A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

OF

PARENT EDUCATION GROUPS

by

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ABSTRACT

Parent education group programs attempt to assist parents in being more effective in their parenting roles. However, there is, as yet, no definitive understanding of the processes and outcomes that actually occur in these programs.

The purpose of the present study was to gain more information on the processes and outcomes of three specific parent education groups by soliciting the participants' descriptions of these factors. This was done by undertaking a review of existing literature; conducting semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the programs; and administering questionnaires to participants who had recently completed one of the three programs.

The results indicate that parents have different learning needs; that all approaches in parent education programs seem to be potentially valid; that parenting is an extremely complicated phenomenon; that content and information ought to be considered tentative and used with caution; that there are a variety of possible outcomes, both educational and therapeutic in nature, which may occur in parent education groups; and that there is a definite need for further research of all types in the field of parent education.

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DEDICATION

To Karen - For Being There

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
INTRODUCTION	vii
I. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	1
Introduction	1
Parent Education - Definitions and Descriptions	7
Evaluation Studies	23
II. METHOD	31
General Introduction	31
Sample	32
Overview of Programs	32
Procedures	35
III. RESULTS	40
Description of Programs	40
Structure	41
Clientele	42
Values and Theoretical Conceptions	43
Goals	46
Content	47
Leader Roles and Skills	49
Evaluation Procedures	51
Questionnaire Results	54
IV. DISCUSSION	96
Limitations of the Study Method	96
Discussion of Results	97
Recommendations for Practice	105
Recommendations for Research	106
APPENDICES	
A. Question Guidelines	
B. Questionnaire	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

LIST OF TABLES

			Page
TABLE	I.	Distribution of Respondents by Sex	56
	II.	Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status	57
	III.	Distribution of Respondents by Total Annual Family Income	58
	IV.	Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level	59
	V.	Descriptions of Leader Characteristics in PET Program	62
	VI.	Descriptions of Leader Characteristics in EP Program	63
	VII.	Descriptions of Leader Characteristics in BM Program	64
	VIII.	Descriptions of Other Group Members in PET Program	73
	IX.	Descriptions of Other Group Members in EP Program	74
	X.	Descriptions of Other Group Members in BM Program	74
	XI.	Descriptions of Outcomes in PET Program	77
	XII.	Descriptions of Outcomes in EP Program	77
	XIII.	Descriptions of Outcomes in BM Program	78
	XIV.	Evaluations of PET Program	84
	XV.	Evaluations of EP Program	84
	XVI.	Evaluations of BM Program	85
	XVII.	Descriptions of Rankings in PET Program	91
	XVIII.	Descriptions of Rankings in EP Program	92
	XIX.	Descriptions of Rankings in BM Program	93

INTRODUCTION

The parenting role has long been one of interest and concern to many people. Over the years, parent education groups have developed as one way by which this important role could be better understood and practised. Such groups have been proliferating in Calgary over the past ten years. There is a host of different types of parent education groups led by laypersons and professionals alike. At the same time, research into this phenomenon has been sketchy and sporadic and there is, as yet, no definitive understanding of the processes or outcomes inherent within parent education groups. It is believed that attempts to gain further understanding of these aspects will ultimately lead to the development of better programs and perhaps to a greater appreciation of the nature of the parenting role itself. With this in mind, it is the purpose of this study to describe some of the processes and outcomes by focussing upon three actual parent education programs that are currently on-going in Calgary and by soliciting participants' perceptions of them. It is anticipated that an analysis of their descriptions will result in formulation of some recommendations for practice and research in the field of parent education group programs.

Chapter I provides a review of available literature pertaining to parent education. Chapter II outlines the method adopted for the present study. Chapter III details the results of the various data collecting procedures used in the study, while Chapter IV offers a discussion of the findings and recommendations for practice and research.

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Parent education has been a topic of interest for many writers in the fields of education and the social sciences. A review of existing literature pertaining to parent education will be provided in this chapter. The literature to be discussed will be presented in three major sections: "Introduction" - which includes the importance of parenting, an historical overview of parenting and the growth and development of parent education groups; "Parent Education Groups - Definitions and Descriptions" - which focusses on underlying values and assumptions, theoretical bases, objectives, methods, procedures, content and structure; and "Evaluation Studies" - which includes a review and analysis of existing evaluation studies.

INTRODUCTION

A basic assumption of parent education is that parenting is an important requirement for the healthy growth and development of children.

