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AN EVALUATION OF THE LEAP PROGRAM
IN
SUDBURY

by

Mary Ann Jenkins, B.A., B.S.W.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Canadian Studies

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

December 18, 2001

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**The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

“An Evaluation of the LEAP Program in Sudbury”

submitted by Mary Ann Jenkins, B.A., B.S.W.

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

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ABSTRACT

In March of 1999, the Ontario government announced a new policy aimed at teen mothers. The \$25 million Learning, Earning, and Parenting program (LEAP) requires 16- and 17-year-old welfare mothers to attend school and take parenting courses. The stated goal of the program is to break the cycle of welfare that traps many young women. In June 2000, the first 23 “graduates” completed the program in Sudbury. To conduct a preliminary evaluation of the program, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 participants of the LEAP program. The results showed how LEAP, a bureaucratic program, which the recipients might have experienced as something quite oppressive, became something more positive and enabling, due to the collaboration of the social workers, the teachers and the students themselves.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem:

Increasingly in Canada and the United States, single mothers have become scapegoats in the battle against the rising costs of social programs. Conservative elements in our nation have convinced the Canadian public that we are in an economic crisis (Mulally, 1997). A 1994 Gallup Poll indicated that 86% of Canadians favoured forcing welfare recipients to work for their benefits. To combat this crisis, there has been a shift to social policies which serve to restrict or eliminate access to welfare assistance. Social policy is being gradually restructured to conform to the corporate agenda of keeping individuals from being dependent on the state.

In March of 1999, the Ontario government announced a new program, as part of the larger Ontario Works program, aimed at teen mothers called LEAP, Learning, Earning, and Parenting. This program requires 16- and 17-year-old welfare parents to attend school and take parenting courses. The stated goal of the \$25 million program, which became fully operational on February 1, 2000, is to “break the cycle of welfare dependency” that traps many young parents.

There are serious concerns about both the intent and the delivery of this program that need to be addressed. As a recent publication of the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice stated:

LEAP creates the opening for teen mothers and their children to be kicked off welfare altogether. Like other workfare programs, the nub is mandatory compliance. With LEAP, the mother's compliance (and possible disqualification) is the final determinant for receiving help, rather than the family's level of need.However, new Harris - era eligibility requirements - having nothing to do with need - further reduce the welfare rolls. The result is that many needy people are disqualified from benefits. ...In the past single mothers and their children have been among those most attached to the system - because of need. The government coins this a "cycle of dependency". Changing the eligibility criteria from primarily that of a family's level of need to that of a mother's compliance - allows the government to kick women and children off support. (Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, Press release, Sept. 27, 1999)

My immediate response to the announcement was very negative. As a former single mother who had lived on social assistance while attending school, I could remember how difficult it was to manage all the conflicting demands which were placed upon me. I questioned whether the architects of the program had a true appreciation of the content of women's lives. Had anyone asked these young mothers what they needed? The intended targets of LEAP are very young mothers. Adjusting to caring for a new baby, dealing with welfare caseworkers and setting up their own household for the first time can be overwhelming if the mother does not have adequate social support. LEAP adds yet another demand - that of compulsory attendance at school.

As I searched for a topic for my thesis, conducting an evaluation of the LEAP program in Sudbury seemed like an ideal fit. I had lived on social assistance in Sudbury while completing my Bachelor of Social Work. As part of a field placement, I had worked in the Social Services Department of the Region of Sudbury. Sudbury is a community with a relatively small population. I was familiar with the housing projects in Sudbury through my role as a parental

support worker. Finally, I was acquainted with the Director of Ontario Works in Sudbury and I believed that I would receive his support with my study.

In discussing the possibility of conducting an evaluation of LEAP with staff from Ontario works in Sudbury, I learned that the first 23 “graduates” of the LEAP program completed high school in Sudbury and left the program in June 2000. Some of these young parents will begin college or university while others will begin working. Given the fact that LEAP is a new program, it would be very useful to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the program based on the experiences of the participants.

Research Question (Conceptual Framework)

Specifically, this research will attempt to answer the following question: “What is the effectiveness of LEAP based on the experience of the young parents who participate in the program?” As suggested by Yegidis et al. (1999, 17) “Qualitative research designs seek to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them”. As is the case with qualitative studies, I will not be proposing a hypothesis beforehand. Rather “it may evolve as data collection occurs” (Yegidis et al., 1999, 18). Moreover, my main goal was to explore questions rather than establish hypotheses and then test them.

Certain key concepts in this question need a clear definition: participants, experience, effectiveness and LEAP.

Participants:

While LEAP is available to young parents, both male and female, the reality is that the vast majority of clients are young mothers. Nevertheless, since the program includes both women and men, I included both in this study. This study focussed on:

- Males and females, aged 16 to 21,
- Recipients who have care and custody of at least one child,
- People who receive welfare through Ontario Works,
- Social assistance recipients who participate in Ontario's LEAP program, and
- LEAP participants who live in the City of Sudbury.

Experience:

While I felt that describing the experience of the participants is an important dimension in an evaluation of LEAP, I recognize that the concept is potentially problematic. On the one hand, Hartsock (Cited in Tanesini, 1999) claims that those who are oppressed by a social system have a better understanding of the real nature of the system in question. Scott (1992), on the other hand, argues against the philosophical conception according to which experience is the basis of human knowledge. Tanesini agrees with Scott that experience is "fallible and therefore contestable" (Tanesini, 1999, 148). She states that authority should be given to people in the marginal positions but that foundationalist accounts are not possible to achieve.

While I recognize that experience as a concept is “fallible”, I nevertheless felt that the experience as articulated by the research participants in response to the questions that I posed, should be acknowledged. The reason I chose to focus on the “experience” of the participants (as experienced by the participants) was that the Harris government seems interested only in overall numbers, i.e. how many parents participate in the program, how many graduate from the program, and how many leave the welfare rolls once they graduate. I felt that these questions dealt with only one dimension of the program leaving out what I see as an even more important dimension, that is what are the views of the participants in the program. In an attempt to broaden out the public picture on the LEAP program, I asked my research participants several questions. These included: Were the expectations of the school realistic? Were there times when you felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities and did this affect your relationship with your child? And finally, will graduating from the LEAP program help you achieve your future educational or job training goals? These questions in my view, will fill the gap in our knowledge of experience of clients on whether the program has helped them.

Effectiveness:

The final concept to be defined is effectiveness. This concept follows closely the concept of experience. Rather than look at the quantitative outcomes mentioned earlier which determine how many participants graduated from the program, I was more interested in the subjective qualitative views of the participants. I wanted to give the clients an opportunity to say if the program was effective by their criteria or standards as an alternative to the standards employed by

the Harris government. More specifically, I wanted to know if the program is helping or harming these parents and their children.

Women and Social Welfare: Historical Sketch

The LEAP program is deeply rooted in residual social welfare ideology (Wilensky & Lebeaux, 1958). In residual ideology social welfare is a minimal temporary form of aid provided by the State but only after the individual requiring help has exhausted all other avenues of assistance. This ideology dates back to 1601, when England, to regulate the care of the poor, collected a series of laws together what was called the Elizabethan Poor Law. “The core of the Poor Law was the assumption of public responsibility for the relief of the dependent poor, financed and administered by the smallest unit of government, the parish, but answerable to the central government in London”(Guest, 1985, 9). The Poor Law distinguished between the *deserving poor*, the sick, the elderly, children, widowed mothers, and the *undeserving poor*, the able-bodied poor. *Poor Houses* were set up for the deserving poor and *Workhouses* for the undeserving where they could be taught about the importance of work (de Schweinitz, 1943).

In Canada, the influence of the Poor Law can be seen in the Mothers’ Pension Debate. “A number of socio-economic forces combined during and immediately following World War I in Canada to produce a ‘mothers’ pension’ movement” (Guest, 1985, 49). By 1920, 39 American states and 3 Canadian provinces had adopted Mothers’ Pensions legislation. In 1920, the British Columbia government passed the Mothers’ Pension Act. The Mothers’ Pension Act in British

Columbia was unique, in that unlike most North American Mothers' Pension legislation, it was premised upon a rights-based discourse (Little, 1998). The benefit was called a Pension to move away from the stigma of charity. While the new legislation was applauded by reformers of the time, it was severely criticized by the business community. In 1931, the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, under the direction of Charlotte Whitton, a social worker with close ties to the federal Conservative Party, was called on by the B.C. government to conduct a review of the mothers' pension program. Whitton felt that the program was dangerous in that it encouraged dependence on the State and moved people away from individual and family responsibility (Guest, 1985).

The Ontario Mother's Allowance (OMA) was passed in 1920, bringing to five the number of provinces providing relief to "needy mothers". The Ontario legislation signalled a departure from past welfare policies. It acknowledged that the government was prepared to provide a monthly allowance for some mothers in need of financial assistance, freeing them from dependence on charitable organizations. A generation before, most single mothers were forced to place their children in orphanages. Rejecting the establishment of more orphanages, Ontario introduced the first direct welfare payment program. By calling it an allowance, legislators reminded mothers that receiving monies was a privilege not a right. In fact, the OMA was one of the most restrictive policies in North America (Little, 1998). The push for the program was headed by bourgeois women lobbyists who argued that some poor women should not work. "This (maternal) ideology, which extolled the virtues of domesticity, unified the campaign and provided new opportunities in the "public" sphere for middle-class women while simultaneously

limiting the opportunities for less fortunate mothers ”(Little, 1998, 1). Questions of morality dominated the debate, with concern over what types of single mothers were considered morally worthy of assistance. Soldiers’ widows were the most deserving with unwed mothers at the other extreme. Indeed, it was World War I and the “crisis” of war widows that initially led to the establishment of mother’s pensions.

As the responsibility for welfare was slowly transferred from the private to the public sector, a whole new structure was developed. It was during this period that the field of social work developed into a profession. “In the social welfare field the profession of social work, emerging out of the liberal individualism of private charitable agency values and practices was, generally speaking, an additional conservative force at this time” (Guest, 1985, 69). The new system would bear a striking resemblance to the philanthropic organizations it was replacing, relying heavily on the old notions of charity.

During the second half of the twentieth century, rapid changes took place in both the role of women and in social welfare provision. The participation of women in the workforce increased dramatically, with 63 per cent of women with children under three working outside of the home (Statistics Canada, 2000). More than 80% of single parent families are headed by women (Statistics Canada, 1996b). The reasons for single parenthood have also changed. Fifty years ago, 60 percent of single mothers were widows. By the 1990s, the majority of single mothers were separated or divorced and widows accounted for less than 20 percent (Lindsay, cited in Evans, 1998). Some single mothers may never have lived with the child’s father. This

group includes mothers who opted for single-parenthood by choice, some with the help of reproductive technologies.

During this same period, following World War II, Canada moved to a more institutional model of social welfare, where the state provides social welfare as a right (Wilensky & Lebeaux, 1958). The Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), enacted in 1966, stipulated that provinces receiving funding for social assistance ensure that the basis of eligibility be financial need. Workfare, that is the requirement to accept work as a condition of application was not allowable under the CAP, such programs could be funded through means other than welfare (Gray, 1996).

The residual ideology, however, gradually returned to importance over the last 20 years. Following the energy crisis of the early 1970s, which demonstrated the global nature of the economy, more and more of the institutional forms of social welfare were challenged by the corporate sector and politicians as too expensive and unnecessary (Mullaly, 1997). In the 1980's social programs were often criticized as encouraging dependence on the state and creating a disincentive to work (Kitchen, 1995). Finally, on April 1, 1996, CAP was replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) further eroding the chances of single mothers receiving adequate benefits. Under the CHST, a single-block grant covers provincial expenditures for social welfare, health care and post-secondary education. As the CHST gave the provinces greater freedom to restructure their social welfare programs, many provinces shifted to an approach which is based on employability, training and "workfare" requirements. The principle of needs-based assistance required under CAP has been abandoned. The change to the CHST

allows provincial governments to impose workfare and still retain federal funding. The prevailing ideology in Ontario is that individuals and families in need, including single mothers and their children, should be responsible for their own survival. This means that single mothers are now largely expected to combine leaving social assistance and becoming self-sufficient with the care of their children (Mason, 2001).

LEAP is part of the larger Ontario Works program. In June of 1995, Mike Harris and his Conservatives were elected with a majority, having campaigned on a platform of deficit reduction, articulated in their Common Sense Revolution document. A central theme of the Common Sense Revolution was welfare reform, which expected that all able-bodied recipients, except single parents with young children, would “work” in exchange for benefits. LEAP is the exception to this rule requiring all 16 and 17 year old mothers on assistance to attend school (Government of Ontario, 1999).

Workfare is a means of transforming a “passive” income support program into an “active” one (Shragge, 1997). Underlying this notion is the assumption that benefits are contingent on an exchange. Recipients are required to attend a variety of activities designed to increase their employability. The division of recipients into groups, those able to work and those unable to work, in fact echoes the days of the Elizabethan Poor Law. Generally, women with small children have been exempted from participation in the labour force because their role of mother and caregiver was considered primary. Now, most parents on social assistance are placed in the category of the undeserving poor.

The introduction of workfare on June 12, 1996, was part of an overall strategy on the part of the Harris government to reduce expenditures on social assistance. In November of 1995, the Harris government reduced social assistance by 21.6%. The government also cut the variable shelter allowance. To provide an idea of what this means financially, the following table provides the amounts available to a single parent with two children in Sudbury, Ontario before and after the cuts.

Table 1 Maximum Social Assistance per Month for a One parent and Two Children Household (under 13 years of age)*

	1993	1999
Basic Allowance	\$679.00	\$532.00
Shelter	\$497.00	\$554.00
Variable Shelter	\$210.00	No longer exists
Total	\$1,386.00	\$1,086.00

(*Source Belanger, Moxam & van de Sande, 1999)

Single Mothers and Stigma:

There is much more to workfare and LEAP, however, than simply a strategy to reduce expenditures. There is a definite stigma attached to being a poor single mother in our society. I was personally confronted by this stigma when, as a single mother trying to negotiate a change in my daughter's school program, I was told by the principal, "It's too bad that a young attractive

woman like yourself doesn't have someone to look after you." He meant, of course, a husband. As the title of Little's book suggests, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997*, women have had a rigid moral code prescribed to them. To be considered 'worthy', a single mother should not have access to a car, a radio, or liquor. Having these items suggests that a single mother is frivolously spending her money (Little, 1998).

The state has used the fact that a woman is on welfare as a license to monitor her behaviour. As the state does not wish to provide financial support to mothers when the fathers are able to, welfare workers regularly check the homes of single mothers on welfare for signs of a male presence. In an attempt to track down male breadwinners, social workers lead lengthy and intrusive investigations into the lives of single mothers (Little, 1998).

"One worker looked behind the shower of a friend of mine. He was looking at absolutely everything. They asked to use your washroom, they go through your shaving cream, razors, three toothbrushes. Those are the things they looked for. (A welfare recipient cited in Little, 1998, p. 174)

The justification for intrusive investigations into the lives of these women can have both moral and financial implications. Presumably, if there is a 'man' living in the house, a 'welfare mother' could find her welfare benefits cut. The monitoring of single mothers does not end with welfare workers. There is a society-wide effort to scrutinize the behaviour of welfare recipients. Teachers, landlords, and neighbours all help to ensure single mothers follow the rules. According to Margaret Little (1998), questions of morality continue to permeate the everyday lives of single mothers.

