-5433.

**9) Consent Statement:**

I have read, or had read to me, the information describing this study. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I allow my child \_\_\_\_\_ to take part in this study.

First Name / Last name

My child can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. I can ask to have the information related to my child returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. I have received a copy of this consent form.

My child may \_\_\_\_ may not \_\_\_\_ be audiotaped.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of parent: First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

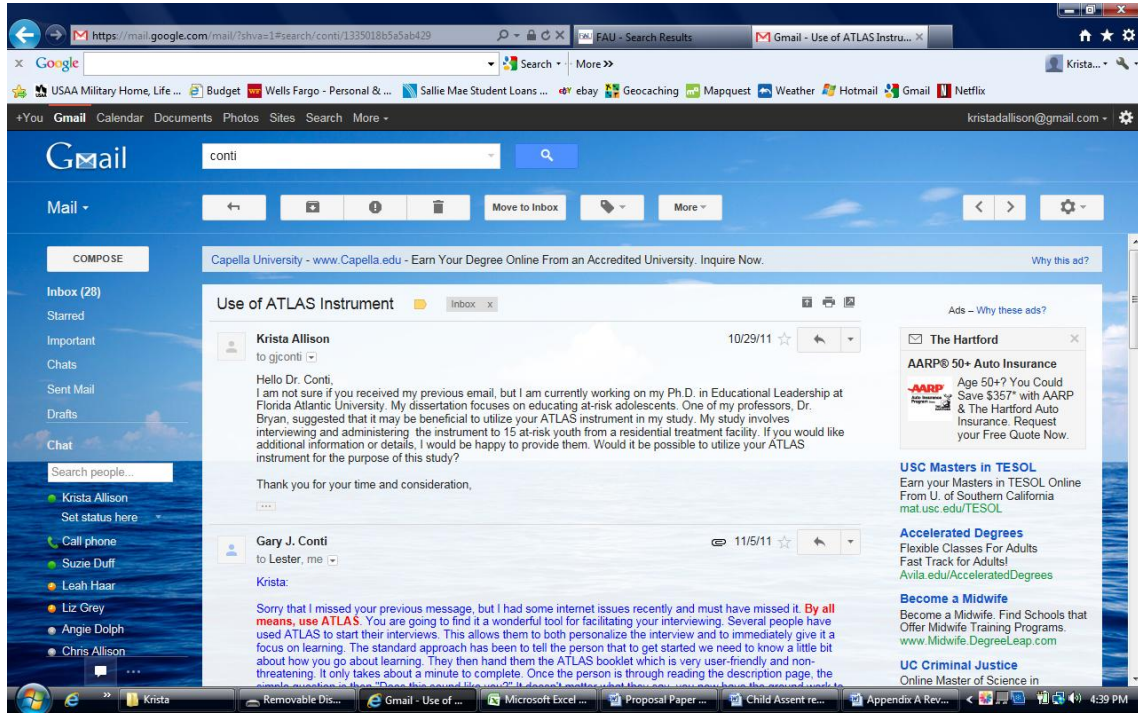
Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved on: 4/17/2012

Expires on: 4/16/2013 **Institutional Review Board**

## Appendix E

### Permission to use *Assessing The Learning Strategies of Adults* (ATLAS) instrument



## Appendix F

### Dissertations Using *Assessing The Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) Instrument

Author	Date	Title
Armstrong, Neill Ford	2001	<i>Learning strategy preferences of international graduate students at Oklahoma State University</i>
Birzer, Michael Lee	2000	<i>Learning strategies utilized by police officers</i>
Chesbro, Steven Bryce	2000	<i>Becoming adult learners: Student learning in dual-campus physical therapy program using distance education</i>
Cochran, Teri A.	2005	<i>Practices of adult learning principles and learning strategies of financial aid administrators in Oklahoma</i>
Coon, Kim	2003	<i>Predictors of psychiatry resident psychotherapy competence</i>
Davison, Angela Machelle	1999	<i>An analysis of graduate and undergraduate courses: Learning strategies, computer literacy, computer confidence, and method of instruction</i>
Foster, Vickie Lee	2006	<i>Teaching-learning style preferences of special education teacher candidates at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma</i>
Geerdes, Elaine M.	2003	<i>A journey in faith: Adult learning in Oklahoma evangelical churches</i>
Ghostbear, Anne Ashby	2001	<i>Adult learning on the Internet: Engaging the eBay auction process</i>
Girdner, Lisa D.	2003	<i>Adult learning on the Internet: Engaging the SeniorNet Process</i>
Goodwin, Sandra K.	2001	<i>Learning strategies in the workplace to create effective employees</i>
Hagans, William Winser	2005.	<i>Musicians' learning styles, learning strategies, and perceptions of creativity</i>
Haile-Egbert, Jennifer	2004	<i>The learning strategies and motivational characteristics of adult students enrolled in an Oklahoma technology center</i>
Harris, Pauline B.	2003	<i>Learning strategies of a learning congregation: A case study of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church</i>

Table F continued on next page.

