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Healthy child development through early childhood parent education

Abstract

This study proposes to examine parent education literature concerning the provision of parent education and support to parents during the first three years of parenthood in order to make recommendations to parent educators, counselors, and others interested in enhancing healthy child development. In Chapter 1, the significance of the study to professionals will be discussed. The limitations of this study will be stated, the assumptions for the provision of early childhood parent education will be detailed, and definitions of terms will be provided.

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HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD PARENT EDUCATION

A Research Paper

Presented to

the Department of Educational Administration

and Counseling

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Victoria Sue Kleidon Oestmann

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Parents have always wanted to raise their children successfully, have always needed confirmation of their parenting skills, and have always asked others they respected for suggestions about how to rear their children. Each culture provides its own forms of parental support and education.

Harman and Brim (1980) point out that since the late 1800's, researchers have focused on children and their development in an effort to identify "scientifically determined superior modes of raising children" (p. 14). Scientists have then sought to make such information available to parents.

It is interesting to note with Harman and Brim (1980), and with Clarke-Stewart (1981) that these beginnings of modern Western parent education occurred during the same period in which increased industrialization was influencing the nuclearization of the family. The nuclearization of the family was a major factor in diminishing traditional forms of educating and socializing parents through exposure to extended networks of experienced family and friends. Parental sources of support also were curtailed as industrializtion and nuclearization increased. Parent education developed as an effort to fill the gap left by the loss of traditional, informal forms of parent socialization and support.

During the latter part of the 1960's and into the 1970's, parent education was seen as a means of making parents into agents of social change, particularly among disadvantaged segments of the population. This sparked the development of programs such as Head Start (Cataldo, 1980), and gave new impetus to research about parental and environmental influences on child development. Parent education programs proliferated during the 1960's and 1970's. Research supporting the importance of the child's early years, and the significance of the parents' influence during the child's first years spurred the development of early childhood parent education in particular.

The Purpose and Organization of the Study

This study proposes to examine parent education literature concerning the provision of parent education and support to parents during the first three years of parenthood in order to make recommendations to parent educators, counselors, and others interested in enhancing healthy child development. In Chapter 1, the significance of the study to professionals will be discussed. The limitations of this study will be stated, the assumptions for the provision of early childhood parent education will be detailed, and definitions of terms will be provided.

In Chapter 2, three aspects of the rationale for parent education for the early childhood years will be discussed. First, the general rationale for, and goals of, parent education will be detailed. Second, there will be a discussion of the research

substantiating the significance of the first three years of the child's life and the impact of the parents' behaviors on establishing the child's learning patterns, skills, and social skills during the early years. The characteristics of the well-developed child will also be described. Third, the willingness and ability of parents to learn means of enhancing their child's healthy development by learning to accept the role of primary teachers of their children will be investigated.

The third chapter will provide a historical perspective on early childhood parent education. This will be followed by a review of selected parent education programs in four categories: infancy period, preschool, behavior modification programs, and comprehensive programs covering birth through preschool. Several authors' program review summaries will be included as well. Finally, the third chapter will discuss program evaluation concerns, general program recommendations, and the use of group methods for providing early childhood parent education.

The fourth chapter will summarize the findings in the parent education literature, and make conclusions. Finally, recomendations for the successful implementation of a "parent as teacher" parent education program for the enhancement of healthy child development will be made.

The Significance of the Study

Cooney (1981) suggests that the participation of counselors in parent education is a recent phenomenon, emerging concurrently with the movement in elementary school counseling begun in the mid-1960's. The developmental emphasis of counseling, combined with a desire to prevent poor parenting, make parent education an appealing and useful tool for the counselor.

The counselor interested in the development of persons with healthy personalities will find this study important for several reasons. This study will provide a rationale for teaching parents means of enhancing healthy child development. It will offer guidelines helpful to the professional in providing services to clients seeking parenting assistance. This study will also provide the counselor a grounding in current child development and parent education literature which Harman and Brim (1980) state is necessary in order for the counselor to disseminate child development information and to assist parents in finding neccessary resources.

Assumptions

Parent education assumes that learning new information and skills will have an effect on parents' behaviors in their interactions with their children. It is assumed that parental decisions define family style and the dimension of thir children's growth, therefore, it is important to encourage decision-making and problem-solving skills.

It is assumed that if the skills, autonomy, and self-worth of the parents is enhanced, the beneficial aspects for the parents will result in the enhancement of the family interaction system, thereby creating a more beneficial family environment for the children.

It is also assumed that parental value systems and growth goals for their children will be the basis for their child rearing decisions. In order to help parents make daily decisions consistent with their values, assisting parents in an examination of their values becomes basic to parent education.

The concept of parent education as teaching the parents to be teachers to their children is based on the following assumptions. (a) A child's first three years are highly significant to child development. (b) The child's most potent early teachers are his or her parents. (c) Parents want to help their children, and are willing to learn the skills necessary to help the enhance their children's healthy development.

Limitations

This study focuses on early childhood parent education programs for parents of children from birth through three years of age. However, since programs specifically designed for the birth through three population are limited, some use of literature referring to programs for older, preschool age children and their parents is made because of the prevalance of such programs in the

literature, and the overlap of such programs with programs for parents of younger children.

A major limitation of this study is the use of the parent education literature as the primary source of information. Referrals to child development literature were accessed through the use of the parent education literature. The author examined literature exhaustively from the years of 1978 through 1982, which led to earlier referrences used in this study.

Another limitation of this study is the inability to report more evaluative results of specific programs. Many authors either did not collect or did not report specific and measurable parental or child behavior changes measured before and after parent education programs. Some programs did not make use of control groups, either. Many programs use parental self-reports as the chief method of program evaluation.

Definitions

For purposes of this study, the following definitions will apply.

Parent education: efforts to provide parents with information and skill development in order that they may increase in self-esteem and confidence as parents, and may change and improve their interaction patterns with their children. The purpose of these improved parenting skills is to improve the functioning of the family

family system in an effort to have a beneficial impact on children's healthy growth and development.

Healthy child development: the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the child that promotes the best development of each child's potential. This includes the enhancement of the child's ability to learn and solve problems, the increase of the child's competency and joy in accomplishment, the development of a sound value system, the enhancement of good relationship skills, and the promotion of the development of good self-esteem and self-confidence.

Culture: the socio-economic and ecological conditions, combined with the ideas, values, customs, skills, and arts of a particular group of people.

Society: the community of mutually dependent individuals which expresses, instills, and reinforces their culture.

Parent: the primary caretaker of the child, either male or female, and of any relation to the child, ie., grandparent, aunt or uncle, foster parent, group home parent.

Early childhood: the period beginning at birth and continuing through the end of the child's third year of life.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Justifications: Early Childhood Parent Education

Parent education seeks to meet the needs of parents in their efforts to rear healthy, well-adjusted children who can adapt to and succeed in their culture. Parent education is based on assumptions about society, parents, children, the nature of learning, and the justifications for providing parent education.

Harman and Brim (1980) point out that it is first important to realize that a person's culture will have a definite influence on what he or she considers a successful person, parent or child. For example, some cultures more strongly encourage interdependence among people, while cultures such as that of the United States emphasize the development of personal independence. In addition, some cultures vary in how parents are expected to learn their parenting role. In almost all cultures, children observe a variety of adults interacting with them and with each other as the children develop their own ideas and attitudes about how to raise children.

Brazelton (1978a, 1978b, 1978c), Harman and Brim (1980), Pugh (1981) and Clarke-Stewart (1981) point out the diminished family and support networks of our modern industrialized society. This diminished family network creates a situation in which it appears that children and young parents are less eposed to a variety of successful childrearing interaction, and have a curtailed

support network. This lack of information and support leads to an increased parental uncertainty, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence as parents. Parent education seeks to fill this need.

Additional justifications for parent education cited by Clarke-Stewart (1981), besides our rapid social changes and their effect on the family, are: the potency of parental influence on their children; the schools' inadequate job of socializing children; surveys showing that some parents are not successful in meeting their responsibilities to young children; and new scientific knowledge now available, which if disseminated, will affect parental behavioral changes.

This new scientific knowledge is garnered from the work of such authors as White (1975, 1980), White et al (1979), Bronfenbrenner (1974), Ainsworth and colleagues (1970, 1971, 1972), Sander (1969), Banks (1979), Widmayer and Field (1980, 1981), Parker and Brazelton (1981), and Myers (1982). This scientific knowledge concerns the effects of different parental behaviors in interaction with infants and young children on child development. This information adds potency to the call for early childhood parent education in particular.

Bradley-Johnson and Johnson (1980) and Dossin-Shanahan and Bradley-Johnson (1980) also see parent education justified as a preventative to child abuse and poor child development. They, and others, encourage pre-parenthood education in the schools, as well as when parenthood is already established.

One basic justification for the provision of parent education is the potential it has to fill parental needs for a support network. Pugh (1981) and Dubin (1982) both comment on the high depression rate among mothers of preschoolers, who rank with the elderly as two of the most depressed groups of people in the country. Mothers are usually alone, coping with role identity changes, and can become locked into meeting their children's needs at their own expense. Parents, particularly those adjusting to a new role with a first child, find themselves at a significant, stressful transition point in their own adjustment, and in their marital adjustment and growth, at a time when support within their own social network may be limited because of a lack of ability to identify and empathize (Wandersman, Wandersman, & Kahn, 1980).

Parents may feel pressures from society, self, and peers to be good, if not perfect, parents, yet feel unprepared, unconfident, and uninformed (or be misinformed) about childrearing and coping with a new parental role. The time of infancy and early childhood is particularly stressful as parents adjust to new roles, seek information about child development and rearing, cope with the extra work involved in keeping up with a rapidly developing person, and try to meet society's expectations of them. Clarke-Stewart (1981) sums up the need for parental support:

> It is ironic that in recent years as women have become more self-concious about becoming mothers and as the importance of parenting has been stressed explicitly and implicitly by 'experts' and the media, the task of being a parent has been made more difficult by the fact that parents have less experience with and less time for children and get less information, advice, and demonstration of child care in the course of daily life. (1981, p. 49)

Brazelton (1978a, 1978b, 1978c), White (1975, 1980) and White et al (1979) and Bronfenbrenner (1974) are echoed by most authors when they speak of the necessity for young parents to be offered support through pregnancy, birth, early infancy, and early childhood. This support needs to be not just of the informational variety, but social and emotional as well. Young parents need to gain the feeling that "they are important, that they have choices and (that they) can make them appropriately" (Brazelton, 1978b, p. 27). Parents who are self-confident and have feelings of self-worth will reflect those feelings and attitudes to their children.

A further justification for the provision of parent education, particularly during early childhood of a first child, is found in White's (1975) findings that parent education was unable to modify significantly either childrearing behaviors or the developmental levels of children, when parents had two or more children. However, parent education had a powerful effect on more receptive first time parents. White's most conservative interpretation of these findings is that

> first-time parents have more time for their infants, have open minds on the subject of child-rearing, and are less set in their ways. If true, the ramifications for the rapidly burgeoning field of education for parenthood are substantial. (p. 179)

When coupled with information about diffusion of parent training effects to younger siblings (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) first time parents of young children and infants become a primary target group for parent education.