The importance of parenting has been demonstrated in many studies. Parents function as the primary caretakers of most children in North America. It has been shown that the quantity and quality of caretaking significantly affects the development of children. Appleton et al (1975) showed that parental ability to provide adequate health and nutrition to children is directly related to motor development.[1] Cognitive development in infants has been shown to be affected by the quantity and quality of stimulation provided by the primary

caretaker, (Caldwell, 1964[2]; Casler, 1965[3]). The relationship between a child aged six months to three years, and the primary caretaker is a central and essential one in the child's social development, (Clarke-Stewart, 1977)[4]. Children are most likely to be socially competent when the behavior of both parents includes the qualities of love, respect and moderate control, (Clarke-Stewart, 1977[5]; Bandura et al, 1963[6]; Sears, 1966[7]).

In reviewing various studies dealing with child care and development, Clarke-Stewart concludes:

> One grand theme that emerges is that children's development is related to the care they receive...Children's development of social, emotional and intellectual abilities is greatly influenced by the way their parents behave toward them.[8]

Historically, the importance of parenting has been indicated by the ever-continuing struggles of parents to raise their children according to the perceived proper way of the times.

In the Seventeenth Century, the notion of a parental instinct which would faithfully guide parents' efforts, was being supplanted by the prescriptions of religious leaders who insisted that "... a child was born evil and had to be beaten, lectured and continually catechized in order to give him a chance of salvation".[9]

By the Eighteenth Century, the importance of parenting was personified in the continuing rise of advice-givers and child care manuals. The Bible served as the main source of guidance for parents, but other publications, (most noteably John Locke's, Some Thoughts

Concerning Education) began influencing parents' actions as well.[10] Some of these early theories are bizzare by contemporary standards. For example, parents were informed that the daily immersion of their children in ice-cold water was necessary for their good health.[11] In his book, Letters on Education, Dr. John Witherspoon recommended that, in order to establish parental authority, "Once a day, take something from them".[12]

In the middle of the Nineteenth Century there began a shift in attitude regarding children as being naturally neither good nor bad. Rather, it had to be their nurturing environment which caused them to be either good or evil. Consequently, parental actions became increasingly more permissive. Mrs. Mattie W. Trippe stated in her book, Home Treatment for Children (1881): "Let the child revel in an absolute sense of freedom, feeling only the restraints of affection".[13]

The dawning of the Twentieth Century ushered in a novel concept in parenting. The book, The Training of Parents (1900), promoted the notion that parents and not only children could be "trained".[14] Rudimentary behaviour modification tactics such as scorecards and positive reinforcing comments by parents were being advocated by an invasion of newly-termed child-care "experts".[15]

Vincent (1972) has outlined the wide, pendulum-like swings in child rearing theories and parental methods that have occurred in the Twentieth Century. Permissive child-oriented parental patterns shifted to more restrictive parent-oriented patterns by around 1910

until approximately 1940 when a renewed era of permissive child-oriented practices was again in vogue.[16] Book titles of the period between 1945 and 1955 indicate this shift: Democracy in the Home, Have Fun With Your Children and Stop Annoying Your Children.[17] The definitive child-care book of the century is Baby and Child Care by Benjamin Spock.[18] He combined the permissive and restrictive patterns; he probably has been the most influential child care expert to date. He writes:

> ... a strictness that comes from harsh feelings or a permissiveness that is timid or vascillating can each lead to poor results. The real issue is what spirit the parent puts into managing the child and what attitude is engendered in the child as a result.[19]

Vincent (1972) predicts that a more restrictive parent-oriented child rearing pattern will return in the last quarter of this century. He suggests that this will occur because the parents will have been raised in the permissive era and, therefore, will be conditioned to expect having their own needs met.[20]

An historical overview of parenting practices reveals that enormous time and energy has been expended in the search for the best methods of caretaking. This search continues unabated.

As the notion of the importance of parenting methods became more widespread, and as the struggles by parents in coming to grips with this notion became more organized, the development of parent education occurred. Parent education, as a phenomenon, is very old. Literature advising parents grew throughout the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. In the United States, Mothers Magazine first appeared in 1832, Mothers

Assistant appeared in 1841 and Parents Magazine ran from 1840 to 1850.[21] Before, 1820, mothers met regularly in study groups called "maternal associations" under the guidance of a minister. These groups concerned themselves with the religious and moral improvement of their children.[22] In 1918, the United States Public Health Service began support for health oriented programs of parent education.[23] In 1930, a report showed one hundred and twenty-six organizations in the United States involved in major programs of parent education and three hundred and seventy-eight organizations reported work consciously recognized as parent education.[24] Cable summarizes the concerns facing parents in study groups of the 1930's:

> Nineteen-thirties' parents were concerned with movies filled with violence and sex; commercial vulgarity of various kinds; the influence of peer group; the adverse effects of moving from place to place; the absent, ineffective father; inadequate schools; sex; rebelliousness; and over and over, the helpless sense that "none of our old ways prepare youth".[25]

These concerns are remarkably similar to parental-expressed concerns of 1980.

