THE EFFECTS OF PARENT EDUCATION ON THE CHILDREARING ATTITUDES OF PARENTS

by

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(ABSTRACT)

In order to determine the effects of a program of parent education on parents' attitudes toward their children, twenty-three self-selected parents from various communities in Southwestern Virginia were surveyed. Eighteen parents, comprising the experimental treatment condition, received training in parent group education taught by graduate students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Testing occurred at the beginning of the first class and was repeated during the last session. A six- to eight-week follow-up measurement was administered also. A group of five additional participants were assigned to a delayed treatment condition. Testing was administered to this group at the same six- to eight-week intervals as the experimental groups; however, this group did not receive the parent education treatment until after the second measurement.

This study tested four hypotheses. The first two focused on changes in specified parental attitudes as a result of participation in a parent education program. Pre-treatment and post-treatment measurements were tested

in the null form using the correlated t statistic. No significant differences were found. The second pair of hypotheses was directed toward change in parental attitudes six to eight weeks later. An examination of posttest and follow-up scores revealed again no significant differences.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Parent education has been the focus of public attention in this country for quite some time. Brim (1959), reflecting upon parent education since the turn of the century, has noted that educational efforts to help individuals develop more effective relationships with their children have increased consistently. And, even today, it seems the plateau has yet to be reached. In professional circles, those who are theoretically or practically interested in parent education face the difficult problem of conducting research which will evaluate the effectiveness of parent education in achieving its aims. Authors who have reviewed the literature in this area have affirmed that, historically, the efficacy of parent education in changing relationships between parents and children has been inadequately explored (Brim, 1959; Croake & Glover, 1977); yet, belief that families benefit from these efforts persists. The research described here was undertaken to explore the effectiveness of a program in parent education in achieving one of its aims, that of changing the childrearing attitudes of its participants.

Previous research in parent education has focused on attitudes toward childrearing and on other variables, such as childrearing behaviors, behaviors of children, children's perceptions of their parents, and children's self-esteem. No published empirical investigation has determined if any of these variables have remained constant for any period of time after the conclusion of a parent education program. Thus, it became the further intent of this researcher to determine if parents' childrearing attitudes remain unchanged for six to eight weeks after the conclusion of a program in parent education.

In order to fulfill this goal, an experimental design was used as the methodological approach. The childrearing attitudes of parents constituted the dependent variable, and the independent variable was participation in a parent education program. The relative effects of an approach to parent education on the dependent variable were assessed. In addition, the status of the dependent variable six to eight weeks after the conclusion of the parent education program was assessed.

Definition of Terms

Parent education has been defined as "the purposive learning activity of parents who are attempting to change their method of interaction with their children for the

purpose of encouraging positive behavior in their children" (Croake & Glover, 1977, p.151). Similarly a program in parent education is regarded as "an activity using educational techniques in order to effect a change in parent performance" (Brim, 1959, p.20), "?and? designed to influence parent behavior in a way that is beneficial to the child" (p.29). Operationally, parent education programs are defined as the group educational courses based on the STEP model (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) and taught to the participants in this study.

The term "attitude" was defined as "a relatively enduring system of evaluative, affective reactions based upon and reflecting the evaluative concepts or beliefs which have been learned about the characteristics of a social object of class of social objects" (Shaw & Wright, 1967, p.3). The most important implication of this definition, as it relates to this investigation, is that attitudes are learned through interaction with social objects rather than being innate or the results of constitutional development or maturation. Since they are learned, attitudes incorporate the same properties of other learned reactions, and are subject to further change through such methods as thinking, inhibition, and extinction (Shaw & Wright, 1967). For the purposes of this study, attitudes towards childrearing were defined

as the scores obtained on the following scales developed by Itkin (1952): "A Survey of Opinions Regarding the Bringing Up of Children" and "A Survey of Opinions Regarding the Discipline of Children."

Theoretical Frameworks of Parent Education

There is no one theoretical foundation for parent education that enjoys universal acceptance. Current foundations for parent education programs have been derived from such disciplines as counseling, psychology, and education. Croake and Glover (1977), in their review, have identified two main foci in parent education efforts within which the predominant theoretical frameworks may be discerned. The first is directed at increasing the education of parents in the techniques of behavior modification so that they are able to exercise more effective influence on the behavior of their children. Programs in this emphasis are based on learning theory which assumes that (1) All behavior is learned; (2) That behavior is a function of its consequences; and (3) That behavior change is a result of the manipulation of these relationships (Blackham & Silberman, 1975).

The other emerging focal point in parent education is directed toward the use of specific curricula in parent discussion groups which advocate more democratic methods

of childrearing. Croake and Glover (1977) have noted two predominant theoretical frameworks in this focal emphasis: the Adlerian approach of Rudolph Dreikurs (1964) and others, and the Rogerian approach of Thomas Gordon (1970). The Adlerian approach claims that all behavior is purposive and goal directed, with the primary goal being the achievement of a sense of significance in one's social relationships. The major objective of this approach is to give parents an understanding of the purpose of their children's behavior and to teach those techniques that encourage children toward responsible participation and belonging in the family.

In contrast, the existential approach of Carl Rogers assumes that the source of support for the individual rests on each person's perceived dependence on his fellow man and his willingness to help others, since in the process he helps himself. The therapeutic process is seen as a reeducative one where the concern is with facilitating change in an individual's perceptions or helping the individual change his own perceptions based on the assumption that this will then alter his attitude, behavior, and eventually, his personality. In Rogerian parent education, parents are taught to listen reflectively to their children and to communicate to them in ways that demonstrate respect for the child's individuality. Both

Adlerian and Rogerian parent education are in opposition to the use of authoritarian childrearing methods and strongly in favor of parent-child relationships based on mutual respect (Croake & Glover, 1977).

Assumptions

In order to facilitate this investigation, three assumptions were made. 1) Attitudes, and in particular the childrearing attitudes of parents, were assumed to vary in quality and intensity (or strength) on a continuum from positive through neutral to negative. 2) Although relatively stable and enduring, attitudes were assumed to be subject to change. Also, in the repetitive administration of the self-assessment instruments designed to measure attitudes, it was considered possible that respondents may discern the purpose of the investigation and modify their responses to affect the results. Thus, (3), it was assumed that there would be no interaction between the administration of the test and the measures of the attitudes.

Rationale

Programs in parent education are based upon assumed linkages between attitudes and behavior which have been only partially substantiated by research (Brody, 1965;

Mannino, Kisielewski, Kimbro, & Morgenstern, 1968; Zunich, 1962). Implicit in the definition of parent education programs are two fundamental goals: (1) the immediate goal of changing the attitudes of parents regarding parent-child relationships and childrearing practices; and, (2) the ultimate goal of producing a positive change in the behavior of the child. These two goals are generally believed to be bridged by the assumption that changing parents' attitudes toward children will in turn change the behavior of parents with their children, which should be reflected in the child's behavior and adjustment (Brim, 1959). Unfortunately, there is little empirical evidence to support any of the links in this assumed chain of events.

Numerous studies have established that the attitudes of parents regarding parent-child relationships and child-rearing practices are changed toward more acceptant, positive treatment of children at the conclusion of parent education programs (Berrett, 1975; Costin, 1960; Croake & Burness, 1976; Davis & McGinnis, 1939; Endres & Evans, 1969; Frazier & Matthes, 1975; Freeman, 1975; Hedrick, 1934; Hereford, 1963; Huff, 1968; Jack, 1932; Larson, 1972; MacNamara, 1963; Shapiro, 1956; Walters, 1959; Walters & Fisher, 1958). These studies were used in determining the focus of the present research as well as the dependent variable. Data were gathered on this change in childrearing

attitudes for the purpose of statistical control and to check against the findings of the earlier studies. Thus, the first goal of this study was to determine whether parent group education programs change the childrearing attitudes of their participants with regard to the acceptance and control of children.

