

## Family Relations

### **Tuning in to Kids™ in a rural Appalachian community: Parents' response to emotion-focused psychoeducation**

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**Tuning in to Kids™ in a rural Appalachian community: Parents' response to emotion-  
focused psychoeducation**

For Peer Review

## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

## Abstract

**Objective:** To describe how participants in a rural Appalachian community, a geographic location that has been largely underrepresented in the literature, responded to a psychoeducation program about parents' facilitation of children's emotional competence.

**Background:** Rural Americans face barriers in access to services such as psychoeducation programs. The Tuning in to Kids™ (TiK) parent education program focuses on improving parents' awareness of their children's emotions, their ability to promote their children's developing emotional competence, and the strength of the parent-child bond. Though this work has shown beneficial effects in Australia, research is scarce on its implementation in the United States.

**Method:** The TiK program was delivered in two groups of six sessions each, with two participants in the first group and seven participants in the second group. To analyze session transcripts, we employed discourse analysis methods from multiple disciplines, including thematic coding, linguistic analysis, and socio-cultural analysis.

**Results:** Key results included the emergence of four major themes: participants' questioning/adopting TiK methods, parental support across participants, facilitator's leveling the hierarchy, and facilitator self-disclosure.

**Conclusions:** Overall, our interdisciplinary analysis allowed us to draw conclusions about unique ways that both the participants and the facilitator contributed to group success.

**Implications:** Major implications of our study include the importance of service providers' awareness of local norms in relating to participants and communicating program content.

Keywords: Emotions, Parent Education, Rural Families: Appalachian, Qualitative:  
Narrative/Discourse Analysis

## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

**Tuning in to Kids™ in a rural Appalachian community: Parents' response to emotion-focused psychoeducation**

Parental philosophies about children's emotions impact the parent-child relationship and play a key role in children's development of emotional competence (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996). Emotional competence includes awareness of and knowledge about emotions in oneself and others and situationally-appropriate emotional expression and regulation (Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001). Emotional competence is related to better psychological adjustment, peer relationships, and academic performance, as well as reduced behavior problems and thus is a protective factor for children (Wilson, Havighurst, & Harley, 2012).

Recognition of the importance of children's emotional competence and the role that parents play in the socioemotional development of children led to the development of the Tuning in to Kids™ parent education program (TiK) (Havighurst, et al., 2015). TiK is a six-session program with well-documented beneficial effects on parents' emotion socialization practices and children's behavioral and emotional competence (Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, & Prior, 2009; Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010). TiK has been conducted mainly in Australian communities. We implemented TiK with families in rural Appalachia, an upland geographic area in the eastern United States, which has been largely underrepresented in the literature. Research suggests that parents in this region may be more likely to use overcontrolling power-assertive discipline (Peterson & Peters, 1985; Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium [RAYFC], 1996), which has been linked to children's behavior problems (Towe-Goodman & Teti, 2008) and adolescents' internalizing problems (Bosmans, Braet, Beyers, Van Leeuwen, Van Vlierberghe, 2011). This suggests relevance of the TiK psychoeducation program within these communities.

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We adopted an interdisciplinary perspective to examine sessions in-depth with multiple methods. Given the scarcity of prior research on implementing psychoeducation programs in rural Appalachian communities, our goal was to *describe* how parents engaged in TiK sessions, rather than *test* pre-existing notions. By doing so, we contribute to an emerging literature on rural Appalachia as a context for delivering psychoeducational programs.

### **Research Evidence for the Tuning in to Kids Program**

Emotional competence is related to lower behavioral problems (Havighurst et al., 2015). TiK is a parent psychoeducation program aimed at preventing or ameliorating child behavior problems via improvement of the parent-child relationship (Havighurst et al., 2013). Central to TiK is the concept of emotion coaching. Coined by Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (1996), emotion coaching includes (a) parental awareness of their own and their children's emotions, (b) viewing children's emotions as an opportunity for connection and teaching, (c) validation of children's emotions, (d) assisting children with verbally labeling their feelings, and (e) problem-solving with children if appropriate. Through emotion coaching, parents teach children to recognize and manage emotions (Havighurst et al., 2015). To enhance parents' ability to emotion coach, TiK also emphasizes parents' own ability to regulate emotions and parental empathy for children's emotions (Havighurst et al., 2015).

TiK is typically delivered in a group format across six weekly two-hour sessions. Program content is delivered through video demonstrations, role-plays, exercises, and psychoeducation (Havighurst et al. 2009). An efficacy trial of TiK with a community sample of Australian parents of preschoolers showed significant improvements in parental emotion coaching, parental emotion regulation, and child behavior post intervention and six months later (Havighurst et al. 2009). Additionally, compared with a control condition, TiK has been found to

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2  
3 be effective in promoting parents' empathy and attention to children's emotions as well as  
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5 children's emotion understanding and in reducing children's behavior problems in Australian  
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7 parents with preschoolers and school-age children with emerging conduct problems (Havighurst  
8  
9 et al. 2010; Havighurst et al. 2013; Havighurst et al. 2015). Further, a version of TiK for teens  
10  
11 was related to greater reduction in early adolescents' internalizing problems compared with a  
12  
13 control condition (Kehoe, Havighurst, & Harley, 2014). In the next section, we describe aspects  
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15 of the rural Appalachian context that might have influenced parents' responses to TiK.  
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### **Sociocultural Context for Implementing Tuning in to Kids in Rural Appalachia**

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21 **Childrearing norms and values in rural Appalachia.** Literature on norms and values  
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23 related to childrearing in rural Appalachia has highlighted the important role of extended kin  
24  
25 networks and expectations for obedience. First, research suggests that rural Appalachian parents  
26  
27 rely on an expansive support network of kin and close community members for mutual aid, over  
28  
29 and above institutional supports and service providers (RAYFC, 1996; Bowden Templeton,  
30  
31 Bush, Lash, Robinson, & Gale, 2008). Thus, when implementing TiK, the facilitator was  
32  
33 prepared for parents to bring up the complexities of starting a new parenting strategy when other  
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35 caregivers in children's lives might be uninterested in or unsupportive of the new approach.  
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41 Furthermore, rural Appalachian parents report placing a strong emphasis on obedience  
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43 and discipline, which they believe promote children's development into responsible community  
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45 members (Manoogian, Jurich, Sano, & Ko, 2015; Peterson & Peters, 1985, RAYFC, 1996).  
46  
47 Importantly, rural Appalachian parents believe that other community members may criticize  
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49 them for their children's poor behavior (RAYFC, 1996). In combination, this suggests the  
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51 importance of emphasizing TiK program material that addresses the difference between  
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53 validating children's emotions and being permissive when disciplining children's behavior.  
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**Rural Appalachia as a context for parenting education.** A majority of American parents at all income levels worry that their children will at some point struggle with anxiety or depression (Pew Research Center, 2015). Rural Americans face multiple barriers to accessing mental health services, both in terms of availability of resources (i.e., geographic distance from providers, affordability) and in regard to community values and practices (i.e., lack of anonymity within the community; Robinson et al., 2012). These difficulties raise ethical dilemmas for practitioners (Werth, Hastings, & Riding-Malon, 2010), and exacerbate the needs of families in rural portions of Appalachia. The most recent economic recession had greater detrimental impact in Appalachia (as defined federally) compared with other areas in the US (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2011), simultaneously increasing barriers to accessing services and creating further strain for families. Furthermore, rural Appalachians experience a higher prevalence of mental health disorders (independent of substance abuse) compared with other areas in the United States (Zhang, Infante, Meit, English, Dunn, & Bowers, 2008). These aspects of the rural Appalachian context make it all the more crucial to understand successful strategies for implementing parenting programs such as TiK that reduce children's risk of mental health and behavior problems.

As previously noted, TiK was developed and has a strong research base in Australia. According to Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), Australia and the US have similar cultural profiles, which might suggest ready extension of TiK to the US context. Hofstede and colleagues (2010) find that both Australia and the US are low in power distance, valuing societal equality rather than social hierarchies, evidenced through norms such as direct and informal communication between people with dominant and subordinate status (Hofstede et al., 2010). These egalitarian values and communication norms are found specifically in rural

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Appalachian contexts within the US (Puckett, 2000).