Two studies in this period, Witmer (1934) and Anderson (1936) show that attendance in parent discussion groups increased in direct proportion with increasing educational and socio-economic status.[26]

Interest in parent education activities declined in the late 1930's but experienced a significant revival in the 1960's and particularly in the 1970's.[27] This occurred despite the cautionary statements of such people as Hilde Bruch, a distinguished child

psychiatrist who doubted that parent education could be put in a capsule: "The variety of human problems is too great to be dealt with in general terms".[28] Some of the reasons for this proliferation of parent education through the mass media (books, films, magazines, television), through individual counselling and through parent education groups include: the increased attention given to child neglect and abuse;[29] the decline of infant mortality; the increasing length of life; the emancipation of women; the increasing importance placed on the democratization of relationships; the decline of the extended family as a support structure; the increased mobility of families which reduces the supportive environment provided by a stable community; and fluctuating social values.[30] Certainly another reason for the growth of parent education has been the emergence in this century of scientific studies in child care which have yielded vast amounts of theory, information and speculation regarding parent-child relationships.[31]

Some enormous changes in society over the past twenty years have created incredible pressures for parents. Margaret Mead thinks that child rearing has become more difficult, for the reason that children are different from any that have gone before.

> In the past there were always some elders who knew more than any children in terms of their experience of having grown up within a cultural system. Today, there are none. It is not only that parents are no longer guides, but that there are no guides, ... there are no elders who know what those who have been reared within the last twenty years know about the world into which they were born.[32]

It is against this background of societal change, increased instability, insecurity and growing scientific knowledge that parent education continues to proliferate. A generalized description of current parent education practices will be articulated in the following section.

PARENT EDUCATION-DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Croake (1977) has broadly defined parent education as "...the purposive learning activity of parents who are attempting to change their methods of interaction with their children for the purpose of encouraging positive behaviour in their children".[33]

The basic methods of parent education consist of three types: mass media, counselling and group discussion procedures. A brief description of the first two types will be given, while a more detailed description of group discussion procedures will follow.

Mass media methods are characterized by the provision of information and ideas to an anonymous audience.[34] Pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, books, radio and television dispense abundant amounts of parent education material. It is without doubt that mass media methods constitute the primary sources of parent-related material for the majority of the population. Clarke-Stewart and Alison (1978) completed four studies dealing with popular primers for parents. The results showed that the publication and reading of child-care literature has increased over the past several decades and almost all parents in the studies read at least one such book, with a substantial proportion reading more than five books. Those who read the most books are relatively young,

worried about being parents and isolated from family sources of child-care.[35]

Griffore (1980) strongly criticizes popular primers for parents as too simplistic and perhaps harmful. He indicates that the child care literature has yet to effectively demonstrate the effects of parent attitudes and behaviours on child development as prescribed by popular primers. As well, it is a fact that much of the child development research is contradictory. Too, since child behaviour probably is contingent upon a complicated interaction of process and context variables which therefore cannot be reliably controlled by specific guided parent behaviour, Griffore concludes that parents cannot use popular primers with any substantial certainty of outcomes. He suggests that advice offered in popular primers should be informed advice. "This would mean identifying the limits of the techniques, observing that the techniques are not completely reliable, that there are several desirables effects that they will not accomplish and some undesirable effects that might result."[36]

Individual counselling ranks second to mass media in the numbers of persons reached.[37]

Such counselling is done by a variety of professionals such as doctors, teachers, social workers and public health nurses in a number of settings, most often in health care settings, family agencies and schools. Counselling can be classified as primarily therapeutic or educational. While there is offered a more personalized, specific focus for the parent in counselling, a basic premise of such counselling

often is that the parent is deficient or lacks competence. Such a deficit model may convey a lack of respect for parental struggles.[38] At the same time, such counselling is provided on the assumption that support and enhanced self-worth will result for the parent.

The third type of parent education is the group discussion method. This is the method that will be the primary focus of the present study.