To date, no published empirical attempt has been made to determine if these attitudes, once changed, remain with the parents for any length of time after the conclusion of the parent education program. It should be noted, however, that Thomas Gordon, in his book PET in Action (1976), relied on case histories and self-reports of former PET participants to substantiate the effectiveness of his approach to parent education. In this investigation, it was anticipated that if parent education changes the childrearing attitudes of parents, these attitudes will remain unchanged for six to eight weeks after the conclusion of the program. Hence, the second and final goal was to determine whether childrearing attitudes held by participants at the conclusion of parent education programs will remain unchanged six to eight weeks later.

Hypotheses

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, it was necessary to subdivide the two goals presented above

into four hypotheses. Itkin's scales measure parents' accepting and controlling attitudes separately, not in combination. Therefore, four hypotheses were tested in this study. The first two relate to childrearing attitudes as effected by the treatment and, stated in the null form, are as follows:

H_1: There is no significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment acceptance-rejection attitude scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

H_2: There is no significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment permissive-restrictive attitude scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

The last two hypotheses deal with the relative strength of these childrearing attitudes as they are held over a period of time, and, again stated in the null form, were:

H_3: There is no significant difference between the post- and follow-up acceptance-rejection scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

H_4: There is no significant difference between the post- and follow-up permissive-restrictive scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview of Parent Education

The history of parent group education in the United States reveals it to be an old and varied phenomenon. The first recorded group meeting of parents in America occurred in 1815 in Portland, Maine (Bridgman, 1930); and Croake and Glover (1977) have noted that, prior to 1820, mothers' study groups known as "maternal associations" met regularly to discuss childrearing problems. It was not until the early 1920's, however, that social workers and educators, recognizing the informal and unorganized efforts of those early groups, began to collect and disseminate organized parent education materials. With support from such public organizations as the Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Mental Health, and from the private sector as well, parent education endeavors have continued to grow to such an extent that today "a variety of professionals and non-professionals teach in parent education programs under the auspices of mental health, schools and other associations using nearly every imaginable form of media" (Croake & Glover, 1977, p.152).

Given the wide variety of parent education efforts currently in existence, an estimate of the number of parents who have been reached through parenting group programs,

or even an idea of how many programs have been taught in parent education is virtually impossible. The PET effort alone claims to have taught over 250,000 parents and trained nearly 8,000 professionals as instructors from every state and several foreign countries within the past fifteen years (Gordon, 1976). The only documented survey of the number of parent education programs in operation was conducted in 1932 by the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. At that time it was reported that from over 2,500 organizations on the mailing lists of the Office of Education which might be conducting some type of parent education, 126 were major programs of parent education and another 378 were involved in work that included efforts in parent education. Projecting from this information, it may be assumed that today these numbers have increased considerably.

Although the number of parents who have received group parent education is largely unknown, it is possible to determine some of the general characteristics of these parents. Croake and Glover (1977), in their review of parent education, make the following generalizations regarding participants: (1) Parents from the middle to upper social strata participate more frequently than parents from lower levels; (2) Mothers attend parent groups in far greater numbers than fathers; and, (3) A greater proportion of parent education programs are directed toward

parents with young children rather than to parents whose children are adolescents. These conclusions are supported by the findings of Mannino and Conant (1969) in their survey of factors which contribute to parent education group dropouts.

The wide variety of parent education efforts has contributed also to the diversity in length of the programs both in terms of time and number of meetings. Some programs meet for only an hour and a half at a time, while others involve day-long workshops or seminars on a specific topic of parenting. Several researchers have found positive changes in the childrearing attitudes and behavior of parents and the behavior of children after ten parent group meetings (Berrett, 1973; Frazier & Matthes, 1975; Freeman, 1975). However, improvements along the same lines after fewer than eight sessions of parent group education have been reported also (Davis & McGinnis, 1939; Hereford, 1963; Shapiro, 1956).

In an attempt to determine the number of sessions necessary before measurable changes occur in parents using the Adlerian Parent Study Group approach, Croake and Burness (1976) found positive changes in parents' childrearing attitudes and behavior after as few as four sessions. An extreme example of the number of meetings that can be offered by a parent education program is the

ongoing approach of the League for Parent Education in New York City. By holding monthly meetings each year from September through June, the League gives group members the option of continuing for as many months or years as they wish, although the average membership is reported between five and eight years (Berger, 1968). Most parent education programs, however, hold meetings from four to eight consecutive weeks, and then disband (Berger, 1968).

In addition to a diversity in the length of parent education programs, there is also a wide range of program content. Examples of topics that parenting programs can incorporate include: child development norms, general personality theory, childrearing practices and situations, methods of discipline, emotions and their expression, interpersonal communications, parent-child relationships and practical advice (Croake & Glover, 1977). Yet, despite the broad range of topics available to parent educators, the tone of the content has changed during the past thirty years. Brim (1959) noted that parent education "has moved from a belief in the dominant effect of overt behavior to a belief in the dominant effects of parental motives and feelings" (p.39). This switch from an emphasis on techniques to one on parent attitudes has been strongly reflected in the popular literature of this time period.

In a review of approaches to parent education in several popular magazine articles from 1950 to 1970, Bigner (1972) found that 20 years ago parents were advised to rear children according to conformity with anticipated future adult life styles, whereas more recent advice suggests that parents should rear a child to be a person and an individual in the crowd. In addition, because all parent education programs are aimed at parents who have little psychological expertise or sophistication, another general characteristic they have in common is a tendency toward the simplistic in their content (Brown, 1976).

Underlying the diversity in content and length of parent group education is the factor that there is no universally agreed upon theoretical framework for parent education. An examination of the current approaches to parent education would most likely reveal theoretical foundations derived from counseling, psychology, and education. In general, however, two major foci have emerged in parent group education within which the predominant theoretical frameworks can be discerned (Croake & Glover, 1977). The first focal area is directed at increasing the education of parents in the techniques of behavior modification so that they are able to exercise more effective influence on the behavior of their children.

Based on learning theory, programs in this focal area utilize writings such as: Parents Are Teachers, Becker (1971); Changing Children's Behavior, Krumboltz and Krumboltz (1972); and Families, Patterson (1971). Most of the behavior modification approaches to parent education involve training parents individually, although one organized group approach, the Responsive Parent Training Program in Kansas City, has been reported (Brown, 1976).

The other emerging focal point in parent education is directed toward the use of specific curricula in parent discussion groups which advocate more democratic methods of childrearing. There are two predominant theoretical frameworks in this focal area: the Adlerian approach exemplified by Children: The Challenge, Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) and Raising a Responsible Child, Dinkmeyer and McKay (1973); and the Rogerian approach using Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), Gordon (1970) and Between Parent and Child, Ginott (1965). Although there are differences between these two approaches, both are opposed to the use of authoritarian childrearing methods and strongly in favor of mutual respect in parent-child interaction (Croake & Glover, 1977).

Other theories of interpersonal relations that have been applied to parent education, but not as extensively developed, include Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) in

How to Raise an Emotionally Healthy, Happy Child, by Ellis, Moseley and Wolfe (1977) and The Rational Management of Children, by Hauck (1967); reality therapy in Schools Without Failure, by Glasser (1969); and transactional analysis in I'm OK-You're OK, by Harris (1967).