Appendix F continued.

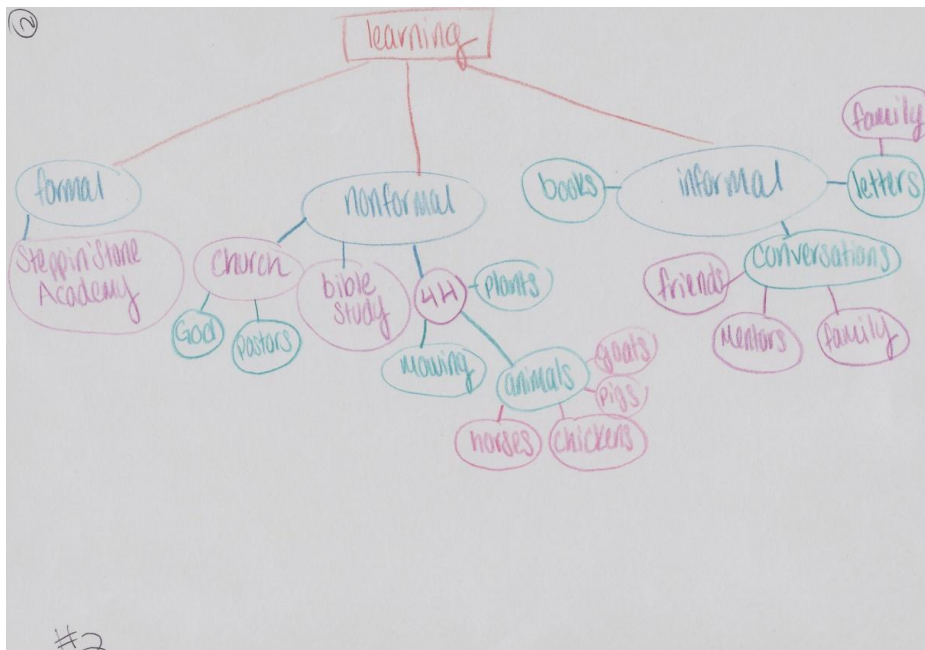
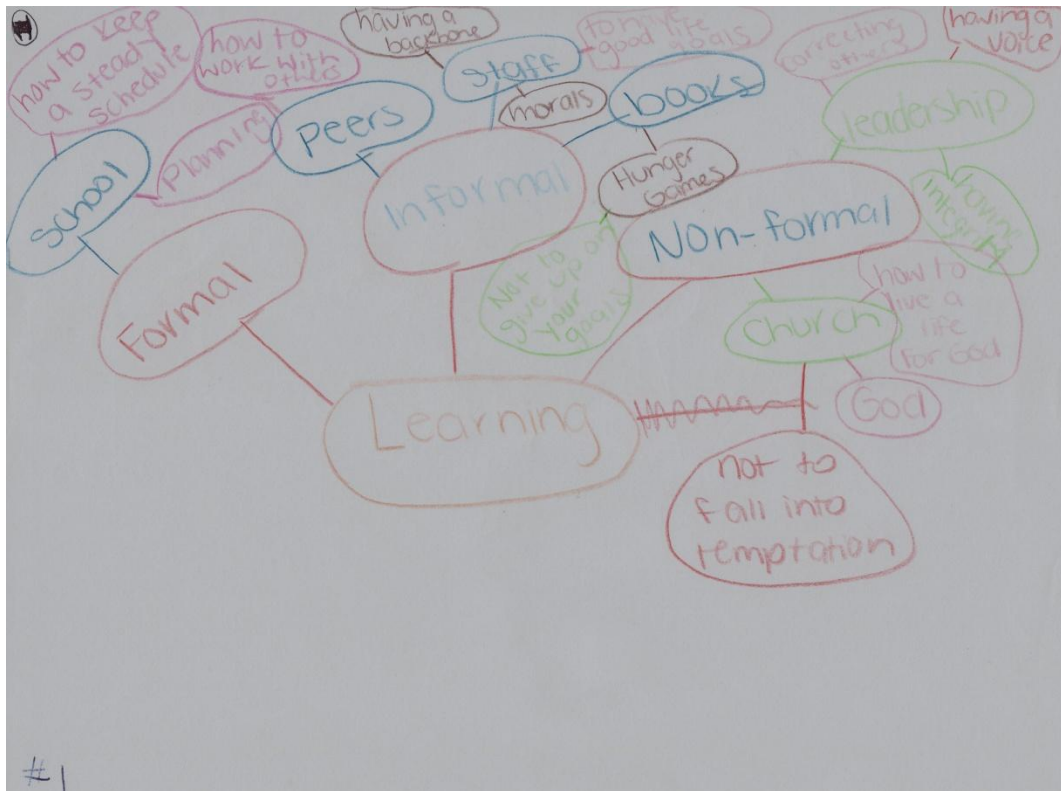
Author	Date	Title
Hinds, Blayne Edward	2001	<i>Learning strategies in the African-American community of Enid, Oklahoma</i>
Hughes, Brian Joseph	2002	<i>Continuing professional education in athletic training</i>
Hulderman, Michael Andrew	2003	<i>Decision-making styles and learning strategies of police officers: Implications for community policing</i>
James, Carol Beddow	2000	<i>Learning strategy preferences of high school noncompleters</i>
Jones, Shirley Paulette	2002	<i>A comparison of online text and subject video in relation to learning strategy</i>
Kenreich, Todd William	2000	<i>Teacher consultants in the Ohio Geographic Alliance: Their beliefs, classroom practices, and professional development activities</i>
Libertus, Ruby J.	2003	<i>Globalization: Learning in the global environment</i>
Lively, Sue Anne	2001	<i>Learning, growing, and aging: lifelong learners in the Academy of Senior Professionals in Bethany, Oklahoma</i>
Massey, Linda	2003	<i>Characteristics and learning strategies of successfully employed deaf adult</i>
Massey, Sandra C.	2001	<i>Understanding learning styles and learning strategies of adult learners at OSU-Okmulgee</i>
Munday, Donald Ray	2002	<i>Effects of learning strategy awareness on learning, learners, and instructor</i>
Munday, Wendy Susan	2002	<i>Identifying the impact of personal counseling regarding learning strategies of graduate-level business students at Webster University, McConnell AFB, Kansas</i>
Nichols-Sharpe, Sally	2004	<i>Cultural attitudes and appreciation levels of early childhood faculty and teachers in Oklahoma: From a quilt to a tapestry</i>
Ossom, Fidelis Chuckwunweike	2002	<i>Adult learning experiences of non-traditional pastoral clergy</i>
Peterson, Claudette M.	2006	<i>Creative problem solving styles and learning strategies of management students: Implications for teaching, learning, and work</i>
Pinkins, Armada C.	2001	<i>The application of the concepts of learning style and learning strategies in a developing nation</i>