### **Study Goals and Overview**

The purpose of the current study was to describe how our participants engaged in TiK sessions. We employed three levels of analysis ranging across various disciplines in order to unpack how this group of participants, who are from a historically marginalized geographical region that is underrepresented in the literature, engaged with TiK. Given the lack of prior research on the topic, we turned to our participants' words to guide us toward what was important throughout the study sessions. Using an in-depth and multifaceted interdisciplinary analysis provided convergent evidence for identification of factors that contributed to parents' successful engagement with and implementation of TiK strategies.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

TiK was delivered in a group format in an Appalachian town to two groups of parents in 2016. We label these the "Spring group" and the "Fall group." Each group consisted of six weekly sessions. A total of nine caregivers participated in at least one session. Four caregivers completed the full program, two from the Spring group and two from the Fall group. We use pseudonyms throughout our manuscript to protect participant confidentiality. All participants were European American. One identified as male and all others as female. Seven were parents and two were grandparents in a parental role. Four were coparenting with another caregiver attending the group (two sets of coparents). The four caregivers who completed the full program were mothers coparenting with a father who had not attended the group. Participant ages ranged from 24 – 76 years, with target children's ages ranging from 3 – 17 years. Three participants also had adult children (ages 28 – 32 years). The number of children under the age of 18 years in



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2  
3 participants' households ranged from 1 – 4. Families were recruited through online and print  
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5 advertisements, outreach to social services, and announcements through churches and schools.  
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7 Parents in the Spring group were paid \$5 per session attended, with a bonus of \$30 for attending  
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9 all 6 sessions. Parents in the Fall group were not paid.  
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### **Facilitator and Site**

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14  
15 A certified facilitator with ties to the host community delivered the TiK program. A  
16  
17 potentially important aspect of our implementation of TiK is that the facilitator (last author)  
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19 spent formative years of her childhood within the community in which we delivered the  
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21 program. Although she was no longer an “insider” in the community, she had maintained  
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23 community ties and had some degree of trust by community members. The credibility of our  
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25 program was strengthened by endorsement from a prominent local church, which hosted TiK as  
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27 part of its outreach, providing space and access to a free community supper and free babysitting.  
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29 The pastors also assisted with advertising the program through personal contacts.  
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### **Procedures**

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35 Informed consent was obtained prior to each participant's first session. Participants  
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37 completed a demographics questionnaire including information about their reasons for coming to  
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39 the program. Each program delivery consisted of six weekly sessions lasting about 2 hours. The  
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41 facilitator used a structured manual (Havighurst & Harley, 2007) and taught emotion coaching  
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43 via psychoeducation, video demonstrations, role plays, and group exercises.  
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47 Sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for later coding and analysis,  
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49 described below. For descriptive purposes, transcripts were analyzed by the Linguistic Inquiry  
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51 and Word Count program (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001) for participants' nonfluencies  
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53 (e.g., uh, um), which may indicate discomfort or difficulty processing or verbalizing the topic of  
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discussion. For our main analysis, in order to fully capture our interdisciplinary perspectives, we engaged in an iterative discourse analysis including three interconnected components: thematic coding, linguistic analysis, and socio-cultural analysis. See Figure 1.

**Interdisciplinary Discourse Analysis**

**Thematic coding.** Thematic coding took place in two phases. First, research team members, who included experts in Developmental Psychology, Marriage and Family Systems, Linguistics, and Appalachian Studies, independently read and noted themes in the transcripts, then discussed them together as a group. Themes that emerged for participants' behavior were (1) questioning of program content and adoption of program skills, as well as (2) lending support to and validating one another. Themes that emerged for the facilitator's behavior were (3) use of self-disclosure and (4) attempts to level/assert the social hierarchy.

Undergraduates were then trained to systematically identify excerpts representing these themes throughout all transcripts. The purpose of this second phase of thematic coding was twofold. First, and most importantly, comprehensively identifying these excerpts was essential for the linguistic analysis (described below). Second, this allowed descriptive quantification of the participants' and facilitator's verbalizations relevant to themes across group sessions. Five coding groups, each comprised of three independent coders, identified excerpts.

For each coding group, undergraduate coders first read through all transcripts for the TiK group they were coding to develop a sense of the overall content and style of communication within the TiK group. They were then trained in the meaning of the theme they were coding, with initial instruction from the second author and dialogue among all group members to ensure understanding of the essence of the theme. Undergraduate coders then independently identified excerpts, moving session by session, with consensus meetings to discuss excerpts identified after

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1  
2  
3 coding each of the six sessions for the TiK group. The second author was consulted to help with  
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5 consensus if needed. Overlap in excerpt identification among at least two coders ranged from  
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7 50% to 74%. Final excerpts used for the linguistic analysis and description of participants' and  
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9 facilitator's verbalizations were those retained by the group following the consensus meeting,  
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11 regardless of how many individual coders had initially identified the excerpt.  
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14  
15 **Linguistic analysis.** Transcript portions with identified excerpts from the thematic  
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17 analysis were pulled for further analysis using a discourse analytic approach to examine and  
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19 compare linguistic expression across speakers, with a focus on turn-taking, phrasing, and  
20  
21 feedback between interlocutors. In linguistics, discourse analysis represents a broad set of tools  
22  
23 for the examination of language in use, with a particular regard for the function and distribution  
24  
25 of linguistic markers in conversation (Cameron, 2001; Schiffrin, 1994). Components of linguistic  
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27 structure that provided insight about participants' engagement with TiK materials included turn-  
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29 taking (i.e., when a participant took the floor, did they opt to change the topic or build on  
30  
31 previous discussion? Was a turn initiated by way of interruption or relinquished via  
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33 backchannelling [e.g., 'mm-hm']?) and length of turns (did participants offer detailed narratives  
34  
35 in response to prompts, or did they provide minimal feedback?). We also considered how  
36  
37 politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) mitigated face-threatening acts, as participants  
38  
39 shared details about their personal beliefs and emotions with a group of people outside their  
40  
41 intimate circle. Finally, we considered ways that participants displayed solidarity with each other  
42  
43 and with the facilitator by mirroring phrasing or speech patterns, providing confirmation and  
44  
45 positive feedback (such as backchannelling, e.g., "uh-huh/yeah/right"), and statements of  
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47 agreement or similarity (e.g., "I agree/me too").  
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54 **Socio-cultural analysis.** Additional qualitative analysis through a socio-cultural lens  
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both reinforced the significance of earlier identified themes and detected additional patterns and themes that emerged from an Appalachian studies perspective. Additional patterns and themes that emerged were: (1) assertion of parenting norms (e.g., children should do as parents say) and (2) the importance of the facilitator's signaling acceptance of (or lack of surprise about) local norms, such as rural traditions not usually shared by suburban or metropolitan families.

### **Results**

#### **Descriptive Information**

Examination of nonfluencies (e.g., uh, um) among participants who attended more than one session showed a general drop in nonfluency proportions from their first to last session attended, suggesting greater comfort speaking in the group over time. Among the four participants who completed the group, two showed an increase in nonfluencies in the fifth session, which addresses anger. Though their rate of nonfluencies remained lower than in their initial session, this may suggest that anger was a difficult emotion to discuss, which is consistent with prior research on discussion about negative emotion (Fivush, Berlin, Sales, Mennuti-Washburn, & Cassidy, 2003). Another participant who completed the group showed an increase in nonfluencies in both the fourth and fifth sessions. These sessions included improvisational role plays, which can challenge verbal fluency. This participant's rate of nonfluencies decreased to its lowest point in the sixth and final session. Please see Figure 2.

Examination of themes in participants' verbalizations at the group level showed that questioning about program content and support for each other were evident in the first session. Excerpts demonstrating adoption of program content emerged in the second session, approximately doubled in frequency in the third session, and then remained steady through the sixth and final session. Instances of participants' support for each other more than doubled

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3 between the second and third sessions and remained notably higher than the first two sessions  
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5 through the sixth and final session. In combination, these patterns suggest that the third session  
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7 marked a turning point in group buy-in, both in regard to mastery of program content and in  
8  
9 regard to group cohesion. Please see Figure 3.  
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12 Individual-level examination of themes in participants' verbalizations also suggest that  
13  
14 the third session marked a turning point. Please see Table 1. All participants who remained in the  
15  
16 group through the third session completed the group. Three of the four participants who  
17  
18 completed the group asked questions about the program content during their first session,  
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20 whereas only one of the five participants who did not complete the group did so. Instances of  
21  
22 support for each other did not differentiate participants who completed the group from those who  
23  
24 did not. This suggests that engaging specifically with program content during their initial  
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26 session—including via skeptical questioning of that content— was important in participants'  
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28 choice to continue in the group. Furthermore, for four of the five participants showing adoption  
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30 of program content, questions about program content preceded demonstration of adopting  
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32 program content in later sessions. This suggests the active nature of participants' engaging with  
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34 program content as part of the process of incorporating emotion coaching into their own  
35  
36 parenting practices.  
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42 Finally, facilitator's verbalizations are shown in Figure 4. Because self-disclosure also  
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44 serves to level the hierarchy, instances of these themes are shown in a stacked column. In the  
45  
46 first session, in which the program content and supporting research evidence are first explained,  
47  
48 facilitator assertion of the hierarchy occurred approximately twice as often as self-disclosure and  
49  
50 leveling the hierarchy. Across the remaining sessions, instances of asserting the hierarchy  
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52 decreased whereas self-disclosure and leveling the hierarchy increased, resulting in an  
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increasingly greater ratio of self-disclosure and leveling the hierarchy to asserting the hierarchy.