Despite the diversity in theoretical approaches to parent group education, there appears to be a consensus among writers in this field regarding the need for parent education. Smith, in his article "Family Life Education-Who Needs It?" (1964), gave seven reasons why family life education was necessary to everyone, four of which pertain directly to education for parenthood:

1) The rapidity with which social change occurs;
2) The continued popularity of marriage and family life;
3) Changing expectations with regard to marriage and and the family in general and the roles of family members in particular; and,
4) The fact that decisions made by family members directly and indirectly affect the well-being of their families.

With specific regard to parent education, Pickarts and Fargo (1971) see the challenge of parenting today as one that can no longer be carried on in the traditional forms.

> Parents need a set of problem-solving and growth-nurturing concepts and skills that will decrease their general uneasiness in the face of the overwhelming complexity of life and their sense of powerlessness in the modern world. They need concepts and skills that foster the growth of children who see themselves and others as worthwhile, who have a zest to invest in new experiences, and who move into the community with skills that make creative and meaningful use of their lives possible, and with the commitment to changing those conditions that inhibit maximum personal and societal growth (Pickarts & Fargo, 1971, p.25).

Parent Education Research

Given the need for parent education, we turn then to a review of the research that has attempted to determine the effectiveness of such programs. Early investigations into this subject have focused primarily on changes in the childrearing attitudes of program participants, which were generally assessed by taking a measurement at the beginning of the parent education program and repeating the process at its conclusion (Croake & Glover, 1977). Under this type of design, any differences in the measures of

childrearing attitudes were attributed to the parent education treatment. Thus, prior to 1960, improvement in childrearing attitudes was reported in seven studies (Costin, 1960; Davis & McGinnis, 1939; Hedrick, 1934; Jack, 1932; Shapiro, 1956; Walters, 1959; Walters & Fisher, 1958). In their review of this early research, Croake and Glover (1977) criticized these studies for one or more of the following reasons: failure to use a control group, failure to determine the reliability and validity of the instruments, or failure to use someone other than the instructor to evaluate the program. Studies reported since 1960 have not only focused on changes in parent attitudes, but also on parent behavior and child behavior in measuring the effectiveness of parent education.

Hereford (1963) conducted a four-year study involving 916 parents in parent education discussion groups and compared them with groups in a lecture, nonattendant, and random control condition. Since none of the children of these parents attended any of the parent groups, change in the behavior of a child was dependent upon a sequence of steps beginning with change in the attitudes of the parents. Parents in the experimental condition showed a significantly greater change in attitudes that did the parents in the three control groups. In addition, the children of parents in the discussion group improved

significantly in their classmate relations as indicated by a sociometric evaluation of peer group selections, but not in their behavior ratings by school teachers. Hereford concluded that "the observed changes in the attitudes and behavior of discussion-group parents were apparently strong and pervasive enough to influence the social acceptance of their children by classmates" (1963, p.137).

Using group counseling as a means of parent education, Gazda and Ohlsen (1966) hypothesized that positive changes in parents' acceptance of self and others, self understanding, and general personal adjustment would enable their bright, underachieving fifth-grade children to make similar improvements. Parents were assigned to three separate groups and given eight weeks of parent group counseling with the authors as group leaders. Promoting group acceptance and solidarity, reducing members' defensiveness, and encouraging self-exploration and understanding were emphasized. Measures taken of the parents and their children at the conclusion of the parent counseling were compared with measures taken eight weeks immediately preceding the treatment. The authors found that two of three parent groups showed a significant increase in acceptance of self and others while the children made some positive changes but none of any statistical significance.

The effects of a parent education program on knowledge, attitudes, and overt behavior of parents and self-concepts of their children were evaluated by Endres and Evans in 1968. Ninety fourth-grade children and their parents were selected as subjects and randomly assigned to experimental, placebo, and control groups. The parents in the experimental group engaged in a series of eight study-discussion meetings while the placebo group viewed travelogue films and the control group received no treatment. Statistical treatment of the data revealed that the experimental group parents had significantly greater knowledge and a significant difference in attitudes, but they showed no significant difference in overt behavior. Their children were significantly different from children of parents in the other groups in perceiving themselves as doing well in school, being happy, and being satisfied with themselves as they were.

In one of the earliest comparative studies, Larson (1972) evaluated the effectiveness of a program in Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) with an Achievement Motivation Program (AMP) and a Discussion-Encounter Group (DEG) on the basis of attitude and behavior changes in the parent participants and observed changes in their children. The PET group showed the greatest overall gains, especially in confidence as parents, insight into the behavior of

their children, and trust. In addition the PET group showed the greatest reduction in problems with their children. Levels of significance were not given for any of these changes.

Thirty-six mothers who responded to a call for participants in a program of parent education were assigned to three treatment conditions by Freeman in 1975. The purpose of the study was to compare the effectiveness of Adlerian Mothers' Study Groups (AMS) with the Traditional Mothers' Discussion Group (TMD) and with a control group. The data consisted of measures of each participant's childrearing attitudes, childrearing practices and a rating of children's behaviors by their mother. No significant differences were found between the AMS and TMD parent education groups; however, there were significant differences between the two experimental groups and the control, especially with regard to the mothers' reports on bothersome child behaviors. Participants in the experimental conditions checked significantly fewer incidents of bothersome behavior engaged in by children than mothers in the control group. Freeman concludes that training is more effective than "no treatment" in changing children's bothersome behavior (1975).

Frazier and Matthes (1975), in a study similar to Freeman's above, assessed the effects of parent education

programs based on the Adlerian approach and a behavioral model relative to each other and to a control group on parents with elementary school age children. In each of the three treatment conditions parents completed scales designed to measure childrearing practices and bothersome child behaviors. The investigators found that parents in the Adlerian program were less restrictive in their childrearing attitudes than those in either the behavioral program or the control group. However, there were no significant differences among treatment conditions on either childrearing practices or bothersome child behaviors. The results of this study were interpreted to mean that the Adlerian as well as the behavioral approach does have an impact but only on the parents and not on the children to whom these efforts are focused.

Aside from the benefits from the content of parent group education programs reported in the literature, it has also been suggested that group support, in itself, produces positive results (Brown, 1976). Parents in these groups experience support and reassurance by associating with other parents who express similar concerns. Berger (1968) reported that group discussion may increase parents' confidence about their childrearing attitudes and behaviors which in turn leads to more relaxed and confident parent-child relations. It has also been suggested that

even a small reduction in anxiety, and a small increase in assurance, as a result of parent group education strengthens the ability of parents to have a supportive, empathic relationship with their child (Crow, 1967).

From this review of the literature, it can be seen that programs in parent group education are expanding, in both number and variety, and that they seem to be achieving some worthwhile results. Yet there is a need for continued improvement both in terms of quantity and quality of research in parent education because "no final conclusions can be drawn that provide a precise definition or description of parent education as it currently exists" (Croake & Glover, 1977). One of the suggestions Croake and Glover made for future research was that rather than make inferences regarding the effectiveness of parent education from results determined at a program's conclusion, results over an extended period of time should be considered. The present study represented an attempt to respond to this consideration.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of parents enrolled in seven parent group education courses conducted in several localities throughout Southwestern Virginia. Two of these courses were taught by graduate students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Department of Management, Housing and Family Development as part of the requirements for a course in parent education during the 1978-79 school year. Of these two courses, one was offered to parents in the university community of Blacksburg, Virginia, and the other in Roanoke, Virginia through the local public school system. The remaining five courses from which this sample was drawn were conducted from 1979 to 1981 to parent groups in the Virginia communities of Salem, Botetourt County and Roanoke by the author. These groups were sponsored by local churches, a public health department, a parent cooperative preschool program, and a university school of continuing education.