LEAP: The Program

The focus of public attention on pregnant teens and teen mothers has often centred on the “morality play” surrounding adolescent sexuality. Young single mothers are portrayed as careless or irresponsible having found themselves pregnant and dependent on social assistance. LEAP was developed to address the concern over the increase in the number of teen mothers. The Vanier Institute of the Family reports that, while teen pregnancies have declined, 49 per 1000 in 1994 versus 53.7 in 1974, the majority of these young women today choose to keep their babies as opposed to giving them up for adoption (Ottawa Citizen July 7, 2000).

According to documents released by the Government of Ontario, LEAP consists of three components: Learning, Earning, and Parenting (Government of Ontario, 1999). The Learning component promotes high school graduation by requiring attendance at an educational program leading to a diploma; it provides supports for participants with second language, literacy or numeracy problems or other disabilities; and it identifies and addresses barriers to school attendance and academic success.

The Earning component includes identifying opportunities to develop employment skills and job readiness; promotes participation in school co-op programs, youth apprenticeship, job shadowing, part-time and summer employment; and plans for transition to employment or further education after graduation (Government of Ontario, 1999).

The Parenting and Child Development component promotes children's growth and development by supporting parents to become more effective caregivers and educators; focuses on the parenting needs and circumstances of the participant, and provides parenting courses. Each teen must attend a minimum 35 hours of parenting courses (Government of Ontario, 1999).

With respect to eligibility, normally, 16- and 17- year olds with and without children are not eligible for welfare. Here teens are considered children and are expected to be living with and supported by their parents or guardians. Under special circumstances, however, 16- and 17- year old parents may qualify for welfare. LEAP participation is mandatory for 16- and 17- year old parents on welfare who have not yet completed high school. Single parents and couples between the ages of 18 and 21 who have not completed high school may participate on a voluntary basis (Government of Ontario, 1999).

LEAP participants are to have full access to a range of supports available under Ontario Works so they can successfully participate in school and parenting and earning activities. These supports may include transportation costs, funding for school supplies, school clothing, educational trips, and counseling. Child care subsidies are to be available to all participants. Communities are expected to build upon existing resources and develop links with other programs and services (Government of Ontario, 1999). All programs were operational by February 1, 2000 to correspond with the start of the second school semester.

LEAP is being delivered through Ontario Works, the government's work-for-welfare program. LEAP provides \$25 million annually in child care subsidies and other services to help teen parents improve their parenting skills and stay in school. Parents not willing to participate in the program are not eligible to receive benefits under Ontario Works (Government of Ontario, 1999).

LEAP: In Sudbury

Children First-Opportunities for Parents, as the LEAP program is called in Sudbury, provides support and assistance to young parents in receipt of Ontario Works, wishing to complete their secondary school education. The program is cost shared 80/20 between the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Region of Sudbury. The Region's portion of the monies, \$120,000, is to be paid out of the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Fund (Region of Sudbury, 1999).

The program has two potential target groups, in keeping with the Ontario Works legislation and the LEAP directives from MCSS .

Participation is mandatory for Ontario Works recipients who:

- **are 16 or 17 years of age**
- **are parents**
- **haven't completed their secondary school education**

(Region of Sudbury, 1999).

A group of voluntary participants will also be solicited, including Ontario Works recipients who:

- are between the ages of 18 and 21
- are parents
- haven't completed their secondary school education.

(Region of Sudbury, 1999).

Organizational Structure:

The LEAP program is made up of two parallel systems: the Regional Municipality of Sudbury and the Boards of Education. The Region, which has overall administrative responsibility for the LEAP program, is headed by the General Manager of Health and Social Services. Figure 1 illustrates the chain of command in the Sudbury office.

Figure 1 : Organigram of Sudbury Health and Social Services

Individual Service Plans (ISP) are developed with each participant to outline their roles and responsibilities. The ISP identifies any needs and the supports required to meet these needs. Case management of Children First - Opportunities for Parents clients are handled exclusively by a client-sensitive team of case workers, due to the increased workload created by the ISPs and the on-going support needed by the client. Caseworkers are responsible for tracking attendance and performance in school, the ongoing special needs of the client (such as child care, transportation issues, school supplies, clothing allowance, etc.) as well as ensuring all eligibility requirements for Ontario Works are met (Region of Sudbury, 1999).

A Community Partners Working Group (CPWG) has been established for the Children First- Opportunities for Parents program. The group consists of representatives from the following : the four Boards of Education in the Regional Municipality of Sudbury; the Sudbury District Health Unit; Child Care Resources; Our Children, Our Future; YMCA- Employment and Career Services; YMCA of Sudbury; Child and Family Centre; Employment Support Services Section (Health and Social Services); Children Services Section (Health and Social Services); Ministry of Community and Social Services; and Social Services Section (Health and Social Services) (Region of Sudbury, 1999).

The four local School Boards operate the educational component of LEAP. Within the site schools, social workers employed by the school boards, provide casework support to LEAP clients. Four initial sites were chosen for the program: École Secondaire Macdonald-Cartier, St. Albert's Adult Learning Centre, École Secondaire Hanmer and Sudbury Secondary School.

Phase I started with St. Albert Learning Centre in February 2000, and the enhancement of existing programs at École Secondaire Macdonald-Cartier and École Secondaire Hanmer.

Phase II began in September 2000, with a program at Sudbury Secondary School. The goal is to co-locate services in each of the site schools.

As much as possible, the participants are integrated into the regular stream. They study three of a possible four disciplines, allowing them one free period and lunch to be with their child. For those requiring additional educational assistance, a resource period is available to them. Should students find it too difficult to cope in a regular classroom setting, the school will provide them with one or more Personal Learning Activities Toward Opportunity (PLATO) periods. In PLATO students will work independently on computer-based courses under the guidance of qualified staff. Independent study (in course books) in a resource classroom can be arranged if necessary. The program provides on-site child care. Our Children, Our Future will provide supports and services such as the Collective Kitchen Program, pre and post-natal nutrition support workshops, resources and equipment to assist parents in caring for their children and themselves (Region of Sudbury, 1999).

Figure 2: Site School Services

Clients of the LEAP program access the system through a variety of means. I will describe two typical examples of how clients gain access to LEAP. The first example involves a sixteen year old pregnant student who is approached by a social worker within the school who informs the student about the program and the services available. The student is directed at that time to apply for social assistance benefits. In the second example, a young mother walks in to the Social Services Department of the Region requesting financial assistance. Her application is processed and she is directed to one of the site schools.

Sudbury: Background

Sudbury, with a regional population of 158,935, is located in north-eastern Ontario, approximately 400 km north of Toronto. It has been characterized as a one industry town based

on mining. In recent years, the economy has diversified to include government services, education, health care, and tourism. With respect to language, Sudbury is 78% Anglophone and 18% Francophone with 3% listing other as their primary language(Statistics Canada, 1996a). Immigrants comprise eight per cent of the population and 3% are First Nations people (Statistics Canada, 1996a). The pregnancy rate for teens in Sudbury is on par with the provincial average of 47.1 per 1000 women (15-19 yrs). Notable is the rate of live births, 26.9% for Sudbury compared with 22.1% for the rest of the province (Kauppi & Picard, 1999). This statistic indicates a lower rate of abortion in the Sudbury region. On average from 1992 to 1995, there were 170 teen births per year in the Sudbury region (Kauppi & Picard, 1999). As of September 22,1999, approximately 30 parents, ages 16 and 17 years, and 180 parents aged 18 to 21 years were recipients of Ontario Works in the Region (Region of Sudbury, 1999).

All of the individuals I interviewed attended schools within Sudbury proper. Nine of the participants lived in the Flour Mill/Donovan areas. Between 1910 and 1920, Sudbury's population doubled with Francophones of all social classes moving to the Flour Mill area and immigrant groups of all backgrounds expanding into the Donovan. The Donovan area is home to a number of ethnic communities, whose members arrived primarily after the First and the Second World Wars to work in the mines. The area continues to be home to the Ukrainian National Federation, the Croatian Centre and the Serbian Centre. It is also home to the United Steelworkers of America Hall. It is a working class community with a long history of union affiliation. The typical Sudbury house was a small wood frame structure. During the 1970's, despite efforts at urban renewal, many of these ethnic concentrations dispersed as new

generations moved to other districts and were assimilated. This is evident in the general deterioration of some of the ethnic halls. Many of the homes I visited in this neighbourhood were in a state of disrepair. The early seventies saw the development of over 3600 subsidized housing units as part of the urban renewal plan. It took government intervention to improve the sub-standard housing conditions of the 1970's (Wallace & Thomson, 1993).

Since the 1970's, the Donovan area has seen considerable deterioration. According to Karen Penman-Stos¹, a longtime Sudbury resident, the Donovan, in the 1950's and 1960's was a vibrant ethnically diverse working-class community inhabited by the hourly-wage workers at INCO. These families took pride in their homes and gardens. Karen then went on to say that she had witnessed changes since the 70's: residents are more transient, more people rent, and the community has become run down and neglected.

In contrast to the Donovan, The Flour Mill area was always a poor neighborhood. Karen Penman-Stos remembered seeing extreme poverty even in the 50's and 60's. She mentioned seeing children coming to school without shoes on their feet. The Flour Mill area today continues to be one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Sudbury.

¹Karen Penman-Stos was born and raised in Sudbury and attended school in the Donovan and Flour Mill areas during the 1950's and 1960's.

Theoretical Framework:

In going back once again to my research question: “What is the effectiveness of LEAP based on the experience of the young parents who participate in the program?”, I approached this question from a specific theoretical framework. My theoretical framework consists of three major strands including 1) **Socialist Feminism**, 2) **Women’s Caring Labour**, and 3) **Women, Mothering and Social Welfare Regimes**. My personal experience as a woman in contemporary society, my experience as a former teenage single parent who has been on welfare, and my academic training in women’s studies and social work, all have contributed to my views about women, about women’s caring, about mothering and what supports are needed by teenage mothers and have lead me to adopt this theoretical framework.

Socialist Feminism

As a starting point, I look at the role of women and men in society. For several years now, I have relied on a socialist feminist theoretical framework to help explain women’s and men’s roles. Socialist feminist theory suggests that women’s oppression is jointly caused by our relationship to production and reproduction (Mitchell, 1971; Hartmann, 1981). Hartmann states that the family wage was seen as a resolution to the conflict between patriarchy and capitalism. Lower wages for women assure women’s economic dependence on men and reinforce separate spheres for men and women. Women’s responsibilities in the home serve to reinforce their inferiority in the labour market. Therefore, the family, supported by the family wage, allows the

control of women's labour by men both within and without the family. For single mothers this presents an impossible situation, as they are not supported by a male breadwinner. The state grudgingly takes the place of the breadwinner by providing social assistance. As we will see later in this paper, this assistance is minimal and not without conditions.

I stated earlier that I rely on socialist feminism as a departure point but I realize that it is not without its shortcomings. Socialist feminism, as it was originally conceived, has been criticized for failing to take into account some important factors. Sexuality, race, ethnicity, and disability must be incorporated into the discussion of how class and gender intersect in the lives of women. Margaret Little suggests that "attention to the struggles of class, gender or race might help to explain some of the contradictions in welfare policies.... because structural arguments focus on the rationale of a welfare policy for a particular group in power, they are not able to adequately explain these contradictions" (Little, 1998, xxi). Additionally, it was necessary for me to include more recent theorists who have specifically dealt with women's caring labour (Duncan & Edwards, 1996; Evans, 1998; Graham, 1983; Luxton, Rosenberg, & Arat-Koc, 1990; Ribbens, 1994).

Women's Caring Labour

The work that most women perform everyday remains largely untheorized in feminist literature. It is necessary for women's work to be incorporated into theory in order to understand how the work is organized or gets done (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1990). This work includes

management of the finances and the household, personal services to other family members, and bearing and caring for children.

Women's caring has long been ignored for several reasons, two of which are worth mentioning here. First, because it is performed mainly in the private domestic sphere and second, women's caring is not recognized as an occupation (Graham, 1983). Traditionally, women's work has been approached from a liberal feminist perspective with its focus on women's status in the paid labour market (Doucet, 1995). Strategies for change centred on issues of equal pay for work of equal value, pay equity and a national child care agenda. Andrea Doucet argues that studies that do explore domestic life and labour exhibit "a tendency to simplify child care tasks, to lapse child care and housework into the same category, and that there is little recognition of the various stages and changing needs and demands of children over time" (Doucet, 1998, 53). Doucet also maintains that care, especially child care, is undervalued in many feminist studies of women's lives. Drawing on work that aims to understand women's caring as work and the importance of balancing an "ethic of care" and an "ethic of justice" Doucet proposes that, "if we listen within a framework, where close relationships and human interdependence are interpreted as central for social and emotional well-being, then we may come to an alternate view of responsibility which, when combined with a conception that recognizes obligations and potential burdens, may provide a *full* understanding of domestic responsibility and domestic processes" (Doucet, 1998, 55).

One further way of understanding women's caring can be developed by examining the 'family ethic' versus the 'work ethic'. First introduced by Abramovitz (1988), 'family ethic' refers to the traditional, patriarchal view that assumes a heterosexual family and relegates women's primary responsibility is to stay at home and care for family members. The 'work ethic' refers to the capitalistic economic view that privileges the work done in public for economic gain and relegates women to invisible work done at home. "Self-sufficiency is rewarded and 'dependency' is penalized, and both are defined only with reference to economic criteria" (Evans, 1998, 48). Explicitly or implicitly, much of traditional theory has assumed that women's primary attachment is to the home and that the attachment is biologically determined (Sydie, 1987).

This brings me to the next and possibly the most troubling area for a feminist such as myself, the concept of mothering. "Critical questions have been raised whether children need to be cared for by their biological mothers and whether or not children's interests and mother's interests coincide" (Ribbens, 1994, 27). Judith Stacey (1986, 237) suggests that the complexities of feminist attitudes to motherhood and family cannot simply be described as oppositional, but as being in tension: contemporary feminist visions are actually characterized by unresolved tension between advocating androgyny and celebrating traditionally female and especially maternal values. "Many feminist writers have been aware of the significance of motherhood for women's lives but have not paid attention to the content of everyday mothering activities" (Ribbens, 1994, 27). Parenting involves a multitude of activities and responsibilities that together make up the content of the provision of care. Some examples of this content include feeding, clothing,

worrying about appointments, arranging for childcare when needed, dealing with outside professionals, staying up at night with a colicky child, making sure that the child's environment is safe, the constant supervision to make sure the child is not in danger of getting hurt, comforting and reassuring a child that does get hurt, and making sure that the child receives adequate stimulation. The content is the thousand and one duties that are part of caring for children.

I believe that society has failed to recognize the value of the care of children and dependent others. Social policies polarize the debate around issues of independence and dependence, concluding that women including single mothers should not be dependent on the state and, if they are, they should be moved to a state of independence as quickly as possible. My preference is to focus on the interdependence of us all. As the life cycle approach (Novick, 1999) suggests, we all slip in and out of periods of dependence and independence during our lives.

