

5-24-1979

Group Parent Training in Oregon

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GROUP PARENT TRAINING
IN OREGON

by

John Peter Kuzma

A research practicum submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF SOCIAL WORK

Portland State University

1979

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

The advisor to John Peter Kuzma approves the research practicum presented May 24, 1979.

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Barbara Friesen.

Barbara Friesen, A.C.S.W., Practicum Advisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher is grateful to the following people for their work in completing this study.

Barbara Friesen, Portland State Graduate School of Social Work

Robert Bagwell, The Oregon State Mental Health Division

Karalee Kiser-Kuzma

ABSTRACT

Research examining the actual practice and methods of group parent trainers has not kept pace with the great amount of literature on "how-to-parent" theory. In this study, 23 group parent trainees throughout the Willamette Valley in Oregon were interviewed to determine the characteristics of their groups in terms of numbers of parents in each group, length of groups, fees charged, teaching methods used, parenting approaches taught. Their general concerns and opinions about the parent training field were also elicited.

The support aspects of the parent groups were recognized as integral to parent training's effectiveness. The organizational structure of the groups and the teaching methods employed by the trainers appeared to emphasize the supportive functions of the groups.

Very limited success was realized with educating involuntary clients on a group basis. It appears that attempts to educate wider numbers of parents will have to be accomplished on a voluntary basis.

Outcome studies documenting group parent education's effectiveness are needed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The following is a study on group parent educators which has grown out of the researcher's interest in doing direct clinical work with individuals and families, and a wish to make that service as effective as possible. Choosing a practice method and an effective theoretical approach is not always a rational decision, rather, it seems to be the result of an intuitive and trial-and-error selection process.

There are varied factors that appear to determine one's choice in utilizing a particular theory of parent-child interaction, such as: the undergraduate school attended; a scholastic major in psychology or education; the orientation of one's field instructor or other strategically important teachers; and the personality or charisma of a particular instructor. Of course, one can opt out of "true believer" status and call oneself an eclectic by combining various principles of the different approaches. However, the apparent inconsistencies and controversy between the different schools of thought lead to a sense of inadequacy when interviewing anxious parents unsure of their own value systems.

Although many of the researcher's doubts might in time be dispelled through experience, this study seems to be a more efficient way of skill building by utilizing the many years of collective experience offered by the parent trainers interviewed.

Though the information provided by the parent trainers interviewed cannot be said to represent the total population of parent trainers in Oregon because of the method of selecting interviewed; their points of view, based on their experiences and philosophies concerning group parent training, can be useful to this researcher and to any social worker beginning work in the field of parent training.

The original stimulus for this study came from Dr. Robert Bagwell of the Oregon State Mental Health Division Child and Adolescent Section. In the spring of 1978, he appeared before the Community Mental Health Seminar at the School of Social Work at Portland State University. He suggested several areas of research that would be useful to the Division in its decision making, one being the parent education movement in Oregon. In follow-up discussions between Dr. Bagwell and the researcher, the focus of the study began to take shape.

Although there is a plethora of theoretical material on parent training, there is a scarcity of research, factual material and demographic data available on the actual practice of parent trainers. As a result this study is an initial exploration in the field.

The study was refined into a set of open-ended questions giving parent trainers ample opportunity to describe what they do. For example, why they chose their particular methods; what they thought of the other methods available; and what their groups looked like in terms of numbers of parents, frequency of meetings, fees and so on.

This study is restricted to group parent trainers, and does not include counselors working solely on an individual basis with parents. The parent education movement that is visible and burgeoning in Oregon

uses the group method. The group method may also offer several advantages in efficiency and effectiveness over the individual approach. First, groups allow the professional to meet ever increasing demands for service by permitting him to see greater numbers of parents. Second, effectiveness is enhanced by the supportive nature of a group. Parents see that their problems are not unique, and that they can give and receive support from other parents which decreases the dependency on the professional as well.

Third, there are increased opportunities to interact with other parents through the use of experiential methods such as role playing. All of the above offer to parents what appears to be the most useful learning experience available.

In summary, this study arises from the researcher's own desire to develop a practical and efficient clinical model of parent training and the need to provide a clearer picture of the parent training movement in Oregon.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a brief description of the major parenting theories evident in the literature and summarize the research available on group parent training.

Theoretical Approaches

There appear to be five major parenting approaches: Behavior Modification, Developmental view, Dreikur's approach, Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (S.T.E.P.).

The Behavior Modification approach is based on the experimental work of B.F. Skinner and has been applied in Oregon to parent-child interactions mainly by Gerald Patterson from the University of Oregon in Eugene. The group approach emphasizes the teaching of the behavioral principles of positive reinforcement and withdrawal of positive reinforcement (ignoring or time-out). Negative reinforcement or contingencies are generally avoided. Examples of positive reinforcement consist of praise, encouragement, physical affection and points awarded within a token economy. When it is applied immediately after a behavior by a child which approximates what is desired by the parent, the rates of positive behavior are increased. Parents are taught observational skills to help them spot actions which may be maintaining the "bad"

behavior, and to withhold this type of reinforcement in the future. They are instructed how to set up their own programs for behavioral change utilizing the principles so they will not be dependent on the instructor after the class terminates (Patterson and Gullion, 1971).

The developmental approach focuses on teaching parents what is age-appropriate behavior for a child using the work of Piaget, Erickson and others. For example, toddlers do not have the capacity to inhibit their behavior in response to verbal instructions like older children. Adult expectations that young children should restrict their behavior solely on the basis of verbal instruction lead to adult frustration and subsequent behavior problems in children (Smart and Smart, 1967).

The work of Alfred Adler was applied to children by Rudolph Dreikurs (Dreikurs and Solt, 1964). Dreikurs' approach teaches that cooperative behavior can be gained with a child through the development of a democratic atmosphere within the family in which children are respected as social equals. Family meetings where children can voice their concerns are recommended. Parents are taught how to identify the motivations or goals behind the child's misbehavior. This latter principle is used in order to keep from misidentifying the problem as that of a "bad" or "naughty" child. Most often the child's goal is attention or power and the parent is taught to see his own part in fostering the misbehavior. While the rights of the child are respected, the parental responsibility to maintain order in the family is recognized. Through the use of natural or logical consequences, the child is allowed to experience aversive results of his own actions, providing him a real learning situation (Dreikurs and Gray, 1968). The child's

ability to engage the parent in a power struggle and the futility of the parent trying to win by force are recognized. Parents are urged to withdraw physically from the conflict. This approach is grounded in the belief that cooperation cannot be forced, but must be stimulated by giving a child a sense of his own power and responsibility through mutual respect.

The Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) approach developed by Thomas Gordon has a value system somewhat similar to Dreikurs' approach (Gordon, 1976). Followers of this method disavow the use of force and emphasize the use of listening to a child's feelings (active listening) and expressing one's own feelings ("I messages") as crucial to developing harmonious relationships within the family. Children are seen as active participants in helping to generate solutions to conflicts in the family. Being able to assess if a particular problem requires parental intervention is an important fundamental. Parents are also warned about doing for a child what he can do for himself, which tends to underscore a feeling of helplessness in the child. Reflection of the feeling of helplessness or frustration by the parent through the use of active listening is used instead. If a parent is frustrated by the child's behavior then that is termed the parent's problem and the use of confrontation through "I messages" is recommended.

The S.T.E.P. or Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, utilizes much of Dreikurs and P.E.T. (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976). Don Dinkmeyer, the major author of the manual, co-authored a book with Rudolph Dreikurs, entitled Encouraging Children to Learn (1963). (He is reportedly being sued by Thomas Gordon for infringement of his copyright on P.E.T.) S.T.E.P. is packaged into a nine-week

program using a workbook for parents and audiotaped vignettes to stimulate discussion and to teach the principles.

These main theoretical approaches are augmented in the popular literature by books combining several of the theories and by titles applying adult self-help psychotherapy approaches (transactional analysis, assertiveness training) to the parent education field.

The books by Hiam Ginott also deserve mention. Between Parent and Child (1965) and Between Parent and Teenager (1969) endorse a similar sort of listening for feeling the P.E.T. emphasizes but without the jargon or standardized form for application that P.E.T. has. Ginott's theory maintains that respecting the child and expecting respect from him, develops the self-esteem of the child. Ginott's work actually preceded that of Thomas Gordon, but was never organized into a formal system and marketed nationwide like P.E.T.

Two other books related to P.E.T. are Your Child's Self-Esteem by Dorothy Briggs (1970), and Helping Your Child Learn Right from Wrong by Simon and Olds (1977). Briggs was an early P.E.T. instructor and her book is endorsed by Thomas Gordon. It focuses on ways to build self-esteem in children and couples using the P.E.T. concepts along with Ms. Briggs own ideas about the importance of acceptance of feelings and being able to make emotional contact with the child. The Simon and Olds' book (1977) is a collection of games and exercises for parents and children to help clarify their own values.

The books by Fitzhugh Dodson, How to Parent (1973) and How to Discipline With Love (1977) are combinations of behavioral theory and discipline softened by information about normal childhood development.

Illustrating his eclectic approach, he incorporates the idea of the family council which was introduced by Rudolph Dreikurs.

Surviving With Kids by Bartz and Rasar (1978), and How to Get Your Kids to Listen by Banville (1978) are simplified behavioral approaches that avoid behavioral terminology, like the Dodson books, and also add such common sense things as being aware of the messages you are giving the child to make sure you are not confusing him. These latter principles seem to be derived from communication theory coming out of social psychology.

Several books emphasize the importance of being able to understand the child's perception of the world in order to provide the means to help the child develop. The Magic Years by Freiburg (1959) and Mommy and Daddy, I'm Afraid by Joseph (1974), help the parent understand the basis for many of childrens' fears and discuss supportive ways of dealing with them.

Help Your Children to be Self-Confident by Booraen, Flowers and Schwartz (1978) is assertiveness training's contribution to the parent education field. Another offshoot from the self-help psychotherapy market is a number of transactional analysis books. Raising Kids OK by Babcock and Keepers (1976), T.A. for Families by Bry (1976) and Transactional Analysis for Moms and Dads by James (1975), all appear to be adaptations taken from the adult model and applied to children rather than developing an independent system of transactional analysis integrated for the needs of children. Concepts like strokes, the need to play, structural analysis (parent, adult, child ego states) are discussed in theoretical terms rather than as developed strategies

for dealing with children in the manner of the behavioral or P.E.T. approaches.

One exception to this is the Family Game by Hersey and Blanchard (1978), which has more concrete ideas and combines T.A. and behaviorism in encouraging a less restrictive approach to child raising. The importance of a parent looking at his own upbringing in order to cope more effectively with his child is discussed.

A review of the literature in the parent education field would not be complete without mention of the reactionary work of Dr. James Dobson found in The Strong-Willed Child (1978) and Dare to Discipline (1970). He professes an authoritarian, Christian approach favoring corporal punishment. He states that children will be grateful to parents for crushing their misbehavior.

Common Themes Among Approaches

Although proponents of each of the major theories might favor their's as the more effective one, since they are dealing with a common entity--children--there are similarities among them all.

For instance, those adopting a behavioral approach have been critical of the Adlerians for advocating family democracy and equating it with permissiveness. But Dreikurs' logical consequences appears to be very much related to a behaviorist's application of contingencies following misbehavior, as well as the principles of ignoring and time-out. The difference seems to be that the behaviorists favor placing the child in time-out, while Dreikurs recommends the parent himself seek time-out, for example, locking himself in the bathroom. Both realize that the

child's behavior is intimately tied to the parent's reaction and that an unaware parent can contribute to his child's misbehavior. Both would also agree that children train their parents, and the difference may be small between the behaviorists use of positive reinforcement and Dreikurs' encouragement.

Both agree that punishment is a self-limiting technique and that the use of contingencies or logical consequences cannot be relied upon exclusively by the parent. The behaviorist teaches that behavior learned through the use of punishment extinguishes quickly and will not be used when the punishment or punisher is not present; while Dreikers believes punishment is useless in winning cooperation from a child, and that not even logical consequences will work if a child is sufficiently discouraged. Only a child who feels good about himself will cooperate, and a belief in encouragement by the parent is necessary (Patterson, 1971; Dreikurs, 1964).

Besides similarities between these two theories, there appear to be deeper themes tying all the major approaches. One common theme is that children are not bad or naughty, nor do they have intentions to purposely defy and reject the parent. The parent who believes this is misinformed and tends to exacerbate misbehavior. A parent must first become aware of the rules of the "game" before he can understand the child's behavior. To use each theory, parents must stop reacting solely on the basis of emotion, popular belief and edicts handed to them or learned from their own parents. They must become observers, analyzers, and then be goal-directed in their behavior with their children.

There appears to be a belief displayed in all the theories that children act under a set of internally consistent rules which can be understood by the parent. This belief in healthy motivation or logical rules that the child follows allows for more empathy on the part of the parent toward the child. Parental guilt and frustration are reduced as the parents see valid meaning in a child's misbehavior. It is not just meaningless anarchy and rebellion that needs to be quashed.

