

# research in brief

## **Adolescent Parent Education**

In a recent study, focusing on the interest level of adolescents in parent education, data from adolescents in Utah and Pennsylvania were compared. The results of the study support other studies that indicate that adolescent interest and concerns focus primarily on the here and the now, along with the rewards of the present.

Parent education and parenting itself weren't concerns of most of the youth studied. In most all cases, parenting, as an area of interest or concern, was ranked at or below the mean among 60 different topics. As an item of conversation, it was near the bottom among both sexes. As a book topic, parenting was ranked by both sexes around the mean.

Females, in general, displayed more interest in parenting as a course preference; however, it was the least desirable course topic among males.

This study indicates that adolescents, although they may acquire knowledge and skills from parent education classes, aren't very interested in the topic of parenting. They're interested in becoming adults and in resolving the developmental tasks set forth before them during the teenage years.

These tasks were summarized in the research as focusing on resolving the identity crisis, acquiring appropriate sexual behavior, committing oneself to an occupation, and acquiring a set of values. The youth in this study appeared more concerned with peer status, physical appearance, and the excitement of the present than in acquiring parenting information.

## *Implications for Extension*

People of all ages learn best the information for which they have an interest. Even though youth can be taught knowledge and skills that will apply to things they'll be doing as parents, the retention of that knowledge and the

future use of those skills may be minimal at best if youth haven't accomplished some of the maturational tasks that need to proceed the role of parenting.

Youth do have an interest in obtaining adult maturity in our society. Perhaps the programs Extension offers should address directly ways youth can obtain adult maturity or the adult pre-parent tasks rather than actual skills in parenthood. If youth had proficiency and information in becoming a mature adult, perhaps it would be easier to learn and implement parenting skills.

The research that has been done up to this point about young marriage and child bearing suggests that maturity is more important than parenting knowledge and skills. Once maturity has been obtained, then the skills can be taught and implemented.

"How Much Interest Do Adolescents Have in Parent Education? A Result of Two Surveys." Katrina H. Miller, Glen O. Jenson, and Vladimir de Lissovoy. *Family Perspective*, XV (Fall, 1981), 187-92.

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