The life cycle approach and the idea of supporting a family's right to make decisions is nothing new. In 1988, an extensive review of social assistance in Ontario was conducted by the Social Assistance Review Committee. The SARC Report, as it was called, proposed that:

As family forms change, as we redefine the roles of family members, and as societal change places new stresses upon the family and those within it, many families need support at various stages in their life cycle..... Social Assistance policy must respect and support the family's ability and right to make decisions. Inadequate benefits dissuade the parent who prefers to remain at home with his or her children. Conversely, serious financial disincentives and the denial of basic supports such as child care keep many parents at home when they would prefer to work outside the home (Social Assistance Review Committee, 1988, 9)

Women, Mothering and Social Welfare Regimes

A growing body of literature has recognized that the processes of social policy restructuring have had particular effects on women and that society has lost its appreciation of the importance of women's work. Janine Brodie (1996), for example indicates in her book, *Women and Canadian Public Policy*, that the growing body of gender sensitive research demonstrates that the gendered impacts of this restructuring are pronounced and multiple. As well, these impacts are disproportionately distributed among women, in particular, young women, old women, immigrant women, women of colour and working class women (Leger & Rebick, 1995). A new "gender-neutral worker-citizen" is emerging in social policies. This is a departure from the past when the "sanctity of motherhood" shielded women from the workforce (Scott, 1996). This development supports the thesis that motherhood is increasingly devalued in our capitalistic society (Silva, 1996). Public funding for social services to alleviate work done by mothers in households is identified as a "frill" - an unnecessary expenditure which is unwarranted, especially in times of economic decline (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1987). Patricia Evans (1998) states that single mothers have been targeted as a social problem.

The importance of reducing dependence on the state is evident if we look at the evolution of social policy and single mothers. Evans (1996) identifies three broad policy orientations regarding the history of single mothers in Ontario. Between 1920 and 1950, single mothers were viewed as mothers first. Women were discouraged from working outside of the home. Beginning in the 1960's up to the mid-1980's policies targeted women as both mothers and

workers. Programs were established to increase women's participation in the labour force. The third period, beginning in 1988, has been characterized as one where women's right to assistance has been eroded and focus has turned to their ability to work. Single mothers on social assistance have been at the receiving end of policies reducing their benefits and increasing their work requirements. It used to be that women could stay home with their children until the youngest child reached eighteen years of age. Today, in some provinces the exemption period is six months. This change is integrally related to the advent of the Divorce Act, and the rapid growth in the numbers of single parents.

There are different types of welfare regimes stressing either the labour market disciplining of welfare recipients or their empowering through meaningful training and job placements. The principles underpinning social policy for the unemployed are undergoing fundamental redefinition. There are three new principles which underlie recent welfare reforms. First, there has been a redefinition of citizen's rights and responsibilities in terms of programs for the unemployed. Secondly, individuals are being targeted. Unemployment is seen as an indication of personal deficiency and all efforts are made through a variety of employment and workfare programs to ensure the individual shapes up. The third principle involves the supervision and normalization of recipient's behaviour in the goal of economic and social integration (Graefe & Laforest, 2000).

Jane Jenson also looks at the changes to the post-war welfare state . In an unpublished article, *Canada's shifting citizenship regime: The child as "model citizen"*, Jenson (2000)

explains that there have been important changes to our citizenship regime, which she defines as “the institutional arrangements, rules and understandings that guide current policy decisions and expenditures of states, problem definitions by state and citizens, and claims-making by citizens”

(1). Central to any citizenship regime is the notion of the “model citizen”. The “model citizen” is the basic unit or the ideal-typical figure upon which statuses are conferred. Access to social citizenship rights are dependent on one’s relationship to this figure. Traditionally, the “model citizen” has been the adult worker. Access to social citizenship rights depended on your being a worker or on your relationship to a worker. Of late, the preferred “model citizen” has become the child, signaling a new way of thinking about the needs of children and families.

Evidence of this change can be seen in the new visions of governing and the role of the state and of the division of responsibilities among the state, markets and families. There is a privileging of market relations and a reduction in the role of the state resulting in an increase in individual responsibility. No longer is there any choice about whether or not to participate in the workforce. All adults are deemed employable and low-income parents are compelled to seek a job, schooling or training. Adults are responsible for their own well-being, income and life outcomes. The role the state plays is in making sure that children do not pay for the mistakes or shortcomings of their parents.

As the emphasis in social spending has shifted from service provision to investments, the child has become the preferred target of social programs. This change in policy orientation has resulted in the needs of adults being pushed to the background. For women in particular this

means little attention to the issue of balancing paid work and family responsibilities. Nor is there any support for full-time parenting. Many adults now gain access to the social rights of citizenship because they have dependent children, rather than their direct relationship to the labour market.

One of the results of this change has been the introduction of workfare. However, even workfare programs are not uniform in their aims, values or in their implementation. The type of welfare regime plays a key role, giving meaning or context to workfare programs.

Gosta Esping-Andersen (1989) defines three regime clusters. The first cluster is called the “liberal welfare state” which includes means-tested assistance, modest transfers or modest social insurance plans. These programs cater mostly to low income, working-class or state dependents. In this cluster the traditional liberal work-ethic norms dominate, benefits are kept to a minimum and have a stigma attached to them. The second cluster, called “corporatist welfare state”, is composed of nations such as Germany, Italy, France and Austria. In these countries, the liberal obsession with market efficiency was never pre-eminent and the granting of social rights was hardly ever seriously contested. At the same time, status differential predominated and rights are attached to status and class. As a result, the state’s emphasis on upholding status differences means that its redistributive effects are negligible. The third cluster is called the “social-democratic regime” and includes those countries in which the principle of universalism and decommodification predominate. Countries such as Sweden and Norway pursue an equality of highest standard and provide services that are commensurable with the standards of the new middle-class (Esping-Andersen, 1989). The current Ontario welfare regime fits best into what Esping-Andersen calls the “liberal welfare state”.

There are two dominant discourses in the North American workfare debate as defined by Sherri Torjman (1996), “work-for-welfare” and the “human resources” strategies. “The work-for-welfare strategy means that people who receive financial aid through welfare are required to perform compulsory labour or services as a condition of their assistance...[It] refers to mandatory participation in a designated program” (Torjman, 1996). LEAP is termed a “learnfare” program and falls under the broader category of workfare. The “human resources” strategy seeks to move recipients off welfare by investing in skills development, job creation and social support. It stresses voluntary measures and the provision of a range of options (training, employment creation, job search) and supports to participation, such as child care and transportation subsidies (Graefe & Laforest, 2000).

The socio-political debate about lone motherhood is also becoming increasingly polarized between two major discourses. In one, lone mothers are seen as a moral and financial threat to society. They are members of an underclass that willingly removed itself from legitimate economic practices, turning instead to state benefits, the unofficial economy, and even crime. In the other discourse, lone mothers are viewed as a social problem. They want to behave in an economically rational way, take up paid work, and better provide for themselves and their children. The structure and the nature of the welfare state, however, prevents them from doing so (Duncan & Edwards, 1996).

The first discourse about lone mothers seeks to remove the social threat by penalizing lone mothers, forcing them to act in a legitimate economically rational way. Supporters of this

discourse argue that reducing benefits will force them into paid work or dissuade them from having children “out of wedlock” whom they cannot support. On the other hand, the second discourse proposes welfare reforms to alleviate the perceived constraints on economically rational behaviour. Therefore, changes to the benefit system should ensure that lone mothers are better off in paid work than they are living on benefits, and should increase the provision of publically funded child care to remove a fundamental block to mothers’ full-time employment (Duncan & Edwards, 1996).

Despite the oppositions between these dominant social threat and social problem discourses, both are based essentially on the same, rather simple, stimulus-response model of social action. In both discourses, taking up paid work is seen as the rational goal for lone mothers. Duncan and Edwards (1996) maintain that the debate has failed to consider how the different social contexts of neighbourhoods, local labour markets, and welfare state policies positioning lone mothers as workers and/or mothers, affect the level of participation of paid work.

The local setting can be an integral part of mothers’ lives - a socially structured factor in the background of opportunities and limitations that are built into lone mothers’ daily routines (Cochrane et al., 1993). Social ties and relationships can give mothers access to resources on two levels: one, materially, in terms of informal child care support and two, as systems of beliefs or moralities and shared social identities. Different communities have different views of the role of men/fathers and women/mothers. Even if lone mothers want paid work and are supported in this

materially and normatively, jobs have to be available to put these ideas into practice. Mothers' wages are often insufficient to provide adequately for a household, especially when they have to pay for child care. Local employers may or may not hire lone mothers based on their views on whether lone mothers should be working. Duncan (1995) calls this the "gender contract", a set of social expectations, discourses, and possibilities which affect whether women are seen locally as paid workers and/or mothers and homemakers. The way a society treats its lone mothers is an indication of gendered social rights. Hobson (1994, 175) points out that lone mothers are the "residuum" in this gendering of policy so that they can be taken as a "litmus test, or indicator, of gendered social rights in welfare regimes."

My theoretical framework is still rooted in socialist feminist perspectives which advocate the inseparability of productive and unproductive labour, as well as the literature on care which attends to defining and understanding the direct contexts of what the work involves as well as attending to what is needed to assist these young parents in balancing their investments in paid work and their caring responsibilities. I then looked at the impact of the restructuring of the welfare state on women. A growing body of gender sensitive research demonstrates that the gendered impacts of the restructuring are pronounced and multiple. Lone mothers have been targeted as a social problem. Duncan and Edwards (1996), in highlighting the socio-political debate on lone-motherhood, maintain that the debate has failed to consider how the different social contexts of neighbourhoods, local labour markets, and welfare state policies positioning lone mothers as workers and/or mothers, affect the level of participation of paid work.

Theoretical Framework and LEAP:

So how did my theoretical framework influence the way in which I approached the study?

The three strands of my theoretical framework, Socialist Feminism, Caring Labour, and Women, Mothering and Social Welfare Regimes, led me to expand my original research question into three broad questions: 1) Does LEAP help young women effectively balance their roles and identities as workers and carers? 2) Does the LEAP program recognize the particular and unique contexts within which the participants are caring, taking into consideration the support they are receiving from kin, extended networks, community resources, and local child care? 3) What is the perspective of the participants on the effectiveness of the LEAP program?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To prepare for my research on the evaluation of the LEAP program based on the experience of the participants in the study, a review of the literature was conducted to identify the areas that should be part of the study. Here again, since the vast majority of LEAP participants are women, this literature review will focus primarily on women. The literature review is divided into two major sections. This first section explores the results of a number of studies done on LEAP and programs directed at young single parents. I begin with two studies conducted on the LEAP mothers, one conducted by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and one by the Region of Sudbury. I will also examine a report on the Wisconsin Program which is similar in many respects to LEAP. There were two more studies conducted in Sudbury: one study on pregnant teens and another on “Cybermoms”, a training program for young single mothers. The second section of the review explores the themes identified in my study including poverty, family support, child care, program participation and parenting classes. The studies and the literature related to the themes together provide an overview of what is known about teen parents living on social assistance and what questions remain to be answered.

Sudbury Research

Children First- Opportunities for Parents is a Regional Municipality of Sudbury initiative which concentrates services and resources on young parents to assist them in overcoming barriers

and finding solutions to completing secondary school. The Region's service delivery model incorporates a "one stop shop" approach to co-locate services and resources to provide for ease of access to programming for participants (Region of Sudbury, 2000). In 2000, a survey was administered to 67 respondents. One question on the survey asked about child care provision. Of the four categories of answers available, 45% selected "other", 30% indicated "family", 18% chose day care, and 7% listed their school as the day care provider. It is interesting that, while only 21% listed child care as being a big problem, the largest group (45%) marked "other" as their child care provider, indicating that the largest group relies on unlicensed day care or friends to care for their children. As child care is a vital component in the supports required by participants to attend school, I decided to include child care as a major theme in my study.

The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton(RMOC) Research

The Social Services Department of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton developed their Learning, Earning and Parenting: Implementation Plan (Region of Ottawa-Carleton, 1999) based on provincial guidelines. The new program will form one component of increased support for youth on Ontario Works assistance. The Enhanced Youth Assistance Program (EYAP) will provide case management, including service plans, participation agreements, maintaining eligibility, case monitoring, referrals and purchasing of supports for all 16 and 17 year olds and young parents aged 18-21 on Ontario Works. EYAP delivers the Ontario Works program to youth age 16-17, including the newly developed trusteeship component. As of 1999, financial assistance is only paid to an agency or trustee on behalf of youth age 16-17.

For the study in Ottawa-Carleton, focus groups were held with 26 youth aged 16-21 years in three locations, the Youville Centre, the Youth Services Bureau, and the Centre Psycho-Social. The majority of the participants (88%) were female and 84% were custodial parents. Key messages emerging from the focus groups specified that waiting lists for licensed child care are of up to one year; that regular high schools are not flexible enough to meet the needs of parents; that parents preferred to have children cared for in same building which was particularly important as most mothers opted to breastfeed; that there is a lack of information about programs and services and workers need to be better informed; that transportation is difficult with young children- trying to get to the welfare office, school, the childcare centre, food banks, grocery stores, etc; that there need to be more on site visits; and that more private space is needed for contact with the case worker at school. The results of this study show that, besides child care, a number of other supports are required to ensure the successful participation of parents in the program. These areas are covered under the general theme of Program Participation in my research.

Report on the Wisconsin Program

Ontario's LEAP program was based largely on a model developed by the State of Wisconsin several years earlier. In a report entitled *State of Milwaukee's Children: Report 1999*, the results of the program are examined and a number of findings have relevance to the present study on LEAP. With respect to child care, the report states that fewer than 15% of eligible children are receiving child care support. While the number of poor working families has

increased, between 1993 and 1998, the number of children receiving food stamps dropped by 30,000. Lastly, in spite of the fact that 10,800 more children are covered by medical assistance through Head Start, the number of other children covered by medical assistance dropped by 24,800, for a net loss of 14,000 children. Therefore, while the State is claiming success for reducing the number of children receiving public support by 65,000 in Milwaukee County, the report emphasizes that there is little information on those families leaving public assistance (Quinn, 1999). The little information that does exist indicates that more than three quarters of the families who left AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) continue to live in poverty. Based on tax return information, only 22% had incomes above the poverty line and 34% reported no income at all (Quinn, 1999). In another follow up study of 134 families who left AFDC, most families reported that they had borrowed money, received money from family members, babysat, worked for cash, pawned or sold valuables (Quinn, 1999). These findings raise serious questions about whether programs like LEAP improve the lives of the participants. Under the theme of Future Plans in my own study, I look at how the program has helped (or hindered) participants in achieving their goals.

Pregnant Teens in Sudbury

As stated earlier, LEAP specifically targets teen mothers. There is a perception among the general public that teen pregnancy is on the increase. In reality teen pregnancies have declined recently (Ottawa Citizen, July 7, 2000), and, while the number of teen pregnancies in Sudbury is similar to the provincial average, there is a higher rate of teen births (Kaupi & Picard, 1999).