Thus, the behaviorists' view that behavior is dependent on its consequences; Dreikurs' view that the child is goal directed, and socially oriented; P.E.T.'s idea that improving communication and listening to the child's feelings to lead to improved behavior; and the developmental psychologist's research showing that certain behaviors at certain ages are appropriate and do not require parental over-reaction, all lead to helping parents see their child's misbehavior in a more supportive and positive light. With the exception of Dobson (1972), this redefinition of a child's behavior in terms of motivation or intent is one way out of the vicious cycle of misbehavior leading to parental frustration and rejection and to greater deviant behavior.

Also excluding Dobson (1972), another theme appears to be an emphasis on avoiding punishment and giving more to the child in positive ways, even when the relationship is severely strained. The behaviorists favor the use of positive reinforcement to encourage the use of good behavior to compete with the misbehavior. Thomas Gordon with Parent Effectiveness Training (1976) and Rudolph Dreikurs (1964) both advocate treating the child as a social equal where the child's ideas and feelings are valued in helping to generate solutions

to his misbehavior. The developmental approach requires that the parent develop empathy with the child by being sensitive to his child's particular stage of development.

This positive approach also implies that the child's behavior is linked to that of his parents. If the parent's behavior can change and improve the child's behavior, then the parent's behavior was a determinant of the child's misbehavior. As was mentioned earlier, both the behaviorists and the Dreikursians attest to parental influence in maintaining or reinforcing undesired behavior, and P.E.T. points to parental roadblocks to communication which can produce "turned off" behavior in their children. The developmental approach also implies that for development to proceed normally, each stage of growth must be dealt with appropriately by the parent.

Research on Group Parent Training

While much can be written about each of the individual methods, and comparisons can be made of their salient features, research on the effectiveness of the group method of parent education is sparse, and there are no studies comparing the effectiveness of the different methods.

In Education for Childrearing, Orville Brim (1959) found inconclusive results in reporting on three experimentally designed (control groups) studies of group discussion techniques for parent education. In the same book, Brim (1959) cites a study done in 1931 on sex education of parents which documented an increase in parent knowledge but no change in parent attitudes.

Another, done in 1956 by Shapiro (Brim, 1959), found no improvement on one attitude measure (use of sentence completion test), significant improvement in MMPI subscales reflecting family relations, improvement in the other main MMPI scales, and a change in an unspecified attitude scale for the experimental group that was paralleled by an equally great change in the control group. This last anomaly leads Brim (1959) to state:

We need not necessarily conclude that the seminar had no effect on the parents but rather it had no more effect on them than did whatever miscellaneous experiences the control group was having at the same time. (p. 295)

For this reason, he does not count as significant the results of five studies showing desirable changes in parent attitude as the result of the group meetings because of the failure to use control groups.

Chillman (1973) surveyed ten more recent parent education projects, most of which focused on low income parents and included individual contact along with the group component. On the whole he found them to be poorly attended and to have minimal impact. One study (Chillman, 1973) restricted to group parent education, and using middle class mothers with children acting out at school, found gains in mental health knowledge by the mothers and improvement in their subjective ratings of their son's behavior, "coupled with no changes in ratings of their boy's behavior by teachers or school psychologists." (Chillman, 1973, p. 426). Chillman (1973) also concluded that several studies (Kraft and Chillman, 1966; Mann, Woodward and Joseph, 1961) "failed to reveal significant changes in parent behavior or attitudes as a result of group parent education." (p. 424)

Although outcome studies produced these equivocal results, the sheer numbers of parents seeking help appears to testify to a felt need for help with parenting. In 1976, Thomas Gordon reported in his book over 7,000 specially trained instructors delivering Parent Effectiveness Training nationwide. Parent trainers in Eugene, Oregon, using Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs' method report over thirty groups operating at any one time with each lasting for eight weeks and consisting of between eight and twelve parents. Most mental health clinics in the state of Oregon have parent training classes available, as do the larger school districts in the state (Portland, Salem and Eugene).

The following studies are supportive of group education of parents in child raising, but are lacking either in their methodology or lacking in the fact that the sampled population is confined to a subgroup of parents which may not be representative (foster parents) so the result may not be generalized to the normal population of parents.

A study by Mitchell (1977) looking solely at the impact of Parent Effectiveness Training on parental attitudes with no assessment of any changes in child or parental behavior, found statistically significant attitude changes towards a more liberal and less authoritarian view of child raising.

That such a change would lead to more effective parenting could be deduced from the results of a study by White (Chillman, 1973). He found a close association between productive socialized behavior and participation in a democratically led group (family). Another study (Boyd and Remy, 1978) on group education of foster parents found a decisive impact on all placement outcomes, with a reduced number

of aborted placements and a greatly reduced drop-out rate for foster parents. The authors concluded that there was a strong case for universal mandatory training. An example of this conclusion can be found in Multnomah County, Oregon Children Services Division which now stipulates mandatory training for all foster parents entering the program.

The lack of research in parent training and the lack of widespread communication of the results has been mentioned by two writers (Arranson, 1974; Bjorkland, 1977). One of the more descriptive responses to this lack of research is found in Bjorkland's Historical Perspectives on Parent Education in America (1977). She has detailed questions needing to be answered about group parent education:

Which methods are most effective? Didactic? Group dynamics? Guided participation? When are they most effective? Is there a matching factor to consider between the type of parent and the content? Are decisions on content in a particular program often based on the type of method or theory the leader was trained in? Are these the content needs of the parents participating in the program? What are the personal qualities which should be required of the leader? (pp. 15-16)

She concludes, "the future impact of parent education depends on information of this kind to document its effectiveness (p. 17).

In summary, this study arises from the researcher's own desire to develop a practical and efficient clinical model of parent training and the need to provide a clearer picture of the parent training movement in Oregon. Although the study does not answer all the questions posed by Bjorkland (1977) to improve information in the parent education field, nor does it approach the problem with a scientific research design, it does provide a basis for further study by asking the parent trainers themselves how they teach their classes, how they arrived at choosing their particular method and how they gauge their effectiveness.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

General Design

The basic design utilized in the study is a research methodology called the key informant approach. The key informant approach is a method of gathering information from individuals in the community who are particularly knowledgeable of community needs and utilization patterns in defined areas of service delivery, in this case, parent training. The subjects usually sought as key informants include: public officials, persons providing primary and administrative services in health and welfare agencies and clinical professionals in both the public and private sectors.

The subjects for this study were selected as appropriate key informants based on the following objectives:

- 1) to locate persons actively involved in group parent training;
- 2) to gather information from participants utilizing the various known theoretical approaches as found in the literature review;
- 3) to identify the needs, concerns, and techniques of group parent trainers in Oregon;
- 4) to identify group parent trainers from different agencies, schools and counties, and from the public and private sector, to give a broader based understanding of the utilization and organization of group parent training in Oregon.