Appendix F continued.

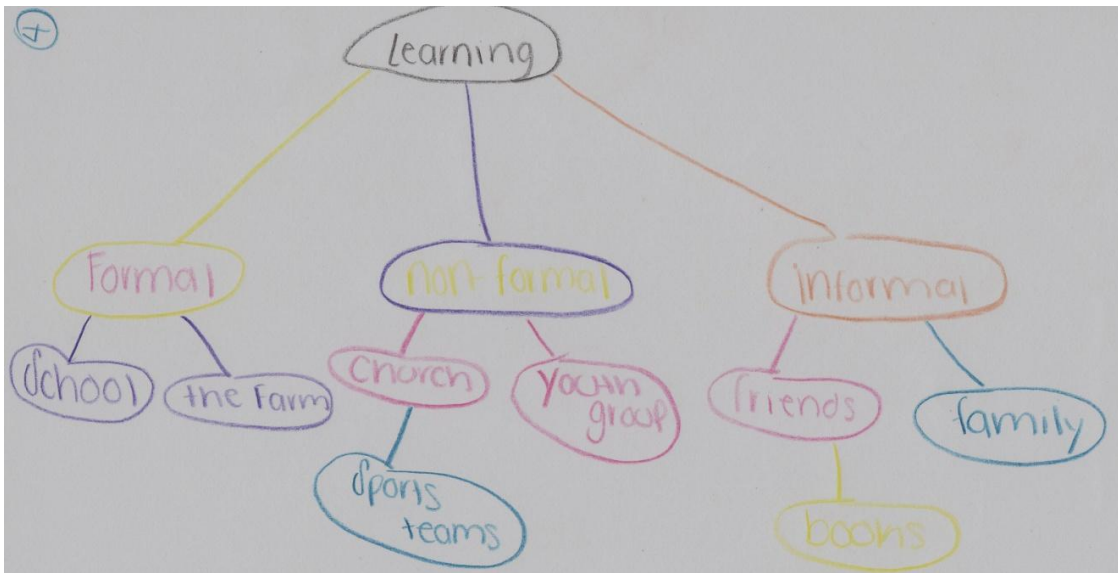
Author	Date	Title
Schweigert, Thomas F.	2007	<i>The effect of selected predictor variables upon adult learning style within functional chaplaincy training</i>
Shaw, Lester	2004	<i>Learning strategies of youth in transitions to adulthood in the urban life-skills program of A Pocket Full Of Hope®</i>
Shelton, Francis M.	2003	<i>Adult learning: Cognitive foundations for learning a complex computer-based task</i>
Shelton, Ralph David	2007	<i>Job motivation and satisfaction levels of mid-level supervisors in the unemployment insurance division of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission</i>
Shumaker, Melody G.	2001	<i>Learning style and learning strategy preferences in an intensive English program</i>
Spencer, Ralph	2000	<i>Self-directed learning on the Information Superhighway</i>
Tapp, Sherri D.	2002	<i>Cultural Appreciation in Lifelong Learning: An instrument identifying cultural appreciation</i>
Taylor, Michelle	2004	<i>Health care education: Understanding graduate students' stress and learning strategy preferences</i>
Turman, Robert Allen	2001	<i>Learning strategy preferences of adult learners in a non-traditional 3 graduate business program</i>
Turner, Michael Dan	2001	<i>Learning for leadership in Oklahoma higher education: A study of selected university presidents</i>
Varmecky, Jane Hyde	2003	<i>Adult learning in self-identified, successful, subsequent marriages</i>
Ware, Sharon Douglass	2005	<i>Learning profile of child care health consultants</i>
Watkins, Janice Beatrice	2006	<i>The educational beliefs and attitudes of Title 1 teachers in Tulsa Public Schools</i>
Willyard, Paula	2000	<i>Learning strategies of first-generation community college students</i>