This may reflect the facilitator's response to groups' increasing cohesion and mastery of program content after the third session.

### **Overview of Interdisciplinary Discourse Analysis**

Within the sessions, there were many structured activities that participants engaged in (e.g., role-playing using a script) or responded to (e.g., video clips), but conversation was allowed to and did meander across topics. This offered opportunities for participants to agree with or offer supportive feedback to the facilitator and fellow participants, propose examples relevant to their own lives, and question program concepts when they conflicted with their worldview. Below, we turn a discourse analytic lens to key moments in the TiK sessions in which these kinds of interactions occurred, assessing how the facilitator and participants positioned themselves towards each other and towards the TiK content. We also highlight local norms that required facilitator negotiation. These lenses allow us to draw conclusions about participants' engagement with the material and the success of implementing TiK in this small Appalachian community. Due to space constraints, we only cover representative pieces of our results for each of our major findings rather than an exhaustive account of our analysis. We refer to the six Spring sessions as sessions S1-S6, and the six Fall sessions as sessions F1-F6.

### **Participant Questioning and Adopting TiK Methods**

Consistent with the descriptive information noted above, our analysis indicated that participants showed progress with TiK concepts by first questioning them and working through how they could fit into their existing parenting practices. Below, we discuss ways parents' questioning of TiK concepts resulted in adoption of TiK strategies in their parenting over time.

**Questioning TiK concepts.** Participants' engagement with TiK concepts was couched in

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1  
2  
3 their cultural understandings of appropriate relationships between adults and children, and their  
4  
5 beliefs about the ways that discipline and control ought to be exerted in parent-child interactions.  
6  
7 Some of the central concepts in TiK appeared to participants to be at odds with how they  
8  
9 believed parents and children should interact. One consistent example of this was participants'  
10  
11 push back against the TiK-related concept of attending to children's emotions before addressing  
12  
13 their behavior, which was often perceived as competing with the notion that children should do  
14  
15 what parents say. Participants' questioning of responding to misbehavior with emotion reflection  
16  
17 was identified during both the linguistic and socio-cultural stages of our analysis.  
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21  
22 In the excerpt that follows, Cat responds to a modeled response by saying, "I would have  
23  
24 totally failed at emotion coaching." She continues:  
25

**Excerpt 1 (Session F3)**

26  
27 Cat: *I mean*, I would have just – like, I would have just been like, 'Excuse me? There is  
28  
29 no reason you need to speak to me that way.' So, anyway, *I guess* I definitely  
30  
31 failed. *In my mind, I guess* I was just thinking there's never an excuse for that  
32  
33 kind of behavior. So why would you talk through with them? I don't know that I  
34  
35 would have put that together.

36  
37 Facilitator: Yeah. And I want to pause for a moment now because you do as parents still  
38  
39 have the right to insist on using the standards on how we talk to each other in the  
40  
41 house. And, in this example, the mom didn't say anything to her daughter in the  
42  
43 second one about 'talk to me differently,' she focused on the emotion. But—

44  
45 Cat: *I mean*, I just think you should be respected. *I mean*, I don't think it should be 'Well,  
46  
47 I don't want to talk to you.' *You know*, I think it should be, 'Well, I'm your mom,  
48  
49 and you do not talk to me in that tone.' *You know*, then they get mad.

50  
51 Facilitator: Yeah, and so from the emotion-coaching approach, it's more the order that  
52  
53 you do things than the fact that you insist that these are standards for how we talk  
54  
55 to each other in the house. So it would be possible to do what this mom did in  
56  
57 terms of, 'let me figure out what's upset you' and 'you know, I understand how  
58  
59 disappointing that is,' and then once the daughter's calmed down a little, bringing  
60  
61 up that, 'you know, it's not okay to talk to me like that. That's our family rule.'  
62  
63 So the emotion-coaching doesn't mean you have to let go of all the behavior you  
64  
65 want to see, it just means you're understanding the child's perspective first.

66  
67 Cat: So you want to do in that order?

68  
69 Facilitator: In that order, yeah.

70  
71 Cat: Because if you don't do that in that order, then she shuts down?

72  
73 Facilitator: Then they shut down. Yeah. Exactly.

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3 In this excerpt, Cat couched her understanding of parent-child relationships in terms of  
4 demanding respect, stating that she thinks that demanding respect would mean “failing” at  
5 emotion coaching. Her use of qualifiers like “I mean,” “I guess,” and “you know” (italicized  
6 above) before nearly every clause as she described how she has “failed” demonstrate an  
7 awareness that her perspective may not be shared by the facilitator and thus must be qualified as  
8 her own stance on the matter (Taylor & Cameron, 1987). Crucially, in response to these  
9 comments, the facilitator allowed space for Cat’s worldview, pointing out that expecting children  
10 to speak in a certain way to their parents does not represent a failure to emotion coach. Instead,  
11 the facilitator explained to Cat that it is simply a matter of prioritizing the empathizing step  
12 *before* the correcting behavior step. This clarification helped bridge the gap between Cat’s pre-  
13 existing expectations and her understanding of TiK concepts, allowing a moment of self-  
14 proclaimed “failure” to become a moment of progress. Indeed, some of the instances of  
15 questioning show the most engagement with TiK, as participants actively sought ways to adapt  
16 the new set of skills they were building to their existing belief system about parenting.

17  
18  
19 Other examples of parents’ open questioning of TiK concepts identified during the socio-  
20 cultural analysis include Celia’s indication that her sense of good parenting is being able to  
21 “make them listen to me without having to fuss at them” and that children should obey, not  
22 “buck up and just want to do what they want to” (session S2). Many of the participants felt it  
23 should be “easy” to ask their children to do something and “you know, the first time, then them  
24 do it” (Celia, session S2; Minnie, session S1). In the Fall group, Cat worried that allowing her  
25 child additional time for transitions would risk her ability to function as an employee in ‘the real  
26 world’ later: “That is not life...I’m trying to say when your parents ask you to do something, you  
27 do it because we ask” (session F3). Sara explained that she believes that when she was a child,  
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3 children “knew to behave” (session F1). Similarly, Kyle proposed that children’s behavior is  
4  
5 poor because of a lack of corporal punishment (session F2). Each of these instances illustrated  
6  
7 participants’ belief that children should obey parental authority, which leads to their questioning  
8  
9 the value of TiK concepts that are focused on children’s emotions rather than on correcting  
10  
11 behavior and the fit of TiK concepts with participants’ established parenting practices.  
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14  
15 Despite their concerns and queries, participants were simultaneously open to learning  
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17 new methods that were not, in Kyle’s words, “traditional.” Kyle offered, “See, you’ve got people  
18  
19 like me that was raised a certain way, if you don’t come to a class like this, you don’t even know  
20  
21 this...kind of thought even exists” (session F2). Cat responded by pointing out how novel it was  
22  
23 to have exposure to Tuning in to Kids: “Just think, it’s only three colleges in the world, in the  
24  
25 US, that’s doing it, right? So we’re really lucky. There’s not a lot of people doing it right now, is  
26  
27 there?” Kyle then asked for more information about the success of the program in Australia. For  
28  
29 these participants, questioning TiK concepts was a necessary component of learning and  
30  
31 adopting parental emotion coaching skills.  
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33

34  
35 **Adopting TiK methods.** A clear measure of TiK program success is when participants  
36  
37 actively adopt the tools from the program, and report back on progress they have made  
38  
39 communicating with and connecting with their children and deploying TiK strategies. In Excerpt  
40  
41 2 below, participant Cat described a major break-through in her relationship with her daughter,  
42  
43 following her successful adoption of TiK concepts:  
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45

**Excerpt 2 (session F3)**

46  
47 Cat: I think I’ve been a little more relaxed being here [participating in the TiK program]  
48  
49 because I feel like I told you to begin with, it was [from my daughter:] “you’re  
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51 mean! You’re just always so mean to me!” And I would always try to just make  
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53 her think or know why I’m not mean. Like argue back and forth with her when it  
54  
55 really doesn’t matter that she says that I’m mean. “Well, I’m sorry that you feel  
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57 that way, it really hurts my feelings that you said that.” And you know, I just  
58  
59 wanted to add that. It’s a little more pressure off of you, as far as being a mom,  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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**you know?**

Facilitator: Yeah. Yeah, that's making me think of—I wrote it on my little piece of construction paper—our emotion-coaching, that being able to sort of let go that every moment isn't perfect, that her feelings are her feelings. Being able to let go of that, and being more open and relaxed opens you up to be more aware of her emotions. And like you said, Cat, instead of feeling like you have to fight against it.