This fact means that there are fewer abortions and more mothers in Sudbury who continue full term with their pregnancies. In a study conducted by Laurentian University and the Research, Education and Development Division of the Sudbury & District Health Unit in the Sudbury Manitoulin, and Algoma Districts, of 397 pregnant teens between the ages of 14 and 19, it was found that the majority (63%) were living with household incomes of less than \$20,000. The researchers found that the effects of poverty were reflected in many aspects of the lives of these teen mothers. An analysis of the qualitative data revealed the following themes: obtaining adequate nutrition including vitamins; access to prenatal care; access to affordable housing; mobility; inability to prepare for baby; poverty as a stressor; and strategies for securing financial support. A consistent finding of the study was a genuine concern and effort to do what is best for the baby, and worrying about the effects of poverty on their unborn child which added to already existing stress (Kauppi & Picard, 1999). A number of items such as financial support, housing, and poverty as a stress factor are covered in my study under the theme of Family Support.

Cybermoms

Another study conducted in Sudbury which looks at poverty was an evaluation of the Cybermoms Program. Cybermoms is a program designed to use computer technology as a tool for supporting and empowering pregnant teenagers and young mothers during the prenatal period and the first 18 months of the babies' lives. It should be noted that 13% of the LEAP mothers also participate in the Cybermoms program. A goal of Cybermoms is "to facilitate, through the use of telecommunication technologies, a peer support network, access to education, training,

marketable skills and knowledge of a range of occupations in computer-related field” (Kauppi & Picard, 1999). Average income for the teen mothers was \$675 monthly or \$8,100 annually. This is 43% of the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off, indicating that these young mothers were living in deep poverty. Average rent for the participants was \$332 which represents 54% of their income (Kauppi & Picard, 1999).

Interviews were held with all participants at various intervals throughout the Cybermoms Program. Six themes emerged from the interviews with participants including the importance of support and assistance from family, the inadequate levels of support from welfare, the humiliation and frustration of applying for and receiving welfare, strategies for saving money, the limitations of social assistance benefits, and the lack of support from the biological father of the baby. The major issue emerging from the study is the lack of money for the essentials. Many have to forego a nutritious diet so that can they provide more for their children. “Fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, and meat were simply too expensive to purchase on a limited budget” (Kauppi & Picard, 1999). This study indicates the importance of assistance from family, the birth father, and/or partner in supporting the single parent in their role as mother. In my research, support systems are covered under the section of Family Support.

Themes

This thesis covers a number of themes related to teen parents living on social assistance. The themes emerged from the above mentioned studies as well as general background reading

that I had carried out over the last number of years. The rest of this review will cover what the literature says about each theme from both a theoretical and policy perspective. The first of the these themes to be examined is poverty.

Poverty:

Poverty is a dominant theme in my study because young parents often live in poverty. Nationally, the average income of young parents in 1996 was \$6,840 with 45% of young parents living below the poverty line (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1998). All of the young parents in my study are living in severe poverty. Studies have shown that mothers will go hungry rather than deprive their children of limited food (McIntyre et al., 1998). Most families on social assistance do not have enough money to buy adequate food and pay for housing (Health Canada, 1994). Housing costs are so high that many families have little left over for clothing, school supplies etc. (Statistics Canada, 1996b). Instability because of frequent moves, evictions, or homelessness often contributes to failure in school (Ross & Roberts, 1999). The wait for a subsidized housing unit is several years in most parts of the province, and five to seven years in Ottawa-Carleton (Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario, 2000). At school, poverty can lead to poor concentration, lower motivation, higher stress, lower achievement, difficult behaviour and poor attendance (Canadian School Boards Association, 1997). There are many factors affecting the mental health of youth. Increasing poverty, or the threat of poverty and homelessness particularly affects the mental health of youth by increasing the level of stress they must deal with (Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario, 2000).

Given the strong link between income and child health (Ross & Roberts. 1999), it is useful at this time to look at the relationship between poverty and health risks in Sudbury. In a study based on data from the Ontario Health Survey of 1996/97, significant differences were found between various income groups (Sanderson, 1999). In terms of food security which is defined as the accessibility, availability and affordability of nutritious, culturally acceptable food through non-emergency food sources, only 57% of low-income households with children in Sudbury/Manitoulin reported having enough money to buy food in the previous year as compared to 100% of the highest income group. With respect to tobacco smoke, low income households in the Sudbury/Manitoulin area were almost twice as likely to have someone that smokes regularly inside the home as compared to households with children in the upper income levels. Only 60% of low income households with children in the home rated their health as excellent or very good as compared to 75% of higher income households. Finally, there was a greater likelihood of positive mental health among the high-income group as compared to the two lower income groups (Sanderson, 1999).

Finally, as shown by the results of the Wisconsin study, there is no guarantee the graduates of the LEAP program will escape poverty. Robin Mason states that, for many women in the labour force, the work is part-time, temporary or contract work usually with no benefits. "In 1997, 2.8 million women or 19% of the total female population were living in low-income situations as compared to 16% of men. The majority of lone mothers (56%) had incomes below the Statistics Canada Low Income Cutoff (LICO)" (Mason 2001, 3). Mason concludes that the persistence of poverty among women is an indication that government policies that focuses on paid employment alone in not working.

Family Support:

One of the key factors related to positive parenting is family support. Anne Bianchi (1996), a nurse and licensed childbirth educator, states that the emotional well-being of the mother is essential during the transition to motherhood. Developing a strong social system is crucial in adapting to the new demanding role of parent. Pregnancy is a time of tremendous change and entering into parenthood without support can be overwhelming especially for the single parent (Bianchi, 1996). In an Arkansas study on adolescent parenting conducted by Thompson, et al. (1995), it was found that the predominant source of support was the mother's own mother and that few of the children's fathers were seen as a source of support. These results support those of the Sudbury study on the Cybermoms program where nearly all of the participants had daily or weekly contact with their mothers and/or father and three-quarters said that their mothers were helpful and supportive. In fact, one third of the participants in the Cybermoms study were actually living with their parents (Kauppi & Picard, 1999).

Child Care:

One of the main themes raised in both the Sudbury and the Ottawa Carleton studies is child care. Over the last thirty years, the participation of women in the labour force has increased dramatically, with 63 per cent of Canadian women with children under the age of three working outside of the home (Statistics Canada, 2000). By the late 1970's, child care had become a

national issue. Public pressure to improve access to child care increased. In the 1980's, child care began to figure prominently in political and policy debates. In the 1990's, we've seen the federal government withdrawing from the social policy field and advances made in the 1980's have begun to fade. In 1992, two organizations, the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association, and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, developed a common set of principles upon which their child care policy options are based (Beach, 1992).

- Universally Accessible:**

All children and families regardless of family income, regions of the country or work status should be entitled to equivalent good child care.

- Publically Funded:**

The Government should contribute a substantial proportion of the funds required to operate a comprehensive system of high quality child care for all children and families.

- Comprehensive Service Provision:**

Different families, children and communities have varying child care needs. In order to meet these needs, a range of options, planned at the local community level, should be available.

- High Quality:**

Child care programs should reflect the best available knowledge of child development. To achieve high quality, child care service should be well regulated, and non-profit, and child care staff should be paid to reflect the education required and the importance of the work.

Evelyn Ferguson (1998) in her article, *The Child-Care Debate: Fading Hope and Shifting Sands*, identifies two trends that have undermined the legitimacy of single mothers looking after their children while receiving social assistance benefits. They are the emphasis on compensatory care and the increasing popularity of workfare. The compensatory model of child care, more commonly known as Head Start Programs, is directed at low income disadvantaged children. Head Start programs were developed to enhance the long-term educational potential of “at risk” children (Tremblay & Japel, 1997). The general acceptance of these views creates a class-based double standard for mothers. When mothers are dependent on the state, their children are perceived to be “at risk”. The message is that the children would be better off in child care than with their mothers at home. In contrast when mothers are dependent on their partners for support, then the traditional mother at home model becomes preferable for children (Ferguson, 1998). Unfortunately in adopting this position, society fails to recognize the benefits in providing quality early childhood education opportunities to all classes of children.

The lack of child care is one of the greatest barriers for parents trying to move off of welfare. The wait for a licensed space can be over two years for some programs (Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario, 2000). In Ontario, there are no caps on the number of subsidized spaces, but there is a cap on the overall subsidy budget. There are many more eligible parents than there are available spots. This situation is not going to ease in the foreseeable future, as the government has not approved any new subsidy money since 1993. In Ottawa-Carleton only 11% of the licensed daycare spaces are in French-speaking centres, and only 8% of the subsidized spots are in French (Regroupement des services de garde de langue française

d'Ottawa-Carleton, 1998). For parents in rural areas access to child care is further complicated by travel issues.

In contrast to Ontario, the Province of Quebec has gone further than any other province to deal with the need for child care. Started in 1997, the Quebec program provides “reliable, accessible and stimulating quality” child care for parents who work, study or are in the process reintegrating into an occupation. For \$5.00 per day, parents can place their 3 or 4 year old children in child care for up to 10 hours per day, 261 days a year. During the day, each child receives one meal and two snacks as well as the materials needed for the educational program. For families on social assistance, the same program is available free of charge for up to 23.5 hours per week or longer with a recommendation from a CLSC, Centre locaux de services communautaires (social services). Low-income families using the \$5.00 day care are eligible for a \$3.00 maximum compensation. Eventually, the program will include infants and two-year old children (Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance, 1999)

Program Participation/ Education:

Education is a central feature of the LEAP program. All participants in the program attend school and this attendance is compulsory for those parents aged 16 and 17. The areas that I wanted to explore in my study included the following: were the expectations of the school realistic given their child caring responsibilities, will graduating from school help the participants in achieving their educational/career goals, and were the supports at school adequate to ensure participants could succeed?

Ultimately, the goal of LEAP is to make the participants economically self-sufficient. Therefore, there needs to be an examination of the links between school and work. During the 1950's and 1960's, Talcott Parsons (Cited in Reynolds, 1998) developed a “functional” theory of the role of education in society. He believed that education serves three major functions: to socialize students and develop their skills, to develop their capacities to be productive, and to assign them to occupational roles in society. Following from Parsons, Becker (1964) developed a “Human Capital Theory” which suggested that education would be positively related to economic growth and that educated workers would be more productive workers. Finally, Reynolds (1998) points out that women are disadvantaged in the educational system. Women continue to realize fewer economic gains as a result of their educational investment than men. Women also continue to enter traditional occupations such as secretarial work, teaching, or nursing. Regardless of which occupation women enter, they continue to struggle with the balance between work and family responsibilities.

The literature on education and women identified a number of supports which are needed to make education “women-friendly”. The Canadian Federation of University Women (1992) described those supports which would enable women at all levels, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary, to succeed at school. Those supports related to my study include: child care support, incentives for increased participation by women in light of their household and family commitments such as scholarships, and recognition of work experience.

One of my questions related to program participation is whether the parents in my study are able to successfully combine school and parenting. Researchers at the Growing Up in Poverty

Project (2000) recently released a report *Remember the Children: Mothers Balance Work and Child Care Under Welfare Reform*, based on a two-year study documenting the impact of workfare on young children. Researchers from the University of California and Yale University found the incidence of severe levels of maternal depression was up to three times higher among participating mothers compared to the national average. They also report certain parenting practices such as reading to one's children often absent. This activity is critical, as young children's early learning and development is limited by uneven parenting practices and high rates of maternal depression. In California, 39% of all women agreed with the statement "At the end of a long day I find it hard to feel warm and loving toward my child". Both of these factors - disengaged parenting and maternal depression - can substantially retard infants' and toddlers' development. This problem raises concerns around how welfare reform's promise of improving children's life chances will be accomplished. Without addressing important social and health issues, how will workfare alone advance children's well-being?

Parenting Classes / Childbirth Education:

Another key feature of LEAP are the parenting classes but the policies associated with parenting classes often serve to stigmatize the parents needing help. This is evident in that only 16-17 year old parents on welfare are required to attend parenting classes. Karen Swift (1998) states that the dominant perspective on the cause of child neglect is the immaturity of the mothers. As a result the literature focuses on changing the behaviour of mothers and improving their performance in the mothering role. Recent attention has been paid to upgrading the

mother's parenting skills (Swift,1998). Swift argues that we must question the cultural appropriateness of the services we currently provide. Parenting courses may fail if based on the Eurocentric model of individualism considered irrelevant and damaging to many minority mothers involved with child welfare authorities (Swift, 1998).

Women who return to work or school face tremendous barriers in continuing to breastfeed: long hours, few breaks, breaks that are too short to enable a visit with baby or time for pumping or hand-expression, the baby's refusal to breastfeed preferring the bottle, the expense breast pumps, and the lack of storage or pumping facilities. As a result many mothers choose the path of least resistance and initiate early weaning. Very young mothers are already less prepared than their older counterparts to assume a nurturing role with their children. This attitude is compounded by the mother's lack of education and dependence on welfare. Both are contributors to low self-esteem. The parenting course portion of the LEAP program becomes a double-edged sword as it provides women with information on breastfeeding and childcare while taking away their option to stay home as a full-time parent.

What does all this mean in relation to my research? The themes reviewed above suggest that the participants in my study are attempting to parent their children and attend school under very difficult circumstances. All are living in deep poverty which results in problems with the basic necessities of life including food, clothing and shelter and which adversely affects their mental and physical health. Family support is a key factor in helping young parents cope with parenting and school. They need high quality child care which should be located within the

school which they are attending. Their participation in the program hinges on a supportive and patient staff and a flexible program that tailored to their unique needs. Finally, the parenting classes should be adapted to the realities of very young parents living in poverty as well as the multi-cultural and multi-racial make up of the participants.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My three broad questions introduced in Chapter 1 included: 1) Does LEAP help women effectively balance their roles and identities as workers and carers? 2) Does the LEAP program recognize the particular and unique contexts within which the participants are caring, taking into consideration the support they are receiving from kin, extended networks, community resources, and local child care? 3) What is the perspective of the participants in terms of the effectiveness of the LEAP program? The purpose of the research was to obtain the views of the participants about the program as opposed to 'judging' the program based on simple quantitative outcome measures such as numbers of welfare recipients participating, numbers graduating from school, and numbers moving off welfare and into the labour force. I initially approached Harold Duff, Director of Social Services Regional Municipality of Sudbury, in September of 2000 and offered to carry out a preliminary evaluation of the LEAP program. In spite of some initial hesitancy, Harold Duff agreed to accept my offer. The hesitancy was based on the fact that the program was new and that, as an administrator, he was concerned about negative publicity.

Sample:

The participants in the study were drawn from those clients who are participating in the LEAP Program in Sudbury, including those who graduated at the end of the Winter term (June 2001). In late May 2001, the Regional Municipality of Sudbury (now called the City of Greater

Sudbury after amalgamation) sent out my Letter of Introduction (Appendix C) to those clients enrolled in the LEAP Program asking that anyone who was interested in being interviewed reply to their caseworker by June 15, 2001. My sample size was determined by the response rate coming from the LEAP program. Out of a possible 65 clients, I was given a list of 21 individuals who had consented to be contacted. I narrowed the list down to 13 men and women who resided within the city boundaries prior to amalgamation. Of these 13 individuals I interviewed 12 plus two others who were present at someone else's interview. I chose to limit the sample to those living in Sudbury proper as I suspected the issues of the rural participants might be quite different.