A final justification for the provision of parent education is parents' self-identified desire for parenting information. Dossin-Shanahan and Bradley-Johnson (1980) made a study of 296 new mothers in three urban Michigan maternity wards. Results reveal that 89.9% of the mothers want to know more about parenting. Most likely to want parenting information are those mothers hospitalized to have their first child, or with more than three children, and those who are employed. The perceived need for parenting information decreases with social position. The researchers conclude that parent educators should not expect open arms from this group, but should consider ways to sensitize this group to the benefits of parent education to their children and themselves.

Dossin-Shanahan and Bradley-Johnson (1980) find that 70.3% of the primary, prenatal information sources are relatives, and 76.9% of the mothers, particularly those under twenty, would have taken a parenting course if it had been provided in highschool. In fact, a majority of the mothers thought highschools should require parenting courses for both girls (73%) and boys (67.9%). Those parents most likely to seek future parenting information from professionals are employed or are from professional families themselves, rather than being housewives or students. Non-professional sources would be used by 49.9% of the mothers. This indicates to this author that a more informal system of parent edcation, or a more culturally pervasive system, would tend to reach a wider range of parents.

Clarke-Stewart (1981) sees the use of child-care books as evidence of parents' self-identified educational needs. Over 5 million how-to-parent books are sold per year. Those most likely to read these books are mothers who have little contact with their own parents or siblings; those who are young and raising their first child; and those who are more educated and more worried about being a good parent. Harman and Brim (1980) find in their survey of the the literature indications that parent education participation, indicating a self-identified need, is

> highest during infancy, begins to decline when children are at about age two or three, declines further during the primary school years, and then increases again during early and midadolescence. (1980, p. 106)

Goals: Early Childhood Parent Education

Pickarts and Fargo (1971, p. 206) and Cooney (1981) both summarize the goals of parent education in some detail. These goals include: raising parental consciousness concerning their role (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971; Cooney, 1981); encouraging parental autonomy and creativity (Cooney, 1981); increasing parental motivation to develop their parenting skills; and supporting and enhancing parents' existing strengths while nurturing their sense of ther own worth as individuals, parents, and citizens (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971). Additional goals include improving parents' independent judgement and increasing parents' rationality in their role performance thru improving parental problem-solving skills (Cooney,1981), assisting parents in defining and setting attainable goals, and making parents conscious of the effect their values have on their decisions and their outcomes (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971). It is also

considered important to promote parents' self-understanding (Cooney, 1981); to increase parents' ability to understand and accept human differences; and to develop parents' receptivity to new ideas (Pickarts and Fargo,1971).

Important parent education goals include encouraging parents' self-confidence in their capacity to deal honestly with their children (Cooney, 1981); increasing parents' perceptions of their children's learning process; and accepting their teaching role in their children's lives (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971). Parent education also seeks to improve parents' communication skills, and provide specific skills for enhancing their children's learning process (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971; Cooney, 1981), while increasing parents' appreciation and enjoyment of their children (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971). Parent education can be summed up as an effort to enhance parents' abilities to teach their children, in order for their children to become healthy, successful persons.

The justifications for and goals of parent education have been delineated. The following section of this study will investigate the literature substantiating the significance of the child's first three years and the parents' impact on the child's healthy development. The characteristics of the well-developed child will also be described.

The Child: Significance of the First Three Years

The Impact of Parental Behaviors

Early childhood and infancy have been acknowledged for quite some time as periods of life that are influential to the formation of the personality. Researchers have attempted to show what factors of the physical and social environment can be documented as having an effect on the child. This section of the study will focus on such research results. Of particular interest is information focusing on the effect of the parents on the parent-child interactive system.

White (1975) and White and Watts (1973) find that well-functioning three year olds have basically the same skills as well-functioning six year olds. Observations indicate the following related environmental and parental behavior factors: freedom of exploration; parent awareness of children's interests and goals; early setting of limits; and purposeful communication. White et al (1979) find that some of the most important differences in childrearing practices are in a distinctive pattern of response to the overtures of babies. Live language directed to the child, especially about what the child is attending to at the moment, is the most consistently favorable kind of educational experience for an infant eleven to sixteen months old. This presupposes large amounts of socia contact, which is associated with the development of social competence. Symptoms of a less than ideal early learning situation are large amounts of idling time, large amounts of between meal eating,

and restrictions of exploratory efforts. Environmental differences observed as early as twelve months are associated with divergence in infant behavior by eighteen months. White concludes that the parents' or caretaker's response to the stressful period of locomotor ability and language acquisition affects the social and physical environments they provide for the child, leading to a divergence in the child's competence.

In a later article, White (1980) asserts:

> (language) is at the heart of educational capacity. It has its own primary value, and has an instrumental value of direct relevance to all intellectual learnings. Subtly, but just as importantly, it (language) underlies healthy social growth. In the first couple years of life, development of sociability depends on some capacities in the language area. (p. 338)

According to White (1980) the difference between an easy and delightful two year old and a demanding or difficult two year old, can be traced to the complex relationship the infant develops with his/her primary caretaker. This is a strong, protective attatchment to an older, more mature, capable human. White (1980) asserts that the social skills developed in the preschool years are crystallized into basic social patterns which are applied to all social encounters for the next year or two,and beome important and instrumental to the success of the child as a student.

White (1980) mentions additional factors that support the importance of the early childhood years. When looking for serious educational deficits, a child will appear normal at twelve months, but may begin to show signs of difficulty at eighteen months. According to White (1980), difficulties can be reliably detected at age three, and nearly always can be detected by first grade.

Children entering first grade behind their peers are not likely to ever catch up. Failure to assist and interact with a child optimally in the first three years leads directly to the child's underacheivement in elementary grades and beyond. Correction is extremely difficult and expensive. White suggests that these findings support the idea of early intervention and parent education as an effort to get at the origin of educational deficits early on, in order to prevent them from occurring.

Banks (1979) cites several studies concerning important environmental variables in infancy which contribute to infant/child development. Bell and Ainsworth (1972) find that infants of mothers responsive to crying in the first six months tend to be advanced in communication skills and independent play at one year. Crying is seen as part of the communication system, leading to the development of more mature forms of communication. Bell and Ainsworth (1972) state:

> those babies who, by the end of the first year, have well-developed channels of communication, tend to be the same who cry little, and, as has been shown previously, these are the ones whose cries were promptly heeded throughout the first year of life...(and) those infants who can be controlled by their mothers across a distance and who comply with maternal commands are those whose signals have been promptly and sensitively heeded bytheir mothers. (pp. 1185, 1187)

Slayton, Hogan, and Ainsworth (1972) find that maternal acceptance, cooperation (vs. interference), and sensitivity to a child's signals all predict early development of internalized controls in children. Blehar, Lieberman, and Ainsworth (1977) took behavioral measures of infants at six to fifteen weeks of age. They find that the child's secure attatchment to the parent at one year

of age is related to the infant's early responsiveness and to the parents' patterns of responsiveness and encouragement of interaction.

Sander (1962, 1964, 1969) looks at mother-child interaction issues, and finds the period of ten to twenty months to be a crucial developmental stage. During this time, the infant shows increasing independence, self-assertion, and use of the parent as a resource. The parents' response to this period can create a relationship characterized either by ambivalence and disharmony or by gratification. Developmental disturbances can be easily initiated at this time, although it is also possible to initiate disturbances earlier.

Banks' (1979) own study of children during the period from six and one half months to from sixteen to twenty-two months of age, tests whether the period of locomotor acquisition is stressful for mothers, and how responses differentially affect development. Banks finds no general tendency toward increased stressfulness, or any general pattern of maternal behavior change toward the child, although there are changes in the environment to remove fragile, dangerous, and forbidden objects. Banks finds that early preverbal interaction styles translate to verbal interaction styles later in a continuous process.

Banks (1979) finds that mothers who understand the interests and skills of pre-verbal children are able to engage in ineractions that complement their childrens' interests. Mothers less skilled or willing at non-verbal communication are either indifferent and uninvolved in babies' activities, or tend to dominate and substitute

their goals and intentions for the children's. Maternal behaviors show a trade-off between independence and compliance, with "suggest-command," "praise," and "interpret child's wish or need" behaviors increasing, while behaviors of "take away objects" and "hold-pickup child" decrease.

Banks (1979) cites White (1975) and White and Watts (1973) as considering the locomotor aquisition period from six and one half thru sixteen to twenty-two months as a critical period for the development of harmonious, productive mother-child relationships. White and Watts (1973) suggest offering maximum assistance to parents during this stressfull period, and suggest that assistance during the first six to eight months of infancy are not as critical as the later months. Banks (1979) concludes that the infancy period prior to sixteen months may be equally critical in the development of harmonious, productive mother-child relationships. She found that the maternal behaviors White (1975) predicted as related to outstanding competence in children, as cited earlier in the chapter, were seen throughout the age range in the mother-child pairs she studied.

Banks (1979) concludes that an approach to infancy emphasizing continuities and viewing the parent-child interaction system as one in which both parent and child have strong moties toward attachment and mutual adaptation is supported. Banks suggests that if basic parent-child interaction patterns and relationships develop early in infancy, as supported in her review and study, then "services directed toward increasing parents' understanding of and

contribution to development in infancy should be available to parents of infants from the earliest months onward (p. 106)."

Clarke-Stewart (1981) cites a variety of scientific studies that have a bearing on child development and parent education. She mentions animal studies that have found that altering the environment of the young to restrict normal rearing patterns impairs intellectual and social development. Studies of children in orphanages found that children are affected by early experience, with social and intellectual stimulation enhancing development, although there is some ability to reverse some effects later on. Studies of children from families of different socio-economic groups show more variation in parent behavior within social level than between two levels. As early as six months, parent attitudes toward the child, and parent stimulation and relation behaviors with the child, has been related to the child's behavior or ability. This relationship of parent-child behaviors continues and strengthens over time.

Flynn (1979) reports that children with high self-esteem have parents high in self-esteem who establish rules, enforce them consistently, and prefer rewarding desired behavior to influence their children, though they also may use punishment. The low self-esteem child is subject to a harsh and disrespectful disciplinary practice.

Forgatch and Toobert (1979) reate that children who are aggressive when they are young continue to act out at a high rate as they get older. From a behavioral standpoint, their review of the literature supports that changing parental contingencies can exert

control over, and change maladaptive behavior, if parents are taught to rearrange structural aspects of their children's home social environment.

These studies demonstrate that parental behaviors and interactions with an infant and young child have a powerful influence on child development. These behaviors stem from attitudes that treat the child as an individual with whom the parents interact and teach. These attitudes and behaviors are learned, and can be changed thru parent education.

However, families exist within a basic physical and social environment. Both White(1980) and Bronfenbrenner (1974) recognize that a child's basic physical and environmental needs must first be met before parents are willing or able to accept or implement changes in their approach to child rearing.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) states that external biological and social constraints, as well as social forces and educational arrangements that diminish the status and motivation of the parents as the most powerful potential agents for the development of their child, can interfere with the complex and enduring reciprocal social and emotional attachment patterns that are important to the psychological development of the young child. He also states that the effects of a "disadvantaged" family environment increase with the child's age. Children of two or three will test normal in IQ levels, then fall more and more behind as they increase in age.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) sees the first step in any strategy to improve a child's developmental chances as some method of providing the family with adequate nutrition, housing, and health. This supports the idea that larger and more enduring gains may be produced when intervention occurs when the child is age two, three, or younger.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) concludes that:

> when the pattern of reciprocal interaction takes place in an interpersonal relationship that endures over time (as occurs between mother and child), it leads to the development of a strong emotional attatchment, which, in turn, increases the motivation of the young child to attend to and learn from the mother....the infant's dependency on the mother develops gradually over the first year of life, then reaches a maximum in the second year, and then decreases as the young child forms new attatchments and interests. This finding implies that a mother-infant intervention program begun before three years of age would be more effective than one initiated later." (p. 26)

Having established the significance of parental impact on the child's development during infancy and early childhood, it is important to further define what are considered to be the characteristics of the well-developed child. The following segment proposes to do this.