Cat: And that's what it is basically *I guess*, **isn't it?**

Facilitator: Yeah.

Cat: So it's okay if you feel that way. And *I guess* I felt like she was kind of being defiant, telling me that I was mean, or being disrespectful to me. And *I guess* really she's not. *I mean*, she's just stating how she feels, **right?**

Facilitator: Yeah.

Cat: So that's okay. It doesn't mean that I need to correct her, that she can have that feeling.

In this excerpt, Cat discussed use of TiK skills, describing how she has developed a new framing of her interactions with her daughter. At multiple points, Cat used past or past habitual verb forms (“I would always”, “I felt like”) to reference her previous behavior and beliefs, which centered on correction of defiant or disrespectful behavior. Throughout this exchange, Cat employed mitigating language such as “I guess” or “I mean” (italicized above) and makes use of tag questions like “you know?”, “isn't it?”, and “right?” (bolded above) to elicit positive feedback, confirming Cat's improved awareness of the emotion coaching framework.

Socio-cultural analysis shows that, despite Celia's prior sense of good parenting as telling kids what to do, she grasped key TiK concepts, such as the benefit of providing specific emotion labels when asking children about their experience. For example, she said that when “you say to a kid ‘you look pretty worried, you know, [do you want to talk about what's going on],” then “it opens that door, like you said, you know, if he decides to talk about it, you know, I'm, I'm sitting there to listen to him” (session S3). Soon after, Minnie said, “Just asking ‘How are you?,' see, doesn't work.” Instead, say, ‘yeah, it sounds like this,’ and then they'll say yes or no.”

Overall, our analysis identified moments in which participants questioned central TiK

## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

concepts, as well as moments in which participants discussed adoption of TiK methods, both of which indicate progress in participants' emotion coaching skills.

### Parental Support between Participants

In our sessions, the participants themselves played a significant role in setting the tone for conversations. Especially in Appalachian cultural practices, where there is an emphasis on egalitarianism in “‘helpin’ out’ contexts” that replicate “bonding relationships among task participants” (Puckett, 1995), it is essential to note the ways that the participants provided support for each other—and, crucially, the ways that the facilitator allowed flexibility and space for that to occur. Excerpt 3 offers an example of mutual support between Celia and Minnie.

#### **Excerpt 3 (session S5)**

Facilitator: You don't have to be perfect at [emotion coaching]. And the other thing is that if your kids don't seem to respond right away, that doesn't mean it's not going to work ever. Just means it's different.

Minnie: Keep trying, yeah

Facilitator: yeah, so, so—yes, Minnie, **it is not too late**

Minnie: I was like, “huh, **it's too late**”

Celia: No, *believe me*, **it's not**.

Facilitator: **It's not**, yeah.

Celia: Like I said, I—I've seen the difference in mine. Before I even started—

Minnie: My, my younger responds pretty well. She's kind of...yeah I can work it and she, it—it's the older that's, that's tricky for me because she's, you know, like the one saying, “I know you're trying this new stuff on me,” and I'm apparently not comfortable with it, I'm not pulling off the, you know. I feel like it doesn't come natural, which I wish it did. But I guess with more practice it will, so...

Facilitator: Yeah and that's, um, part of why I wanted to bring it up at the beginning, like if it's feeling like, “oh my gosh, this is not natural,” it's normal to feel that way.

Celia: You're self-doubting yourself.

Minnie: Just keep trying.

Celia: There's the self-doubt.

Facilitator: Yes.

Celia: *I've done that several times*, me going through the emotion coaching with (name), you know it...but, like I've said, I've seen the difference, you know, between me and him, you know, because like I said at first this child was uh...I mean he was just out. I mean, me and him could not get along, and you know now, you know we—we see eye to eye on certain things. So it—Minnie, *believe me*, it—it will adjust.

Facilitator: That—**that's really good** to hear that you've already seen that change.

Celia: It—it will adjust

## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

Facilitator: So  
Minnie: **That's good**, thank you. Good encouragement.

In this excerpt, Celia offered Minnie the reassurance that she herself has seen changes in her relationship with her children following adoption of TiK methods. She took an authoritative, experienced stance here by repeating “believe me” multiple times, and stating “I’ve seen the difference,” “I’ve done that several times” (italicized). By describing her own experience and using colloquial phrasing (e.g., “we see eye to eye”) rather than drawing on TiK terminology, Celia spoke to Minnie as a fellow mother and community member, acting as an ambassador for TiK to someone experiencing doubt (an emotion Celia labels twice; underlined). Although the facilitator is not the central speaker in this exchange, when she does chime in, the participants mirror her wording (bolded), demonstrating agreement with her. Thus, we see here how parental support from other participants can also strengthen and bolster the role of the facilitator.

Participants also used an understanding of specific contexts that are common for Appalachian families, such as children’s chores—including gathering wood for a wood stove—to connect with each other. In Excerpt 4, Cat and Molly offered support as Kyle described a difficult experience following his son’s return from visiting another caregiver.

**Excerpt 4 (session F2)**

Kyle: Well we, I mean we’ve just got to keep, it’s just been rougher here lately. It seems like the more time he goes over there, you know?

Facilitator: Yeah yeah yeah

Kyle: Which in the back of my mind I’m jealous, too, you know, I can’t lie, I really am

Cat: **It’s hard**, I’m sure

Facilitator: And I’m really glad that you recognize that you’re jealous, **that’s hard**

Cat: That’s a lot

Molly: **It’s hard** to admit our wrongs, too

Kyle: Well he’s my best friend, you know what I mean?

Facilitator: Yeah

Kyle: You know **it’s hard** to be together, the one that has to, you know, be the prick sometimes {Facilitator: Mhmm} Because then he goes over here and [other caregiver] lets him do whatever. As a kid, you know

Rita: *He has a different respect for him*

## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 Kyle: You're either cool or—

4 Facilitator: Oh yeah. Yeah, so it's not only that you're losing the time, but you feel like  
5 you then have to sort of make up for the lack of structure as well, and lose the fun  
6 too.  
7

8 Kyle: When he's coming back it takes a little time to get things back on track

9 Rita: *Yeah sometimes he comes back with an attitude and it takes him a while*

10 Kyle: Like this morning he, or was it yesterday morning, he got home Sunday night and  
11 he had to carry wood, he had to carry some wood, I was putting the stove on it or  
12 something. And Sunday morning he was getting ready to go on the school bus and  
13 I had it out then  
14

15 Cat: But you know, doing the wood—he remembers stuff like that more than you ever  
16 think. You know, that's even one-on-one time, even though he's working. 'Cause  
17 we make her do that, we burn firewood and I don't know what she can do, she's  
18 eight years old, but you know.  
19

20 Kyle began this exchange by admitting to his struggle with sharing caregiving of his son,  
21 and how that impacts their relationship. Participants Cat and Molly, and the facilitator, all mirror  
22 each other in validating this feeling (“it’s hard”; bolded), which Kyle echoed back as he  
23 continued his description of their difficulties. Kyle’s wife, Rita, added small details, supporting  
24 Kyle’s narrative, as he continued on to share an anecdote about carrying wood for the stove. Cat  
25 did not miss a beat, understanding the significance of this activity and noting that this is also a  
26 chore her eight-year-old daughter does, and that from her perspective this is quality time (the  
27 very thing Kyle expressed doubts he was getting with his son). This sort of uptake, both in terms  
28 of identifying this chore as a shared activity across households and in re-framing it as a positive  
29 experience to share with your children, well illustrates parental support across participants.  
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43 Participants’ mutual support was also noted during the socio-cultural stage of our  
44 analysis. In the Spring group, Celia and Minnie’s first joint session was the third session. They  
45 quickly made efforts to acknowledge common cause despite different socio-economic  
46 circumstances. Minnie connected with Celia by saying that she, too, went back and forth  
47 between her divorced parents’ homes as a child. Celia connected in return by saying later in the  
48 same session, “I’m like Minnie, it would be, it’s always got to be your way” (session S3).  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 In the Fall group, Kyle praised Rita, saying “She’s an awesome mom.” Sara, another  
4 participant, says “She’d make a great nurse. She seems like she has a lot of qualities” (session  
5 S1). Here Sara referenced back to Kyle’s wife Rita’s saying she cries every day because nursing  
6 school is so hard, and reached out to her and supported her. Also in the Spring group, Gigi and  
7 Sara were supportive when Cat indicated concerns about her daughter, with Gigi responding  
8 encouragingly, “She sounds like [my daughter],” and Gigi’s mother Sara concurring, saying,  
9 “She does sound like [name], my granddaughter” (session F1). These excerpts exemplify how  
10 participants provided support for each other broadly, becoming in some sense part of each  
11 others’ network of “fictive kin” (Bowden Templeton et al., 2008) for the span of the groups and  
12 encouraging one another’s progress in adopting TiK methods into their parenting. Participants’  
13 mutual support appears to have helped create solidarity and fostered a communal atmosphere  
14 during sessions, which may have promoted attendance as well as adoption of TiK methods.  
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**Facilitator Leveling the Hierarchy**

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33 Our analysis also revealed important interactional moves made by the facilitator. Both the  
34 linguistic and socio-cultural stages of our analysis supported the importance of moments when  
35 the facilitator leveled the hierarchy between herself as the expert and the participants. This  
36 happened in both explicit and implicit ways, described below.  
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42 **Explicit leveling of hierarchies by facilitator.** In the excerpt that follows, the facilitator  
43 leveled the hierarchy by asserting her different roles in the group.  
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**Excerpt 5 (session F4)**

47 Cat: What are we going to do when they run into girls you just don’t want them to be  
48 around?

49 Facilitator: Well, I can tell you. This is now my crackpot opinion, but my Mom’s strategy  
50 was to get them at our house. If I was going to hang out with people she didn’t  
51 really care for, it was when she was there. Not everyone follows that. But that was  
52 – she didn’t want to say, ‘don’t hang out with them,’ because that makes them  
53 more attractive.  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 Cat: If you tell them not to, hey, it's going to make it worse.