Six of these parent groups were assigned to the experimental treatment condition, and, taken together, comprised a total of eighteen subjects. Group 1, the delayed treatment group, contributed five parents to the sample. Table 1 presents a breakdown of this information.

TABLE 1

Breakdown of Parent Education Groups by Sponsor, Survey Yield, and Treatment Condition

Group #	Sponsorship	Number of Useable Surveys	Treatment Condition
1	Church Group	5	Control
2	MHFD	4	Experimental
3	Health Dept.	4	Experimental
4	Parent Co-op	2	Experimental
5	Church Group	3	Experimental
6	School of Continuing Ed.	3	Experimental
7	MHFD	2	Experimental

Experimental Groups

In this investigation, Groups 2 through 7 represent courses that were conducted for either six or eight weeks, one session per week, from the Spring of 1978 to the Winter of 1981. The content of all six of these groups was drawn primarily from the STEP parent group education program developed by Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976). Two were taught by graduate students for a course in parent education, and the remainder by the author. All of the groups included no less than six one-and-a-half to two hour sessions of course material depending on the time and content needs of the participants; four of the groups met for eight sessions.

Delayed Treatment Group

The delayed treatment group, Group 1, included parents who had registered for a STEP-based course through a local church during the summer of 1980. Due to the scheduling considerations of the church, this course did not begin until six weeks after the registration deadline, thus providing an opportunity to test this group six weeks prior to the first class meeting. The delayed treatment group met for eight weekly sessions, and was taught by the author.

Testing Instruments

The questionnaire for this study consisted of three parts. Part 1 was intended to collect background data on the respondent and included items soliciting such information as sex of parent, age of parent, educational level, marital status, number of children in the family, sex ratio of children, age range of children, religious preference, and family income. Since the entire questionnaire was given to respondents on three separate occasions, a space was provided in Part 1 for respondents to identify themselves for comparison purposes through the last four digits of their Social Security number. The background data questionnaire in included in Appendix A.

The second and third parts of the questionnaire were comprised of two scales from a battery developed by William Itkin (1952) to measure intrafamily attitudes and published in Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes (Shaw & Wright, 1967). The scale in Part 2 of the questionnaire was designed by Itkin to measure parental attitudes toward children along an Acceptance-Rejection continuum and is entitled "A Survey of Opinions Regarding the Bringing Up of Children". Part 3 is entitled "A Survey of Opinions Regarding the Discipline of Children", and is designed to measure parental attitudes involving the supervision of

children along a Strict-Permissive continuum. Both scales are included in Appendix B.

These scales used the Likert summated ratings procedure; although the form of a few of the items in each scale, specifically the multiple choice questions at the end of Part 2 and Part 3, deviates from the standard Likert format. A five alternative response mode is used on the Likert-type items: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. Each item alternative is assigned a weight ranging from one to five. For the Likert-type items, a weight of five is assigned to "strongly agree" for positively worded statements and to "strongly disagree" for negatively worded statements. Item negativity and the weight of each alternative on the multiple choice items are provided by Itkin in Shaw and Wright (1967).

The acceptance-rejection attitude scale (Part 2) consisted of 30 items: twenty-six standard Likert items and four multiple choice. The strict-permissive scale contained 35 items: thirty-one Likert-type and four multiple choice. Both are scored by summing the weight of the alternative marked for each item. The theoretical range of the scale in Part 2 is from 30 to 150, with the higher score indicating a more favorable attitude toward acceptant, positive treatment of children. For the scale

in Part 3, the range is from 35 to 175, with the higher score indicating an attitude favoring more strict control of children. Itkin (1952) provides no norms for these scales.

The entire battery of scales from which these two were taken was developed for a study of over 400 students and parents of students from several junior colleges in the Chicago area (Itkin, 1952). The items in the final scales were selected by item analysis, but the number of items in the original pool was not given in the report. Reliability coefficients of the final forms of the scales were computed by the split-half method and found to be .91 (corrected) for the acceptance-rejection scale and .97 for the strict-permissive scale. Evidence of validity is limited to item analysis data and the correlation between attitude scores and self-ratings of 70 parents.

Testing Procedures

There were three testing intervals in the design of this research as illustrated in Table 2. During the first session of most of the experimental groups, parents were provided with the questionnaire and urged to complete the entire form. Where possible with some of the groups, questionnaires were sent to participants for their responses prior to the first session. All testing was

TABLE 2

Research Design

Group	Testing	Treatment	Testing	Treatment	Testing
1 (Control)	X		X	X	X
2	X	X	X		X
3	X	X	X		X
4	X	X	X		X
5	X	X	X		X
6	X	X	X		X
7	X	X	X		X

done on a volunteer basis. Parents were told that the purpose of the survey was for research only. This testing represented a Pretest.

At the end of the last group meeting, six to eight weeks later, parents were requested again to fill out the questionnaire. Where feasible, those participants who were not able to attend the last session, but who had taken the pretest, were contacted within a week and tested. Due to attrition and the inability to obtain completed forms from several participants within the time period, the response rate was 73% of the original sample. This testing represented the Posttest.

The Follow-up testing was accomplished at a period six to eight weeks after the final session of each parent group. Parents were sent the questionnaire and a cover letter in the mail with a self-addressed, stamped envelope included. A sample cover letter has been included in Appendix D. Respondents were asked once again to complete the questionnaire and to mail it in the return envelope. In addition, they were asked to respond according to the opinions they were holding at that time and not according to how they remembered answering on previous tests.

For Group 1, the delayed treatment control group, participants were given the questionnaire for the first time when they signed-up for the course at the sponsoring

church. This represented the Pretest Control. Group 1 was tested again six weeks later at the beginning of the first class meeting, and finally, the questionnaire was administered at the end of the last class. This represented the Posttest Control.

The response rate for all of the groups was not as high as expected. At the conclusion of the second measurement the rate of response was 75% of the original sample population. The number dwindled further by the third measurement to 23 participants with three complete questionnaires apiece, or a response rate of 37% of the original sample population.

Treatment

After test administration was completed in the first session, the remainder of the time was spent by beginning the parent education course itself. This constituted the beginning of the treatment for both the experimental and control groups. Each group used a modified STEP program and to some extent followed the outline suggested by Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976). This outline is presented in Appendix C. The final class session constituted the conclusion of the treatment.

Analysis of Data

A complete set of data for the purposes of this study consisted of three fully answered questionnaires from the same participant: a pre-treatment survey, a post-treatment survey and the six to eight week follow-up. The investigation yielded twenty-three complete sets. Participant responses to each item from every set of questionnaires were transferred onto optical scanning sheets in order to facilitate the preparation of computer input cards. In the cases where no answer was given for an item, or when a written explanation was substituted for one of the Likert-type responses, the item was assigned the value for an "Uncertain" mean response. Similarly, the value of the mean response was assigned to incomplete or unanswered responses on the multiple choice-type questions included on the questionnaires. The information was then computer scored and the total scores for each participant after each testing interval was calculated. The mean, standard deviation and difference between the means was then calculated for each group and for each testing interval.

In order to test the first two hypotheses, that childrearing attitudes regarding the accepting and permissive treatment of children are changed as a result of participation in a parent education program, mean scores

calculated from the pre- and post-treatment measures were used. For the second two hypotheses, that these same childrearing attitudes remain unchanged six to eight weeks after the conclusion of parent education programs, mean scores calculated from the post-treatment and follow-up measurements were examined.