The Well-developed Child

Some of the characteristics of the well-developed child are mentioned by White (1975, 1980), White et al (1979), and by Stevens (1978). Pickarts and Fargo (1971), Bronfenbrenner (1974), Honig (9175) and Nimnicht (1981) find common ground with White's (1975) comprehensive listing of the characteristics of a well-developed child. This list was developed following extensive observation of

three- to six-year-old children in their homes, at nursery schools, and in day-care centers, including work on the Harvard Preschool Project (White, 1973; and White et al 1979). White finds that

> the well-developed three-year-old child shows the following abilities in greater and more impressive ways than the average or below average three-year-old:
>
> Social abilities
> - -getting and holding the attention of adults
> - -using adults as resources after determining that a job is too difficult
> - -expressing affection to adults
> - -expressing mild annoyance to adults
> - -leading peers
> - -following peers
> - -expressing affection to peers
> - -expressing mild annoyance to peers
> - -competing with peers
> - -showing pride in personal accomplishment
> - -engaging in role play or make-believe activities
>
> Non-social abilities
> - -good language development
> - -the ability to notice small details or discrepencies
> - -the ability to anticipate consequences
> - -the ability to deal with abstractions
> - -the ability to put oneself in the place of another person
> - -the ability to make interesting associations
> - -the ability to plan and carry out complicated activities
> - -the ability to use resources effectivly
> - -the ability to maintain concentration on a task while simultaneously keeping track of what is going on around one in a fairly busy situation (dual focusing)" (p. 168)

Pickarts and Fargo (1971) add several goals for the well-developed child. Such a child would be able to listen in a sustained and involved manner, and would have a sense of self-worth. The child would be interested in learning and would be able to exert initiative in the learning process, and would also expect rewards from learning and task completion. The healthy child would begin to handle emotions in positive and constructive ways.

Nimnicht (1981) stresses that the healthy preschool child has a good self-esteem, has developed the ability to solve problems, and has "learned how to learn." He considers it essential for parents to learn how to provide an environment that enhances healthy child development.

Stevens (1978) and Clarke-Stewart (1981) cite changes in children whose parents have participated in parent education programs. These changes are in the direction of the characteristics of the well-developed child cited earlier from White (1975). In summary, the healthy or well-developed preschool child is a child with good self-esteem and self-confidence who has good relationship skills, a sound basis for a value system, and who has learned how to learn and to solve problems.

The significance of the child's early years, and the impact of parental behaviors on the child's development has been established. Attention will now be turned to the parent. In order to make parent education successful, it is important to understand the parents' attitudes, values, motivations, and needs as individuals and as learners.

Parent as Learner

Parent education assumes that parents need support and information in order to feel confident in their childrearing roles. Some parents see their need and seek support and information on their own; other parents ay not, so for them parent education seeks to heighten their awareness of their importance to their children's

children's development and well-being. Parents are better able to develop their parenting skills if their, and their family's basic economic, health, and living needs are met. They are able to expand their parenting skills within their personal framework of behavior based on: ability factors (intelligence, health, physical abilities); unconscious factors in their personal background; their cultural antecedents and expectations, and the network of expectations from spouse, children, other family members, and significant others; and group structural determinants, such as family size and interaction structures (Harman and Brim, 1980). Parent educators must respest these factors affecting parent behavior.

Pickarts and Fargo (1971) offer a powerful example of how cultural, or socio-economic factors and value systems can affect a child's home educational environment. The different value systems of middle class families and working, upper lower class families results in different methods and directions of socializing their children. Middle class families, in which there typically is a greater degree of freedom and sense of self, and in which both parental roles are minimally differentiated and tend to be supportive, are able to show greater consideration of the child's internal dynamics. They take access to society for granted, and begin preparing their children from the beginning, incorporating into their daily interaction the teaching of skills essential for future oriented achievement.

Working lower class parents, according to Pickarts and Fargo (1971), whose security depends on their ability to be good

workers--traditional, conservative, anti-intelectual, materialistic, and conventional--socialize their children in similar directions. Unfortunately, this conflicts with

> the value system which seems most conducive for dealing with prevailing social conditions and issues; ie, the valuing of self- realization, social commitment, rational thinking, the finding of new solutions, and the capacity to live with difference and uncertainty." (p. 163)

Pickarts and Fargo (1971) state that both middle and lower class parents share the value and desire for their children to do well in school, since school success is now considered a prerequisite for the good life. The difference lies in parental knowledge about how to help a child. The lower class family may have a restricted language code which does not contain the concepts and tools for explaining the world and defining the potential for effective interaction with it. Other families may not use skills they possess because they do not see the importance their use of these skills with their child may have on his or her development, or because they have relinquished their influence to the schools.

According to Pickarts and Fargo (1971), the impact of this inadequate socialization is that children enter school unable to learn. Not having learned how to learn, they function passively, focusing on "getting by" and staying out of trouble. They may handle many aspects of their immediate experience skillfully, but

> they have not developed the capacity for divining the meaning of their experience or their ability to relate that meaning to their daily lives. They do not see themselves as unique or worthwhile, nor do they see the world as capable of being mastered. So they fail." (p. 166)

Information about the impact of parental values and abilities on their child rearing behaviors influences the approach parent education may take. For example, working class parents may more readily accept or try new ideas or methods if they can see how those ideas or methods can assist their children in school success. This can begin the process of raising the parents' consciousness and confidence concerning their role (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971, and Cooney, 1981).

Harman and Brim (1980), Pickarts and Fargo (1971), Cooney (1981), and others stress the importance of first addressing and respecting the parents' needs as a learner in order that they may successfully see and accept themselves as competent teachers of their children. Parent educators make the assumption that parents can learn and want to learn. It is also assumed that parents will seek support and information when they perceive their own need, such as when the birth of their first child forces them to integrate a new role into their self-concept. An additional assumption about the parent as a learner is that learning is most significant when related to parents' immediate needs and personal experiences with their children, and clearly related to action.

When looking at the parent as learner, goals include encouraging the parents' systematic and disciplined process of inquiry--helping them examine and learn how they themselves learn. Additionally, it is important to assist parents to define their value base, see how their values first affect their judgements, and

think through the implications of those judgements to an understanding of the practical consequences.

Pickarts and Fargo (1971, p. 93) suggest that the attitude of the parent educator toward parents is very important to establishing an atmosphere conducive to learning. Respect and acceptance of the parents' personal values, history, and self-concept is basic. The parents must also be respected as thoughtful and capable of choice, and encouraged to view themselves in such a light. It is important to value the parents' process of learning and choosing, above the preferred choices of the parent educator.

There are several considerations to keep in mind when establishing the learning environment for parents (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971). It is important to find a consensus of aims between the parents and the parent educator. It is important to support the parents' conception of themselves as learners, and offer them frequent feedback and reinforcement. The parent educator should be aware of herself or himself as a model of someone who enhances the learning process. Parents should be offered a learning environment that contains the components of safety, time, variety, freedom to err, repetition, and clarification, that they are encouraged to provide for their childrens' learning. Finally, it is important to give parents a direct message of their importance as teachers of their children, and that there are ways in which they can teach their children the process of learning, valuing, and relating; and to make apparent both the need for and the usefulness of their parental skills.

The conclusions of Pickarts and Fargo (1971), Harman and Brim (1980), and Cooney (1981) can be summarized. If their stated considerations, attitudes, and assumptions for parent education are kept in mind, parents will have an opportunity to maintain and develop their parenting skills. Parents' motivation and willingness to learn will increase. Parents will also be more likely to try out new behaviors or ideas to test their suitability to the needs of themselves and their own families.

CHAPTER 3

PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND REVIEW

As stated earlier, this study proposes to examine parent education literature concerning the provision of parent education and support to parents during the first three years of parenthood in order to make recommendations to parent educators, counselors, and others interested in enhancing healthy child development. To facilitate this goal, this chapter will first review the historical development of early childhood parent education programs. It will then review selected early childhood parent education programs represented in the parent education literature. These programs will be classified according to age range of the child: infancy programs (birth to twelve months); pre-school programs (two through four years); behavior modification pre-school programs; and comprehensive programs designed to work with parent and child from birth to school entrance. Several authors' program review summaries will be included as well. The final section of this chapter will discuss the literature concerning recommendations for program evaluation, general recommendations for a parent education framework, and advantages and recommendations for the use of group methods for early childhood parent education.

Historical Perspective

Interest in the value and effectiveness of early childhood parent education has grown during the decades of the 1960's and 1970's. At this time, development of parent education programs flourished. Cataldo's review (1980) established that many programs, such as Head Start, were "deficit models that treated the disadvantaged young child as deprived of the important prerquisite educational skills found in middle class homes" (p. 172). Head Start in the 1960's attempted to improve the lot of the nation's poor children by preschool intervention in conjunction with varying degrees of parent involvement and education. Federal funds were invested in determining the best methods of early childhood education and delivery. Later, in the 1970's, federal funding was shifted from disadvantaged intervention programs to programs for young handicapped children and their families (Cataldo, 1980). Bronfenbrenner (1974) supported parent education and the importance of the first three years of childhood in his review of the effects of preschool and early intervention programs. White (1975), and White et al (1979) worked with the Harvard Preschool Project to determine influences of early childhood that contributed to a "well-developed" child.

Cooney (1981), and Carlson and Russell (1982), cite three main schools of thought in general parent education programs in the recent decades, as well as those currently in effect. The first is the Adlerian, presented to the public by Dr. Rudolf Driekurs (1964), and by programs such as Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

modification orientation, presented by such authors as Becker (1971). The third orientation is the communication model put forth by Gordon's (1970) Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). In addition, parent education programs have had self-exploration and awareness orientations; children's cognitive skill enhancement orintations; and combinations of various orientations.

In the 1970's, early childhood was recognized as a critical period in child development. Clarke-Stewart (1981) and Harman and Brim (1980) describe the wide variety of parent education programs that were developed and implemented. The focus of early childhood parent education ranged from: a) the child-tutor dyad, to b) the mother, to c) the mother-child dyad, to d) a comprehensive family focus. Participants varied according to age, cultural background, socio-economic group, and geography. Delivery varied from individual, to group, to written or electronic media, and were presented in schools, homes, hospitals, and other locations. Programs ran for weeks or years, occurring at varying frequencies over the time period. Those instigating the programs included governmental agencies, private agencies, or the parents themselves. Concurrently, child-rearing literature production boomed, and was eagerly consumed by the populace, particularly by the middle class. Parent education became established as an integral component of child development and early childhood education efforts.