Parent trainers were identified based on these objectives by Dr. Robert Bagwell of the Oregon State Mental Health Division and Barbara Friesen of Portland State University School of Social Work. When interviewed, these parent trainers were asked who they knew to be qualified parent trainers in Oregon. Based on the same objectives and again utilizing the key informant approach, more participants were selected from the names suggested by this initial group of parent trainers by repetition of this process with each interviewee. The trainers interviewed were also asked to specify the theoretical orientation of the trainers they mentioned. Parent trainers with a theoretical orientation not yet adequately represented among those interviewed were then chosen. Sixty-four parent trainers were identified. Twenty-three were actually interviewed.

Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was developed with the assistance of Dr. Bagwell and Barbara Friesen. A combination of fixed response questions and open-ended questions was used. The fixed response questions define the characteristics of the parent trainers and their groups. Such things as the educational preparation of the trainer, the organizational structure within which they work, the size of their groups, the length of their courses and the socioeconomic status of their clients were examined using this type of question. The open-ended questions were designed to let the parent trainers interviewed determine the broader concerns and issues of the field. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of telephone interviews. The telephone interview was chosen because of its ability to reach participants in more distant areas efficiently, and due to the researcher's time and financial limitations. A mail-out questionnaire was not feasible because of the need to obtain in-depth opinions from the many open-ended questions in the interview schedule. The large amount of information requested would not have encouraged as high a response rate from a mail-out questionnaire as from the telephone interview.

Potential interviewees were sent a cover letter introducing the researcher and describing the purpose of the study. Included were sample questions from the interview schedule. In a follow-up telephone contact, a time for the actual telephone interview was arranged. Any questions the participant had about the study were answered at that time. Participants were informed that the interview could last as long as sixty minutes. The researcher conducted all the interviews and attempted to administer all questions uniformly.

Data Analysis

The fixed response questions were tabulated. Size of the intervals chosen for the tables differed with the question asked in order to highlight the results.

Open-ended questions were analyzed retrospectively, and the responses for each question were grouped into the most logical divisions from the viewpoint of the researcher.

Limitations of the Study

The parent trainers interviewed are not a representative sample but were chosen on the basis of their professional reputations and theoretical orientation. Because of the length of the interview, respondents had the option of answering the open-ended questions either briefly or at length. Interviewers differed as to the amount of time available because of work schedules or other demands.

The open-ended questions were categorized retrospectively and may have reflected the bias of the researcher.

The usage of telephone interviews to gather the data did not allow for face to face contact with the participant which may have reduced the motivation of the respondent. The telephone interview method may also limit the time taken to answer a question; particularly an open-ended question, thereby reducing the amount of information gathered.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Entry Into Parent Training

Parent trainers were asked "Why did you become a group parent trainer?" The majority of the respondents (17 out of 23) had already been working with children, either as teachers, counselors, or school psychologists and began parent training because it had become apparent to them that in order to help children some sort of contact would have to be made with parents. Such comments as: "It's necessary to help children;" "Parents have a real impact on children;" "You need to work with the parents;" "It's a way of getting to the kids before the patterns are set;" and "From a teacher's standpoint there is a critical need" exemplified their seeing parent training as a vital part of helping children.

Two interviewee's involvement with parent training began with their receiving parent education as mothers. Since it worked for them they decided to get involved in helping other parents and progressed from volunteer work to post graduate counseling work.

Three of the respondents were thrust into service as group parent trainers because their employers or fellow staff members decided the service was needed. They either volunteered or were selected because they were the only ones who were parents.

One person was interested in working in the counseling field using a behavioral approach and took her job as group parent trainer because it was a chance to practice behavior therapy. The interest in work with parents and children was secondary to this choice.

Amount of Time Spent With Parent Groups

The majority of parent trainers (12 out of 21) spend less than one-fifth of their time engaged in group parent training and most parent trainers appear to be leading groups as an adjunct to their other professional activities. The amount of time parent trainers devote to leading and preparing for their groups is as follows:

Percentage of Time	Number of Parent Trainers
1 - 19	12
20 - 39	6
40 - 59	1
60 - 79	2
80 - 100	0
Unable to estimate	2

Two respondents were not included in this question because they are not presently running parent groups. However, both are working with parents on similar issues on an individual basis. They have worked with parents using the group mode in the past. One has developed a parenting curriculum for high school students. She was unable to give estimates for several questions because the program

is used by school districts throughout Oregon with varying class sizes, socioeconomic statuses, etc. It will be noted for each question when these respondents were unable to provide a response for that particular question.

Amount of Time Spent With Parents Individually

Parent trainers were also asked what proportion of time was spent counseling with parents on a couples or single parent basis as opposed to a group basis. The following responses were made:

<u>Percentage of Time</u>	<u>Number of Parent Trainers</u>
0 - 19	7
20 - 39	10
40 - 59	4
60 - 79	1
80 -100	1
TOTAL	23

Seventeen out of the 23 parent trainers spend less than forty percent of their time counseling parents individually.

Organization Within Which Parent Trainers Work

Parent trainers were asked "What organizational structure do you work within?" Most of the parent trainers (17 out of 23) work in either schools or mental health clinics.

The organizations were given as follows:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Number of Parent Trainers</u>
Schools	10
Mental Health Clinics	7
Private Agencies Funded by NIMH	2
Children Services Division	1
Juvenile Department	1
Private hospital	1
Private practice (collects own fees)	1
TOTAL	23

Educational Training of Parent Trainers

Most of the parent trainers interviewed (16) had master's degrees. Four people were doctorate level and three people had bachelor's degrees.

Number of Courses Taught at One Time

Interview's were asked "How many courses do you teach at any one time?" Responses were:

<u>Number of Courses or Groups</u>	<u>Number of Parent Trainers</u>
1 group	14
2 groups	6
3 groups	0
4 groups	1
5 groups or more	0
unable to estimate	2
TOTAL	23

Two respondents ran ongoing groups and were included in the 14 who ran one group at a time.

Special Types of Problems Dealt With

The parent trainers were asked "Do you think of your program as being addressed to parents with children with particular kinds of problems?" Only three parent trainers responded affirmatively. Problems mentioned were: children with alcoholic problems, teenage girls either pregnant or with infants, and pre-parents in high school.

Most of the parent trainers (20) work with heterogeneous groups in which multiple problems were mentioned. Of those, the following problems were noted:

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Number of Parent Trainers</u>
Behavior problems or acting out	11
Mentally retarded or learning disabled	5
Children who are irritating	4
TOTAL	20

There are no objective criteria for establishing a difference between a child who is a behavior problem from one who is merely "irritating."