4 Molly: That's right.

5 Cat: Lots of prayer, lots of emotional coaching, and pray it works out the best.

6 Facilitator: I've got to say, those friends who are not the best influences, when they were  
7 with my mom they all had good behavior. Um, but that's not me as a psychologist  
8 that is just me talking.

9 Molly: **That is still good advice though.**

10 Cat: **It is good advice, and that's okay to give us your advice. Your personal advice,  
11 we will take it.**

12 Molly: That's right.

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16 In bold, we see that the participants happily accepted the facilitator's advice ("that is still  
17 good advice," "that's okay to give us your advice"), which the facilitator presented as a mother  
18 and daughter ("crackpot opinion," "my mom's strategy"), instead of as a professional ("that's not  
19 me as a psychologist, that is just me talking"). By providing multiple disclaimers and the phrase  
20 "This is now" her opinion, the facilitator shifted footing (Goffman 1981), providing clear signals  
21 to the participants that she is "taking off her psychologist hat," and shifting her role in the  
22 interaction. While it might appear that she relinquished some of her authority in doing so, in fact  
23 she is bolstering the idea that when she *does* "have her psychologist hat on," she is providing an  
24 expert's opinion rather than friendly advice. Moreover, the universally positive responses to the  
25 facilitator sharing personal advice here ratify the participants' own offering of advice to each  
26 other. Thus, the hierarchy between participants and facilitator was temporarily leveled, as the  
27 facilitator voiced her perspective from a different role, while retaining her authority as expert  
28 otherwise in their interactions. Cat and Molly's assurance that "your personal advice, we will  
29 take it," suggests that they may accept the facilitator as part of their extended kin network.

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48 Also notable within Excerpt 5 is that Cat presented emotion coaching and praying as  
49 parallel techniques for improving her relationship with her children ("lots of prayer, lots of  
50 emotional coaching, and pray it works out the best"), by listing these strategies in a coordinated  
51 unit (Taylor & Cameron, 1987). This again demonstrated integration of new skills with a pre-

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3 existing set of beliefs about how to approach parenting, and fits with literature suggesting that  
4  
5 many residents of rural Appalachia find no contradiction between faith and other approaches to  
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7 health care (Coyne, Demian-Popescu, & Friend, 2006). The facilitator, by valuing “regular folk  
8  
9 wisdom” and allowing space for these sorts of interactions, was able to build solidarity with the  
10  
11 participants and demonstrate that she is a safe member of their support network.  
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15 This deliberate, explicit leveling of hierarchies by the facilitator was also noted during  
16  
17 our socio-cultural analysis. In the Fall group, as the facilitator taught participants about brain  
18  
19 development, she deferred to Molly and Rita, whom she said “may know this better” as they are  
20  
21 in the nursing field (session F2). Here, the facilitator acknowledged their expertise and gave  
22  
23 them the floor in this domain. Similarly, in proposing strategies for addressing children’s  
24  
25 emotions, the facilitator gently proposed “So one suggestion, and you tell me if you think this  
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27 would work for” your children, later following up with “I don’t know what they feel so I might  
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29 be wrong” (session F4). In this example, the facilitator acknowledged the participants’ expertise  
30  
31 as parents, leaving room for participants to speak for their own families. By asserting her  
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33 expertise in some areas but explicitly acknowledging that participants had their own expertise,  
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35 the facilitator fostered a communal environment to which each participant contributed.  
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40 **Implicit leveling of hierarchies by facilitator.** The facilitator also demonstrated implicit  
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42 leveling of social hierarchy by providing a comfortable space for participants’ unselfconscious  
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44 expression of local norms. One way the facilitator did this was by referencing her own roots in  
45  
46 the community. She frequently told stories about her family who lived in the same region where  
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48 the sessions took place. Her father was a minister in the church, and some of the stories she opted  
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50 to share centered on attending church with her family. In Excerpt 6, the facilitator set the scene  
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52 for a story of how her mother showed an emotional response to her behavior, which prompted  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

Molly to tell a detailed narrative about her own ways of responding to her daughter:

**Excerpt 6 (session F5)**

Facilitator: One way that my mom – I think I might have mentioned this to y'all at an earlier session – my mom would be in the choir loft, while my brother, sisters, and I were in the pews. Because – my dad was a minister – she was in the choir. She would just tilt her eyebrow a little, and there would be a little tightness at the corner of her mouth, and we knew we were in trouble with that. No one else would have known from looking at her, but we knew. So, sometimes there's – your face can give it away. So, when you think about a time that you have been angry, how do you show it? (Pause) What's your style of expressing anger?

Molly: I think mine is my tone of voice, too, and probably my face. Probably both.

Facilitator: Can you think of a time that you've noticed your tone of voice? Or your face?

Molly: Well, last Wednesday, right after we had this [session], interestingly enough, I picked [child's name] up from school.

Facilitator: Mm-hm.

Molly: And she said, uh, 'what are we having for dinner?' and I was telling her. Well, she just started up, fussing and complaining, and that kind of made me angry, you know, so I was – I'm sure I got sharper with her. And then she was just kind of crying, and not wanting to go along with anything I said. So I remembered, I was like, 'Okay! Emotion coaching!' So I said, '[child's name], you seem upset today.' [Molly continues across several turns]

Here, Molly mirrored the facilitator's disclosure of personal details by providing an in-depth example of her own, following the themes put forth by the facilitator. We suggest that this narrative was offered in response to the facilitator's leveling the hierarchy in her previous turn by providing a colorful, relatable example, which just so happened to take place in the very church where the sessions were being held.

Implicit leveling of the hierarchy within the TiK groups was also evident from the socio-cultural stage of our analysis. During the Fall group, the facilitator accepted participants' expression of local norms with ease, such as Cat's discussion of squirrel hunting (session F1) or Kyle's discussion of wood-gathering as a child's chore (session F2). Furthermore, the facilitator responded to wood-gathering by telling her own stories of yard work with her dad and "shelling beans with my grandmother and my mom, that kind of, we were busy doing something but we also had an opportunity to talk." She thereby integrated examples of common local activities into

## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 the TiK framework, illustrating that common activities are also opportunities for parents to  
4 engage in emotion coaching with their children. Similarly, in the Spring group, the facilitator  
5 responded with familiarity to emotion terms specific to the local context, such as “hateful”  
6 (session S5) and “aggravated” (session S2). Overall, by implicitly leveling the hierarchy through  
7 non-judgmental responses to expressions of local norms, the facilitator promoted participants’  
8 engagement in sessions, reflection on the TiK concepts, and application to their own lives.  
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17 Importantly, just as the facilitator deferred to participants’ nursing or other expertise,  
18 participants deferred to the facilitator’s expertise on particular topics. Kyle in the Fall group  
19 acknowledged, “I mean, you don’t even know this train of thought exists. And that’s one of the  
20 big reasons why I’m asking all these questions, because you’re a psychologist and you know  
21 thought process. That’s what you went to school [for]” (session F2). On multiple occasions,  
22 Molly solicited the facilitator’s professional opinion with questions such as, “Is it normal...?”  
23 (session F5) and “Now would it be appropriate...?” (session F6).  
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### **Facilitator Self-Disclosure**

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36 Another important interactional move by the facilitator that our analyses revealed was the  
37 use of self-disclosure, or appropriately expressing information about the facilitator’s personal  
38 life. Self-disclosure may be considered a form of leveling the hierarchy, as it shows the  
39 facilitator’s willingness to be vulnerable with participants, and may have the specific effect of  
40 normalizing the parenting issues being discussed. In Excerpt 7 below, the facilitator gave a  
41 personal example in order to demonstrate how well-intentioned questioning can backfire if  
42 children hear the question “why” as a judgement. This in turn spurred the participants to chime  
43 in about their own similar interactions with their children.  
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#### **Excerpt 7 (session S3)**

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54 Facilitator: For my kids, it’s like the minute I say, “why?,” it’s like I am telling them they  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

were [wrong].