## Appendix G

### Conceptual Maps Drawn By Students

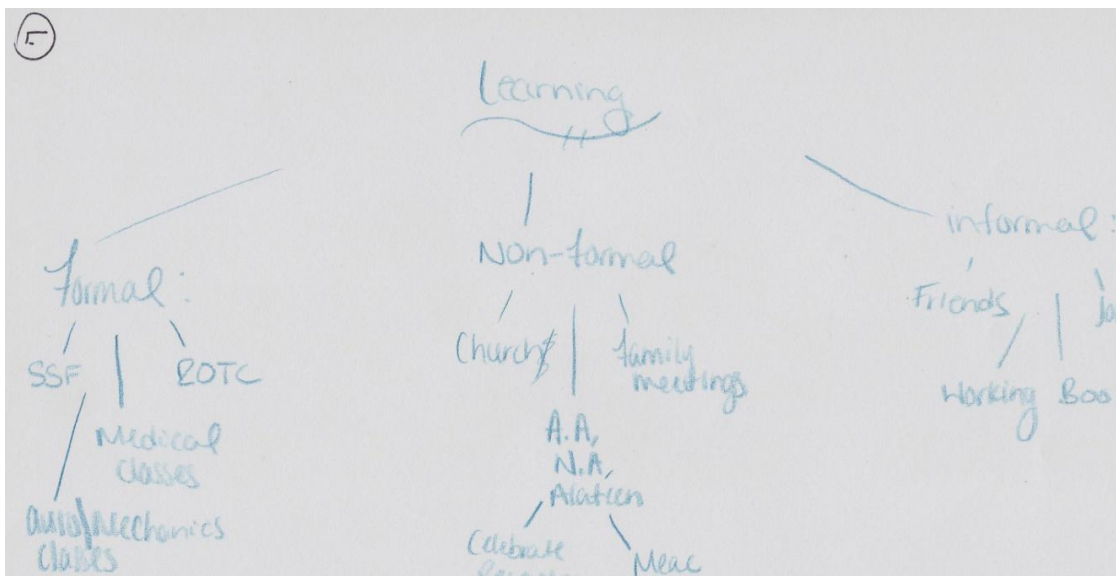
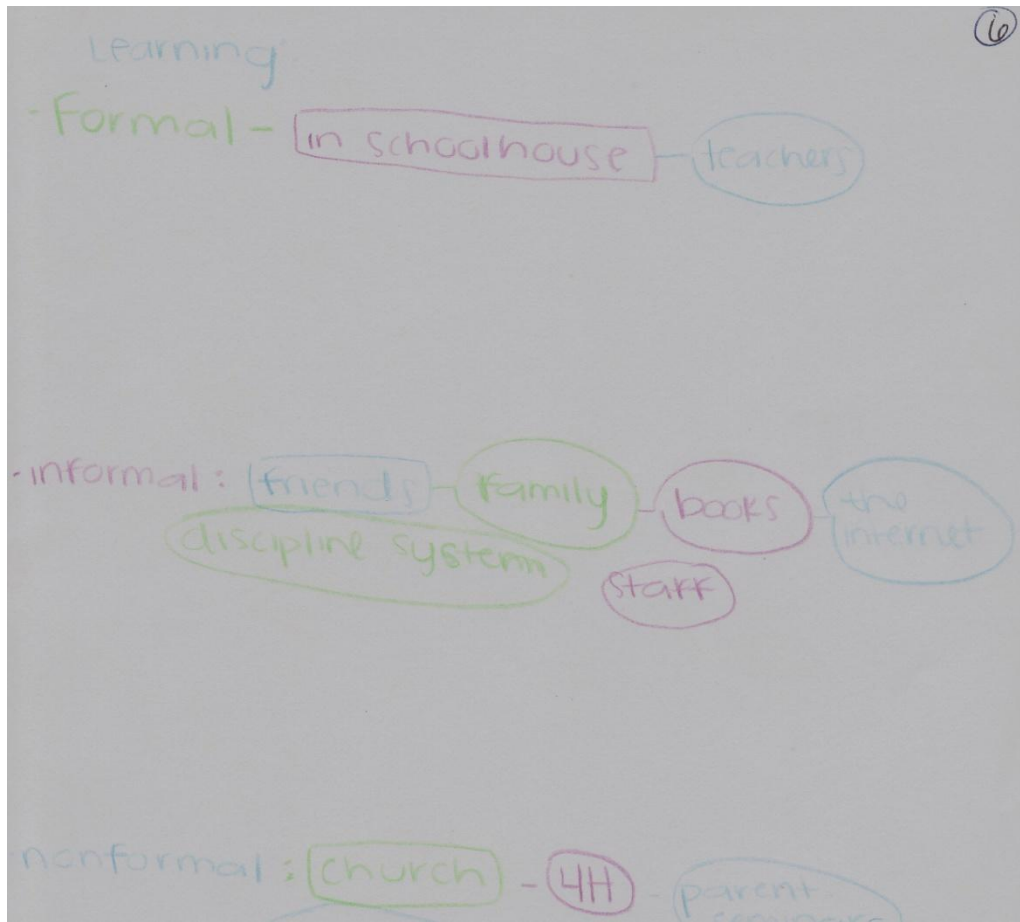