The correlated t test for mean differences was applied to all the comparison data and the .05 level of significance was employed.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four hypotheses were tested in this study to determine the effect of participating in a parent education group on parents' childrearing attitudes. Eighteen experimental parents and five control parents were tested at three intervals of six to eight weeks duration. All measurements of childrearing attitudes were acquired through the use of two of Itkin's intrafamilial attitude scales.

Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample

The descriptive characteristics of this study's sample population are presented in Table 3. In general, these findings agree with the participant profiles reported by Croake and Glover (1977) regarding parents who take courses in parent group education. In all seven groups, the participants were predominantly female, in their 20's or 30's, married, and with more than one child. Based on educational attainment and annual family income, the sample appears to have come mainly from the middle and upper-middle socioeconomic brackets. Most of the parents had preschool-aged children (34.8%); however, the next highest percentage (30.4%) were parents of teenagers.

TABLE 3

Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Control Group	Experimental Group	Total	%
Sex:				
Females	4	16	20	87.0
Males	1	2	3	13.0
Age Range:				
21-30 yrs.	4	7	11	47.8
31-40 yrs.	1	9	10	43.5
41-50 yrs.		2	2	8.7
Education:				
High School or less	3	8	11	47.8
College or less	1	7	8	38.4
Graduate School or more	1	3	4	17.4
Marital Status:				
Married	3	15	18	78.3
Divorced/Separated		1	1	4.3
Widowed		1	1	4.3
Single	2	1	3	13.0
No. of Children:				
No children	3	1	4	17.4
One child		6	6	26.1
Two or three	2	11	13	56.5
Sex Ratio of Children:				
More boys than girls		7	7	30.4
More girls than boys		6	6	26.1
Equally divided	2	4	6	26.1
Age Range of Children:				
Infants (0-2½)		2	2	8.7
Preschoolers (2½-6)	1	7	8	34.8
School-aged (6-13)		2	2	8.7
Teenaged (13-19)	1	6	7	30.4
Religion:				
Protestant	5	15	20	87.0
Catholic		2	2	8.7
Other		1	1	4.3
Range of Annual Income:				
Under $9,999	1	4	5	21.7
$10,000-14,999		3	3	13.0
$15,000-19,999	2	2	4	17.4
$20,000-24,999		5	5	21.7
Over $25,000		5	5	21.7

The characteristics of the participants in the delayed treatment group were fairly homogeneous with the experimental groups, except for one characteristic. Three of the five participants in the control group reported that they had no children at the time of the measurement; two were a married couple expecting their first child, and the other was a single female engaged to be married.

Testing of Hypotheses

The first two hypotheses focused on changes in specified childrearing attitudes as measured by two of Itkin's intrafamilial attitude scales. The first scale, entitled "A Survey of Opinions Regarding the Bringing Up of Children", measured attitudes along an acceptance-rejection continuum. The second scale employed was designed to measure attitudes towards the supervision of children along a Strict-Permissive continuum. Postscore means were subtracted from prescore means for the experimental and control groups and subjected to correlated *t* tests.

1. H_0: There is no significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment acceptance-rejection attitude scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

With regard to attitudinal change as plotted along a continuum of acceptance or rejection of children, although there were slight differences between prescore and post-score means for all of the groups, this analysis revealed that none of these differences was significant ($p>.05$). These findings are summarized in Table 4. There appears little alternative, then, but to accept the null hypothesis and attribute no changes in accepting-rejecting attitudes to the treatment condition of this study.

2. H_0: There is no significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment permissive-restrictive attitude scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

All of the groups, including the control group, revealed mean increases in the measurement of the permissive-restrictive attitudes toward children by the second testing interval. This may suggest, according to Itkin (1952), a movement in the direction of an attitude favoring more control of children. However, none of the increases shown in the groups assigned to the experimental condition were significant, with the exception of Group 2. And when scores from all of the experimental groups were examined in total, no significant differences were found at $p \leq .05$. These findings are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 4

Group Comparisons of Pre-treatment and Post-treatment Measurement of Parents' Accepting-Rejecting Attitudes Toward Children

Group	Pre-treatment		Post-treatment		Difference Between Means	t	2-Tail Probability
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Control #1	112.8	2.6	115.6	7.6	2.8	1.09	0.335
#2	106.7	4.6	108.5	2.1	1.75	1.33	0.275
#3	113.0	10.1	114.0	7.4	1.0	0.56	0.613
#4	115.0	1.4	117.5	4.95	2.5	1.00	0.500
#5	111.3	8.6	109.3	6.5	-2.0	-1.31	0.321
#6	112.3	3.8	114.6	8.6	2.3	0.33	0.770
#7	114.0	9.9	112.0	4.2	-2.0	-0.50	0.705
Experimental Group Totals	111.5	6.7	110.4	11.5	-1.1	-0.51	0.619

TABLE 5

Group Comparisons of Pre-treatment and Post-treatment Measurement of Parents' Restrictive-Permissive Attitudes Toward Children

Group	Pre-treatment Mean	Pre-treatment SD	Post-treatment Mean	Post-treatment SD	Difference Between Means	t	2-Tail Probability
Control #1	104.4	13.8	111.8	15.7	7.4	5.16	0.007
#2	109.7	9.2	119.2	8.6	9.5	3.75	0.033
#3	95.5	10.5	96.2	13.8	0.7	0.33	0.764
#4	94.0	4.2	103.0	5.6	9.0	9.00	0.070
#5	108.0	5.0	117.3	5.0	9.3	3.59	0.070
#6	105.3	3.2	109.6	13.3	3.7	1.29	0.327
#7	106.0	22.6	107.5	23.3	1.5	3.00	0.205
Experimental Group Totals	103.4	10.5	107.5	13.5	4.1	2.06	0.055

Interestingly, the first and second measurement scores for Group 1, the delayed treatment control group, did reveal a significant difference. Since this group received no parent group education treatment during the interval between testing, this difference is assumed to be the result of a possible sensitivity to survey items measuring this attitude after being tested for a second time. This same sensitivity may have been offset by the parent education treatment for the groups assigned to the experimental condition.

The last two hypotheses focused on changes in these accepting-rejecting and permissive-restrictive attitude variables over a period of six to eight weeks after the conclusion of each of the experimental parent education groups. The data on the delayed treatment control group reported here represent the outcomes for this group after administration of the treatment.

3. H_0: There is no significant difference between the post- and follow-up acceptance-rejection scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

Overall, the groups showed no significant mean differences in the measurements of the accepting-rejecting attitudes of parents toward their children ($p > .05$). Thus, it is not possible to reject the null hypothesis that

implies that the attitudes held by parents at the conclusion of courses in parent education are the same attitudes held by these parents six to eight weeks later. Table 6 presents these findings.

At this point in the research design, the delayed treatment control group, Group 1, had received a course in parent group education between the second and third testing intervals. The results for this group presented in Table 6 are not intended for comparison with the experimental groups in the same table, but may be compared with the findings for the experimental groups in Table 4. Again, as with the experimental groups in Table 4, no significant differences were revealed in the analysis of pre-treatment and post-treatment scores for Group 1.

4. H_0: There is no significant difference between the post- and follow-up permissive-restrictive scores of parents participating in parent education programs.