Review of Selected Parent Education Programs

Infancy Programs

Several programs focus specifically on parents of newborns. The first segment of this program review section will focus on these programs. It is important to note an additional assumption made by infancy parenthood programs. These programs stress the notion that an enhanced initial parent-infant bond creates a stable base on which to build the parent-child relationship (Brazelton and Parker, 1981; Widmayer and Field, 1980, 1981; Myers, 1982; Lind et al, 1978; Dickinson, 1980; and Edwards, 1978).

Dossin-Shanahan and Bradley-Johnson (1980) assessed the desirability of a maternity ward parent education program through use of a questionaire answered by 296 new mothers in three urban Michigan maternity wards. They found that 89.9% of the mothers wanted to know more about parenting.

Bradley-Johnson and Johnson (1980) developed a program for use on maternity wards that would appeal to people of a variety of social and economic backgrounds, and be understandable by non-readers. This videotape program was designed to fit the limited amount of time available on a maternity ward, minimize the costs, and be useable on closed circuit television with a population accustomed to television. The focus is on giving mother and child a good start, with information on the developmental period of the first twelve months, and baby's health, learning, and behavior. It is essentially an individual delivery mode, but could be an initial

component of an ongoing program. This author suggests that it would also be possible to use it with groups of parents of somewhat older infants as a discussion starter.

Brazelton (1978a) suggests that innovations in delivery rooms and nurseries are needed to improve the self-image and confidence of parents to help their infant, and to create an understanding of the mother/father/infant interaction. Parker and Brazelton (1981) suggest the use of the Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale (1973) with parents to help them learn more about their infant and its abilities, and to help them gain confidence in handling and observing their infant. The Brazelton scale (1973) was initially intended for use by medical professionals to determine the health and abilities of newborns. The use of the Brazelton scale (1973) with parents develops parental sensitivity, gives parents and health care providers a common frame of reference, and creates a sense of active partnership in the baby's development.

Widmayer and Field (1980, 1981) found that using the Brazelton scale (1973) with at-risk parents resulted in the mothers interacting more with their infants, both verbally and facially. The twelve month follow-up showed babies in the study group to have a significantly higher mental development score than the control group.

Myers (1982) trained parents of newborns to use the Brazelton Scale with their infants, with attention to the infant's positive interactive and physical abilities. The experimenter (trainer) demonstrated, then had the parent repeat each item several

times. The experimenter discussed the infant's behavior with the parent, aiming at being supportive and at praising and complimenting the infant and the parent's skill in handling the infant and noticing its behaviors. The study assessed whether there was an improvement in parental knowledge of infant behavior, heightened feelings of confidence as caregiver, increased feelings of satisfaction with and affection for the newborn, as well as testing parental behavior with the infant.

Myers (1982) did the first assesment before the infant left the hospital, and again four weeks later. Three groups were used; mother treated, father treated, and no treatment. Treatment parents were encouraged to share these games and exercises to get to know the baby with their spouses. Results showed that both treatment mothers and fathers were higher in their knowledge of infant behavior, while untreated mothers showed no effect and untreated fathers showed some improvement at four weeks. Only treatment mothers showed some increase in confidence. Both treatment groups were more satisfied with their infants. Treatment fathers were found to be more involved in infant caretaking at four weeks than either control fathers or spouses of treatment mothers. This effect may be due to increased "bonding" experience with the infant, more trusting mothers, and the fathers' sense of being taken seriously as a competent caregiver.

All the reported studies using the Brazelton scale (1973) with parents suggest a relation between the use of the scale and an improvement of the parent-infant bond, which is the beginning of the

social base needed for the child to develop well. The Brazelton scale (1973)

> is well-suited for intervention for it shows off the infant's best behavioral characteristics. Parents are able to see the newborn's ability to follow a voice and face, to emit reflexive behavior, and to habituate to repeated stimuli; and they can learn something of their infant's characteristic body tone, state control, and ability to be soothed." (Myers, 1982, p.463)

In these studies, the Brazelton scale (1973) was shared individually with parents before they left the hospital with their infant.

Lind et al (1978) found that teaching lullabies to young parents in maternity wards facilitated parent-child bonding. The lullabies incorporate beginning language skills, and encourage parent-infant interaction in a mutual activity. Parents found themselves more relaxed in their interactions with their infants. This learning could occur in groups or individually.

Several programs focus on working with parents and their infants of less than twelve months. Dickinson (1980) developed a curriculum for professionals to use with groups of parents and their infants six to twelve months old. This involved ten hour-long sessions balancing parent-child activities with topic discussion with parents and with book reviews. The intent of the class is to support parents, particularly first time parents, in their new role, and to encourage and to stimulate their infant's potential learning ability. The curriculum focuses on child development in several areas; cognitive, emotional, social, motor, and language. Support materials for use with parents are included.

Wandersman (1978) and Wandersman, Wandersman, and Kahn (1980) developed new parent groups for parents only, who had infants six-ten weeks old at the beginning of the group. The group met weekly for six weeks, then monthly for four months. Six to ten couples met in two hour sessions, and addressed such topics as: infant health and nutrition, cognitive development, changes in the husband-wife relationship, parenting values, and socialization techniques. The groups were seen as an advantageous means for the establishment of relationships that are beneficial to coping and adapting to the particular stress of new parenthood. Groups were utilized to create an atmosphere of trust, caring, and mutual aid, and to offer an opportunity to share feelings and experiences, and enable a person to try out new perspectives and ideas in an atmosphere of reinforcement and empathy. Objectives include the optimization of family functioning, and augmenting parental strengths through validating feedback from peers.

The parenting groups developed by Wandersman (1978) and Wandersman, Wandersman, and Kahn (1980) were found to be more important to the fathers in adapting to their new role, while mothers found most of their support in the informal network of peers. Although parents reported their appreciation of the groups, measures taken showed little effect on adjustment, compared to controls. This may have been due to the fact that participating parents indicated more initial stress than control parents; to the limited effect of twenty hours over the six month period, or to a lack of sensitivity of the pen and paper self reports to post-partum period changes and variations.

Edwards' (1978) monograph details a rationale and offers suggestions for the formation of new parent classes in a variety of formats, depending on local needs and provision capabilities. She supports a family systems approach, stating "the family grows like a baby," and seeing the family as a mobile, with a shift in one piece affecting all the other pieces. Several of her curriculum suggestions emphasize parents becoming aware of personal and family values, and value goals for their children. She offers child development information, information on parents' personal identity support, discipline, positive reinforcement, infant stimulation and education, and marital sexual adjustment, as well as other topics about which parents indicate a concern. She did not offer any information on the evaluation of these groups, other than some quotes of positive self-reports by parents with whom she had worked.

Preschool Programs

The second segment of this program review will focus on programs for parents of children ages one through three years. In the pre-school context, Bronfenbrenner (1974) reviewed several studies of programs intended to enhance children's intellectual, social, and emotional development. Authors cited by Bronfenbrenner include: Levenstein (1970, 1972); Levenstein and Sunley (1968); Levenstein and Levenstein, 1971; Gray and Klaus (1970); Gilmer, Miller, and Gray (1970); and Klaus and Gray (1968); Radin (1969, 1972); Gordon (1973); and Karnes (1969). A common comparison factor he used was change in IQ of the participating children. There were no consistent factors enabling the comparison of social or emotional

factors, but it is important to be aware of the established relationship between language ability and development and social adjustment. An assumption made by this study is that implications from studies relating to the enhancement of a child's cognitive success have a bearing on the goal of parent early childhood education to assist parents to enhance their children's potential and development in order that their children might be as happy and successful in what they choose to do as possible.

Levenstein (1970, 1972); Levenstein and Sunley (1968); and Levenstein and Levenstein (1971) developed the Verbal Interaction Project, involving the child's exposure to educational toys, demonstrating and encouraging the use of the materials in the course of the mother-child interaction. The principal intervention agent was the mother, who was trained by a toy demonstrator who was directed to "treat the mother as a colleague in a joint endeavor in behalf of the child." Further, the demonstrators were given these directions:

> Share your verbal stimulation techniques with her the mother by demonstrating them in play with her child; then draw her into the play, and take a secondary role as soon as you can while she repeats and elaborates what she has seen you do. Encourage her to play and read with the child between home sessions. Keep constantly in mind that the child's primary and continuing educational relationship is with his mother; do all you can to enhance that relationship." (1970, p. 429)

Levenstein (1970, 1972); Levenstein and Sunley (1968); and Levenstein and Levenstein (1971) found that the child's IQ gain was most strongly related to the maternal behavior in the verbal interaction cluster, involving responsiveness to the child, clarity of explaination, expressed approval, and the use of reason. Further,

it was found that a greater and more enduring IQ gain was achieved by the child the earlier and more intensely the mother and child were stimulated to engage in communication around a common activity. This program worked with mother and child as an interactive system, establishing the mother as the principal intervention agent in a relationship style that continues when the program ends.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) also cites Gilmer, Miller, and Gray (1970), Gray and Klaus (1970), and Klaus and Gray (1968) in a series of studies comparing three experimental groups: a home visit group in which the mother was trained to work with her child, a curriculum group, in which the child only was involved in a preschool, and a maximum impact group which combined the two approaches. Results indicate that the age of the child at the first intervention is significant, the highest gains occurring when children started at two years of age, and diminishing with each successive year of age at which intervention was begun. The maximum impact group showed moderate IQ gains during the program (eleven points) with a loss of three to four points at follow up two years later. The curriculum group gained sixteen IQ points during program participation, but lost ten points at the two year follow-up. The home visit group gained four IQ points and lost four IQ points at follow-up, but program participation for this group was only one year instead of two, with follow-up at only one year. Gray's results (Klaus and Gray, 1968: Gray and Klaus, 1970; and Gilmer, Miller, and Gray, 1970) indicate that a home visit component of a program, enhancing the parents' role as primary change agent, increases the staying power of any IQ improvements.

It was also indicated in Gray's studies (Klaus and Gray, 1968; Gray and Klaus, 1970; and Gilmer, Miller, and Gray, 1970) that younger siblings of the children in the two home visit component groups showed higher IQs during and after the program than the siblings of the curriculum or control groups, and higher gains than their older siblings in the home visit group. Bronfenbrenner (1974) suggests that this "trickle down" effect may be attributed to the earlier intervention the younger siblings received, as well as the parents' perception of themselves as the sole change agent for the child.

Gordon (1973), cited by Bronfenbrenner (1974), used a phased sequence, starting with home intervention at age one or two, with the introduction of preschool components as school age neared. Groups maintaining IQ gains had received parent intervention in the first year of life and had continued in the program for either one or two consecutive years, with group intervention added in the third year. The next greatest gains were found in the group with one year of home intervention beginning at age two, with the addition of a group program in the second year.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) cites Radin's (1969) findings that the mothers' self-perception of themselves as educators and of their children as individuals fosters new maternal behaviors. These new maternal behaviors are conducive to the child's intelletual functioning, and is important to the the success of any parent education or intervention.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) also cites Karnes' (1969) work with groups of disadvantaged mothers in child enrichment programs. In this study, mothers were instructed as a group once a week in a two-hour meeting about how they could enhance their children's success. Parents were presented with educational toys and materials, and with an instructor demonstration of an appropriate teaching model. There were also adult-centered activities that consisted of group discussion of child rearing problems in today's society, which were intended to foster a sense of responsibility in the mothers for themselves, their families, and their community. Along with the provision of eleven educational toys and suggested books, the mothers also received monthly home visits over a period of fifteen months. The children in Karnes' (1969) studies made gains of seven to sixteen points in IQ.