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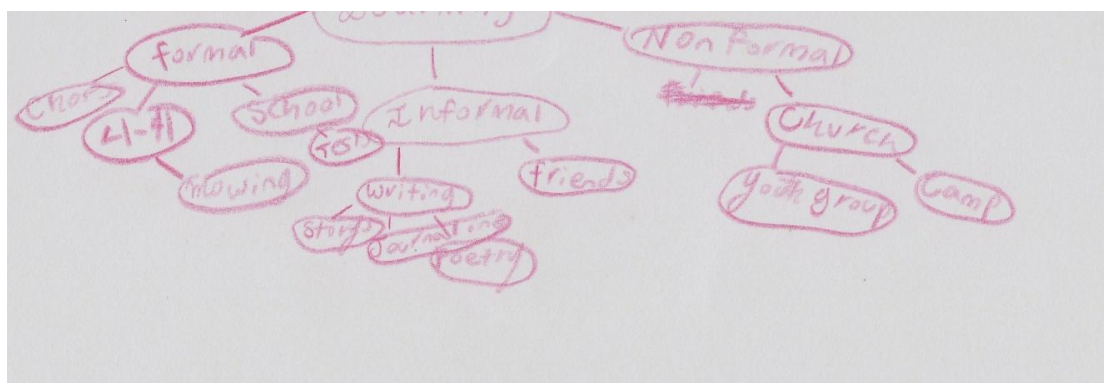
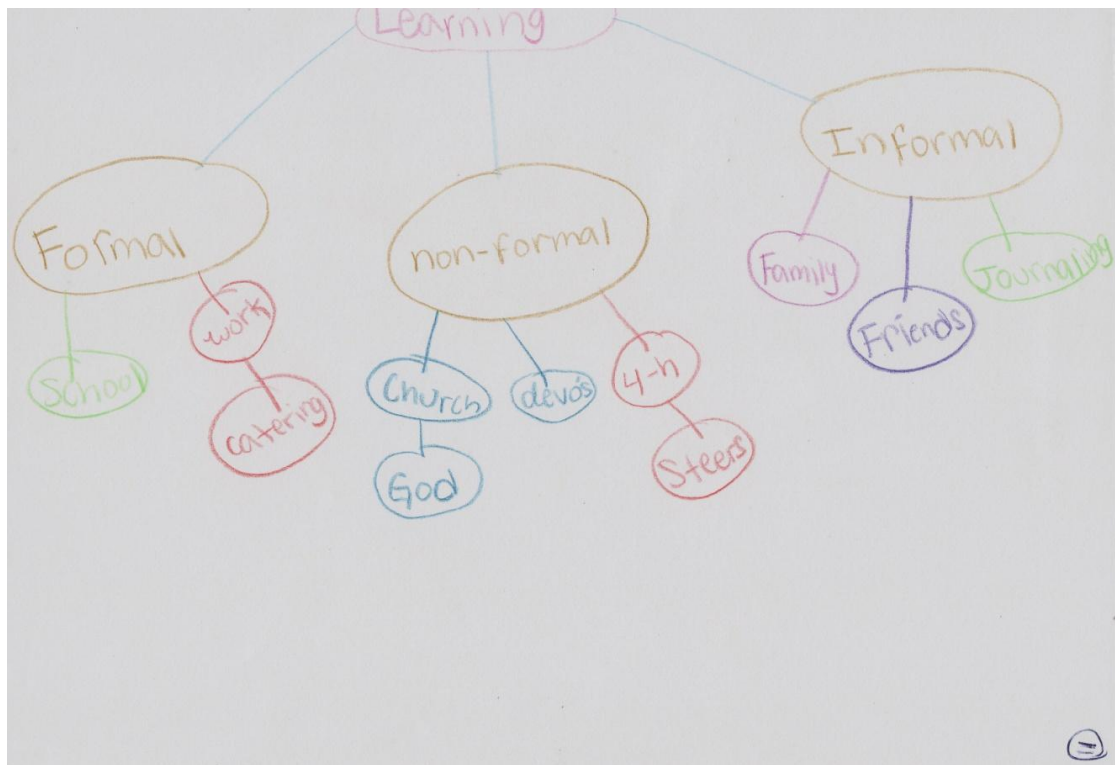