Age Groupings of Parent Groups

The interviewee's were asked "Do you think of your program as being addressed to parents with children of particular ages?" The majority

(17 out of 23) have groups which are age specific. The responses clustered into four categories. Three parent trainers work with parents whose children are in the first three primary grades. Seven are engaged in parent training with parents of elementary school age children (6-14 years) and three work with parents of teenagers (13-18 years). Four parent trainers work with mothers of infants, pregnant mothers and pre-parents who are teenagers. Six parent trainers have groups with parents with all age ranges of children.

Socioeconomic Status of Parent Groups

Parent trainers were asked to estimate the socioeconomic status of their clients and were given two classes to choose from (working class including welfare and unemployed and middle class). Below are the responses for working class parents. The responses for middle class parents is the converse of the following data.

Percentage of Working Class Clientele	Number of Parent Trainers
0 - 19	1
20 - 39	5
40 - 59	3
60 - 79	6
80 -100	2
Unable to estimate	2
TOTAL	23

Referral Sources

Parent trainers were asked "What are your referral sources?" The following responses were given:

<u>Sources of Referral</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Schools (teachers, principals, counselors)	19
Self-referred, other parents, word of mouth	13
Physicians	10
Childrens Services Division	9
Flyers, newsletters, college catalog	4
Courts, Juvenile Department	4
Mental health clinics	4
Churches	1
Other agencies	2

Schools were the most frequently mentioned referral source, followed by self-referral.

Group Size

Interviewee's were asked "What is the average number for each group of class?" Responses were as follows:

Number of Number of Parents	Number of Responses
1 - 4	0
5 - 8	6
9 - 12	6
13 - 16	5
17 - 20	2
21 - 24	0
25 - 28	2
More than 28 parents	0
Unable to estimate	2
TOTAL	23

Over half of the 21 parent trainers who were able to estimate the size of their groups had 12 or fewer parents in their groups.

Mandated Clients

Interviewees were questioned about the proportion of mandated clients in their groups. Specifically, they were asked "What percentage were told to get parent training by some authority?"

Ten out of the 23 respondents take only voluntary clients. Four of the ten do not take mandatory clients because of past unsatisfactory experiences with clients who disrupted or sabotaged groups. The remaining 13 parent trainers had the following proportion of mandated clients:

Percentage Mandated Clients	Number of Responses
0 - 5	10
6 - 10	1
11 - 15	2
16 or more	0
Will not take mandated clients	10
TOTAL	23

Length of Groups

The parent trainers were asked "How many sessions are there for each course or group?" The responses clustered into three categories. Two parent trainers had groups lasting four sessions. The majority of respondents (14) had groups lasting from six to eight sessions and three parent trainers ran courses with ten or more sessions. Two of the latter respondents taught in schools where the length of the group is determined by the school term or year. Two people ran ongoing groups, and two people did not run groups.

Entry Into Groups

Parent trainers were asked if their groups were open or closed. Open groups were defined as groups which allowed new members after the first two sessions. Closed groups did not. Twelve parent trainers ran closed groups, nine ran open groups. Two were unable to estimate.

Drop-Out Rate

Parent trainers were asked "What percentage of the clients drop out before completing the class?" The following responses were given:

Percentage Dropping Out	Number of Parent Trainers
0 - 10	8
11 - 20	7
21 - 30	3
31 - 40	1
41 - 50	2
More than 50	0
Unable to estimate	2
TOTAL	23

There appeared to be no correlation with drop-out rates and any of the other possible variables, such as degree status, size of group, etc.

Fees

In response to the query "Do you charge a fee?" 11 of the 21 responded in the negative. Of the ten who charge a fee, three use a sliding fee scale based on the client's income. The other seven charge a fixed fee as follows:

Fees in Dollars	Number of Trainers
1 - 10	3
11 - 20	1
21 - 30	1
31 - 40	1
41 - 50	0
51 - 60	0
61 - 70	1
More than 70	0
TOTAL	7

The one fee over \$40.00 was charged by a parent trainer who works privately and offers Parent Effectiveness Training.

Methods

The interviewees were asked what kind of teaching methods they use in their classes. The following responses were given:

Methods	Number of Responses
Experiential exercises (role playing, warm up exercises, etc.)	28
Group discussion techniques	19
Lecture or didactic approach	16
Audio-visual aids	4

Multiple responses by each parent trainer were given. Methods emphasizing interaction between the parents appear to predominate.

Outside Reading

The interviewee's were asked if they recommended outside readings and if so which ones. Twelve parent trainers did not, although five distributed handouts in the classes. Eleven parent trainers did urge their clients to read outside books. Titles mentioned more than once were:

<u>Readings</u>	<u>Number of Times Mentioned</u>
Ginott's books	4
<u>S.T.E.P.</u> workbook	4
Dreikurs' books	3
<u>P.E.T.</u> by Gordon	2
<u>Peoplemaking</u> by Satir	2
<u>Born to Win</u> by James and Jongewood	2
<u>The People Book</u> by James	2

Amount of Time Spent on Lecture

Parent trainers were asked "What proportion of total class time is spent on lecture as opposed to experiential or group discussion methods?" The following responses were given:

Percentage of Class Time	Number of Parent Trainers
0 - 20	10
21 - 40	8
41 - 60	2
61 - 80	3
81 -100	0
TOTAL	23

Eighteen of the 23 parent trainers spend forty percent or less of total class time on lecture-type methods.

Amount of Free Rap Time

Parent trainers were questioned about the amount of discussion or experiential time spent with parents, and how much of that was unstructured or "free rap time." The term "free rap time" was an ambiguous term to the parent trainers. Some felt that the term applied to such extraneous topics as talking about the weather or what the parent had for breakfast that morning, and obviously felt such talk should be redirected; while other parent trainers felt "free rap time" meant any concerns or problems that the parents had in their roles as parents that placed stress on the child-parent interaction. This discrepancy in the definition of the term was not cleared up until over half the interviews were collected, and should be kept in mind in reviewing the data on this question.

Percentage of Class Devoted to "Free Rap Time"	Number of Parent Trainers
0 - 20	15
21 - 40	4
41 - 60	2
61 - 80	2
81 -100	0
TOTAL	23

The majority (15 out of 23) of the parent trainers do not appear to value "free rap time."