The experimental groups showed no significant differences in the measurement of the permissive-restrictive attitudes of parents toward their children ($p > .05$). This would suggest, then, that for the parents in the experimental groups, there were no changes in either their accepting-rejecting or their permissive-restrictive attitudes when measured six to eight weeks after the

TABLE 6

Group Comparisons of Post-treatment and Follow-Up Measurements of Parents' Accepting-Rejecting Attitudes Toward Children

Group	Post-treatment Mean	Post-treatment SD	Follow-Up Mean	Follow-Up SD	Difference Between Means	t	2-Tail Probability
Control #1	115.6	7.6	118.2	8.6	2.6	2.53	0.065
#2	108.5	2.1	109.2	5.5	0.7	0.40	0.718
#3	114.0	7.4	114.2	8.2	0.25	0.13	0.907
#4	117.5	4.9	114.5	0.7	-3.0	-0.75	0.590
#5	109.3	6.5	111.3	6.1	2.0	3.46	0.074
#6	114.6	8.6	115.3	6.6	0.6	0.33	0.774
#7	112.0	4.2	113.0	1.4	1.0	0.50	0.705
Experimental Group Totals	110.4	11.5	112.7	5.7	2.3	1.07	0.299

conclusion of the treatment. The results are presented in Table 7.

As for Group 1, the findings summarized in Table 7 for this control group are similar to those revealed for the experimental groups in Table 5. No significant differences were found between the pre-treatment and post-treatment scores for either the control or the experimental groups.

Limitations

Several of the predominant factors relating to the limitations of this study involved the sample. It was recognized at the onset that the size of the sample would be small, and that the subjects would be "self-selected". These factors were borne out during the implementation of the investigation. Additionally, this sample represents a particular segment of the population insofar as sex, religion, socioeconomic group, race and age of children are concerned. It is recommended, therefore, that caution be exercised in generalizing from these results to groups who differ in these characteristics.

Another problem relating to the sample involved randomization. A stronger research design requires that parents first be randomly selected and then randomly assigned to treatment and control conditions. However,

TABLE 7

Group Comparisons of Post-treatment and Follow-Up Measurements of Parents' Restrictive-Permissive Attitudes Toward Children

Group	Post-treatment Mean	Post-treatment SD	Follow-Up Mean	Follow-Up SD	Difference Between Means	t	2-Tail Probability
Control #1	111.8	15.7	105.2	13.4	-6.6	-2.03	0.112
#2	119.2	8.6	118.5	10.2	-0.75	-0.23	0.835
#3	96.2	13.7	101.5	8.6	5.2	1.37	0.265
#4	103.0	5.6	106.0	11.3	3.0	0.75	0.590
#5	117.3	5.0	116.6	6.1	-0.6	-0.28	0.808
#6	109.0	7.2	112.3	8.5	3.3	0.62	0.598
#7	107.5	23.3	112.0	21.2	4.5	3.00	0.205
Experimental Group Totals	107.5	13.4	111.3	11.0	3.8	1.74	0.100

since it proved difficult to identify parents who were willing to participate in a six- or eight-week parent education course, this design was not possible to achieve.

It was also recognized at the onset of this investigation that the use of questionnaires to measure complex attitudes, such as those regarding childrearing, presented another limitation. For example, in this study the range of responses to a given item of Itkin's attitude surveys is limited to the Likert scale. Commenting on this imposed limitation, one of the parents in an experimental group wrote in the margin of her pretest questionnaire that, when she circled the "Uncertain" choice for a particular item, it meant that "it depends on the particular situation." This limitation, in conjunction with other factors, such as reading comprehension and childrearing experience, may have influenced the outcomes of this investigation. Given these conditions, it is likely that the questions on each scale may not have been interpreted uniformly, and, too, that there may have been differences in the verbal facilities of the respondents. In addition, with regard to the use of questionnaires to measure childrearing attitudes, Shapiro (1956) has noted the possibility that a subject may sincerely believe that the response he or she has made is an accurate reflection

of his or her actual attitude when in fact this may not be the case.

An additional limitation of this study was inherent in the instruments used to measure change. Itkin's surveys on intrafamilial attitudes were not designed originally for use with parent group education programs, nor were they originally used repeatedly after intervals of treatment and no treatment. Hence, more evidence of the validity of using these scales is badly needed. Indeed, the inadequacy of many of the instruments currently used to assess attitudinal change toward children has been noted by other researchers (Becker & Krug, 1965; Endres & Evans, 1968; Shapiro, 1956).

A final limitation was the fact that the investigator in this study also served as the parent education group leader for five of the seven groups. Although all three group leaders who participated in this study were graduate students in Family Studies who had taken the same parent education methods course, some bias toward the instructor on the part of the participants may have been present. This point will be developed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

The present study sought to assess the effectiveness of a parent group education course by observing change in designated parental attitudes toward children as measured by Itkin's intrafamilial attitude scales. As studies in parent group education began to accumulate, support regarding the effectiveness of such courses in promoting more accepting and less restrictive parental attitudes has increased. As a result of these established findings and the subjective reports from descriptive studies, this investigation sought to carry previous findings a step further by assessing changes in parental attitudes eight weeks after the conclusion of the parent education course. Until the present study, this particular aspect had not been objectively measured.

To examine participants' changes in their attitudes toward children, a sample of twenty-three self-selected parents from various communities in Southwestern Virginia were surveyed for this study. Eighteen parents from six groups, who comprised the sample from the experimental treatment condition, received training in parent group education taught by graduate students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Testing occurred for the groups in the experimental treatment

condition at the beginning of the first session and was repeated during the last session. A six- to eight-week follow-up measurement was also administered. A group of five additional parents were assigned to a delayed treatment group. Testing was administered to this group at the same six- to eight-week intervals as with the experimental groups; however, this group did not receive the follow-up testing.

Four hypotheses were tested in this study. The first two hypotheses focused on changes of specified parental attitudes as a result of participation in courses of parent group education. Pre-treatment and post-treatment measurements were tested in the null form using the correlated t statistic. Based on a review of prior research, it was expected that the accepting and controlling attitudes held by parents toward their children would be different after participation in a parent education program and that this change could be attributed to the parenting course.

However, no significant differences between pre-treatment and post-treatment scores were found in the experimental sample. One characteristic of this study which could be a factor in this discrepancy is the small sample size; another could be the fact that the instruments employed in this study were neither originally designed

for use with parent group education programs, nor tested by repeated administration to the same population. In addition, Shaw and Wright (1967) do not report very high validity correlations for either of these scales.

The latter explanation regarding Itkin's instruments gains more weight when considered in the light of the surprising significant differences found between first and second measurement scores on strict-permissive attitudes in the delayed treatment control group. Here, a statistically significant difference appeared in a group which had received no parent education treatment during the first testing interval. It may well be that this difference is related to the validity of the instrument. And too, although it was assumed there would be no interaction between the repeated administration of the tests and the measures of the attitudes, some interaction may have been present in the control group during this testing interval. Some interaction may have been present also in the experimental condition, but, it is supposed, this was not revealed by the scores because it was offset by the parent education treatment.

The second pair of hypotheses was directed toward change in the parental attitudes of parents in the experimental groups six to eight weeks after the last parent education class. It was expected that there would

be no difference in the accepting and controlling attitudes of parents between the posttest and the six- to eight-week follow-up scores. As before, these hypotheses were tested in the null form using the correlated *t* test. There was no significant evidence found for the rejection of the null hypotheses implying that parental attitudes did not change for a period of time after the conclusion of the treatment. However, since this study also found that parental attitudes did not significantly change immediately after the parent education treatment, some caution is recommended when drawing conclusions about the findings of this study.

In fact, conclusions drawn from the second pair of hypotheses were dependent to some extent on achieving the expected results with the first pair. It was hoped that parental attitudes would be changed after a course in parent education, and that, once changed, these attitudes would be as firmly held six to eight weeks later. From this study, all that may be concluded is that no change occurred to this sample after the treatment, and that these relatively unchanged attitudes are held as strongly after the second testing interval.