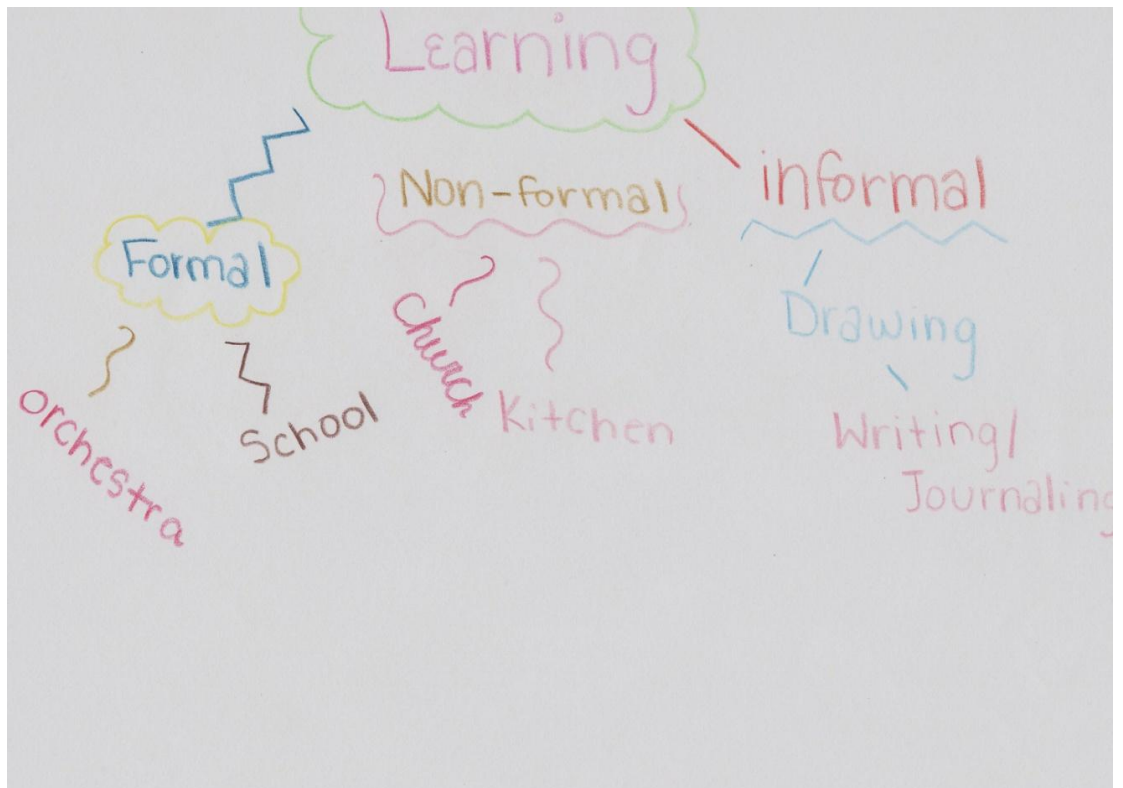
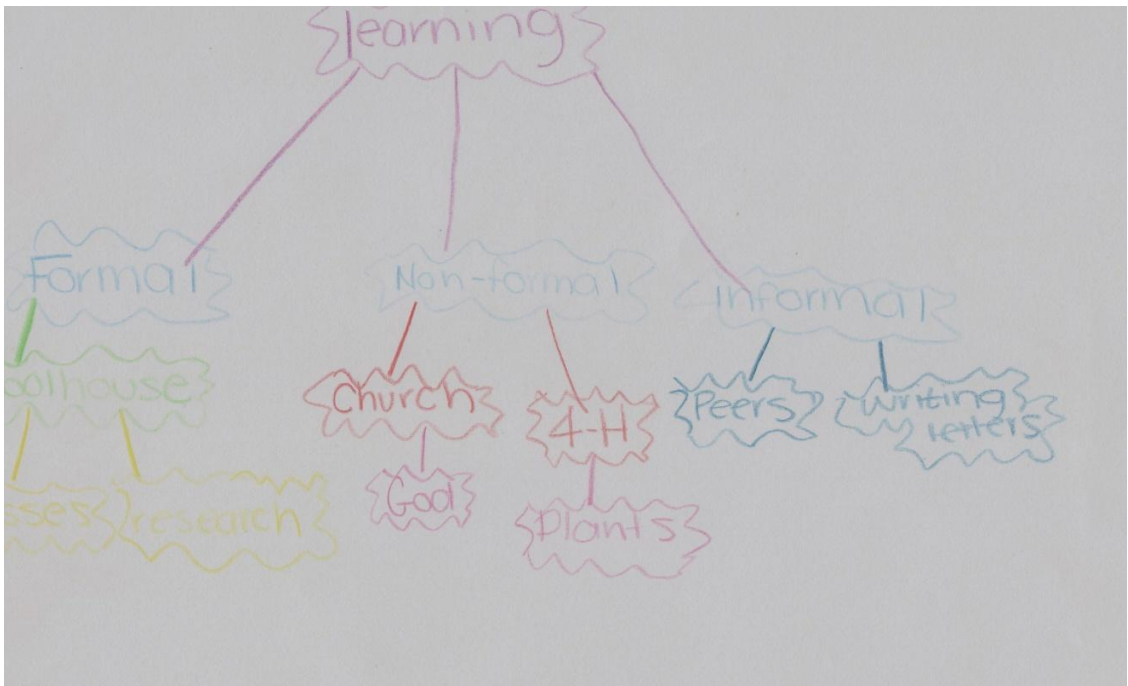
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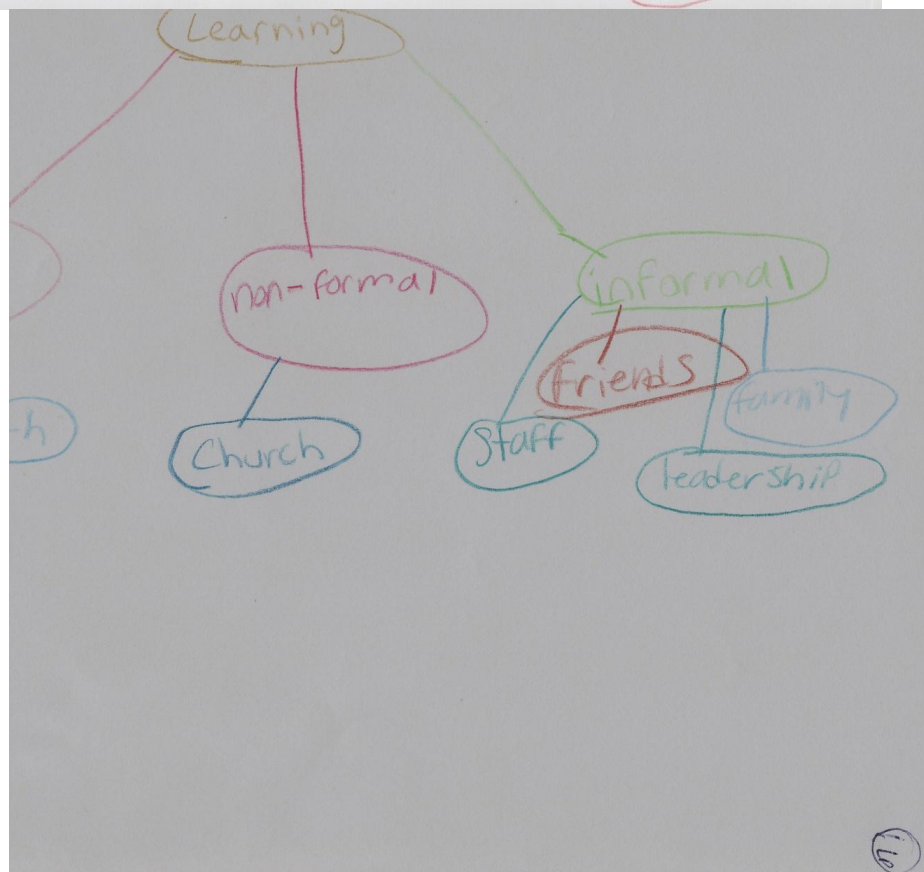