Skills Taught

Respondents were asked "What kind of skills do you consider important to teach. Multiple responses were given by each parent trainer. Arranged in descending order of frequency, they are:

Skills	Number Mentioned
Behavior Management (Setting limits, logical consequences, time-out, etc.)	13
Communication (listening skills, "I messages)	11
Positive Reinforcement (encouragement, raising self-esteem of the child)	10
Information of normal childhood development	4
Determine needs, goals or motivation of child	4
Staying out of power struggle, feeling management	4

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Number Mentioned</u>
Values clarification	3
Problem solving	3
Self-awareness	2
Negotiate a democratic atmosphere	2

Skills Modeled by Parent Trainers

Interviewees were asked "What kind of skills do you try to model to parents?" The following responses were given:

<u>Skills Modeled</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Listening, communication	15
Reinforcement, encouragement	11
Co-teach with opposite sex and work out differences in group	5
Problem-solve issues with group	4
Focus on group support	4
Talk about failures openly	4
"I Messages"	4

Multiple responses could be given by each parent trainer.

Evaluation

The interviewees were questioned about their use of written evaluation instruments. Fifteen parent trainers use written evaluation.

Usually these parent trainers relied upon the subjective evaluations of the parents in the group. Several used more objective data. For instance, a parent trainer working in a juvenile department looked at recidivism rates among juveniles whose parents attended education groups. He found that after six months, their repeat offense rate was lower than the rate for those receiving case management services.

Seven parent trainers do no formal evaluation and instead rely on parent feedback or their own observations. Five of those seven said they would use evaluation instruments if they had the time to develop and administer them. One parent trainer did not respond to this question.

Theoretical Model Chosen by Parent Trainer

The following is a list of the theoretical models of parent-child interaction the parent trainers interviewed adhere to:

<u>Theoretical Model</u>	<u>Number of Parent Trainers</u>
Eclectic	4
Behavioral	4
S.T.E.P.	4
Dreikurs'	3
Developmental	2
P.E.T.	2
Both P.E.T. and Dreikurs'	2
Transactional Analysis	2
TOTAL	23

Views of Major Methods

The respondents were asked "What do you think of the other major methods?" Specifically, they were asked about Dreikurs' approach, P.E.T., S.T.E.P., and behavioral. Comments about the theories in general were also elicited.

Comments About Dreikurs.

Four persons stated that they liked the technique of logical consequences. One of these stated that it helped to develop a responsible child. Four persons said that logical consequences could be carried too far and that it was presented as having all the answers, or that too many different problems were treated the same way with it. Two parent trainers with behavioral viewpoints were critical of Dreikurs. One person stated that parents lose control in a democratic family. The other said that the logical consequences makes erroneous assumptions about children being able to benefit from longer term reinforcers, and lauded the behavioral approach for focusing an immediate reinforcement of behavior. Two persons stated that Dreikurs' approach was for middle class parents who already "have it together."

Comments About P.E.T.

Four persons mentioned the value of P.E.T.'s communication skills. Two stated that it was especially useful with teenagers. Two persons liked how P.E.T. builds positive relationships in the family. Two people did not think P.E.T. would be useful for concrete thinking parents. Three persons were of the opinion that sometimes active listening and "I messages" wouldn't work and discipline was needed instead. One

person said that P.E.T. was presented as a special skill which discounts what parents already know.

Comments About S.T.E.P.

Five persons stated that it was a good combination of P.E.T. and Dreikurs. One person thought it worked well with parents who were concrete and needed structure. Two people suggested it wasn't effective for low-income clients. Four persons found that it discourages parents by focusing on parents' weaknesses, rather than their strengths. Three people said that the eight-week program was too long and needed to be shortened.

Comments About Behavioral Approach.

Seven parent trainers found the approach useful and used at least some of the techniques or principles. It was recommended for parents too rigid to handle P.E.T.'s philosophy, with severe behavior problems such as hyperactivity and children recently placed in foster homes. Techniques such as positive reinforcement, ignoring, data-collecting and time-out were mentioned as being used by parent trainers who labeled themselves non-behaviorists.

Six persons did not use the techniques but felt that they would be appropriate under certain circumstances. Two of those had seen it misused and in one instance as a punitive measure. Two persons stated it was one-dimensional and did not go far enough. Three parent trainers were critical of behaviorism because it did not develop self-control and responsibility in children like Dreikurs' approach and P.E.T.

Comments in General About the Approaches.

Two parent trainers could not single out any one of the theories for comments, stating that they were all good or each had good elements. Three persons mentioned that they have their limitations and they encouraged parents to find out which approach worked best for them. One stated "There is no one right way, parents need to see they already have skills, they just don't know it." Three said that the major theories focus on what is wrong with parents and can discourage and turn them off. Two persons stated most of the parenting approaches are too complicated and not useful to parents who lack personal and emotional resources and who are under stress. The trainers were of the opinion that being able to recognize one's feelings and not taking them out on one's children would be more effective advice with those kind of parents. One parent trainer expressed concern about parent trainers who do not have children and treat parents like students. She said it was important to have empathy for the deep sense of discouragement that parents can feel.

Another parent trainer also mentioned how poorly parents feel when their children are acting out and nothing they have tried has been effective. This concern for the self-esteem of the parents appeared to be a significant theme running throughout the general comments about the major parenting approaches.

Which is More Important? Support or Skills?

Parent trainers were asked: "Some people ascribe the benefits of parent training to the supportive aspects of parents coming together in a group and seeing that other parents are in the same situation.

Others maintain it is the skills taught in the class and used in the home that make the difference. If you had to choose which one predominated over the other which would it be?" Six parent trainers were unable to decide, even when they weren't allowed to say both were equally important. Nine felt that skills predominated, although four said it was a mix of either 60% or two-thirds skill, the remainder being support. Eight parent trainers found the support aspect to be most important. Four of those stated it was 60% support and 40% skills.

Areas of Concern

The respondents were asked "What are the problems or questions facing the parent training field you would like answered?" Five persons felt that there was a need to reach more parents with parent education. Two of those were concerned that the parents who need it most rarely sought it out. Four people thought more emphasis should be placed on prevention. Parent education classes for high school students was cited as an example. Four trainers expressed concern for how overwhelmed parents can feel when starting in a parent education group. Several felt that parents are treated as if they are dumb by parent educators when the parent's strengths are de-emphasized in favor of their faults. They felt the parents self-esteem was a primary consideration.

Four respondents thought more research into parent education was needed.

Three persons had concerns about parents' ability to generalize their classroom experiences out in the "real world," and worried about

old habits taking over when parents are faced with stress as their children throw a new wrinkle at them.