Research Implications

A comparison of the findings of this study with other studies in parent group education measuring attitude change

suggests some methodological considerations. No other reported research in parent education has utilized Itkin's parent attitude scales in a pretest/posttest/follow-up design. Indeed, Itkin developed these instruments primarily to compare parents' attitudes toward their children with children's attitudes toward their parents in a design that required only one measurement. This study might have borne different results had a more valid and reliable pair of instruments been employed.

Itkin's scales are not the only instruments which have weaknesses in their validity. As Croake and Glover (1977) have noted, there is a lack of sound reliability and validity associated with most of the instruments used to measure results in parent education. In particular, one of the most frequently employed instruments in this area -- the Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) developed by Schaefer and Bell (1958) -- was not utilized in this investigation because of some strong reservations expressed in the literature (Becker & Krug, 1965). Although Itkin's parent attitude scales were not originally designed to measure change in parent education groups, they were chosen for this study because there was positive, albeit not strong, evidence of their validity and reliability, and it was hoped they would provide an alternative means to evaluate change in parent education groups.

Placing aside issues relating to the reliability and validity of the instruments used to assess parent education programs, we are left with the possibility that this study actually may have measured parental attitudes toward the acceptance and control of children and that the treatment truly produced no change in these attitudes. Such results are not inconsistent with the literature. Marvin J. Fine, in the Handbook on Parent Education (1980), has indicated that a number of studies have reported negative findings also. In particular, Mahoney (1974) reported only limited success with an Adlerian approach, which sought to help parents better recognize why their children were misbehaving and how to effectively intervene. Mahoney found that the parents' attitudes toward discipline did not change, nor was there a decrease in parent over-protectiveness. It would appear that the matter regarding the effectiveness of programs in parent education has not been settled yet, and that there is clearly a need for more empirical evidence using a variety of instruments.

Theoretical Implications

It was expected that the results of this study would give support to two related concepts regarding parent education. The first expectation was that parent group

education programs change the attitudes held by parents toward their relationships with their children and their childrearing practices. The second expectation was that, once changed, these new parental attitudes would be relatively stable and enduring.

Since previous studies had indicated that the attitudes of parents regarding parent-child relationships and childrearing practices are changed toward more acceptant and less authoritarian treatment of children at the conclusion of parent education programs, it was expected that this investigation would yield similar results by examining parental attitudes on the scales of acceptance-rejection and restrictive-permissive. If this had been the case, then, it was expected that when these attitudes were measured again after a brief interval, they would remain unchanged.

The results of this study seem to contradict prior research in parent education. Unlike previous findings, this investigation found no significant evidence to support the assumption that parent group education changes parental attitudes toward children. However, there appears to be some evidence to support the assumption that attitudes are relatively stable and enduring, since after exposure to the treatment these parental attitudes remained unchanged over a period of time.

From a theoretical standpoint then, it may be concluded from this investigation that no support could be found for parent group education effecting any change in the attitudes of parents regarding their parent-child relationships and childrearing practices, as measured by Itkin's parent attitude scales. However, this research did support the concept that attitudes, as they were measured here, are "a relatively enduring system of reactions" (Shaw & Wright, 1967, p.3).

Suggestions for Future Research

Most particularly, this study has underscored the need for valid and reliable instruments for examining efforts in parent education. Also, instruments that are relatively succinct without being lengthy would prove helpful to future research designs where repeated measurements are indicated. The use of additional instruments, such as those that measure behaviors, would further increase the value of the research findings. One such instrument, the Child Rearing Practices Scale (CRPS) devised by Freeman (1975), is a relatively short, twenty-eight item checklist which requires an observer to rate the subject parent's childrearing behaviors.

On another point regarding research design, a longer time interval between posttest and follow-up measurements

may produce stronger evidence for the presumed durability of childrearing attitudes. A period of six months or even a year has been recommended by Croake and Glover (1977). The present investigation, with its interval of one-and-a-half to two months, has only begun to shed light in this area. Future data would be helpful in determining the value of the parent group education approach.

In addition, there appears to be a strong need for future research to incorporate designs which surmount the possible bias difficulties that can occur when the parent education group leader is also the one handling the administration of the evaluation instruments as well as the one conducting the research. The likelihood that subjects might mark their responses in the desired direction in order to please the educator/researcher has rarely been considered in most studies, according to Croake and Glover (1977). Nor was it accounted for in the present study. A design similar to the one devised by Beutler, Oro-Beutler and Mitchell (1979) in their comparison study of two distinct approaches to parent group education, may overcome this difficulty.

Finally, the findings of this study have been based entirely on a small group of parents representing a particular segment of the population. Similar studies, using a larger sample of participants from various ethnic

groups, socioeconomic and educational levels, would prove efficacious in determining the generalizability of programs in parent group education.

For many family life practitioners, the worth of the group approach in parent education seems sufficiently evident to merit the continued increase in these diverse and varied phenomenon. Perhaps now, more than at any other point in its history, practitioners ought to turn their attention to the research necessary to heighten the effectiveness and increase the efficiency of their parent education efforts.

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APPENDICES

A. Background Data Questionnaire

B. Childrearing Attitude Scales

C. Session Outline

D. Sample Cover Letter

BACKGROUND DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

_____. In the space on the left, write only the last <u>four</u> digits of your social security number.

Please circle the most appropriate answer for each of the following questions.

What is your sex?
1. female
2. male

What was your age on your last birthday?
1. 20 years or under
2. 21 to 30
3. 31 to 40
4. 41 or over

Which of the categories below best describes the education you have received?
1. high school
2. college degree or below
3. graduate school degree or above

What is your current marital status?
1. married
2. divorced or separated
3. widowed
4. single

How many children do you have in your family?
1. No children
2. One child
3. Two or Three
4. Four or Five
5. Six or more

Which of these phrases most accurately describes the sex ratio among your children? (Answer even if you have only one child.)
1. More boys than girls
2. More girls than boys
3. Equally divided

Which category best describes the age range of the majority of your children?

1. Infants (about 0 to 30 months)
2. Preschoolers (about 2½ to 6 years)
3. School-aged (about 6 to 13 years)
4. Teenaged (about 13 to 19 years)
5. Adult (20 or over)

What is your religious faith?

1. Protestant
2. Catholic
3. Jewish
4. Other, please specify _____
5. None

What is your current annual income? (Include yours and your partner's in your answer.)

1. Under $5,000
2. 5,000-9,999
3. 10,000-14,999
4. 15,000-19,999
5. 20,000-24,000
6. 25,000 or more

A SURVEY OF OPINIONS REGARDING THE BRINGING UP OF CHILDREN

Following is a list of statements regarding what should or should not be done in the bringing up of children. If you strongly agree with a statement as it stands, please draw a line under the words "Strongly Agree"; if you strongly disagree with a statement, underline the words "Strongly Disagree," and so on, for "Agree," "Uncertain," and "Disagree."

Since this is a survey of opinions, it is desired that you indicate your own personal opinions regarding these questions, regardless of whether you think other people might agree or disagree with you. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these statements. This is a study of personal opinions, and of personal opinions only. Please fill these forms out independently.