While the sample was small, the social worker assigned to the program felt that this was an excellent response rate. The majority of the program participants did not reply to the invitation to participate in the study. As a former social assistance recipient, I understood their reluctance to speak out or go public. There is still a strong stigma attached to being "on welfare". There is also the concern on the part of the recipients that this is another person coming in to "snoop". These parents already have a number of individuals exerting control over their lives, including child protection workers, welfare workers, school administrators, and public health nurses, to name a few. Finally, this population is made up of young, sometimes very vulnerable individuals who are rarely if ever encouraged to speak out about the services they receive.

Because of the obvious sample bias, it may well be that the participants in the study differed from those who chose not to reply. Perhaps I only surveyed the more motivated students.

I must, therefore, accept the possibility that the participants in my study report a more favorable view of the LEAP program than those who chose not to participate.

All of the participants in the study did question my motives for wanting to have their input about the program. I realized that, even as a former single mother on welfare, I had become an outsider. Patai (1993) questioned whether it is possible for feminists to advocate on behalf of poor vulnerable women. If we assume that feminists who are conducting field research on women are doing so out of a commitment to women, not just to further their own academic careers, and are going to continue to conduct research, then we need to examine some of the ethical issues involved. While there is no easy answer to this issue, I have chosen to conduct this study, both, to further my academic career, but also because, as a former single parent on welfare, I felt that I would have a better appreciation of the needs of these young parents, in the hope that some good will come from the study.

The participants in the study attended three of the four site schools: École Secondaire Macdonald-Cartier, Sudbury Secondary School and St. Albert Adult Education Centre. One participant attended a mainstream secondary school, Lockerby Composite School. These are the inner city schools attended by the LEAP parents. I wanted to look at different schools including two English and two French and different school boards because I did not want the experiences of those parents at one particular site school to be taken as the norm for the Sudbury area. I felt that the availability of resources and services and how they were accessed by the participants was important. Availability of services is not uniform across the region and I felt this could have a significant impact on the participants level of success in negotiating school and home.

I placed an emphasis on the differences between the participants' experiences with the welfare system rather than on their common experiences. Throughout the study, the data is broken down and reported by school attended in order to highlight differences between the delivery of services and the level of satisfaction.

Description of the Instrument:

The present study involves semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted by myself with participants of the LEAP program in Sudbury. With input from Sudbury's social services staff and following a careful review of the literature, my three questions translated into an instrument involving 53 open-ended and close-ended questions. A copy is attached as Appendix B. The interview guide is divided into six sections: Social Background; Family Support; Child Care; Program Participation; Parenting Classes; and Future Plans.

I submitted a draft copy of the interview guide to the Ontario Works Department of the Regional Municipality of Sudbury. Minor revisions were made based on feedback from the Region of Sudbury and a copy was forwarded to the Region's Legal Department. I was obliged to sign a one page document agreeing not to publish or present any of my findings or present a paper at a conference without the express permission of the Region. A final copy and the data gathering process was approved by the Carleton University Ethics Review Committee.

Methods of Data Collection:

Although I did offer to hold the interview at Laurentian University or at some neutral location such as a restaurant, all of the participants agreed to be interviewed in their own home. Conducting the interview in the homes of the participants added to their feeling of security, that they were on “their home turf”. It was also easier for the participants in that there was no need to arrange for child care or worry about transportation. Finally, it also allowed me to gain a more complete picture of the lives of the participants, watching the interaction between parent and child as well as with significant others.

Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. I chose not to tape record the interview as a way of encouraging the participants to speak openly about the program and its impact on their lives. It allowed the participants to tell me things “off the record”. In fact, one woman did say to me “you’re not writing that down, are you?” I therefore chose to record the responses of the participants directly onto the interview guide. I offered to share with the participants what I had written allowing the participants to retain some control over the interview process.

Generally, we must be cautious regarding the reliability of self-reporting. Hannah Frith and Celia Kitzinger (1998) argue that individuals may distort the truth to present themselves in a more acceptable light. This is especially true when the individual must divulge painful experiences. Interviews conducted in the presence of others, on the other hand, may provide

more reliable information because the others present will often correct what the individual reports. In a study on unwanted sexual encounters, Frith and Kitzinger talk about “emotion work”, a term coined by Arlie Hochschild, as a way of describing the process used to manage the feelings of others and the work people do on their own emotions in order to conform with socially acceptable rules (Frith & Kitzinger, 1998).

Young women talking about the doing of ‘emotion work’ are not just faithfully reporting on their own experience: they are also attending to the expectations and responses of those with whom they are talking, managing their identities, justifying, excusing, and otherwise accounting for their behavior in socially plausible ways (Frith & Kitzinger, 1998, 300).

In conducting the interviews with the participants, I knew that the responses of the participants must be kept in the context of the social expectations inherent in the situation. I was aware that the participants would likely present their experiences to me in a socially acceptable manner. Most of the interviews were conducted with members of the extended family present. I felt that having members of the extended family present was a mixed blessing. Extended family members often added their thoughts sometimes contradicting or correcting what the interviewee was saying. I often incorporated the views of these other people into the responses. On the other hand, those few participants who were interviewed alone seemed more open and less guarded in speaking to me. On balance, I felt that having family members present was useful. The participation of the extended family members provided me with a more complete sense of the day to day life of the participants.

Each participant received an honorarium of \$20. I chose to offer this honorarium for three reasons. The first reason was that it would encourage participation in the study. Second, I felt that it was important to recognize that the participants' time was valuable. Finally, I wanted to acknowledge that their input was important. The children were present at the time of the interviews and as a result no child care costs were incurred.

I had originally believed that my background as a former single mother on welfare would help me to better relate to the participants. I quickly realized that my background had little or no bearing on the interview process. I didn't disclose that I had been on welfare unless it appeared to fit with the discussion, and, when I did, it seemed to make little difference. To the participants, I was another middle-class professional person that has come into contact with them even if only briefly.

While my background made little difference to the participants, I felt that it made a great deal of difference to me in how I related to the participants. As a former welfare mother, I felt I could empathize with the participants at a level that other researchers could not. As they talked about their struggle with limited choices and few resources, I could recall my own struggles with these issues.

My social work training also had an impact on the interview process. During the interview, I found myself mentally conducting a needs assessment of the participants and what intervention, if any, was required. At times, it was a struggle not to intervene in the lives of the

participants. The one exception was when one of the participants received a phone call during the interview that her mother was in the hospital dying. I encouraged her to accept a ride to the hospital.

Analysis:

During the interviews, I recorded responses directly onto the interview guide. For the most part, I carried out my own analysis identifying major themes and issues for each question. Where appropriate, I used SPSS 10 to run frequencies. All information collected from participants in this study was aggregated and the names of the participants were not used in my report. The analysis is a critical site for issues of reflexivity. As Mauthner and Doucet explain:

... in our view, this is a point where the voices and perspectives of the research respondents are especially vulnerable. They might be lost and subsumed to the views of the researcher, or to the theoretical frameworks and categories that she brings to the research (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, 138).

At the stage of data analysis it is much more difficult for participants to have input or control. It is in this stage that we risk “losing much of the complexity, subtlety and depth of the narratives” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, 138). Here it becomes extremely important for researchers to document how they came to their conclusions.

In fact, the analysis started from the moment I wrote the responses of the participants onto the interview guide. From what the participants said in response to my questions, I selected what I would put on paper, what I would include and what I would leave out. While I tried hard to capture the essence of what the participants said, even at this stage of the process, I was conscious of the impact of what was recorded on paper realizing that this information was politically sensitive. I was guided by my Social Work Code of Ethics (CASW,1994) to give voice to the participants and do my best not to harm the participants or others like them with the results of my study.

Participants have been told that they will not benefit personally from the study but that results of the study may help future clients of the LEAP program. Recommendations for improvements to the program will be made available to the program managers from the Region of Sudbury.

Ethics/ Consent:

At the start of the interview, I reviewed the Consent Letter (Appendix D) with each individual. Each participant was asked sign their name to the Letter to indicate their consent. If they agreed to allow me to use direct quotes, they were asked to initial this statement on the Letter of Consent (Appendix D). During the course of the study, the interview material is being stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Only my supervisor and I have access to this material. Participants in the study faced the risk that discussing their experiences with the LEAP

program might stir up strong negative feelings. Arrangements with a mental health professional were made prior to the start of the study, in the event that any of the participants required assistance.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The instrument used in the present study (Appendix B) is divided into several section with the first being the social background of the participants. For this section SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Base 10, was used to generate frequencies for each of the variables.

Section 1: Social Background

S.B. 1. Age:

The participants ranged in age from 17 to 22 years with the average age of the participants being 18 years. Only three participants were under 18 and were obliged to participate in the LEAP program as a condition of receiving benefits.

S.B.2 Male or Female:

Of the total of 14 participants I interviewed, there were 2 males and 12 females.

S.B. 3 Language Spoken at Home:

English was the predominate language with 12 of the 14 participants indicating it was the language spoken in the home, while the remaining spoke French.

S.B. 4 Length of time in program:

The length of time in the program varied from less than one month to 24 months with the largest group (4) having attended one school semester (five months).

S.B. 5 School attended:

Four attended Macdonald-Cartier, eight attended Sudbury Secondary, one was at St. Albert Adult Learning Centre and one was at Lockerby. Due to the fact that some participants attended more than one school while in the program and that some had graduated or were on maternity leave, I chose to record the school the individual had most recently attended.

S.B.6 Number, Sex and Ages of children:

In the study sample, twelve families had one child while two families had two children. There were 9 boys and 7 girls and the age ranged from 2 to 42 months with the average age being 14.3 months.

S.B. 7 Residence, (Apartment or House):

Four families were living in houses and ten were in apartments. Of the four living in houses, three were living with a parent. Eleven of the participants were in private accommodation with three in Sudbury Housing units (subsidized housing). A fourth was scheduled to move into a Sudbury Housing unit in August.

S.B.8 Who resides in the home with you?

All fourteen participants lived with their children. Five participants indicated they were living with their partner. Three resided with a parent and one lived with a sister, the sister's boyfriend and their child.

S.B. 9 Have you had to change residences in the last 12 months? If yes, why and how many times?

Unfortunately, many of the participants had faced frequent moves. Three indicated three or more moves and six had moved twice in the last year. Two had not moved in the past year and three had moved once.

Table 2: Reasons for moving

Problems with other tenants/ landlord	(3)
Needed own place, moved away from home	(3)
Apartment was too small	(3)
Moving into Sudbury housing	(2)
Bored with apartment/ just wanted to move*	(2)

*These last participants were very evasive as to their reasons for needing to move.

Basically, the social background information shows that the majority of the participants are over 18 and voluntarily signed up for LEAP as a way of benefitting from the support services. As expected, most of the participants were female. Few were living on their own without the support of family or a partner. Finally, frequency of moves is an issue that needs attention.

Section 2: Family Support

F.S. 1. Do you have family in the Sudbury area? Who are they?

Thirteen of the fourteen participants reported having one or both parents living in Sudbury. Two reported that their partner's family lived nearby and seven indicated extended family in town (siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents). Two of the women lived with their mothers, one with her father and a fourth lived with her sister.

F.S. 2. How often do you have contact with your family?

Twelve indicated they had daily contact with their family either by phone or personal visits and two indicated it was biweekly. Overwhelmingly, it was their mother whom they called. Many of the participants specifically identified their mother as being their main source of support.

"She's a friend, not only a mother. She was seventeen when she had me and she knows what I am going through."

F.S. 3. How would you describe your relationship with your family?

Three stated that their relationship was excellent, eight said it was good, one said it was on and off while two stated that their relationship had improved with the birth of their child.

F.S. 4. Is your family a source of support for you?

All but one indicated that their family was a source of support. I believe that this one

individual took the question to mean financial support only as her parents were caring for her child at the time and did so on a fairly regular basis.

F.S.5. Describe the type of support they provide.

Of the thirteen participants indicating that they received support, four stated that they received assistance with everything. Of the rest, they listed emotional (5), financial(3), childcare(3), transportation(1), articles for the baby(2), friendship/social (1) and parenting tips(1).

F.S. 6. Is the baby's father/mother involved in the child's care? If yes, how?

The father was involved in six of the families while the mother was involved in the two families in which I interviewed the father. Fathers were not involved in six of the homes. Both parents were living in three of the homes.

F.S. 7. How would you describe your relationship with the baby's father/mother?

Six indicated that the relationship with the baby's other parent was good. Two stated they were 'just friends' and one said that the relationship was limited. Five indicated that the relationship was non-existent.

As indicated in the literature, young parents require a great deal of support from family. The participants in this study did receive a lot of support from their families. Most report that the relationship with their parents, primarily the mother, was good and all except one state that their parents were an important source of support. The children's father was much less involved and it was my impression that support from the fathers was minimal.

Section 3: Child Care

When I developed my research questions, the criteria I used for analysing the child care component of the program were the four principles developed by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association, as presented in the literature review.

1. Universally Accessible:

The participants who attend the site schools and have their child placed in the on site child care program are generally happy with the service. One participant expressed concern that the in-school program could not accommodate her older child due to the age of the child.

In spite of this, the co-location of services including in-school child care is clearly a valuable component of the program. If participants are able to attend school and check in regularly on their children, the overall stress is greatly reduced.

“I love child care in the same building. They could pull me out of class to check on the baby.”

Those not able to use in school day care do not fare as well. If the child is not on site, mothers are not able to breastfeed, and the child care is also much less reliable. One participant in the study was forced to use three different care givers within the same school year.

2. Publicly Funded:

I chose to divide child care into formal care provided during school hours and the more informal babysitting provided outside of school hours. Unfortunately, the current funding formula for child care does not factor in time for homework, appointments or other errands.

3. Comprehensive Service Provision:

Here again the issue is that child care is not available outside of regular school hours. Most of the participants felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities and all could benefit from respite care from time to time. Unless a grandparent or friend is available to take over from time to time, participants are unable to get a badly needed break.

There is also the need for short term emergency child care. Often during the first few months in a new more social child care setting, children become ill on a more frequent basis. If the children are sick then mothers can not attend school. Even under the best of conditions, most mothers are under stress from trying to balance school demands and caring for children without the added burden of dealing with illness.

4. High Quality:

The child care programs at the site schools appeared to be of high quality. To the credit of the child care staff, most parents stated that they were amazed at how much their children were learning.

“She learned something new everyday”

“It helped him become socially ready for school in September.”

One of the parents in the study did express concern about the child care staff. Some staff used in the child care program were students on a co-op placement. These students were regularly pulled out of the child care program to attend assemblies and other school functions thereby reducing the complement of staff available to the children.

The rest of this section on child care provides the responses to specific questions.

C.C.1 Who cares for your child other than yourself?

For this question participants were invited to include more than one category. The majority (9) of participants indicated that they relied on grandparents to provide child care. The next largest category (7) included their partners or boyfriends.