Three parent trainers felt that the quality of leadership was a crucial factor. The personal qualities of the leader were considered to be his most important asset in teaching parents. Two parent trainers were concerned about commercialism and quality control in the parent education field. Two people felt more effective teaching materials were needed. Two respondents thought that parents needed more self-awareness particularly about how they were parented by their own parents before learning specific parenting skills. One person was concerned about financial limitations affecting parent education's effectiveness.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Characteristics of Parent Trainers Interviewed

Only a few persons interviewed did parent training full time. Most (12 out of 21) spend less than one-fifth of their time running parent groups. For over half this means teaching one group at any one time. Seventeen out of the 23 interviewed spend less than 40 percent of their time counseling with parents individually. Most frequently, the parent trainers interviewed worked in the schools, with the next highest frequency being mental health clinics. Together they accounted for 17 respondents out of the 23 interviewed. Sixteen out of the 23 parent trainers had master's degrees.

Characteristics of Parent Education Groups

Most of the parent trainers (20 out of 23) teach groups of parents whose children have heterogenous types of problems. A majority of parent trainers run groups with parents of children of particular ages (17 out of 23).

Of the 21 parent trainers who were able to estimate the socio-economics status of their clients, over half (12) have groups in which 60 percent or more of the parents are working class, including unemployed and welfare. Only one parent trainer worked exclusively with middle class parents.

The major referral sources for the parent education groups were the schools and other parents who had heard about or been helped by the groups .

Over half (12 of the 21) of the parent trainers who ran groups had 12 or fewer parents in their groups.

The parent trainers in this study work almost exclusively with voluntary clients. Ten take only voluntary clients, and another ten see five percent or fewer mandated clients in their groups.

Fourteen out of 21 parent trainers had courses or groups which lasted from six to eight sessions. The majority of the parent trainers (12 out of 21) closed their groups to new members after two sessions, although a sizable number (nine) allowed parents to start at later sessions.

The drop out rates in the groups ranged from approximately one to two percent to over 50 percent. There were no apparent connections between drop-out rates and such variables as degree status, type of theory used, organization within which the parent trainer worked, length of group, number of parents in the group, etc.

Eleven out of 21 of the parent groups are free of charge.

Methods and Skills Used

The most frequently mentioned teaching method was experiential learning situations such as: role playing, warm-ups, growth games, etc. Group discussion techniques were the next most frequently mentioned method, followed by the lecture approach. Ten of the 23 parent trainers spent 20 percent or less of class time delivering material through the lecture method. For most, the remainder of the time was

experientially oriented or spent in group discussion. This time was structured with little allowance for free rap time. Over half (12 out of 23) of the parent trainers did not require outside readings of the parents in their groups. Five of those, however, did distribute handouts in class.

Behavior management skills were the most frequently mentioned as being important skills to teach parents, followed by communication skills and positive reinforcement skills. When asked what skills parent trainers tried to model to parents, those most frequently mentioned were communication and reinforcement/encouragement skills.

Most of the parent trainers (15 out of 22) encourage written evaluation of their programs by the parents. A few of the parent trainers depend on more objective data like recidivism rates for juvenile offenses for determining the effectiveness of their groups.

Supportive Aspects of Parent Training

Most frequently the parent trainers in this study adhered to a parent training philosophy that encourages viewing children as social equals whose needs and feelings have to be considered in order to build family harmony. Eleven out of the 23 used either Dreikurs, P.E.T., S.T.E.P. or a combination of Dreikurs and P.E.T.

When questioned about whether they would ascribe the benefits of parent training to the supportive aspects of the group or to the acquisition of skills, the parent trainers were divided almost equally. However, of the nine who said skills were most important, four qualified it by stating: "It is 60%-40%" or "It is two-thirds skills and one-third

support." Eighteen of the 23 parent trainers, then, felt that the support aspects of group parent training accounted for a third or more of its value to parents. This emphasis on support for the parents appeared to be the predominant theme in the comments about the major theories and the major concerns and needs of the parent training field.

There was concern that the S.T.E.P. method focused too much on what parents were doing wrong, and tended to discourage them initially. One parent trainer responded to this concern by shifting the more positive elements of the program to the beginning few weeks in order to counteract the negative reactions of parents in the program. There was also concern that the S.T.E.P. program was too long, and needed to be shortened in order to hold parents' interest. Another parent trainer said that P.E.T. had a negative approach as well because it was taught as a special skill which tended to discount the knowledge that parents already have. This empathy for parents was underscored by another parent trainer who was concerned about non-parents leading parent training groups. She stated that parents are too easily treated as students by parent trainers who do not have children and who might not be sensitive to the sense of discouragement that all parents feel.

Another parent trainer who runs behaviorally oriented groups for parents of hyperactive children, mentioned the low self-esteem that parents have upon entering the group, and the need to provide some relief to those parents by giving them a method that works and is practical.

This emphasis on the support aspect of parent training could also be seen in the organizational structure of the groups and the teaching

methods employed by the trainers. Class size tended to be small, with most having twelve or under as the average size. Large, impersonal group meetings were also avoided through the emphasis on experiential exercises and group discussion techniques and by de-emphasizing the use of lecture techniques. There was a conscious attempt by the parent trainers to model reinforcement and encouragement skills with their groups. Modeling appropriate communication also enhanced the supportive aspects of the group through parent trainers actively listening to the concerns and needs of their respective groups.

Parent trainers in the survey mentioned the need to avoid presenting themselves as the experts. Admitting errors and negative feelings, working with opposite sex co-leaders and negotiating differences openly among themselves in the group were all conscious attempts to support the parents through helping the parents see their own imperfections without having to put themselves down.

Access to the groups was also encouraged. Many did not charge a fee and for those groups which had fees, the total cost appeared to be affordable to most parents. A sizable number (nine) allowed entry into their groups at any time. Few restricted their groups because of the particular problem of the child and apparently there was no discrimination against non-middle class parents as most of the groups had sixty percent or more of their clientele coming from lower socioeconomic groups.

It seems that the principles of support and enhancement of self-esteem which are common to most of the major parenting theories, were applied by the parent trainers to their interactions with parents in groups.

Concerns of Parent Trainers

Parent trainers were also concerned about the effectiveness of their groups. Four felt a need for more research in the field of group parent training. Several of those trainers wanted more hard data on what methods worked best with lower socioeconomic groups. More effective materials were also requested by a few parent trainers. Several questioned the long-term effect of their groups. One expressed concern about parents who have difficulty generalizing the principles learned in the class to cope with new patterns of behavior in their children. Another worried about parents falling back on old styles of behavior that are destructive to the child when the parents are under stress. Several also doubted the need for complicated or sophisticated theories of child raising, and emphasized the need for simple ideas which would be easily understood by parents in need. They felt that encouraging parents not to take their negative feelings out on their children was a useful approach. These parent trainers appeared to be saying that focusing on the personal resources of parents and their ability to operate under stress might be more helpful than using the skill-building approach that the major methods rely on.