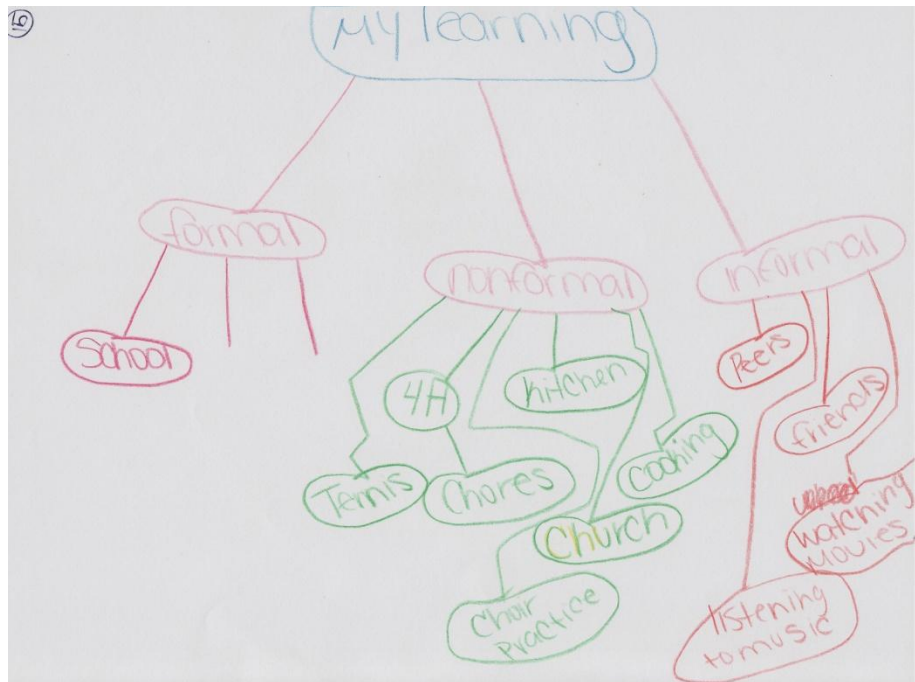
Appendix G (cont.)



Appendix G (cont.)



Appendix G (cont.)



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