It is interesting to note that when Karnes (1969) coordinated a mothers' group with a child's preschool group, and home visits were decreased and changed in focus from parent reporting their teaching activities to the teacher, to the teacher reporting the child's progress to the parent, there were diminished effects. IQ gains of experimental children were actually two points less than the gains made by the control group. This may be due to the mothers' altered perception of their role in the program. There was less responsibility placed on the mothers as the sole active agents for change. The mothers' may have then used their group meetings more to serve their own needs, rather than to serve their children's needs.

After reviewing the above studies, Bronfenbrenner (1974) summarizes his findings and makes recommendations concerning early childhood parent education. First, he concludes that the more involved parents are in their children's early education, the greater and longer lasting are the children's gains. He determines that the diminution of parental status and responsibility is more significant in decreasing program results than the lack of a home visit program, particularly if the home visit program is seen as only an adjunct to the child's preschool program. He finds that focusing on the parent-child system, and stressing the importance of the parent's sustained verbal interaction with the child in relation to a common challenge or task tends to sustain any increases the child achieves through program participation.

Secondly, Bronfenbrenner (1974) concludes that program effects diffuse to younger siblings. Reaching more children through diffusion increases the cost effectiveness of programs. Bronfenbrenner recommends a program of two home visits per week as less costly than a preschool program, and suggests parent group meetings to reduce costs further. He suggests a continuing parent intervention program to diminish losses over time, in conjunction with an added children's group intervention to prepare children for learning in a classroom setting, and to take advantage of larger gains preceedng school entry.

In Badger's (1971) early study with disadvantaged mothers, she worked with twenty mothers of children whose ages ranged from fourteen to twenty-six months, with a mean age of nineteen months. Mothers met once a week for two hours at a time over a seven month

period during the first year, and on a similar schedule for eight months during the second year. In Badger's (1971) study the children were pre and post-tested to "determine how successful she (the mother) had been as a teacher" (p. 168). Mothers also were provided transportation, and $1.50/hr so they could make child care provisions.

Badger (1971) divided the group sessions into two sections. In the child-centered component, mothers were given or made materials to use with their children, taught how to use them, and were requested to use them with their children in daily play sessions at home. During the mother-centered discussion, topics included educational materials, childrearing, family life, and problems of everyday living. Results for the participating children included an increased attention span; greater persistence and increased frustration tolerance in solving problems; and logical ordering in thinking with an ability to transfer a lesson learned from familiar to new materials. The children's scores on standardized tests were significantly higher than those of either the matched control group, or the control group of their older siblings.

Pickarts and Fargo (1971) detail the Los Angeles Parent-Preschool Program, which seeks

> (1) to develop an awareness of the effect of parent attitudes on children's behavior; (2) to increase understanding of parental skills in quiding children; and (3) to increase knowledge of community resources to strengthen family life." (p. 206)

In addition, Pickarts and Fargo (1971) state program goals of supporting and strengthening parental self-concept as a teacher,

an individual, and a citizen; increasing understanding and perception of their children's learning process and their skills in enhancing that learning; and providing a base for home-school relations, the children's preschool component offers the children an opportunity to enhance their self-concept, and their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

In the Los Angeles Parent-Preschool Program (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971) both parent and child attend a three hour session, once a week. Teachers demonstrate activities and skills with children while parents observe. Parents then participate in separate discussion groups. This two part format enables the introduction of alternative childrearing methods to be presented to the parents without diminishing their integrity. It also provides them a forum for evaluating new ideas. Additional parental concerns can be addressed to suit the parents' needs and interests. Parents are aided in becoming good child observers, so their involvement with their child's development can be based on their child's level of development.

Parent evaluations of the Los Angeles Parent-Preschool Project (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971) indicate that the feeling of mutual parent-child learning reinforced parental motivation to continue their new behaviors at home. They appreciated the opportunity to try out new behaviors with their child in a safe setting, and found concrete observations and examples helpful when trying new ideas. Parents reported diminished yelling at children, increased listening, increased enjoyment of parent-child relationship; more

use of language, libraries, and books; and more involvement on the part of their spouses with the children.

Strom (1981) developed a play-training program for parents designed to help parents gain a better understanding of their children, and to develop interaction skills that would help parents enhance their children's learning. Strom (1981) sees parent-child co-play as a way for parents to demonstrate and share their important values, and for children sharing the fantasy experience to meet some of their power needs. Strom found that the best models for parents learning to play were their own children. Children can carry on a fantasy longer, and need more repetitions. Parents, with a shorter attention span and greater need for diversity, needed to be sensitized to the child's play needs, shown how to provide variety within themes, and be given a structure within which to categorize their play experience.

Strom (1981) found that a parent's non-participation in play with their preschooler was related to a six-fold increase in misbehavior by the child. He suggests that this demonstrates the importance of play meeting the child's relationship and power needs. He also found that parents sharing play with their children had more appropriate child rearing expectations.

Marvelle (1978) and Barnes (1978) both offer suggestions for parent training workshops for parents of preschool age children. Both Marvelle (1978) and Barnes (1978) state as goals the enhancement of the parents' perception of themselves as teachers and guides for their children's development, and the increase of parental

participation in decision making and planning. Marvelle (1978) and Barnes (1978) both provide child development information. Both seek to provide parents with methods, materials, and skills needed to increase their children's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth. Topics include self-esteem, self-concept and discipline, cognitive development, and language development.

In addition, Barnes (1978) also includes topics such as single parent, death, or divorce problems; non-sexist, non-racist education; and creative arts. Marvelle (1978) includes these additional topics: kindergarten curriculum, behavior principles, techniques, and implementation. Neither Marvelle's (1978) nor Barnes' (1978) program included evaluative information.

This has been the second segment reviewing existing early childhood parent education programs.

The third segment of the program review section will review behavior modification programs for parents and their preschool age children.

<u>Behavior Modification Programs</u>

According to Becker (1971), behavior modification oriented parent education programs propose "to show parents how to systematically use consequences to teach children in positive ways what children need to learn to become effective people" (p. 1). Behavior modification programs are increasing in number. They address a varied range of problems, from specific problems such as whining and non-compliance (Forgatch and Toobert, 1979) to more comprehensive

programs presented by Becker (1971), Wolfe, Sandler, and Kaufman (1981) and Huber (1978). This section will examine some of these behavior modification training programs for parents and their pre-school children.

Forgatch and Toobert (1979) developed two behavior modification short courses for parents, targeted to change the undesirable child behaviors of whining and non-compliance. Twelve mother-child pairs were divided into experimental and control groups. The short course dealing with whining consisted of a one-half hour intake training in defining, counting, and recording whining, followed by a treatment period beginning with a review of a two-page brochure explaining time out and gold stars, and a thirty minute role play with parents demonstrating time out. This was followed by daily phone contacts during the five-day baseline period. Termination, following the five-day treatment period, consisted of presentation of a two page brochure suggesting social reinforcers such as bedtime stories or extra time with the parent to replace gold stars. Results showed a significant decrease in whining. There was continued significant change at the one-to-three month follow-up.

For the non-compliance short course, Forgatch and Toobert (1979) made some changes in their format in an attempt to create a more easily disseminated program. Fifteen mother-child pairs were divided into two experimental and one control group. Parents were provided with a programmed manual designed to provide consistency in counting target behavior during the intake phase. The treatment introduction consisted of a two-page brochure suggesting time-out

for non-compliance and gold stars for compliance, coupled with a thirty minute audio-tape modeling time out with examples of right and wrong uses of time out. Half of the experimental parents received daily phone contacts not only during the five-day baseline period, but throughout the five-day treatment period. The one month follow up showed maintainance of the significant decrease in non-compliance.

Forgatch and Toobert (1979) designed their programs to be comprehensible to parents of a wide variety of educational backgrounds who were interested in the behavior problems of normal children. They wanted to provide professionals a program efficiently disseminated, requiring a minimum of professional involvement, and containing a carefully evaluated treatment package. They felt that such a short course could be used to screen for families that need additional help after short term intervention. Intervention for minor problems was seen as a preventative because it would alleviate escalation of the undesired behaviors. They felt the non-compliance program would be most useful to parents because non-compliance is the most bothersome to parents, and it would be easier for parents to generalize their skill to other children to and other problem behaviors.

McMahon, Forehand, and Griest (1981) compared behavior modification training of parents with and without a social learning component. At the end of training, and at the follow up, parents in the combined training group percieved their children as better adjusted, were more satisfied with treatment, and rewarded their

adjusted, were more satisfied with treatment, and rewarded their children more than did parents in the non-social-learning group. Their children were less non-compliant than the children of the non-social learning behavior modification group.

Baum and Forehand (1981) did a longterm follow up and assessment of behavior modification parent training. Their study of thirty-four mother-child pairs trained one year to four and one half years earlier showed a maintainance of changes.

Two programs viewed behavior modification training for parents as serving a preventative mental health role. Huber and Lynch (1978) and Wolfe, Sandler, and Kaufman (1981) both included a social learning component in their programs. Both used Becker's (1971) Parents Are Teachers as a text. Both programs used role playing, modeling, and did homework assignments concerning specific child behavior changes.

The Wolfe, Sandler, and Kaufman (1981) program for child abusers also utilized filmstrips on human development at each session, as well as using videotaped vignettes of common child management problems which parents were asked to solve based on prior reading. The tape was then reviewed, with the inclusion of an appropriate problem resolution. Additional components of the Wolfe, Sandler, and Kaufman program were self-control and deep muscle relaxation training, and indiviualized home training procedures. There was improvement shown in parenting skill at the end of the program.. At the one year follow up, there were no reported or suspected incidences of abuse.

Eyberg and Matarazzo (1980) compared the established approach using didactic group parent training with parent training in specific parent-child interaction patterns working with individual parent-child dyads. The interaction training included the use of modeling, in vivo practice, and immediate feedback. Using direct therapist observation and parent report, the interactive training group parents improved their facilitative behaviors, and children's behavior improved. The control group and the didactic training group showed no significant changes. All three parent groups reported improvement in specific home management behaviors. Individually trained parents also expressed greater satisfaction with their program.

Eyberg and Matarazzo (1980) suggest that the direct observation of parent-child behavior, coupled with immediate feedback, reinforcement, and further practice may be related to the greater success of the individual interaction method. This author further suggests that the interaction method may also owe some of its superiority to the program content, which works directly with improving parent-child play interactions through use of language skills and learning how to share a mutual interaction; and to the direct focus on the parent-child dyad.

Behavior modification programs show the most responsibility in evaluating their success and results. Results are consistent with program designers' goals of modifying parent and child behavior.

Comprehensive Programs

Previous segments of the program review section have discussed infancy programs, preschool programs, and behavior modification programs. This third program review segment will describe parent education programs that deal comprehensively with parents and children from birth through at least three years of age.

Several programs seek to work with parents as part of a comprehensive educational package, starting from birth and continuing through preschool, if not beyond. Gordon's (1973) program was cited earlier in conjunction with the Bronfenbrenner (1974) review. Other programs are detailed by Packer et al (1979), Badger (1971, 1972), Honig (1975), Fletcher (1979), and Nimnicht (1981). Whitesides (1977), Pierson (1975), Yurachak (1975), and White et al (1979) all describe the Brookline Early Education Project. These programs will be discussed here.