Minnie: **Yeah that's me**, uh, that's definitely here, yeah. And I'm just—I'm just trying to figure out the situation! { Facilitator: [*laughs*] yes} I'm not really trying to—you know what I mean { Facilitator: [*laughing*] uh-huh, uh-huh} I'm coming at it, I think—but it's coming across very judgmental and very: “pffft well, mom, nooooo!” [*laughing*] { Facilitator: yeah} yeah so the, why um, I need to do that myself

Facilitator: yeah

Celia: **I have a tendency to do that** and, you know, offer advice.

Facilitator: Mm-hm, uh-huh, exactly, yep.

Minnie: **I did that** right off the bat

Following the facilitator's self-disclosure, Celia and Minnie both offered up admissions in response (“yeah that's me”/“I have a tendency to do that”/“I did that”), identifying similar issues in their own parent-child interactions. As in the previous example, we see that both participants engaged with the facilitator, in this case committing the face-threatening act of admitting the way conversations with their children go wrong, and even voiced their children's distaste with this approach (“pffft well, mom, nooooo!”). The laughter (italicized and underlined) from both facilitator and participant in this excerpt allowed for a release of tension during this session of confessing both a misstep and a frustration in how this is received by their children.

A crucial point to clarify here is that participants did not validate or offer up their own personal narratives about emotion coaching *every* time the facilitator made herself vulnerable by disclosing personal information. However, there did seem to be a cumulative effect over time, as participants became more familiar with the facilitator's life and background story. At one point during session F3, the facilitator admitted to feeling tired, to which a participant responded, “I mean, you have to drive back tonight, don't you?” The facilitator acknowledged that she needed to get back in order to get her daughter off to school the next morning. The participant offered, “We were talking about that, I do a step-study with [another participant] over here, and we were talking about how late you must get home and what dedication it is that you're doing this.” This

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comment demonstrates that the participants thought about the facilitator and her own family structure in an empathetic way, considering her as a mother in addition to a psychologist.

In some cases, what followed the self-disclosure was not necessarily personal anecdotes, but rather further probing into parental decision-making tasks, as seen in Excerpt 8.

**Excerpt 8 (session S1)**

Facilitator: Um, when I think back to—my mom could see what I was {Minnie: **mm-hm**} doing with my friends {Minnie: **yeah**} ‘cause we had to be there in person {Minnie: **right**} and I can’t see what’s happening on the computer—

Minnie: And that brings up the question you know how much privacy do you allow {Facilitator: **mm-hm**} and how much do you monitor {Facilitator: **mm-hm**} and then protect, you know. That—that is something that we’re kinda in the middle of, and we have a thing where you charge [your devices] downstairs {Facilitator: **uh-huh**}, don’t have the ipod—devices—upstairs after bedtime, you know {Facilitator: **mm-hm**} things—but then those can be challenges, {Facilitator: **right**} like do you, do you fight those battles or not? {Facilitator: **right**} so, but...and you know, giving that independence but yet, {Facilitator: **right**} you know, are they ready for that? So...

Facilitator: yeah

In this excerpt, the facilitator shared her own perspective on what has changed in parenting since her mother’s generation, and Minnie chimed in, finishing the facilitator’s sentence by raising a number of questions about the role of technology in parenting (underlined).

Heavy backchannelling (bolded) came from both facilitator and participant in this section, demonstrating active listening and deep engagement with each other about the issue raised.

Crucially, the next step in this conversation was *not* to provide an answer to these questions posed. Rather, it sufficed in this interaction to acknowledge this challenge and its complexities, and to validate each other’s burden of these sorts of parental decision-making processes.

The contagious effect of the facilitator’s self-disclosure was identified in our socio-cultural analysis as well. As early as the first session in the Spring group (session S1), the facilitator responded warmly to Minnie by saying, “Yeah, um, I definitely see that with my kids, too. Neil is more of a, a, a, like, you know, the sort of the ‘look before you leap,’ he’s a looker,

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3 and Leah's a leaper. You have to adapt for the kids, too." The facilitator also reflected that "there  
4 was a lot that was different" when she was growing up, such as that "my mom didn't work  
5 outside the home." Later in the same session, Minnie relayed her anxiety over whether her  
6 parenting challenges are normal: "Yeah, I think, that's what I think, is 'are we the only ones?'  
7 You know, I feel like I'm on an island." The facilitator's early admission that she struggles with  
8 parenting, too, contributed to a sense that child-rearing difficulties are normal and to a sense that  
9 "we're in this together," rather than creating a formal clinician-patient or teacher-student  
10 environment. During the final session of the Fall group (session F6), the facilitator related a  
11 particularly tough morning and her struggle with whether to "let it go" when her daughter acted  
12 out a bit. In response, one of the participants exclaimed encouragingly, "That's good! Yeah, so  
13 it's helping you to do all this as well," to which the facilitator responded, "It is!"  
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### Discussion

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31 Our interdisciplinary analysis, centering participants' own voices, identified important  
32 aspects of participant and facilitator behavior that contributed to successful implementation of  
33 the TiK psychoeducational program in a rural Appalachian community. Below, we first  
34 summarize our major findings in relation to literature on rural Appalachia. We then conclude by  
35 describing implications of our findings for delivering psychoeducational programs in rural  
36 Appalachia.  
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#### Participant Engagement with Program Material and with Fellow Participants

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47 Quantitative and qualitative aspects of our findings showed the importance of  
48 participants' questioning about TiK concepts. Participants who raised questions in their initial  
49 sessions were more likely to complete the program, and questioning about TiK concepts  
50 generally preceded adoption of TiK strategies into existing parenting practices. Interestingly,  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 much of participants' questioning of TiK content centered around discomfort with what they  
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5 initially perceived as TiK's failure to demand discipline. In other words, at the outset,  
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7 participants perceived listening to and reflecting on children's expressions of emotion, which are  
8  
9 central TiK concepts, as an unacceptable replacement for punishing inappropriate attitudes and  
10  
11 behaviors. This finding is consistent with prior literature on rural Appalachian values, which  
12  
13 shows that parents in these communities often emphasize obedience and discipline in the service  
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15 of promoting children's appropriate behavior (Manoogian et al., 2015; Peterson & Peterson,  
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17 1985, RAYFC, 1996). Participants' questioning led the facilitator to emphasize emotion  
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19 coaching as an *additional step* to take prior to punishment rather than *instead of* punishment. All  
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21 participants who questioned TiK content later showed instances of adopting TiK strategies. Thus,  
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23 questioning TiK concepts may have facilitated participants' understanding and ability to envision  
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25 incorporating TiK concepts into their parenting practices before enacting change.  
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31 Participants' provision of support for each other during TiK sessions was also notable,  
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33 illustrating participants' contributions toward a group-oriented environment, independent of the  
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35 facilitator's behavior. Although participants' mutual support is a common element of group-  
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37 based psychoeducation programs, this may be especially important within the rural Appalachian  
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39 context, given scarcity of service providers and reliance on extended kin networks for support  
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41 (Bowden Templeton et al., 2008; RAYFC, 1996;). Hosting of the groups within an established  
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43 and trusted church outreach program may have fostered participants' willingness to welcome  
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45 other participants into their trusted social networks, as well as extended credibility to the  
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47 facilitator. We turn next to our findings regarding facilitator behaviors.  
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### **Facilitator Creation of a Space for Mutual Respect and Support**

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54 Quantitative and qualitative aspects of our findings show a deliberate leveling of social  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 hierarchies across the course of the sessions by the facilitator through use of strategic self-  
4 disclosure and recognition of participant expertise. Although TiK is a psychoeducation program,  
5 and not a therapeutic intervention, it may be pertinent to note that work on use of self-disclosure  
6 in therapeutic settings suggests benefits for building trust with people from marginalized  
7 communities (Constantine & Kwan, 2003). Furthermore, self-disclosure may be humanizing  
8 (Audet, 2011), and express authenticity or genuineness, which may create a more collaborative  
9 relationship (Bitar, Kimball, Bermúdez, & Drew, 2014). Demonstrating solidarity and  
10 vulnerability through self-disclosure and leveling the social hierarchy by recognizing  
11 participants' knowledge and expertise in their occupations and as parents may have been  
12 especially important within the rural Appalachian context, in which language patterns value the  
13 construction of co-equal relations between adults (Puckett, 2000). Thus, these facilitator  
14 behaviors may have fostered participants' engagement with TiK program content and enhanced  
15 their perception of TiK as compatible with their values and world view.  
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### **Implications for Delivering Psychoeducational Programming in Rural Appalachia**