Table 3: Child Care Providers

Grandparents	(9)
Partner/boyfriend	(7)
Day Care	(5)
Uncle	(3)
Babysitter	(2)
Friends	(2)
Aunt	(1)
No one	(1)

C.C.2 How hard or easy is it for you to get babysitting when you need it? (I did not include daycare here).

Nine stated that it was not hard for them to obtain child care. Two indicated it was very difficult, and three stated that during the day (outside of day care) was a problem. One felt evening care was easier to obtain and another individual felt summer time was easier.

C.C.3 How many hours were able to get babysitting help last week?

Results for this question revealed that participants were able to receive very little (from 0 to 5 hours) babysitting per week.

Table 4: Hours of Babysitting

Not Needed	(1)
Zero Hours	(5)
One Hour	(2)
Five Hours	(3)
Six Hours	(1)
10 Hours	(1)
Overnight	(1) (on one occasion)

C.C.4 Are there times when you really like to have more time away from your children?

For this question, the majority (7) stated that they rarely wanted time away from their children, four replied never, while three wanted time away very often.

C.C.5 What would you do with the time if more child care was available?

The largest number (6) participants stated that they would relax if more child care was available. Some (3) reported that they would go out if they had more money.

Table 5: What To Do With Time Away From Children

Relax	(6)
Would go out if they had any money	(3)
Shopping	(2)
Movies	(2)
See friends	(2)
Watch TV	(1)
Work more shifts	(1)
Attend Pow Wow	(1)
Sleep	(1)
Clean House	(1)
Do homework	(1)
Don't know	(1)

C.C.6 Are there times when you would really like to have more time with your children?

On the question of whether the participant would like to have more time with their children, four chose very often, one stated quite often, while two chose rarely. Half of the participants (7) felt that they did need more time with their children.

C.C. 7 Where was your child cared for when you were in school?

Most participants stated that their child was attending an on-site child care facility, indicating that this is an important service for these parents.

Table 6: Where Child Was Cared For

Child Care Centre(School)	(5)
Home Day Care	(2)
Grandparent's Home	(3)
Partner	(1)
Sibling's home	(1)
On maternity leave	(2)

C.C.8 Were you happy with the child care options you had?

On this question, the great majority of participants (11) stated that they were happy with their options. One mother was content with her current child care arrangements, but, on-site care for her children would have been preferred. This question was not applicable for the remaining two since these participants were on maternity leave.

C.C.9 Did you receive any assistance in finding a child care provider?

Most participants (9) stated that they did not receive assistance in finding child care. Two participants found their caregiver by word of mouth.

Table 7: Who Provided Help in Finding Child Care

Friend	(2)
School	(1)
Teacher	(1)
Worker	(1)

C.C.10 Did you have to change child care providers? Why? How often?

When asked if the participant had changed child care providers, eleven said “no”. Here again, the question was not applicable for two participants as they were on maternity leave. One women had employed three different caregivers over the last two years due to the birth of another child and illness of the caregiver.

C.C.11 Was child care a positive experience for you and your child?

On whether or not child care was a positive experience, the great majority (11) said yes. Only one said she wasn’t sure.

The responses in this category can be divided into two sub-categories including child care and babysitting. With respect to child care, most participants rely on child care programs located within the schools which they are attending. Most also report being happy with the arrangement. The majority reported, however, that they did not receive help in finding child care indicating that a formal process is needed to help these young parents locate this essential service.

In looking at babysitting, a different picture emerges. Most of the participants receive little or no babysitting. This is a problem because they never get time to themselves away from their children. Most would use this time to relax or go out if it was available.

Section 4: Program Participation

P.P. 1 At which site did you attend school?

Four attended Macdonald Cartier, eight were attending Sudbury Secondary, one was at St. Albert Adult Learning Centre and one was at Lockerby. Due to the fact that some participants attended more than one school while in the program and that some had graduated or were on maternity leave, I chose to record the school the individual had most recently attended.

P.P.2 Why did you choose this school?

When asked why they chose a certain school, the main reason(s) were the services provided by the school. Of these services, four indicated the availability of in school child care, and alternative programming. Another four chose the school because of its proximity to their home.

Table 8: Reason for Choice of School

Day Care in School	(4)
Closest Location	(4)
Alternative Program	(4)
Extent of Services	(3)
Good Environment	(1)
Parenting Classes	(1)
Quality of Courses	(1)
Partner in Same Program	(1)
To Be With People Her Own Age	(1)

P.P.3 How did you travel to school?

Four walked to school, four traveled in bus provided by the school board and seven used public transportation.

There was also some confusion about the delivery of services. Some participants questioned why some parents received certain benefits while others did not.

“They should treat everybody equally. My friend doesn’t get nothin’. I don’t think it’s fair”

“You have to ask or you don’t get it. But, I won’t call my new one (worker) ‘cause I don’t know her.”

One of the questions raised in the interview was why participants chose certain schools over others. The most common reason for choosing a certain school was the extent of services offered by the site schools. Location was also an important factor as many of the parents live close to the schools they chose. Transportation was an issue for a number of parents. Students at Macdonald-Cartier were appreciative of the door to door bus service provided for themselves and their children. Those participants not receiving assistance with transportation found it very difficult to get to school.

P.P.4 How many hours a day did you attend school on average?

Most participants (12) attended six hours of classes daily while the rest (2) attended for 4.5 hours.

P.P.5 If you attended one of the site schools, which services did you use?

Here again, child care was often mentioned. Other services mentioned include meals and bus services.

Table 9: Services Used at School

<u>Macdonald-Cartier</u>	
Correspondence Courses	(2)
Bus	(3)
Child Care	(3)
Meals	(3)
Didn't use any services	(1)
<u>Sudbury Secondary</u>	
Child Care	(2)
Native Student Council Room	(2)
Legal Assistance	(1)
Nurse Practitioner	(2)
Prenatal classes	(1)
Didn't use any services	(4)
<u>St. Albert Adult Education Centre</u>	
Didn't use any services	(1)
<u>Lockerby (not a site school)</u>	
Boost (A Program for individuals with addiction problems)	(1)

I believe that the “one-stop shop” approach to service provision (Region of Sudbury, 2000) is a vital to the success of the program. When asked which services they used, the participants stated they used the full range of services provided by the site schools. A number of the participants commented that having everything available in one location was very important. Transportation is difficult with young children - such as trying to get to the welfare office, school, child care centre, food banks, grocery store, etc. School is a familiar environment for the parents and they see it as a “safe place”.

“Everything was provided. It made it so easy. It would be so hard to do it any other way. It made me want to go to school.”

P.P.6 What other services would have been useful to you?

Most participants had difficulty coming up with any suggestions. Those participants that did mentioned child care and transportation.

Table 10: Other Useful Services Desired

Child care that accepts older children	(2)
Transportation bus or bus pass	(2)
More child care workers	(1)
More high chairs in child care	(1)
Comparable program to Macdonald-Cartier in English	(1)

P.P. 7 Were the School Staff Supportive?

Also key to the success of the program is the quality and the commitment of the staff. Of all of the participants, only the participant attending Lockerby stated that she did not find the school staff supportive. (It should be noted that Lockerby is a non site school.)

The rest found the school staff to be supportive.

“One teacher brought my work home to me for two weeks after the baby was born.”

“The teachers would give money to people who didn’t have any.”

“One teacher brought me gifts when my baby was born.”

“The guidance counselor and a teacher helped me get welfare.”

In general, the participants gave me the impression that the staff go out of their way to help. Furthermore, in addition to the support of the staff, most of the participants appreciated the support of a peer group.

“We give a lot of support to each other.”

P.P. 8 Were the School’s Expectations of You Realistic?

Here again, only the participant attending Lockerby felt that the expectations where not realistic.

P.P.9 Where there time when you felt overwhelmed by your responsibilities ? If so, did this affect the relationship with your children? Expand.

Most parents (10) stated that, at times, they felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities. Three indicated it was having a negative impact on their children. Only one stated she did not believe that her feelings had any effect on her child.

Table 11: Feelings Associated with being Overwhelmed

Can't give the child attention he needs	(1)
Feeling stressed out, feeling frustrated	(3)
I have no patience	(1)
I feel like I am always cleaning	(1)
There is too much to do, school, housework, baby	(1)
Especially difficult when the baby is colicky	(1)

P.P. 10 Where did you go for support?

For this question, clearly the family is the chief source of support for the participants.

Table 12: Where to go for Support

Mother	(5)
Father	(1)
Parents	(3)
Sister	(3)
Family	(2)
Friends	(3)
Teacher	(1)
Counselor	(1)
Child's caregiver	(1)
Boyfriend	(1)
Daughter (34 months)	(1*)

* This last participant stated that "Kids understand a lot."

P.P.11 What kind of support did you need?

When asked what kind of support the participants needed, most chose emotional support (12). Interestingly, in spite of the deep poverty experienced by the participants, only three mentioned financial support.

Table 13: Kind of Support Needed

Emotional	(12)
Child Care/ Respite	(5)
Financial	(3)
Everything	(2)
Guidance	(1)
Transportation	(1)

When asked if they received the support identified, all participants replied that they did receive it.

P.P.12 What other supports would you find useful?

Besides the type of supports already mentioned most (10) could not identify other forms of support they might need.

Table 14: Other Support Desired

None	(10)
Financial	(2)
Transportation	(1)
Respite	(1)
Counseling	(1)

This section on program participation indicated that all but one attended designated site schools. Most chose schools for very practical reasons such as availability of child care, proximity to home, and the availability of alternative programming. All except one found the staff to be supportive. The majority of parents admitted feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities. Most state that they need emotional support. When asked where they turned for support, again, most will turn to their families.

Section 5: Parenting Classes

P.C. 1 Did you attend parenting classes?

Of the fourteen participants, seven indicated that they attended the mandatory parenting classes, while six had not. One participant gave a qualified yes referring to prenatal classes. Interestingly, three indicated that they did not know that the classes were available, in spite of the fact that the parenting classes are an integral part of the LEAP program. The two male parents did not attend but indicated that their female partners attended.

P.C. 2 Were they helpful?

Of the eight participants who attended parenting classes, five stated that the classes were helpful. Some of the reasons given were the support of staff and class mates, the helpful hints, handouts, and observation time in the Child Care Centre. One participant stated that practicing with a doll was helpful.

In spite of the fact that most of the parents who attended the classes found these classes helpful, a few of the women did question the usefulness of the information.

“It would have been more helpful if they focused on babies instead of mate selection and aging”

Of the three participant who did not find the classes helpful, two felt that having to practice on a doll when they had their own child or were pregnant was not useful.

“I had both babies at once (the doll and her own baby). Having to use the dolls when I had my own baby was stupid.”

This last participant was required, as part of the program, to care for a doll for extended periods of time as a way of teaching about the realities of caring for a baby.

One participant stated that she dropped out after two days stating that, while she found the information useful, she did not have the time to attend. Most of the participants were overwhelmed with coping with being a new parent with all the related stresses. One participant found that the parenting class was an additional burden.

On a positive note, the parenting classes does provide a source of support. A number of the participants stated that this was one the reasons why the parenting classes were helpful,

“I would go even if they were not mandatory”

“We give each other a lot of support.”

“It was helpful being able to open up to them (the staff).”

“The handouts were really helpful. I took them home and read them over and over.”

Section 6: Future Plans

Based on the description Earning portion of LEAP program, there are three components:

1. Identify opportunities to develop employment skills and become job ready. 2. Promote participation in school co-op programs, youth apprenticeships programs, job shadowing, as well as part-time and summer employment. 3. Plans for transition to employment or further education as participant approaches graduation.

F.P. 1 Are you currently attending an educational program?

Of the fourteen participants, eleven stated that they are in attendance at school, two are on maternity leave and one has graduated. Of those attending school, three are in summer school and one is participating in a work program.

F.P. 2 Do you have a paid job? Full-time? Part-time?

Most of the participants (12) stated that they do not have a paid job. The two who replied yes are referring to summer employment.

F.P. 3 What is your current occupation?

Of the two participants who indicated that they had summer jobs, one will be tree planting through an Ontario Works Program and the other will be working for her Reserve.

F.P. 4 How long have you been in your current occupation?

In light of the previous responses, this question became irrelevant.

F.P.5 What is your source of income?

All participants in the study receive money from Ontario Works either directly or indirectly. Some participants' income is supplemented by their partner or their family if they reside with their parents. Other participants mentioned the GST rebate or the Child Tax Credit as additional sources of income.

F.P. 6 What is your total monthly income?

The average income for the participants not living a parent is about \$1,000 per month. Those living with a parent received approximately \$200 per month. One participant lives with her sister and receives \$650.

F.P. 7 Do you have any future educational or job training plans?

When asked about their future plans, eleven participants indicated that they plan to go to college while three had no definite plans. Of those who planning to go to college, four mentioned being interested in Law and Security, while nursing, paramedic training, social services, child and youth care, and business were each chosen by two people. One participant wanted to become a legal assistant.

F.P. 8 Will your participating in the LEAP program help you in achieving these plans?

Of the fourteen participants, five replied that the program did help in achieving their plans for a variety of reasons. Two mentioned the \$500 bursaries which participants receive when they graduate, while teachers, peers and range of services were each mentioned by one individual.

One participant is making good use of the opportunities available through the Earning portion of the program. This summer, she will work at the Copper Cliff Flour Mill Museum and during this time her child care will be subsidized and she will receive an additional \$125 on her welfare cheque. In September, through the VISTA program, she plans to work at a restaurant. The VISTA program allows her to receive credit for work experience. She is not expected to attend classes but will be required to complete assignments for school. Upon graduation in January, she plans to go to college to study business.

A few of the participants do have plans for summer employment. One of the two male participants will be spending his summer tree planting. One of the Native women in the study will be working for her Band doing whatever summer job they can line up for her. Two other participants were toying with the idea of attending summer school for additional credits. One participant in the study commented on the fact that she was looking forward to getting \$500 from Macdonald-Cartier in addition to the \$500 from Ontario Works. The money was to be sent directly to the college she plans to attend.

One student plans to attend college. Her first choice is university but she doesn't feel that this is available to her.

"I would like to go to Laurentian University to become a mid-wife but, I can't do two more years on assistance."

F.P.9 Has your perception or your views on school, your abilities, or your plans for the future changed as a result of your participation in the program?

Of the fourteen participants, only five indicated that their perceptions of school have changed. One participant even suggested that her perception was more negative since having her child. Of those who stated that their perceptions had changed, some of the reasons mentioned include feels more capable, takes school more seriously, and feels more mature. One participant stated that she wants to go to university but needs two more years to complete her OAC's followed by four years of university. She doesn't feel that this is financially possible.

F.P. 10 Do you have anything else you would like to add? How could the program be improved?

When asked if they had anything to add, participants gave a variety of responses. Generally, they felt the program should keep doing what it is doing. Some areas were identified as deserving special attention. One was child care. Some participants suggested that the age limit of existing child programs should be extended to include older children so that siblings from the same family can be accommodated in the same program. Another parent had concerns over the lack of staff in the child care programs. A second area of concern centered on the perception that the benefits are not always provided equitably. For example, some receive transportation while others don't.