This need for a preventive approach was seconded by four of the parent educators. One of the parent educators developed a preventive parenting curriculum for high school students in the state of Oregon. Self awareness by the student is the primary goal and is developed through experiential exercises such as role-playing, group discussion, and a "hands-on" experience of taking care of young children in a day-care center or nursery. The assumption of this type of program

is that children are not doing anything extraordinary when problems develop in the family, but that parents cannot handle their feelings about the behavior exhibited by the child. Through self-awareness and appropriate expression of feelings, alternatives to parent acting out can be more readily generated.

Parent trainers were also concerned about reaching wider numbers of parents, in particular those who are or may be potential child abusers. Several felt that parents seeking parent training were already coping adequately, and those who needed it most were the least likely to seek help. The lack of success with mandated clients found by parent educators in this study would seem to cast doubt on the feasibility that universal parent education would have substantial merits.

Attempts to teach greater numbers of parents through mass media techniques appear to be a limited approach as most of the parent trainers in this study feel that the supportive and experiential aspects of the small groups are a prime ingredient in the effectiveness of group parent education. This seems to indicate that wider use of the media may be more of an adjunct to group parent education rather than a substitute for it.

Future research could also take note of the importance of the support aspects of group parent training. The effectiveness of a particular group may be related to the personal qualities of the leader rather than the particular parenting method taught. The most important factor related to effectiveness may be the ability of the group leader to enhance the support functions of the group while still giving parents sufficient knowledge and skills.

The equivocal research results on group parent training noted in the literature review also indicate a need for more outcome studies. Several of the parent trainers in this study are collecting objective measures of their impact on parents and their children. Research projects relying on this data and utilizing control groups would provide useful information to the parent education field.

While parent trainers would like to be more effective in reaching wider numbers of parents, due to the aforementioned limitations, which were lack of feasibility for universal or mandated parent training, and lack of support inherent in mass media techniques, group parent training cannot be proposed as a panacea for the problems of children and parents in our society. However, it can be used to reach a proportionate number of parents interested in improving the quality of their parenting skills.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT TRAINERS INTERVIEWED

Judy Arthur
Oregon Social Learning Center
Eugene

Pat Carroll
Clackamas County Mental Health
Oregon City

Edith Dzubay
Child Development Specialist
Clark School, Portland Public Schools
Portland

Kathy Ellickson
North Clackamas Schools
Milwaukie

Janet Farrel
Child Neurology Clinic
Good Samaritan Hospital
Portland

Pat Giebal
Salem YWCA - Teen Mothers
Salem

Robin Hickock
Preparenting Curriculum Developers
Portland

Loren Huffman
Children Services Division
Resource Board
Portland

Richard Lazere, PhD
Private practice, formerly Morrison Center
Portland

Manny Lotito
District 4-J, Eugene Public Schools
Eugene

Elva Martin
Wilson High School
Portland

Robert McNamee
Yamhill County Mental Health Clinic
McMinnville

Don Mihaelow
Lane County Juvenile Department
Eugene

Carolynn Morris, PhD
University of Oregon - Department of Education
Eugene

Michael Morrissey
Morrison Center
Portland

Lysa Partyka, PhD
Kaiser Mental Health Clinic
Portland

Fred Piazza
Portland Public Schools - School Psychologist
Portland

Charlene Russell
Child Development Specialist
Bridger School - Portland Public Schools
Portland

Trudy Wallis
Parent Child Services
Portland

Hilda Welch
Portland Community College
Portland

Max Wilkins
Parent Effectiveness Training
David Douglas High School
Portland

Mary Workman
Clackamas County Mental Health Clinic
Oregon City

LeAnn Zupam
Lane County Mental Health - Alcohol Section
Eugene

January 8, 1979

APPENDIX B

I'm a second year social work graduate student from Portland State University's Master's Program, and I'm doing a research practicum on parent trainers as part of the requirements for my Master's Degree in Social Work.

In talking to people informally in the field, your name has been given to me as someone who does parent training. I'm conducting interviews over the phone with parent trainers throughout the state, and I would appreciate your assistance in my information gathering.

My study focuses on the teaching methods and theoretical orientations underlying those methods of parent trainers. Since it appears that very little research has been done on comparisons of the views of trainers with different theoretical backgrounds, I will be focusing my research in this area. No one, it seems, asks parent trainers what they think of what they are doing.

Information obtained through the study will provide descriptions of the different approaches and a list of the main concerns and problems facing parent trainers.

I will be using telephone interviews to gather my information. I will be asking questions, such as: why did you get started in parent training; how your clients are referred to you; the teaching methods you use; how you structure your classes; your theoretical approach; what you think of the other major approaches (P.E.T., Dreikurs, Behavioral); how you gauge your effectiveness; and who else do you know does parent training.

I will be calling within two weeks to set up a time for the interview. Your assistance with this research will be greatly appreciated. I will be glad to answer any further questions you may have about the study at the time we set up the telephone interview.

Sincerely,

John Kuzma
4224 SW Condor
Portland, Oregon 97201
Telephone: 222-5260

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Why did you become a group parent trainer?
2. What proportion of your time is spent parent training with groups or classes of parents?
3. What proportion of your time is spent with parents on an individual basis?
4. What organizational structure do you work within?
5. What degree do you have?
6. How many courses do you teach at any one time?
7. Do you think of your program as being addressed to parents with children with particular kinds of problems? or heterogenous?
8. Do you think of your program as being as being addressed to parents with children of particular ages? or heterogenous?
9. What percentage of your clientele is working class (blue collar and welfare) as opposed to middle class?
10. What are your referral sources?
11. What is the average number for each group or class?
12. What percentage were told to get parent training by some authority?
13. How many sessions are there for each course or group?
14. Are the groups open or closed?
15. What percentage of the clients drop out before completing the class?
16. Do you charge a fee? Fixed or sliding scale? If fixed, how much?
17. What teaching methods do you use?
18. Do you recommend outside readings? Which ones?
19. What proportion of total class time is spent on lecture as opposed to experiential or group discussion methods?

20. If the experiential or discussion time, how much is unstructured or free rap time?
21. What kind of skills do you consider important to teach?
22. What kinds of skills do you try to model to parents?
23. How do you know how effective you are?
24. What theory or model of child development do you prefer?
25. What do you think of the other major methods? Dreikurs? P.E.T.? S.T.E.P.? Behavioral?
26. Some people ascribe the benefits of parent training to the supportive aspects of parents coming together in a group and seeing that other parents are in the same situation. Others maintain it is the skills taught in the class and used in the home that make the difference. If you had to choose which one predominated over the other, which would it be?
27. What are the problems or questions facing the parent training field you would like answered?