Packer et al (1979) describes a parenting program at Prarie View Elementary School in Gainesville, Florida aimed at providing preventative, developmental, and educational services for new parents and their children. The program focuses on parents and children from birth through age three, using four sequential classes divided according to the child's age. Parent-infant classes are available from birth to six months, and from six months to twelve months. Parent-child classes are also available from twelve to twenty-four months, and from twenty-four to thirty-six months.

Packer et al's (1979) groups consist of six to eight families, or sixteen to seventeen persons, and met one morning a week, for an unspecified time and for an unspecified duration. A once-a-month Saturday class is provided for other members of the family who cannot attend weekday mornings. Parents or caregivers and children attend together. The morning typically includes exercises and learning activities with babies, postnatal conditioning, parental sharing, demonstration, practice, or modeling of suggested activities or alternate behaviors, parent- child interaction observation, and interdisciplinary consultation.

Other program components Packer et al (1979) include are: a parent advisory council, a toy lending library, home visitations if the family is stressed or expresses a need, referral services, and supplementary materials. The program is intended to provide opportunities for positive interaction that will enhance the parent-child relationship and the infant's growth and development, as well as to provide peer support in the parent's adjustment to their new role.

An evaluation of the results of the Packer et al (1979) program indicate that parents are able to handle stressful or frustrating situations significantly better at the end of the first year than than they were able to eight or nine months earlier, using the Rosenweig Picture Frustration Test cited in the research data reported by Resnick et al (1976). Parent self-reports on their program participation indicate an improved parenting esteem, confidence, and skills, a joy in their children and in the parent-child

relationship, an appreciation for a source of support, and an increased involvement with their child.

Findings from Badger's (1971) early study were used to develop early education programs for the Mount Carmel, Illinois Parent and Child Center as a Headstart preschool precursor, and for a birth through preschool program for the Chattanooga County, Georgia Parent Child Center (Badger, 1972). In the Mount Carmel program, the mothers' training program was integrated with an existing infant/toddler program at the center. Mothers attended weekly two-hour instructional meetings for a period of seven months. Transportation and childcare for older siblings was provided. The teacher functioned as a group and discussion leader and provided demonstrations. Mothers were able to borrow toys and materials from a lending library weekly. The mothers learned to match their own infant's level of development to the toys or activities borrowed from the library. The group leader made weekly follow-up visits to each home for progress evaluation and individual help. Each parent was asked to read Children: the Challenge by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs (1964). Parents often made take home materials to use with their infants while discussing a portion of the book. The following year, parents attended twenty-seven meetings, and completed several home teaching projects.

As a reult of their program participation at Mt. Carmel, mothers were eager to show their children's new skills, were comfortable in the teaching role, became enthusiastic about other community involvement, and came to be regarded by the staff as

competent educational partners. As a result of the program, children showed an eagerness to learn, and developed a more cooperative relationship with their mothers. Results were similar to those cited in the following description of Badger's (1972) Georgia program.

In Badger's (1972) Georgia program, mothers and staff of this parent-based program were taught observational skills that enabled them to match activities to the individual infant's level of development. Mothers used a twenty level skill chart to match toys and materials from the lending library to their children's developmental level. Staff again gained an appreciation of the mothers as competent teachers as they learned new skills. Mothers' self-confidence as teachers, and their pride in their children increased, as indicated by staff observation. Mothers and children working together established successful and mutually reinforcing relationships. Badger (1972) also describes the changes observed in the children participating in the program.

> The child was eager for the positive attention of his mother and worked to master new skills. These young children demonstrated interest in learning, increased attention spans, and a sense of order and organization as they learned new skills. And, as would be expected, there was an absence of behavior problems as mother and child regularly had this 'good' time together." (p. 3)

Honig (1975) reports on the Kentucky Rural Child Care Project (1972). This program begins parent participation during the prenatal period by providing prenatal checkups. During the period from birth to two years, weekly home visits are made. Starting at age three months and continuing through age two, mother and infant make weekly one-half day visits to an attractive, well-equipped

infant room. At age two, there is an added one-half day per week for the child alone. There are a variety of parent services. Head Start parents have an additional volunteer participation requirement.

Fletcher (1979) describes the Parent-Child Training Center in Robinsdale, Minnesota. As of 1978, this was one of twenty-two programs funded through the Minnesota State Department of Education, whose common purpose is to improve family status by providing child development information and encouraging the aquisition of effective parenting skills. Other common features of the Minnesota programs are the rationale that ages one through five are crucial, and that parents are the child's significant teachers. All programs have an advisory council of parents, and have voluntary attendance within school boundaries. All programs provide early and periodic screening, a toy library, a parents' library, a children's library, field trips, and small and large group instruction for parents on their choice of topics.

Specific goals of the Robinsdale program (Fletcher, 1979) include: exposure to alternative methods of child rearing, demonstration of effective communication models, inclusion of fathers in Center activities through the institution of "Dad's Nights," demonstrating to parents how they can arrange a stimulating environment for their children, and provision of a children's learning-through-play program. Parents may participate in evening activities, which include speakers, with an eclectic approach to parenting. Parents are asked for evaluations of each evening

session. Parents and children participate in sixteen one-and-one-half hour discussion sessions supplemented by reading materials.

The Robinsdale program described by Fletcher (1979) groups parents and children into thirty-two age clusters, ranging in child age from one week to five years. For the first hour, parents participate in discussion sessions and observe their children in the playroom through an observation window. During the next half hour, parents join their children in the playroom for planned and spontaneous learning-through-play activities. Parents are asked for evaluations at every eighth class session. The best recommendation for the success of the program is that parents find the program significant enough to recruit other parents to the program.

Nimnicht (1981) discusses his Medellín demonstration program, and his recommendations to the Puerto Rican Governor's Commission on Educational Reform. In the Medellín program, mothers of babies from birth up to six months participated in twelve weekly meetings. They were helped to learn how to care for babies, how to provide a healthy environment, how to observe babies, and how to stimulate development. There were three more similar programs for parents of children aged one, two, and three. Parents and four and five year old children participated jointly in a program. Programs took place in local neighborhood ceters. Also provided in each neighborhood parent center were a toy lending library, a children's library, and a parents' library.

Nimnicht's (1981) recommendations to the Puerto Rican Governor's Commission added a basic program for all parents starting before the birth of the first child, or at birth, and continuing until the child is eight years old. This program also provides for children with special needs. Nimnicht (1981) estimates that such a comprehensive program would cost less than half as much as kindergarten.

Nimnicht (1981) seeks to help parents in several ways. He first helps parents help their child learn how to learn and to become a problem solver. The requisite conditions are the child's healthy self-concept, developed in an environment of tender, loving care, coupled with a learning environment arranged to match the child's individual needs and interests. Secondly, Nimnict seeks to help parents become more competent, to help them understand how children develop their self-concepts, and to help them understand how important they are, as the primary educators of their child, to the development and reinforcement of their child's healthy self-concept.

The Brookline Early Education Project (BEEP) is discussed by Pierson (1975), Yurachak (1975), Whitesides (1977), and White et al (1979). This program also sees the parent as the child's most important teacher, and seeks to prevent the "cycle of defeat" children experince when entering school without the advantages of enriched parentally provided environent. It provides five years of continuous educational and medical services, including free, regular health and developmental exams.

The BEEP free parent and child education program (Pierson, 1975; Yurachak, 1975; and Whitesides, 1977) begins with regular home visits by a teacher who recognizes the importance of the mother-child dyad, and who can adapt plans to meet the mother's immediate needs. Regular playgroup sessions are added at age two. At age three, a pre-kindergarten program is available for a nominal fee. Also provided is a drop-in center for babies, a parents' lounge, toy and book libraries for children, a parents' library, and free transportation. The center serves as a model for structuring the home environment with consideration for such factors as: safety features, kitchen arrangement for exploration, and the playroom arranged for maximum benefit.

Parents' evaluations and comments of BEEP (Pierson, 1975; and Whitesides, 1977) indicate the parents' increased awareness of their child and their parental role, their appreciation for the reassurance and support of the staff, and their use of the toy and book libraries. Parents see the home visit program as positive, supportive, informative, and useful. Participating families in the home visit program were divided into three groups. Group A received between one and four home visits per month. Group B received one home visit every six weeks. Group C was based in the drop-in center, and received phone contacts when requested. Of the three groups, the home vist groups did not want home visits replaced with group meetings. It is estimated that such a project would cost between \$600-\$1400 per year per child to operate, with some special needs requiring more money. This compares favorably with provision of kindergarten and remedial services.

Program Evaluations Review

Several authors have evaluated parent education program results. This segment of the program review section will present summaries of the findings of these authors.

Schultz, Nystul, and Law (1980) compared three parent education models: PET, Adlerian, and behavior modification, with placebo and non-attendant control groups. All three parent education groups were shown to produce longlasting attitudinal change, based on course content rather than attendance or group experience, or leader variables such as age or marital status. At the twelve month follow up, all three groups had maintained and continued their attitude and child interaction behavior changes.

Stevens (1978) reviewed parent education programs ranging from peer group counseling, to individual home visit consultation, to intensive group models and consultation. He found only a small amount of evaluative research in comparison with the number of programs described in the literature. Stevens found that individual consultation allowed personalized and individual treatments so targeted skill areas could be developed. Intensive group models were more effective than minimal home visitation programs. A group approach had a significant positive effect on both maternal and child behaviors.

Parental changes noted by Stevens(1978) include the use of more task appropiate, and more elaborate and syntactically complex language, and more encouragement of verbal skills. Parents became

more aware of their children's characteristics, allowing them to "read" their children more accurately. Parents were more willing to engage in reciprocal, cooperative play, and to grant their children increased autonomy. In addition, parents became aware of the learning potential of household routines and what constituted appropriate play materials, enabling parents to create a more optimal home learning environment.

Children's changes noted by Stevens (1978) included increases in intellectual and cognitive funtioning, curiosity about novel objects, and improved language development. Children showed more willingness to explore strange play environments, exhibited more cooperative play with their parents, and displayed increased skill in using their parents as resources. Stevens found that children were more strongly attatched to their mothers earlier, with mothers being more resposive in reading their children's cues.

Overall, Stevens (1978) found that the most effective programs were prescriptive for the parent consultant, with clearly stated objectives and carefully developed activities. Successfull programs emphasized personalizing to the parent-child dyad, and provided supervision of consultants, and monitoring of their activities, and ran eighteen to twentyfour months. When there was consultant turnover, attrition, and haphazardness, programs had detrimental effects.

Harman and Brim (1980) find that the areas of changes or effects produced by parent education, suggested in the literature include:

positive changes in verbal behavior, greater responsiveness, warmth and sensitivity, greater relaxation in relation between parents and children, and greater self-sufficiency and effectiveness." (p. 251)

Clarke-Stewart's (1981) research review found that children's behavior in child focused programs influences parental behavior; that parent-child interaction and children's behavior is more susceptible to program induced change than is parental behavior alone; and that child focused programs are at least as effective as parent or dyad focused on producing child gains, indicating parent education doesn't work simply through parental influence on the child.