Overall, the results are as expected based on the literature. The majority of the participants are young women who struggle to meet the combined demands of attending school

and caring for their children under difficult financial and emotional circumstances. They rely heavily of family support in particular their own mother with whom they have frequent contact but receive little support from their children's fathers. They chose their program based on practical reasons including proximity of the school and availability of services. They have little time to themselves and, at times, feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities. What is more surprising was that, in spite, of their difficult circumstances, almost all indicate that they felt positive about the LEAP program and credit LEAP with providing opportunities that did not otherwise exist. While this finding may be partially explained by some sample bias, the results do show that the staff of the program do their best to provide the young parents with the support needed to succeed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In the discussion portion of the chapter, I will review the results of the study described in the previous chapter, as well as my own observations, and relate these findings to what emerged from the literature. This chapter will again follow the outline of the interview guide starting with the Social Background of the participants. A number of themes emerged from the study. In the area of housing, parents generally lived in substandard housing. Family support was another important theme. Many parents felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities. They were greatly dependent on family for such things as baby sitting and emotional support. With respect to child care, the study revealed that most parents were left to make their own child arrangements and that social services had not addressed child care needs in a comprehensive manner. Another theme was that information regarding the program or services available was not getting to parents in a uniform fashion. With respect to future plans, there is a lack of assistance for parents in making the transition to employment, the ultimate goal of the LEAP program. Finally, in the conclusion portion of this chapter, I will answer the three broad questions which I introduced in Chapter 1.

Social Background:

In a document released by the Region of Sudbury in October of 1999, it was stated that the two groups of clients, i.e. the younger mandatory group and the older voluntary group must

be approached differently. For the younger group, the challenge is to identify and remove the barriers to successful performance in school. For the older group, the program must be made attractive enough to motivate the clients to remain in school or return to school. As will be shown later, a number of barriers to remaining in school still exist.

The next item on the interview guide is gender. Gender is an issue for two reasons, the first being that money from Ontario Works is paid to the male parent and not the female partner. Also, the two male parents in the study did not participate in the parenting classes although their female partners did. These two points will be raised again later in this chapter.

Language did not seem to be an issue, but race and culture may be. While the question was not included in the interview guide, I did learn that five of the fourteen participants were Native. This was an issue particularly with respect to the relevance of the parenting classes which will also be discussed later.

Housing was one of the issues identified in the results. A number of participants in the LEAP program were obliged to move frequently, an issue which was identified in the literature as a problem. In a report published by the Canadian Council on Social Development, the problem of frequent moves is clearly identified as a barrier to success in school, "...instability because of frequent moves, eviction, or homelessness often contributes to failure in school"(Ross & Roberts, 1999, 10).

Many of the participants in the LEAP program live in substandard housing. I found that those participants living in market rent housing did not fare as well as the participants living in Sudbury Housing Authority units. These market rent homes were damp, musty, and in need of repair. Poor housing is associated with health problems. A report by the Canadian Council on Social Development noted:

“Housing for poor children is often inadequate due to age, neglect or faulty design. This leads to several indoor air quality hazards including mould, lead, paint and asbestos. Of all age groups, children are the most susceptible to the effects of environmental hazards.” (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1998, 21)

The participants who were willing to pay more for their accommodation lived in better quality housing. The amount provided by Ontario Works to pay for shelter costs has a maximum limit which has not changed since 1995 and the variable shelter allowance has been eliminated. If the actual rent is lower than the maximum allowed, the welfare amount is reduced to the actual rent. On the other hand, if the rent is higher than the maximum allowed, the individual must make up the difference from their food or clothing budget. This problem faced one participant who was paying \$150 above the maximum limit. She commented that she had no money to clothe herself. On a more positive note, Sudbury Housing was generally much better maintained than the market rent housing. Three of the participants lived in Sudbury Housing and others were hoping to move into one of the units in the near future.

Family Support:

LEAP tends to focus on the individual parent as opposed to family networks or neighbourhoods. The program is oriented to making clients the target of activity. However,

family members figure prominently in the lives of the participants. In fact, of the parents I interviewed, there were only three that didn't have family present during the actual interview. In at least half the cases, the family members actively participated in the interview. The study by Mason on lone mothers and their attachment to the labour force found that the family members were an important source of support.

Other than child care, the support of family members, specifically mothers and sisters, and friends was the most important to lone mothers' ability to remain in the paid workforce. These women would step in during child care crisis when the lone mothers could not leave work easily, and would babysit occasionally in the evenings, giving lone mothers a much needed break. They also provided emotional support. (Mason, 2001, 10)

Three of the participants lived with a parent. This situation has advantages and disadvantages. As Robin Mason, in a study of 95 low income lone mothers, points out:

Those who lived in their parent's homes often benefited from affordable and family support. However, some described increased family tension and clashes in this type of arrangement (Mason, 2001, 11).

Being so closely involved with family also has the potential to create stress. In one case, in addition to taking care of her young children, the participant was also caring for a dying mother. In fact, a call came from an aunt informing the woman I was interviewing that her mother had been admitted to hospital. We terminated the interview early so I could drive the participant to the hospital. She had told me that her relationship with her mother had improved greatly over the past year, and now she was losing her main source of support. She also expressed concern over how her younger siblings were coping with the mother's illness.

Even if the individual parent is the target of activity, there is an assumption that the individual parent has the support of an extended family. As mentioned in the Theoretical Framework, Doucet (1996) argues that society fails to recognize the full extent of domestic responsibility and domestic processes. The extended families may be coping with their own struggles and issues that preclude their being a reliable source of support. I was reminded on a couple of occasions of just how young the “grandmothers” were. I tended to forget that many of the grandmothers were in their late thirties or early forties. They were holding down jobs, raising young children of their own, trying to establish new relationships, and generally were very busy.

The LEAP program is geared to providing care based on a school schedule, 6 hours a day five days a week. Program staff are not available 24 hours/seven days per week. As a result, clients were placed in the position of seeking support outside the program turning to family or friends to fill the gap, a network that may not be in a position to help. The LEAP program pays little attention to the role and responsibility of fathers. The Cybermom study revealed that there was little support coming from the father of the baby (Kauppi & Picard, 1999). In my study, fathers were not involved in the majority of cases.

On a related issue, many lone mothers are survivors of or involved in abusive relationships (Statistics Canada, 1993). Violence was not included in my study because I felt ill equipped to deal with the issue. Additionally, for ethical reasons, I felt that it would be counter productive if not destructive to delve into the issue. The literature has shown that the issue of violence is added to a host of other issues and challenges facing young lone mothers. In the

Young Mothers' Resource Group's study (1993) of young mothers (aged 13-26) in Metro Toronto, most of whom were on social assistance, one third were experiencing abuse by a current partner and one third had been abused by their first partner during pregnancy. This problem is further substantiated by a Canadian study of violence against women, showing that young women under the age of 24 are *4 times* as likely to be abused (Statistics Canada, 1993).

Child Care:

As stated in the literature review, the lack of child care is one of the greatest barriers for parents trying to get off welfare (Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario, 2000). The original proposal as presented by the Government of Ontario stated that child care was to be available to all participants, and that municipalities were to provide the child care services by building on existing services. Municipalities were told to use Federal National Child Benefit Program money to fund additional services (Region of Sudbury, 1999). LEAP participants may need child care to attend school and to participate in various parts of the LEAP program. Based on Government of Ontario guidelines, LEAP delivery agents are expected to work with participants to determine the most effective and appropriate child care supports (Government of Ontario, 1999).

In reality, however, this assistance seems to be lacking. When asked if participants received any assistance in finding a child care provider, 9 of the 14 participants indicated that they did not receive any assistance. Only one stated that she received assistance from her worker.

Program Participation:

As stated in the Government of Ontario documents, participation for 16 and 17 year old parents is mandatory. But what if parents are unable to comply? If a parent feels emotionally unable to participate, will their assistance be cut-off? The decision to deny social assistance to a parent for non-compliance has serious implications. The moment a parent's benefits are cut-off, a call has to be placed to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) to inform them that there is a child at risk. If CAS decides to remove the child, another child is added to the child welfare system. Up to the time the study took place, no parent has had their benefits cut, but staff admit that, in a couple of cases, they have come close to denying benefits. Keeping parents motivated to participate is a constant struggle.

There is a problem with respect to the information getting to parents about the LEAP program. As was stated in the Results Chapter, a number of parents seemed unclear about the services offered and what they were entitled to receive. At the same time, a couple of the parents found that the amount of information was overwhelming. One stated that it was difficult to absorb the quantity of information only a couple of months after delivering her child. The method and timing of the delivery of information needs to be reviewed.

Another important area related to Program Participation is maternal depression. The literature states that 45% of single mothers are depressed (Byrne & Browne, et al, 1998). The instrument used in the study did not directly address the issue of depression. Nevertheless, it did

come up in the interviews. One mother stated directly that she was dealing with depression and most of the mothers in my study admitted to feeling overwhelmed. As stated by Dr. Gina Browne, author of the McMaster University report, “The provincial government’s method of trying to wean these women off social assistance is useless. You can’t hit them over the head with the two-by-four of workfare”(Ottawa Citizen, 1998). To improve the success rate of programs like LEAP, the mental health needs such as regular assessments, counseling, and respite care should be provided as a routine part of the program.

Parenting Classes:

The Parenting and Child Development component of LEAP promotes children’s growth and development by helping teens become more effective parents. To receive the LEAP incentive provided on successful completion of the LEAP program, participants must have completed a minimum of 35 hours of parenting activities. Sudbury Secondary offers credit courses on Parenting which include a Life Skill Component. On-site informal child care is provided by Child Care Resources and parents will be expected to assist in the care of the children, and may be granted a coop placement for this. Qualified Early Education Staff lead the program and provide modeling of appropriate parenting skills, child growth and development and behaviour management. Our Children, Our Future provides support and services to fully support these parents and their children such as the collective kitchen program, pre and post natal nutrition support, workshops, resources and equipment to assist parents in caring for their children and themselves.

As stated in the literature review, the dominant perspective on the causation of child neglect is the immaturity of the mothers. As a result, the literature focuses on changing the behaviour of mothers and improving their performance in the mothering role. Recent attention has been paid to upgrading the mother's parenting skills (Swift, 1998). In 1996, the Globe & Mail ran a series of editorial pieces on the "behavioural roots of poverty" and the "behavioural dysfunction among the poor" (Cited in Hurtig, 1999, 215). Parenting skills of the poor were cited as a major concern. On June 3, 1998, the Globe & Mail quoted Premier Harris as saying the reason there were hungry children in Ontario was due in part "because working mothers don't cook hot breakfasts like they once did" (Cited in Hurtig, 1999, 221).

Another issue that has come up in the study is the relevance and cultural appropriateness of the parenting classes. Five of the fourteen participants in the study were Native. The literature on Native parenting (van de Sande, 1995) has shown that parenting practices among First Nations people are different from non-native parents. It may not be appropriate for LEAP to offer mainstream parenting courses to culturally diverse groups if based on Eurocentric model of individualism. This would have greater implications for large urban, multi-ethnic, multi-racial communities.

Future Plans:

This section on future plans revealed some important gaps in the LEAP program. In spite of the importance of linking school to work, very little was provided in terms of helping

participants make the transition to work. Also lacking was the support needed for participants wishing to continue on to college or university. With respect to pursuing a university education, most participants felt that the obstacles were too great and that this was not an option. In Ontario, students with children can no longer receive social assistance while attending a post-secondary institution. Their only option is to rely on OSAP (Ontario Students Assistance Program). This normally involves taking on a considerable amount of debt.

The experience of one mother showed that child care continues to be a barrier to pursuing future plans. As a recent graduate, she hopes to find part-time work over the summer. However, since she no longer attends the site school, she needs to make new child care arrangements. As a positive factor, the Region will subsidize care up to a maximum of \$3.00 per hour. Nevertheless, in September, when she attends college and her son begins Kindergarten, she is potentially looking at a third child care arrangement.

The problems associated with pursuing future plans is a good example of the recent change in welfare regimes. As I conducted the interviews with the participants in this study, I could not help but compare what was available when I was a young mother on social assistance. Ten years ago, when the issue of my future plans came up for discussion, my worker informed me that I had the choice of going “off welfare” and obtaining a student loan or continuing to receive social assistance while attending university. My worker encouraged me to continue receiving assistance as it would save me thousands of dollars. I was in a new relationship with an individual who was ready to provide support and I opted for the student loan. Again, my

worker advised me to continue receiving social assistance. She didn't want me to be financially dependent on someone new because, she felt based on her experience, that men leave. The choices that were available to me and the support forthcoming from my worker no longer exist for women in similar situations today. Throughout this study, I had the compelling and growing sense that we must recognize the almost overwhelming responsibility that we are placing on these young parents. We need to be realistic about what we can expect during a time of tremendous change and adjustment. All are coping with the constant demands of raising young children. Many of these parents are setting up their own households for the first time. And now, society is expecting these parents to comply with compulsory attendance at school as a condition to receiving social assistance benefits.

Almost without exception, the participants spoke very positively of the support they receive from LEAP. While never challenging their perceptions of the program, inside I felt that these young parents live in a different world than the one I knew only a few years ago. For the young parents in my study what matters is that, based on what is available to them right now, LEAP provides much more than what is normally available from social assistance.

Limitations of the Study:

As with all studies, this study has its limitations. I believe that the main limitation of the study is the small size of the sample and the low response rate. In spite of the fact that the LEAP staff were pleasantly surprised by the response rate, a larger sample size and a better response rate would have helped me to be more sure of my conclusions.

Additionally, having completed the analysis, I realized that there are a number of areas that could have been explored more thoroughly. Some have already been mentioned. The literature points out that an important theme in the lives of young women on social assistance is violence (Statistics Canada, 1993, Young Mothers' Resource Group, 1993). As mentioned earlier, not having the means to deal adequately with this area, I avoided dealing with this topic altogether. With more training and with the back up of mental health professionals, I would have dealt with violence more thoroughly.

While not dealing with violence was a conscious choice on my part, one area that could have been addressed was the school history of the participants in the study. It was an error on my part to assume that students would be working at grade level. Since attending school is an expectation of the program, I should have explored whether the participants were weak or strong students, whether they have learning difficulties in specific areas, and whether they perform better in one-on-one or in class room settings.

Finally, future studies should offer a clear definition of the child, as a way of distinguishing between participants of the LEAP program, that is 16 and 17 year-olds who are children, and those over 18 who are young adults. The LEAP program has very different expectations of these two groups, with participation for 16 and 17 year-olds being mandatory and voluntary for those over 18. The LEAP program uses a much more supportive approach to the older group with the goal of encouraging participation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In concluding, it is important to return to my three broad questions introduced in Chapter One. First, does LEAP help women effectively balance their roles and identities as workers and carers? Second, does the LEAP program recognize the particular and unique contexts within which the participants are caring, taking into consideration the support they are receiving from kin, extended networks, community resources, and local child care? Finally, what is the perspective of the participants in terms of the effectiveness of the LEAP program? I will now address each of these three questions.

1) Does LEAP help women effectively balance their roles and identities as workers and carers?