1. A parent should look after his (or her) young child both at school and play.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. A parent should praise his (or her) child liberally in private.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. If one child in a family is less quick to learn than another, his parents should spur him on by constantly pointing out the superiority of the other.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. If parents can afford to do so, they should send a child to a military or boarding school, where he (or she) could obtain the proper training with the least inconvenience to the parents.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Surprise parties, birthday parties, and the giving of presents to children are likely to spoil them, and should be avoided.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Parents should take their children with them on trips and vacations.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. Parents should encourage their children to bring their friends home and should help them to entertain their friends.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Parents should, if necessary, make almost any sacrifices of their own money or comfort in order to make their children happy.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. If a three-year-old child tells wild stories which are obviously untrue, he should be punished severely for lying.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. A parent should never "give in" to a child.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. A parent should spend as much time as possible with his (or her) child.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. Children should be trained to do things for themselves as early in life as possible.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. A parent should be perfectly frank with his (or her) child on the subject of sex.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. Parents should give children of elementary school age or older reasons for any requests made of them.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. If a family is able to afford to do so, the training of the children should be handled by a servant or a nurse.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. Children should <u>not</u> be allowed to interfere with the social or recreational activities of their parents.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. Children of high school age should earn all of their own spending money.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. A family should move out of an unwholesome neighborhood for the sake of the children even if such a move would make it necessary for the father to travel farther to work.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. A child who sucks his thumb often should be made to feel ashamed of himself.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. Parents should praise and make much of their children in the presence of outsiders.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

21. Parents should show their love and affection for their children outwardly by praise and expressions of affection.
   Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

22. Whenever a child deserves a scolding, he (or she) should be scolded then and there, whether strangers are present or not.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

23. Parents should discourage their children from asking them intimate questions.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

24. Children should not be teased.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

25. Young people should obey their parents because they are their parents.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

26. It is not possible to show too much love for a child.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

In each of the following you are given a statement which can be completed in any one of several ways. Please place a check in front of whichever of the alternative choices most nearly resembles your own opinion.

27. In general, a child may be expected to act like an adult at ....
_____(a) Seven years of age
_____(b) Ten years of age
_____(c) Thirteen years of age
_____(d) Sixteen years of age
_____(e) Nineteen years of age

28. Children should not be given allowances until they are ....
_____(a) Seven years of age
_____(b) Nine years of age
_____(c) Eleven years of age
_____(d) Thirteen years of age
_____(e) Fifteen years of age
_____(f) Children should not be given allowances at all
_____(g) Children may be given regular allowances even before age seven

29. Children who talk back to their parents should be ....
_____(a) Given a quiet talking to
_____(b) Told that another such offense would be punished
_____(c) Severely scolded
_____(d) Sent to bed without food
_____(e) Whipped severely
_____(f) Given a less severe punishment than any mentioned above

30. Children who repeatedly disobey their parents should be ....
_____(a) Given a heart-to-heart or man-to-man talk
_____(b) Threatened with punishment
_____(c) Scolded severely
_____(d) Spanked
_____(e) Whipped severely
_____(f) Locked into a closet
_____(g) Punished more severely than in any of the above choices
_____(h) Punished less severely than in any of the above choices

A SURVEY OF OPINIONS REGARDING THE DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

Following is a list of statements regarding what should or should not be done in respect to the control or discipline of children. If you strongly agree with a statement as it stands, please draw a line under the words "Strongly Agree"; if you strongly disagree with the statement, underline the words "Strongly Disagree," and so on, for "Agree," "Uncertain," and "Disagree."

These statements apply to a child of either sex unless they specifically refer to a child as a boy or girl. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. This is simply a survey of opinions. Please do not be concerned as to whether other people may agree or disagree with you, and say exactly what you feel. Please fill these forms out independently.

31. Violation of household rules should never be overlooked.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

32. Parents should help their children with their homework if they need help.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

33. Parents should allow their children to make up their own minds as to what they will be when they grow up without trying to influence their decisions.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

34. A child should be encouraged but not required to say "Please" whenever he makes a request.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

35. Parents should allow children of less than fifteen years of age to see only those movies of which they approve.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

36. Children should be trained to pay immediate obedience to their parents.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

37. Parents should insist upon complete obedience from their children.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

38. Children should be expected to obey commands instantly and without question.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

39. An older child should be expected to take care of younger brothers and sisters.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

40. Children should be allowed to do as they please.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

41. A child should never be forced to eat anything against his will.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

42. A child should never be forced to do a thing he does not wish to do.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

43. The social activities of a boy or girl of high school age should be closely supervised by the parents.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

44. Parents should not dictate to high school students as to when and how much they should study.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

45. Children should be expected to obey commands without being given reasons for them.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

46. Whenever a young child fails to come home from school promptly, his parents should question him as to where he had been.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

47. Before a child of high school age goes out of the house, he should always be required to tell his parents where he is going and what he is going to do.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

48. Parents should closely supervise all of the after-school activities of their children of high school age or younger.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

49. Children of high school age or younger should be allowed to go only with those friends of whom their parents approve.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

50. A child should be required to say "Please" whenever he makes a request.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

51. If a parent threatens a child with punishment, this punishment should be carried out without exception.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

52. If parents refrain from punishing a child, they will spoil him.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

53. Parents should watch their young children to see that no harm comes to them.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

54. A young person of high school age should be free to come and go and he pleases without interference from his parents.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

55. A child should <u>never</u> be allowed to contradict or talk back to his parents.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

56. Young children should be allowed to choose their own playmates without any interference on the part of their parents.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

57. A child should be allowed to spend his money or allowances as he wishes.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

58. If a child wants to destroy his own playthings, he should be allowed to do so.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

59. A child's liberty should be restricted in danger situations only.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

60. A parent should always insist that every one of his (or her) commands be obeyed, even if he realizes after making a command that it was an unreasonable one.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

61. If one parent refuses a child's request, the other parent should refuse it also.
Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

In each of the following you are given a statement which can be completed in any one of several ways. Place a check in front of whichever of the alternative choices most nearly resembles your own opinion.

62. Parents may allow their daughters to have "dates" beginning ....
_____(a) Age 10 or younger
_____(b) Age 12
_____(c) Age 14
_____(d) Age 16
_____(e) Age 18
_____(f) Age 20

63. Children under fourteen years of age may be allowed to go out alone in the evenings to play ....
_____(a) At any time they desire
_____(b) Several times a week
_____(c) About once a week
_____(d) About once every two weeks
_____(e) Less than once a month, or never at all

64. Children who misbehave should have their privileges taken away ...
_____(a) Never
_____(b) Seldom
_____(c) Sometimes
_____(d) Often
_____(e) Every time they misbehave

65. Girls of less than sixteen years of age should be required to be home every evening (with only a few reasonable exceptions) by ....
_____(a) Nine o'clock or earlier
_____(b) Ten o'clock
_____(c) Eleven o'clock
_____(d) Twelve o'clock
_____(e) No special time in the evening

Appendix C: Session Outline

Based on STEP: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

Session 1: Understanding Children's Behavior and Misbehavior

2: Understanding How Children Use Emotions to Involve Parents and the "Good" Parent

3: Encouragement

4: Communication: Listening

5: Communication: Exploring Alternatives

6: Developing Responsibility

7: Decision Making for Parents

8: The Family Meeting

Appendix D: Sample Cover Letter

Dear Parent:

Attached you will find the questionnaire you first encountered during our recent parent education class. This is the last time you will be asked to complete this survey and your cooperation is earnestly sought to help improve the quality of parent education courses and to assist me in this investigation.

Please fill this questionnaire out according to how you feel now rather that how you remember answering on the previous forms and return it to me using the enclosed stamped envelope. As before, all of your responses are held confidentially.

Thank you for your assistance and interest in this regard.

Sincerely,

Bob Henderson
Instructor

enclosure

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