Clarke-Stewart's (1980) review of program effects on children indicates generally positive outcomes with consistent results. Other program effects on children were immediate effects on children's intellectual performance, and maintainance of change over time, although there was some IQ decrease over time. Research suggests that such variables as children's sociability, security, and cooperation may also be increased. Clarke-Stewart (1981) concurs with Schultz, Nystul, and Law (1980) that program outcome is related to program content, be it democratic/communication oriented, or social, cognitive, or language oriented.

Clarke-Stewart's (1980) review of parent education effects on parents indicates positive changes, although the changes were less often noted and less consistent than were changes in the children. At the end of programs, parent education was successful in changing superficial parental behaviors. Parents were

> more talkative, didactic, responsive, and active with their children; (used) more complex speech with them, including questions; their attitude toward child rearing is less authoritative; (and) they feel more confident about being parents." (p. 53)

However, parent education programs were less successful in modifying the more subtle, possibly more critical aspects of parental behavior of responding, caring, and playing.

Program Design

The initial sections of this chapter first reviewed the recent history of early childhood parent education programs, and second, reviewed the parent education literature concerning existing programs. The final section of this chapter will examine program design issues. First, recommendations for the evaluation of parent education programs will be discussed. Second, general parent education framework recommendations will be examined. Finally, the advantages of using group methods and recommendations for group focus and group development will be detailed.

Review of Program Evaluation Recommendations

This segment of the program design section will present program evaluation recommendations. Clarke-Stewart (1981) states:

> Only if we study parent education programs systematically and scrupulously, at the same time as we are advocating them or operating them, can we hope to advance in our quest for knowledge about the best possible environments for children. ...In fact, the best and only true test of how the parent influences child development would come from the observation of what happens to a child's development when the parent changes her or his behavior. This kind of observation is potentially afforded by the very parent education programs that were derived from the research." (p. 57)

Clarke-Stewart (1981) recommends that the evaluation process needs to check eight assumptions. First, the program should be monitored to see that what the program designer intends actually happens. Second, whether the parent is receiving the message intended by the parent trainer should be checked. Third, the assumption that all participating parents are equally ready for training should be examined. Fourth, the compatability of parents' goals and program designers' goals should be assessed. Fifth, the assumption that giving parents information will change their behavior should be tested. Sixth, whether the parents' changes will be in the desired direction needs to be examined. Seventh, the assumption that changes in parent behavior has a causal effect on the child's improved performance is important to assess. Finally, it is important to test whether the benefits of parent training will continue after the program ends, and family circumstances change. Harman and Brim (1980) add that program cost effectiveness and possible deleterious effects of parent education programs are additional factors to consider when evaluating a program.

Clarke-Stewart (1981) suggests that it is important to find out how or why changes occur in order to develop an effective program. She sees a need to attend to the processes of change and the effects of variations of program dimensions (length, intensity, and instructional method, subject dimensions (age, ability, and background), or delivery dimensions (time, place, target).

Review of General Program Recommendations

It is the general consensus, based upon research in child development and early education, that it is of particular importance to reach and educate parents during the first years of parenthood, and to involve as many family members as possible, for as long as possible (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; White, 1979; White et al, 1980; Brazelton, 1978; Nimnicht, 1981). White (1980), Bronfenbrenner (1974), and Nimnicht (1981) all recommend comprehensive programs of parent education and parent involvement with child education. Recommendations range from total provision of sanctioned programs through government educational agencies (Nimnicht, 1980) to a coordinated effort by various agencies to make available services and interventions to parents so they can "plug into them" when the parents see a need for services, and are willing to utilize them (Pugh, 1981; Edwards, 1978; White, 1980).

White (1980), in response to the general recommendations for parent education, outlines a five part plan for teaching families the fundamentals of educational development. The first step in White's (1980) plan is to reach each and every prospective parent long before the birth of the first child. Each person would be taught all the known and accepted fundamentals about educational development in the first years of life. Bradley-Johnson and Johnson (1980) and Dossin-Shanahan and Bradley-Johnson (1980) think this should be done in required high school courses. Bronfenbrenner (1974) thinks this exposure to children, and caring for children, should start in the elementary years.

White (1980) sees the second critical period for parent education as the period just before and soon after birth. Parents are especially traumatized at the birth of the first child when they come face-to-face with the reality of their responsibilities. At this time, adult education classes can provide parental support, and can update and refresh parents concerning early childhood information. Bronfenbrenner (1974), Edwards (1978), Wandersman (1978), and Wandersman, Wandersman, and Kahn (1980) concur with White (1980). Bronfenbrenner (1974) also concurs with White's (1980) suggestion for the provision of public television programming.

Bradley-Johnson and Johnson (1980) concur with White's (1980) recommendation to use a video-tape or film course in maternity wards. Parker and Brazelton (1981), Widmayer and Field (1980, 1981), and Myers (1982) also recommend the maternity ward as a parent education forum, through the use of the Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale (1973).

White (1980) also recommends that the neonatal period be used to contact parents and inform them of early assessment, detection, and referral services available to them and to their child, preferably at little or no cost. Parents should be promised that if these services are used, their child will not go through the preschool years with an undetected educational handicap, such as vision or hearing impairmen.

White (1980) focuses the third step of his plan on the first six years of a child's life, particularly upon the first three years. He suggests making available "continuing, low-pressure,

strictly voluntary" training for parents. This training would be available through resource centers and through home visitation programs that work with and through the family. Bronfenbrenner (1974) and Badger (1971, 1972) concur with White (1974), and suggest the addition of parenting groups. Nimnicht (1981), Packer et al (1979), and Fletcher (1979) concur with the need for a resource center, and use groups as the chief method of parent education delivery. Balter (1976) recommends that nursery schools and day care centers become sponsers for such parent groups.

White (1980), Pickarts and Fargo (1971), Bronfenbrenner (1974), Harman and Brim (1980), Badger (1971, 1972), and Goodyear and Rubovits (1982) all discuss the importance of seeing parent education in relation to ecologically broad parental and family needs. Parents will not have the energy or willingness to participate in and learn from parent education if they are wondering where their next meal or tank of gas, money for the doctor, or a job is going to come from. "The family's capacity as an educational delivery system rests upon its general capacity to function in society (White, 1980, p. 342)." Therefore, it is recommended that a family's basic ecological and hierarchical needs first be met. This would involve strong referral connections with social service delivery agencies. Basic assessment and remedial help would thus be made available for parents and children. Parent education programs should provide assistance in the forms of employment, health, consumer and household management skills, and personal referrals. Programs might also include some provisions for transportation and childcare services to enable parental attendance (Badger, 1971,

1972). These referral services and remedial assistance constitute the fourth and fifth parts of White's (1980) comprehensive framework for parent education.

The previous segments of the program design section have focused on program evaluation concerns and a general parent education framework. The final segment of this section will discuss the use of the group format for the provision of early childhood parent education.

Use of the Group Method for Parent Education

White's (1980) recommendations for "continuing, low-pressure, strictly voluntary" training for parents starting before the birth of the first child, and stressed during the first three years of parenthood, can be met using a group format. This section will review alternative methods to, advantages of, and recommendations for the use of groups to deliver parent education.

Harman and Brim (1980) describe a wide variety of methods of delivering parent education to the public. There are several factors to consider when choosing a delivery method for parent education. These factors include: the suitability to the client/parent; the compatability of client/parent goals with program goals; cost factors; and how resources and modalities may be combined.

Harman and Brim (1980) suggest that mass modes are the most cost effective, are the most easily available to te most people, and allow for the greatest personal choice without interference.

Mass modes include: books and magazines; the electronic media of radio, television, and films; and large group formats, such as lectures. The disadvantages of mass media are the impersonality and unadaptability to the parent's needs.

Harman and Brim (1980) describe individual delivery of parent education as the most adaptable to the parent's individual needs. Individual parent education can include counseling, advice, or active assistance. This is the category into which home visitation parent education programs fit. The individual, home visit form of parent education keeps the focus on the parent-child interaction and the parents' significance to that interaction. It provides parents immediate feedback, support, and reinforcement about their actual, present interaction with their child, as pointed out by White (1980), Whitesides (1977), and Bronfenbrenner (1974). These are significant advantages to individual delivery. A disadvantage of individual delivery is the lack of provision of a support network for the parent that will continue after the program ends. Other disadvantages of individual delivery include possible higher cost factors, availability of personnel, and local programming preferences or biases.

Group delivery is suggested by Harman and Brim (1980) and by Pickarts and Fargo (1971) as having the advantage of using the parent educator's time and energy more efficiently by meeting with several parents simultaneously. Groups can utilize a variety of materials, program structures, material presentation formats, curriculum choices, and program orientation and focus. This makes

the group highly adaptable to meeting varied individual group members' needs. For example, material can be presented using lectures, discussions, audio-visual materials, personal and group experience, or role-play and modeling. Program structure and format can range from the pre-planned, formalized curriculum to the more flexible session-to-session plan. A significant advantage of group parent education is the potential of the group to develop support systems, and provide support to parents in several areas.

Wandersman, Wandersman, and Kahn (1980) describe four categories of support: social, emotional, esteem, and instrumental support. Social support leads the person to believe he or she is cared for, loved and esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations. It is in this area that the group's expectations of acceptable behavior can provide a person motivation for trying new behaviors (Harman and Brim, 1980). Emotional support provides love and caring to the person. Esteem support comes from the group's public confirmation that the person is valued. Instrumental support aquaints the person with information, goods, and services available to him or her. This can take the form of providing information about child development, the nature of learning, and available community resources and services.

Within a parent education group, a parent receives the feedback and reinforcement advantages of home visit education from both the facilitator, and from other group members (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971; Harman and Brim, 1980). Social, emotional, and esteem support become available to the parent not only during the program, but as

group relationships and support skills continue after the program ends. This can diminish the parents' sense of isoaltion, tension level, and lack of self-confidence and sense of control over their lives (Pugh, 1981).

Pickarts and Fargo (1971) suggest that the feedback and reinforcement from both peers and facilitator in a group helps parents learn the value of reinforcement and feedback to themselves and learn how to give reinforcement and feedback. It also helps parents learn the value of providing reinforcement and feedback to their children.

Harman and Brim (1980) join Pickarts and Fargo (1971) in considering the group as providing parents a safe place to meet with other parents with similar experiences and an opportunity to share their concerns and ideas with others. This provides a basis to broaden parents' focus, and to start exploration of other options available to them in child rearing.

A significant and effective advantage of the group format is its adapability to include the parent-child dyad. Honig (1975), Packer et al (1979), Fletcher (1979), and Badger (1971, 1972) all demonstrate this potential of the group format.

Another important benefit of group parent education is the opportunity for the parents to interact with a skilled facilitator. Dickinson (1982), Pickarts and Fargo (1971) and Harman and Brim (1980) all discuss the importance of the facilittor. A facilitator knowledgeable about children and learning, skilled in group process,

who offers the parents an attitude of respect, empathy, and genuineness can guide the parents' interaction to provide a basis for individual learning. The facilitator can use and model teaching skills such as summarization, repetition, feedback, problem solving, and communication skills for the parents. The facilitator can point out the advantages of these skills in the parents' learning process, and provide the parents an opportunity to develop and use these same skills with their peers and their children. This helps the parents gain insight into the feelings, thoughts, and opinions of themselves and of others, and contributes to the esteem and instrumental support system of the parents.