The LEAP program highlights the competing demands of the family ethic and the work ethic. LEAP requires women to assume primary responsibility for the care of their children and home and to actively engage in educational activities to increase their marketability in the work place. The participants in the study are carrying out this work while still very young, most without the support of a partner, and while living in a situation of extreme poverty. As a single parent, they have to assume the dual role of both the mother and father.

Only a longitudinal follow-up study could answer “Does the program help young parents escape poverty and reach their potential?” The little information coming out of the Wisconsin

studies suggest that participants do manage to get off welfare but remain trapped in low wage, part-time or contract jobs that do not help them to escape poverty. Whether the state could or should do more for these young parents remains an ideological question.

LEAP was conceived and developed at a provincial level. The fundamental objective of workfare legislation in keeping with the 'Common Sense Revolution' is to remove people from the welfare rolls, by force if necessary. Teenage mothers were perceived as a social problem, in the sense that they would get pregnant, go on welfare, and raise another generation of welfare recipients. The goal of LEAP was to break this perceived cycle by forcing young teenage mothers back to school where they would receive enough education to qualify for employment.

In Canada's "liberal welfare state" (Esping-Andersen, 1989), a distinction is made between working mothers, (i.e. those raising children and gainfully employed outside the home), and welfare mothers. While both of these groups of mothers are raising children, only working mothers receive parental leave benefits from the state for a period of up to one year. This group is considered to be 'worthy' of state support. Welfare mothers, on the other hand, are considered to be parasites on society. Benefits are consequently kept to a minimum and have a stigma attached. If Canada operated in the tradition of a 'social democratic regime' (Esping-Andersen, 1989), and if interdependence rather than independence were to become the central tenet of what defines citizenship, then caring for others would be recognized as a social provision and supported through the state (Baines, et al., 1999).

2) Does the LEAP program recognize the particular and unique contexts within which the participants are caring, taking into consideration the support they are receiving from kin, extended networks, community resources, and local child care?

It is the role of the regional governments to take the provincial directives and implement them in their own communities. As required, the Region of Sudbury has participated in extensive discussions with community partners and has attempted to put into place an extensive array of supports for the LEAP parents and their children. The infusion of money from the provincial government has meant that the Region is able to provide a host of supports and services that would otherwise not be available. As a result of the LEAP program, many young parents are given an opportunity to at least finish high school.

Despite this assistance, the LEAP program in Sudbury focuses primarily on the school schedule, that is 9 to 3, Monday to Friday, and neglects almost completely what goes on evenings and weekends. What resources does a young parent have after hours for respite care, to do groceries, complete homework or simply to get a break from children? What happens if children are sick and are up all night? Who does a mother turn to if extended family members aren't available? To be more effective, workers in the LEAP program need to carry out a thorough assessment of the needs of the young parent to determine what services need to be provided at all times to ensure that the young parent has the resources to succeed in the program.

3) What is the perspective of the participants in terms of the effectiveness of the LEAP program?

Based on the perception of the participants in my study, the program in Sudbury has many positive aspects that need to be recognized. The co-location of services in the site schools has proven to be very effective. In addition the dedication and commitment of the staff at the site school has helped many participants make substantial progress in their education and, in the process, improve their self-image. I am convinced that the Region of Sudbury has turned what is basically a negative, coercive provincial program into something positive that has made a difference in the lives of the majority of the participants in the study. I would like to give the last word to a couple of the participants that express how I generally felt about the program.

“They covered every base. They paid for my prom ticket and my date’s ticket and my dress.”

“You can’t get any better. They need more publicity on how good it is.”

Appendix A

Recommendations (based on the Study)

1. **Families must live in safe, adequate and affordable housing. A child's development can be adversely affected by their physical surroundings. Sub-standard housing can put children at an increased risk of encountering environmental contaminants and sustaining physical injury. Lone-parent families have the greatest difficulty paying for housing. Many families must subsidize their rent with the grocery money.**
 - **The municipal government must continue to lobby all levels of government to increase the supply of safe, affordable housing.**
2. **Family stress is directly related to parental isolation. Therefore, we must ensure that there is a full range of community supports available to parents to assist them in increasing their self-confidence and independent living skills as well as decreasing the familial cycles of abuse and neglect.**
 - **Development of a residential program where pregnant women and new mothers and their children can reside for a period of up to 18 months. On-site services should include a prenatal program, a mother and baby program and a cooking program. These programs would help the mothers develop the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to the needs of their children as well as work on their own individual plans.**
 - **A semi-supervised apartment program that permits clients to live a more normalized environment than an institutional setting and whereby they can develop independent living skills within a structured program.**
 - **Provision of affordable and accessible respite care allowing parents time away from their children to complete homework, visit with case workers and nurture themselves, etc.**
 - **Develop a 6 week summer program of fun activities and structured programming designed to provide learning opportunities and decrease social isolation for young parents during a time when many other programs have taken a temporary break.**

3. **The lack of a comprehensive, affordable and accessible child care system in Canada is a major weakness in our commitment to the well-being of our country's children. We need a system which meets the unique needs of LEAP parents so that they are not forced to choose their child care based on cost and availability, but rather on what best meets the family's needs.**
 - **Child care at the site schools must be expanded to include older children so all children from the same family can attend the same facility.**
 - **Child care needs to be tailored to the needs of the child rather than the educational program of the parents. As it currently exists, children must change caregivers during the summers months and again when the parent leaves the secondary school system.**
 - **A formal process must be implemented to ensure all participants receive assistance in obtaining quality child care.**
4. **Parents need to be fully aware of the services and expectations of the program.**
 - **Recognizing that having a baby and setting up a household can be overwhelming for a young parent, and that a parent may have difficulty in absorbing all of the information at one sitting, the information about the LEAP program needs to be provided on an on-going basis using a variety of means such as brochures, orientation sessions, and guided tours.**
5. **We must strive to decrease long-term dependence on the social safety net by encouraging young parents to finish their education and find jobs.**
 - **Provide increased incentives for parents to pursue post- secondary education including a reinstatement of the provision of OSAP for social assistance recipients.**
 - **Develop support services to help parents make the transition from secondary school to post-secondary education.**

Appendix B
Interview Guide

I.D. # _ _ _ _ _

Social Background:

S.B.1. Age

S.B.2. Male or Female

S.B.3. Language spoken at home (English, French, Other)

S.B.4. Length of time in program in months

S.B.5. Name of school attended

S.B.6. Number, sex and age(s) of children

S.B.7. Residence, (house, apartment)

S.B.8. Who resides in the home with you?

S.B.9. Have you had to change residences in the last 12 months? Elaborate.

Family Support:

F.S.1. Proximity of family (who are they?)

F.S.2. Contact with family (daily, weekly, monthly, none)

F.S.3. How would you describe the quality of your relationship with your family?

F.S.4. Is your family a source of support for you?

F.S.5. Describe the type of support they provide?

F.S.6. Is the baby's father involved with the child's care? If yes, how.

F.S.7. How would you describe your relationship with the baby's father?

Child Care:

C.C.1. Who cares for your child other than yourself ?

Relationship to child/ren or self

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C.C.2. How hard or easy is it for you to get babysitting when you need it? (Do not include daycare here).

C.C.3. How many hours were you able to get babysitting help last week?

C.C.4. Are there times when you would really like to have more time away from your child/ren?

Very often / quite often/ rarely/ never

C. C.5.What would you do with the time if more child care was available to you?

C.C.6. Are there times when you would really like to have more time with your child/ren?

Very often / quite often/ rarely/ never

C.C.7.Where was your child cared for while you were in school?

C.C.8. Were you happy with the child care options you had?

C.C.9. Did you receive assistance in finding a care provider? From whom?

C.C.10. Did you have to change child care providers? Yes/ No Why? How often?

C.C.11.Was child care a positive experience for you and your child? Expand. Why.

Programme Participation:

- P.P.1. At which site did you attend school?(Is this a different school?)**
- P.P.2. Why did you choose this location? Expand.**
- P.P.3. How did you travel to school? Specify.**
- P.P.4. How many hours a day did you attend school on average?**
- P.P.5. If attended one of the site schools which services did you use? Specify.**
- P.P.6. What other services would have been useful to you?**
- P.P.7. Was the school staff supportive? Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Other. Expand.**
- P.P.8. Were the schools expectations of you realistic? Given time restraints, family responsibilities, etc.**
- P.P.9. Were there times when you felt overwhelmed by your responsibilities? If so, did this affect the relationship with your child(ren)? Expand.**
- P.P.10 Where did you go for support?**
- P.P.11 What kind of support did you need? Did you receive it?**
- P.P.12 What other supports would you find useful?**
- P.P.13. Has attendance in the program been a problem for you? If so, what made it difficult for you to attend, (child care, transportation, etc)?**
- P.P.14. Did you feel accepted by your peers in your school?**

Parenting Classes

P.C. 1. Did you attend parenting classes?

P.C. 2. Were they helpful? Why or why not.

Future Plans

F.P.1. Are you currently attending an educational program?

F.P.2. Do you have a paid job? Full-time Part-time

F.P.3. What is your current occupation?

F.P.4. How long have you been in your present job?

F.P.5.What is your source of income?

F.P.6.What is your total family monthly income?

F.P.7.Do you have any future educational or job training plans?

F.P.8. Will graduating from the LEAP program help you in achieving these plans?

**F.P. 9. Has your perception or your views on school, your abilities, or your plans for the future
changed as a result of completing the program?**

F.P. 10. Do you have anything else you would like to add.

Appendix C

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

My name is Mary Ann Jenkins, a graduate student in the Master of Arts Program in Canadian Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa. I am inviting you to participate in a study about the LEAP (EXPRESS) program in Sudbury. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the LEAP program based on the experience of the young mothers such as yourself who have graduated from the program. The study will provide valuable information to those running the program giving them feedback to further improve the program for future clients. The interview will take approximately one hour and could be held in your home or in any place where you would feel most comfortable. I will provide you with \$20.00 after completion of the interview to cover your time. If you agree, someone from the program will pass along your name and phone number to me and I will contact you to set up an interview appointment.

Appendix D

LETTER OF CONSENT

My name is Mary Ann Jenkins, a graduate student in the Master of Arts Program in Canadian Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa. I am inviting you to participate in a study about the LEAP program in Sudbury. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the LEAP program based on the experience of the young mothers/fathers such as yourself who have graduated from the program. The study will provide valuable information to those running the program giving them feedback to further improve the program for future clients. The interview will take approximately one hour and could be held in your home or in any place where you would feel most comfortable. I will provide you with \$20.00 after the interview to cover your time. Would you be willing to participate in the study?

The study will focus on your opinions of the LEAP program and its impact on you and your children. I will also be asking some general background questions. Your participation in the study is strictly voluntary. I would like for you to answer all the questions, but if there is anything you find too personal, then you don't have to answer. Should you wish to withdraw from or terminate the interview at any time, services to you and/or your family will not be affected in any way.

Participants in the study face the risk that discussing their experiences with the LEAP program may stir up strong negative feelings. Should this occur, I will assist you in getting in touch with a mental health professional. Arrangements have been made through the Social Services Department prior to commencing this study, to ensure a counselor will be available to all participants.

The information that is collected will be kept strictly confidential. Only combined aggregate results will be used in the final report. Your interview guide will be identified only by a number, your name will not be used in any reports and your individual interview guide will be seen by

only myself and my thesis advisors. All interview guides will be destroyed upon completion of the study. I may wish to use direct quotes from this interview and if you agree to this I will ask you to initial your consent on the consent form.

I have read the Consent Letter describing the purpose and the tasks involved in participation in the study on the LEAP Program in Sudbury, which is being conducted by Mary Ann Jenkins of the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University. I further understand that should the information I provide be used in publication or for teaching purposes, my identity will be protected. I acknowledge that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time.

This study has been reviewed by, and has received ethics clearance, through the School of Canadian Studies. This office will receive any complaints or concerns with regard to your involvement in the study.

I have read and understood the above, _____

Participant's Name: (Please print)

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

I further consent to allow the use of direct quotes from this interview. (Initials) _____

Graduate Supervisor's Name: (please print) _____

Telephone Number: (613) 520-2366

If you have any questions about participation in this study, please feel free to contact me, Mary Ann Jenkins at (613) 731-7678 (collect) or (613) 862-4320.

Form 1
Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This agreement is made between Mary Ann Jenkins, referred to below as the researcher, and the City of Greater Sudbury, referred to below as the institution.

The researcher has requested access to the following records that contain personal information and are in the custody or under the control of the institution:

Children's First, Opportunities for Parents Caseload .

The researcher understands and promises to abide by the following terms and conditions:

1. The researcher will not use the information in the records for any purpose other than the following research purpose unless the researcher has the institution's written authorization to do so:

Masters Thesis , Carleton University

2. The researcher will give access to personal information in a form in which the individual to whom it relates can be identified only to the following persons:

None

3. Before disclosing personal information to persons mentioned above, the researcher will enter into an agreement with those persons to ensure that they will not disclose it to any other person. (Not applicable)

4. The researcher will keep the information in a physically secure location to which access is given only to the researcher and to the persons mentioned above.

5. The researcher will destroy all individual identifiers in the information by January 31, 2002 (date) (Not applicable) *mj*

6. The researcher will not contact any individual to whom personal information relates directly or indirectly without the prior written authority of the institution.

7. The researcher will ensure that no personal information will be used or disclosed in a form in which the individual to whom it relates can be identified without the written authority of the institution.

8. The researcher will notify the institution in writing immediately upon becoming aware that any of the conditions set out in this agreement have been breached.

Signed at the City of Greater Sudbury, this 23rd day of Jan, 2002. *ajw*

Mary Ann Jenkins
.....
Researcher

[Signature]
.....
City Clerk

Appendix F
Characteristics of Participants

ID	Age	M/F	Lang	Schl	Length in Progr.	# of child	Gender of child	Age of child	Income per month	House/ Apt.
1	18	F	eng	MJ	5 mo.	1	M	34 mo.	1200	Apt
2	19	F	eng	SA	8 mo.	1	M	8 mo.	200	House
3	22	F	fr	MJ	24 mo.	1	M	42 mo.	1000	Apt.
4	18	F	eng	MJ	DK	2	F	34/21	1100	Apt.
5	17	F	eng	SS	1 mo.	1	F	2 mo.	200	House
6	20	F	eng	SS	6 mo.	1	M	19 mo.	850	Apt.
7	19	M	eng	SS	DK	1	M	6 mo.	950	Apt.
8	17	F	eng	SS	DK	1	M	6 mo.	0*	Apt.
9	19	M	eng	SS	1 mo.	1	M	4 mo.	1026	Apt.
10	19	F	fr	MJ	7 mo.	1	F	7 mo.	1027	Apt.
11	17	F	eng	L	1 mo.	1	M	2 mo.	650	Apt.
12	18	F	eng	SS	5 mo.	1	F	9 mo.	201	Apt.
13	20	F	eng	SS	24 mo.	2	F	24/8	1052	House
14	18	F	eng	SS	3 mo.	1	M	4 mo.	1026	Apt.

* Living with # 07, she does not receive any money directly nor does he receive money for her.

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