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35 Our interdisciplinary and reiterative approach allowed us to hear participants' voices in  
36 multifaceted ways and draw conclusions about what worked for them, thus allowing us to  
37 suggest implications for psychoeducation delivery in rural Appalachia. Limitations of our study  
38 include attrition of parents over the course of the six sessions, particularly for the second group,  
39 which constrained our analysis, as well as limited representation of fathers, which prevented  
40 examination of gender-related patterns but may have increased the sensation of "helpin out"  
41 among women (Puckett, 2000). In addition to our interdisciplinary approach, our focus on an  
42 underrepresented and underserved population is a primary strength.  
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54 Overall, our results highlight the openness of parents within this rural Appalachian  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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3 population to psychoeducation programming, demonstrated by their movement from questioning  
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5 to adopting novel parenting strategies and their support for each other in doing so. Our results  
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7 also suggest the importance of service providers' awareness of local customs and norms in  
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9 relating to participants and in communicating program content. This was critically important in  
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11 response to parents' initial concern that addressing children's emotions would prevent discipline.  
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13 Leveling the hierarchy and measured use of self-disclosure are related to rural Appalachian  
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15 "equality norms" (Puckett, 2000), and thus may have been particularly effective in this context,  
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17 promoting participants' mutual support and their movement from questioning to adopting  
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19 program strategies. Although it is important for service providers to become familiar with  
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21 community customs and norms prior to implementing psychoeducation programs, respecting  
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23 participants' expertise about and commitment to their own community's values and practices is a  
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25 way of leveling the hierarchy that may benefit implementation regardless of service providers'  
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27 previous experience in the community. In conclusion, participants' active engagement with  
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29 program content and active support for one another, plus the facilitator's leveling of hierarchy  
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31 within the group and ready incorporation of community norms, appeared to foster increasing  
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33 mastery and ownership of program concepts by participants over the course of the sessions. We  
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35 look forward to future research on prevention program delivery in rural contexts.  
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## TUNING IN TO KIDS IN RURAL APPALACHIA

Table 1

*Individual Participants' Questioning about and Adoption of Program Content and Support of Each Other Across Sessions*

Group	Participant	Session					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Spring	Celia	--	N	A, S	A	A, S	Q, A, S
Spring	Minnie	Q	--	Q, A, S	--	Q, S	Q, A, S
Fall	Cat	Q, S	Q, A, S	Q, A, S	Q, A, S	Q, A, S	Q, A, S
Fall	Gigi	S	--	--	--	--	--
Fall	Jill	--	S	--	--	--	--
Fall	Kyle	Q, S	Q, A, S	--	--	--	--
Fall	Molly	--	Q, S	Q, A, S	Q, A, S	Q, A, S	Q, S
Fall	Rita	S	S	--	--	--	--
Fall	Sara	S	--	--	--	--	--

*Note.* Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' privacy. Q=questioning; A=adoption; S=support; N=no questioning, adoption, or support; -- = participant did not attend session.

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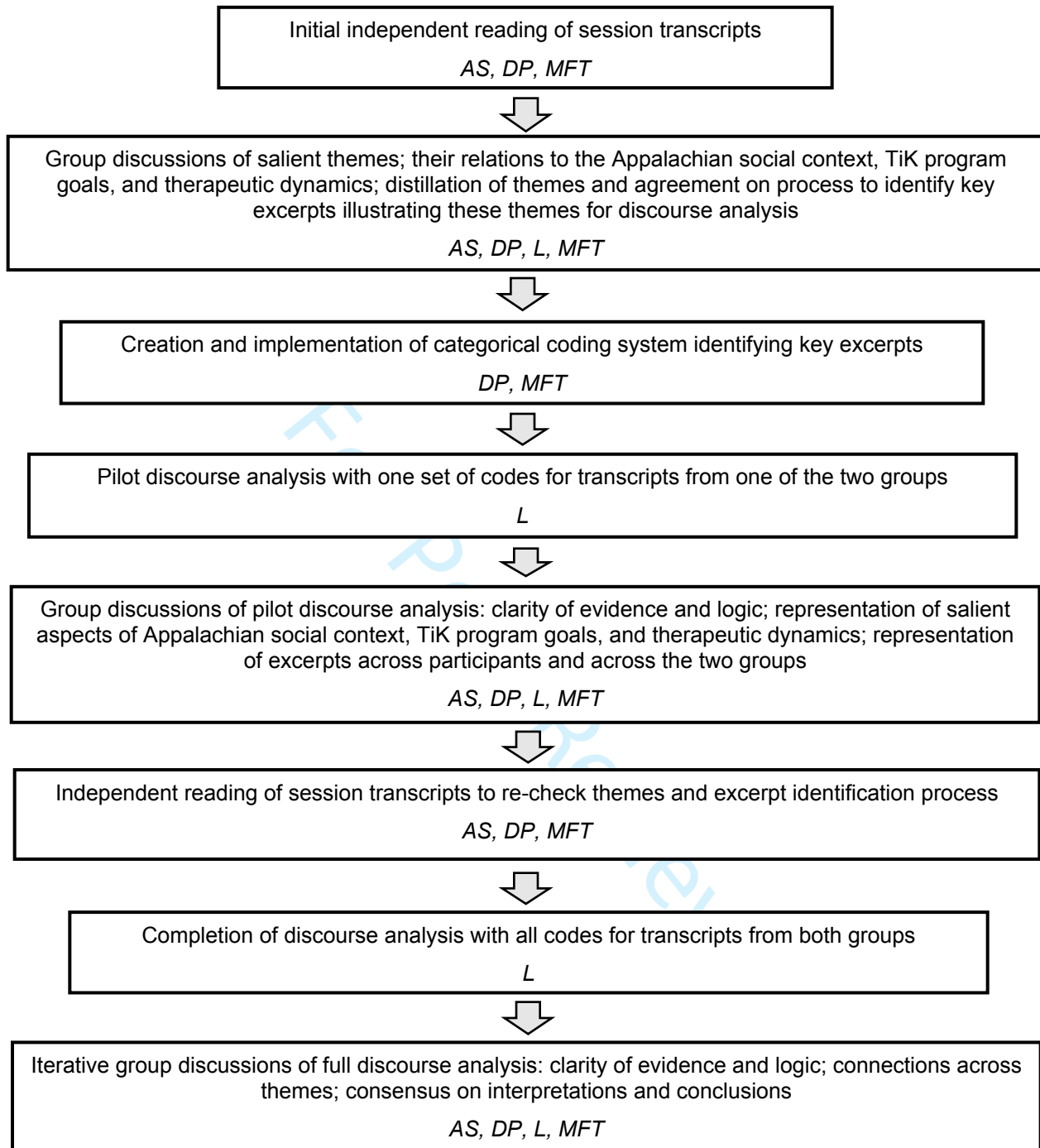


Figure 1. *Analysis process*. Abbreviations denote the expertise of team members involved in each step.

AS=Appalachian Studies; DP=Developmental Psychology; L=Linguistics; MFT=Marriage and Family Therapy