The group method can adapt to the educational abilities and cultural differences of the group members, as referred to by Goodyear and Rubovits (1982). Parents from lower socio-economic classes, often with less formal education, will likely be less comfortable with printed materials and informal group structures (Harman and Brim, 1980; and Pickarts and Fargo, 1971). Goodyear and Rubovits (1982) found that these parents may find help with family management problems of more immediate importance than improvement of their interpersonal skills. Family management skills include, but are not limited to, parents shaping their own and their children's behavior. These skills are taught in an initially more structured manner.

Middle class parents, who have been found to be more likely to participate voluntarily in adult education programs (Harman and Brim, 1980; and Pickarts and Fargo, 1971), are more likely to be

comfortable using printed material, and participating in an informal group structure. Goodyear and Rubovits (1982) found that these parents have more basic family management skills at hand, allowing them to pursue the improvement of their interpersonal skills. These are skills stressed by Gordon's (1970) Parent Effectiveness Training and by Carkuff (1975) which are taught more informally. The parent education group facilitator can assess the needs of the participating parents, and adapt the structure and curriculum to fit the parents' hierarchical needs.

Another way of looking at group adapability is within the context of the integrated approach suggested by Carlson and Russell (1982). The integrated approach is based on Lazarus' (1977) suggestion that the greatest lasting change in counseling occurs when combined techniques, strategies, and modalities are used. This multimodal approach covers the areas of Behavior, Affect, Sensation, Imagery, Cognition, Interpersonal relationships, and Drugs or diet. Carlson and Russell suggest the application of Lazarus' (1977) "BASIC ID" concept to parent training, using a small group format, meeting one-and-one-half to two hours per session for six to ten weeks. Homework requiring parents to examine their beliefs, their children's behavior, and to try new behaviors would be an esential program feature. Information would include social learning information and communication skills training. The parents needs could be assessed within this concept, and the curriculum could be structured accordingly.

In summary, parent education in groups is adaptable in its approach and focus. It can have the hierarchical focus suggested by Goodyear and Rubovits (1982), the integrative focus of Carlson and Russell (1982), the learning-valuing focus suggested by Pickarts and Fargo (1971), or the child development focus promoted chiefly by White (1975, 1980) and White et al (1979) and by Bronfenbrenner (1974). Parent education groups can also be developed that integrate these various foci.

The advantages of parent education utilizing a group format are numerous. Parents benefit from interaction with and support from their peers. The modeling provided by the facilitator, and the opportunity to interact with and assist other parents provides concrete experience for the parents. This experience as helpers can be adapted to the parents' role as an enabler of their children's learning, while enhancing the parents' own concept of themselves as competent and worthwhile persons. The parents' direct experience can be enhanced further by including their children in group participation. Child-parent participation provides opportunity for parents to safely try out new interactions with their children, and to receive immediate feedback, reinforcement, and support for their efforts from both their peers and the facilitator. The feedback, reinforcement, and support patterns of the parent education group can become estblished as a continuing resource for the parent, even after program termination.

This final segment of the program recommendation section has provided information about the advantages of using the group as a

method of providing early childhood parent education, and recommendations for the structure and focus such groups might have. This chapter has provided an extensive look at early childhood parent education programs developed by others and reported in the literature. The fourth chapter of this paper will summarize the findings, state conclusions based upon the findings, and make recommendations for the implementation of early childhood "parent as teacher" education programs.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This paper explored the parent education literature in the area of early childhood parent education. In Chapter 2, the justifications for, and the goals of early childhood parent education were detailed. A discussion of the research concerning the significance of the child's first three years, and the impact of parental behaviors on the child's development gave credence to the assumption that providing support and information to parents during the first three years of parenthood can be extremely important.

The healthy, well-developed child was described as a child with good self-esteem and self-confidence who has good relationship skills, a sound basis for a value system, and who has learned how to learn and to solve problems. This description of the healthy, well-developed child provided a frame of reference concerning the primary goal of early childhood parent education for counselors and mental health professionals seeking to improve the mental health of individuals by working through the family system. A discussion of the characteristics of the parent as a learner provided a frame of reference concerning the needs of parents in the learning situation provided by the mental health professional or parent educator.

Chapter 3 provided an historical frame of reference for the development of early childhood parent education programs. The four

categories of programs reviewed shared the goal of providing parents information and support to enhance their skills in assisting their children's healthy social, cognitive, and emotional development.

Infancy programs worked with parents from the birth of the child through the first twelve months of life. These programs were based on the assumption that the earlier optimum interaction patterns are established between parent and child, the better are the chances of a healthy parent-child relationship, and healthy child development.

Preschool programs worked with parents and their children of one through three years of age. These programs had a cognitive focus for child development, and were by far the most numerous cited in the literature.

Another category of programs designed for working with children from one year of age and older were the behavior modification programs. These programs provided a social learning frame of reference for the parents involved.

The comprehensive early-childhood parent education programs provided support and information to parents beginning at or before the child's birth, and continuing through school entrance, if not beyond. These programs usually focused on the entire family system as a means of assisting healthy child development.

Chapter 3 provide a review of program summaries which supported the assumptions that parent education does have an effect on both parents and children, and that those effects are desirable.

Also presented in Chapter 3 were program evaluation recommendations, and recommendations for a general program of parent education drawn from the literature. Factors supporting the use of versatile group methods of parent education were detailed as well.

The assumption that the period from birth through three years of age is important to the development of a healthy, well-developed child was supported in Chapter 2. It was shown that parental behaviors have siginificant impact on child development, and that the parent-child interaction patterns developed in early childhood can establish long-term personality, learning, and relationship skills and patterns for the child.

The assumption that parents want to assist their children to become healthy and successful persons was supported in Chapter 2. Also supported were the ideas that, when treated with respect, understanding, and honesty, parents are able to learn improved or new parenting skills, and that they want to learn these skills for enhancing their children's learning and healthy development.

The assumption that becoming a parent is a stressful period of life, during which the parent must adapt to new roles and learn new skills was demonstrated. The need for support systems for the parent during this adjustment period, and throughout the years of parenthood, was established.

Conclusions

The conclusion drawn from the assumptions supported above is that the provision of parent education and support, particularly during the first years of parenthood, can assist parents in adapting to their new roles, and in learning skills to help their children develop in healthy directions. The provision of parent education enhances the chances for children to become healthy, well-developed persons, a primary goal of counselors and mental health professionals.

After an examination of established early childhood parent education programs in Chapter 3, several additional conclusions can be drawn concerning success factors for parent education.

The earlier parent education is provided, the greater and more long lasting will be the gains for the child, and the sooner beneficial parent-child interaction patterns will be established.

It is particularly important to focus on the parent-child system, through the parent, in order to enhance parental learning, and to obtain the most persistent results for the child. The broader the involvement of all family members in the process, the more benefits will accrue to the entire family system, and to the child.

The learning process is enhanced by direct, personal experience, immediate feedback and reinforcement, and congruence with the parents' vales, goals, and perceived needs.

The attitude of the parent educator, counselor, or mental health professional toward the parent as a person who can make choices and solve problems based on the parent's own needs and values for self and family is essential to the enhancement of the parent's self-esteem and self-confidence in the parenting role.

The family exists in the context of its culture and society, and of its economic and biological needs. If a family is lacking in basic needs, the parents will be unable to invest energy in improving their parenting skills. The parent educator, counselor, or mental health professional needs to be able to assist parents through referral, or through program components, to address their more basic survival needs.

The group method of parent education was demonstrated to be highly adaptable in addressing parental concerns and needs, including support needs. The group method of parent education also provides a means of reaching more parents with less use of professional time and energy. The group method can incorporate the above mentioned success factors for parent education. Counselors and mental health professionals, with expertise in working with groups, can become significant contributors to the group parent education process.

Recommendations

In the course of this study, there was found to be a lack of solid, well-substantiated data on the results of some parent education programs. Some programs reported the use of only parents' written self-reports. Other programs, such as those reviewed by Bronfenbrenner (1974), could be compared only on the limited basis of the use of IQ measures for children. The behavior modification programs were the most responsible in obtaining and reporting both pre-program and post-program results. Some parent education programs have neglected to include an evaluation process in the overall program design that can be easily compared with the results of other programs.

The development of standardized methods for evaluating the results of parent education programs is important to research and development efforts that contribute to the improvement of future parent education programs. It is recommended that evaluation measures be developed to enable researchers to determine changes in the child's cognitive, social, and emotional development; to determine changes in parental behaviors and attitudes; to determine changes in family relationship patterns; to determine which factors of a program influence which changes, and in what directions; and to determine how various changes may interrelate.

An early childhood parent edcation program can become an excellent tool for the counselor or mental health professional working with parents toward the common goal of healthy, well-adjusted children. The following recommendations, consistent with the

conclusions of this study, will enhance the chances for success of an early childhood parent education program.

1. Counselors, mental health professionals, and parent educators should work with area schools, universities, adult education programs, churches, or other local agencies to develop early childhood parent education programs.

2. The early childhood parent education program should include as many family members as possible, as early in the life of the first child as possible.

3. The early childhood parent education program should be flexible enough to meet the current ecological, hierarchical, and personal needs of the parents.

4. The parent education program should focus on the parent-child interaction, providing immediate feedback, reinforcement, and support by providing a joint parent-child participation component in a small group setting with four to six other families, including both parents and children.

5. The parent-child learning group should start shortly after birth, using such tools as the Brazelton scale (1973) to introduce parents and infants to each other. During early infancy, when the child is not as active, the parent-child learning group can focus a primary share of the time on helping parents adjust to new role identities and developing a support system with the other parents in the group.

6. As the child develops and parents are encouraged to obtain more of their support needs from group members outside of parent-child learning time, more opportunities for direct participation in mutual parent-child learning activities within the group should occur. The primary focus of the parent-child learning group should become the parent-child interaction and learning process itself.

7. Parents should be assisted in examining their own learning process, so they could use that information in combination with child-rearing alternatives or skills presented or practiced in the group that they choose to incorporate into their own family style.

8. A manageable format for early childhood parent education may be for the group to meet for a series of six to eight meetings every six months, starting when the child is about one month old, and continuing until the child's fourth birthday. In an effort to encourage as many family members to participate as possible, a monthly weekend gathering of two to three hours would be provided for family members who could not attend other meetings. The parent-child learning groups would be available during both evening and daytime sessions, in order to accommodate a wider variety of family lifestyles.

9. For evaluation purposes, some measure of parental attitudes and behaviors should be found or developed. This measure should be used before program participation, and at the beginning and end of each six to eight meeting segment. Parent self-reports should be collected periodically as well. The subjective

information of self-reports can serve to provide feedback to parent educators, and can be a learning process for parents enabling them to consolidate the parents' own learnings.

10. A series of evaluation tools should be used with the children as they develop throughout the course of the program. A variety of tools already exist which should be found, evaluated, and selected from the literature.

11. If at all possible, some form of control group should be used, in order to better assess the effects of the program on both parents and children.

For the mental health professional interested in the healthy development of people, early childhood parent education becomes an important means of enhancing family members' opportunities to develop in healthy directions. When dealing with parents and families, the best suggestion is to deal with both the individuals and the parent-child interaction systems in a way that is respectful, congruent, and understanding and empathic.

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