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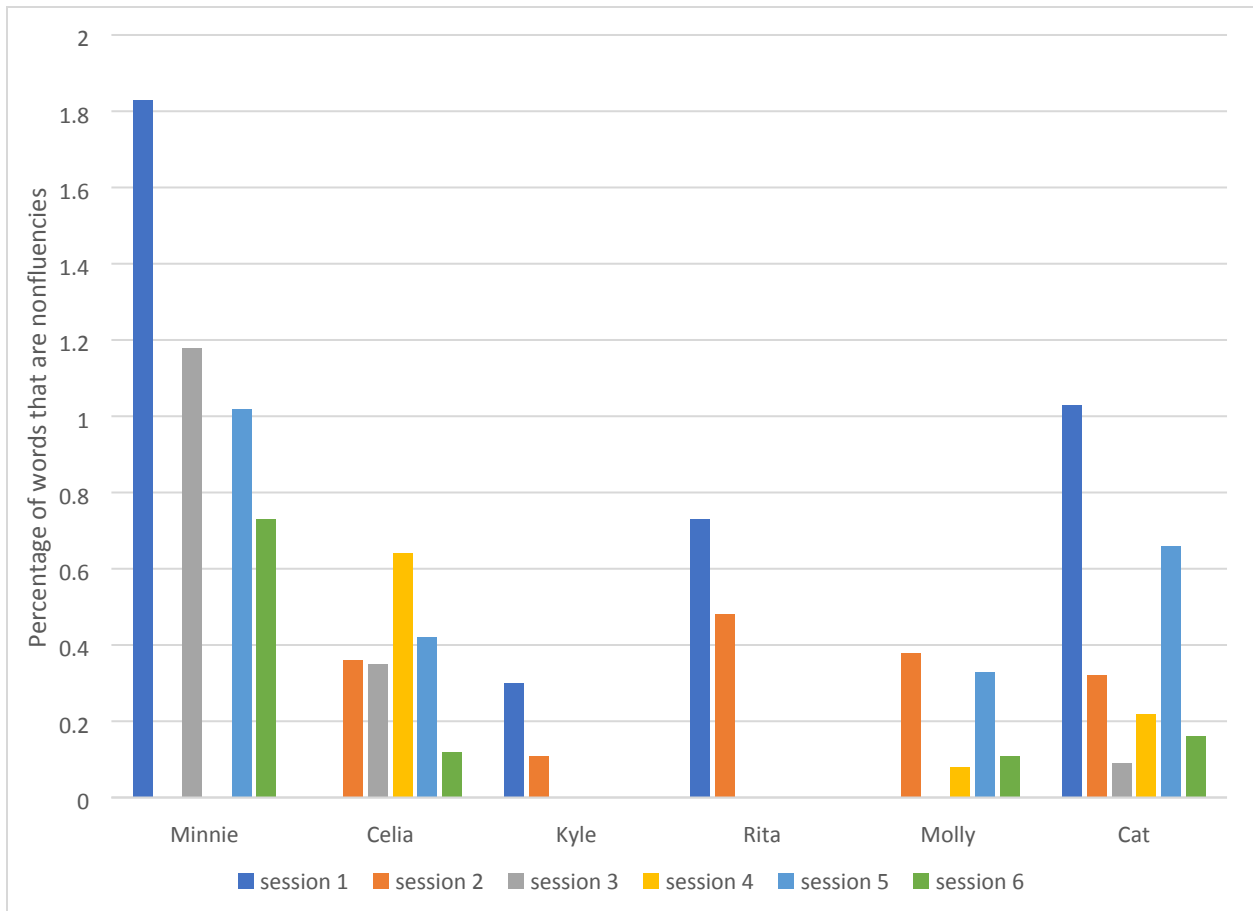


Figure 2. Proportions of nonfluencies per session for participants who attended more than one session.

Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' privacy.

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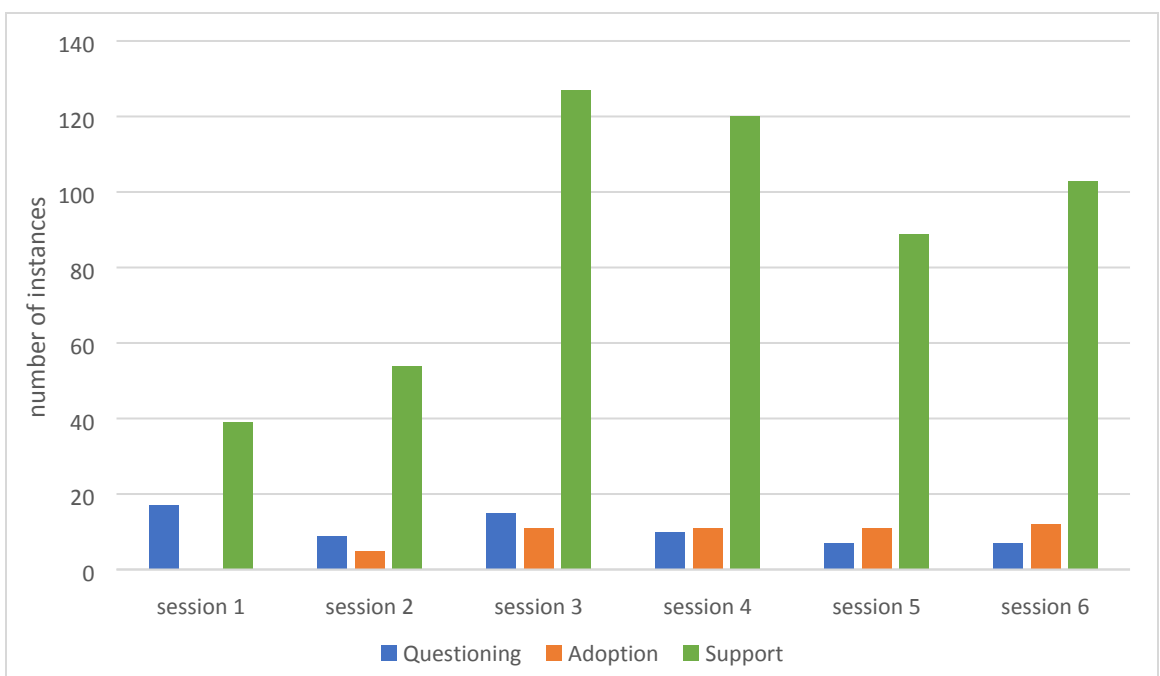


Figure 3. Instances of parent engagement across sessions, combined across parents in Spring and Fall groups.

Peer Review

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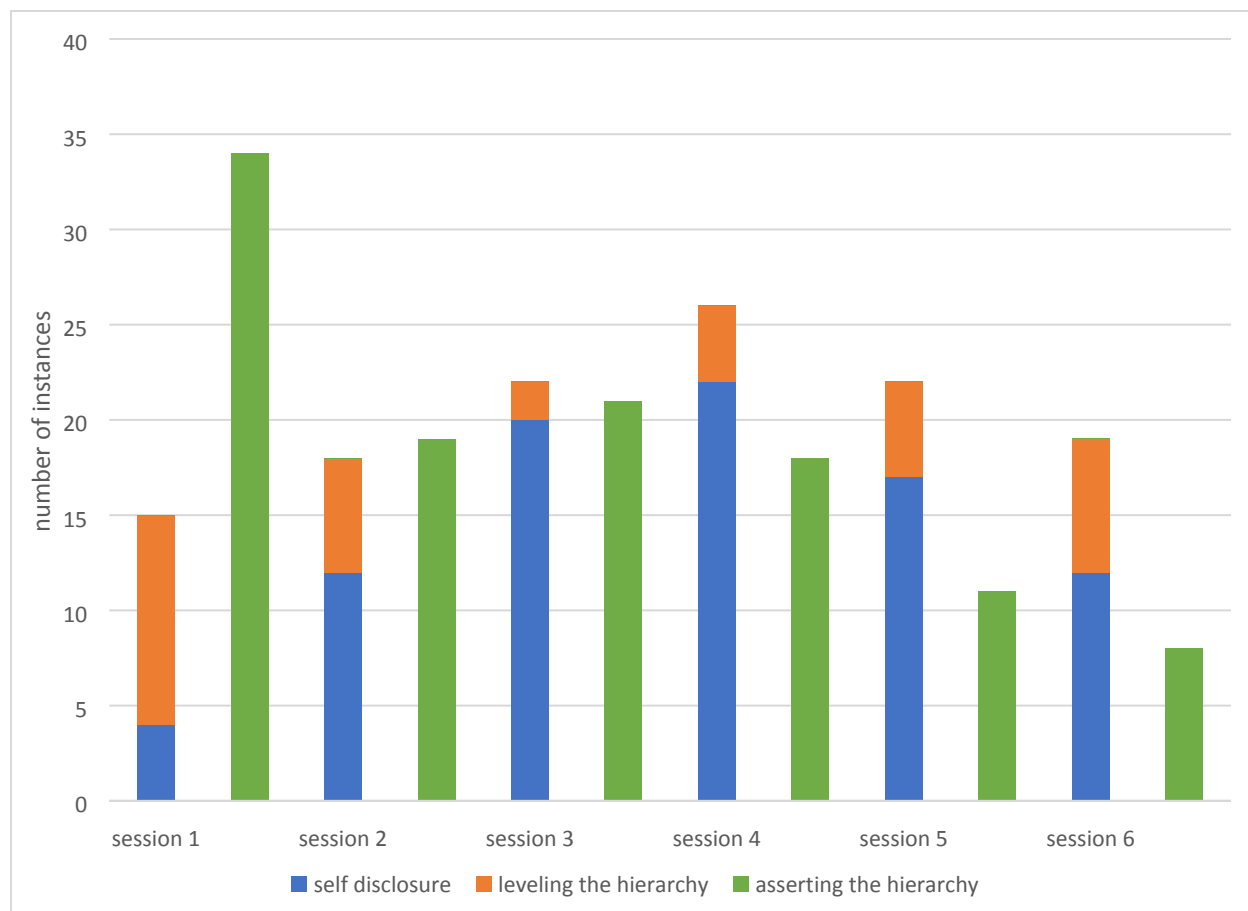


Figure 4. Instances of facilitator self-disclosure, leveling the hierarchy, and asserting the hierarchy across sessions, combined across Spring and Fall groups.