Auerbach (1968) defines parent education groups as:

> Intervention to help parents (in a group format) function more effectively in their parental role. It introduces new educational experiences that will give parents added knowledge and understanding; cause them to question their habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, and help them develop new methods (where new methods are indicated) of dealing with their children, with themselves and with their social environment.[39]

According to Auerbach, the primary purpose of parent education groups is that:

> They all aim to help parents become more familiar with basic concepts of child growth and development and parent-child family interaction from a dynamic point of view; to recognize some of the crisis points in different stages of the normal family cycle; to clarify the parents' own role and those of their children, within the family and the community; and to enlarge their understanding of the complexities of their everyday situations so that they will have a wider background against which to make choices.[40]

Brim (1959) defines the primary objectives as:

> ... to make the parent more conscious of his role performance, to make him more autonomous

> and creative, to improve his independent judgement, to increase the rationality of the parent's role performance.[41]

Pickarts and Fargo (1971) believe that the essential aim of parent education groups is to assist parents to accept, be aware and become more competent in their teaching role in guiding their children's growth.[42]

These descriptions of primary objectives in parent education groups have in common the notion that parents are deficient in a variety of ways and can be assisted to become more competent, more knowledgeable, more autonomous and more creative in their role performance. It will be noted that these aims and objectives tend to be non-specific, relatively nebulous and difficult to measure.

Underlying value premises and assumptions are important components of parent education groups. A fundamental value premise of parent education groups is the movement of parents toward competency, knowledge, autonomy and creativity. While there are some parent education groups that claim to avoid promoting values it has been argued that no program is valuefree, (Brim, 1959).[43] Indeed, many parent education groups openly promote a set of values considered by many child-care "experts" to be essential to good parenting. Some examples are openness, responsiveness, respect, equality, dignity and control. Values significantly influence the choice of aims, method and content of parent education programs. Thus, the choice of values is an ethical and political process since what constitutes a good parent and a good person has not yet been scientifically demon-

strated, (Brim, 1959).[44] Consequently, the definition of a good parent or person can vary from one person to the next, even from one parent education group to the next. For example, is it important for people to be conforming or independent, outer-directed or inner-directed, orderly or spontaneous? It is without a doubt that parent education groups are currently wrestling with existing ambiguities in the area of values, and this ambiguity is reflected in the generality of aims that often accompany parent education groups.[45] This point will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

Underlying assumptions, as well, influence the choice of aims, methods and content of parent education groups. A fundamental underlying assumption is that participation in a parent-education group will assist parents to modify their attitudes and/or behaviours in varying degrees which will correspondingly enhance their children's healthy development.

Other underlying assumptions in parent education groups have been articulated by Auerbach (1968) and Brim (1959). Auerbach outlines nine basic assumptions which are consistent with general adult education principles: parents can learn; parents want to learn; parents learn best what they are interested in learning; learning is most significant when the subject matter is closely related to the parents' own immediate experiences; parents can learn best when they are free to create their own response to a situation; parent group education is as much an emotional experience as it is an intellectual one; parents can learn from one another; parent group education provides

the basis for remaking of experience; each parent learns in her/his own way.[46]

Brim (1959) discusses assumptions made by parent education groups regarding parental effects on children. In most cases, such groups assume that the parent has the primary influence on child development; more so than hereditary factors and/or other persons or groups.[47]

Another assumption made by some parent education groups is that parent behaviours are more important determinants of a child's personality than feelings and attitudes, while others claim the opposite. Behaviour modification training groups are examples of the former while discussion groups tend to adopt the latter assumption.

Some parent education groups assume that specific types of parent behaviours will have a direct effect on certain child behaviours. Other groups assume that there are multiple causes for child behaviours.[48]

Another major assumption made by most parent education groups is that parental actions are under conscious volitional control; subject to conscious thought and change. This provides a rationale for educational programs.[49] There are but a few programs which make assumptions about other possible determinants of parental actions: physical ability factors of parents such as intelligence, health, energy levels, size and strength; unconscious and emotional factors; environment factors such as poverty, size of family, housing and support systems.[50]

In view of the many possible assumptions about determinants of a parent's behaviour and ability to learn, Brim suggests that the

basic assumption subscribed to by most of the parent education groups, namely that the parent is autonomous, rational and conscious in terms of his/her child rearing practices, has limited applicability.[51]

Stern (1960) concurs with Brim that assumptions underlying parent education groups generally are too limited.[52]

These assumptions are based on various speculations and theories. It is important to note that, at present, there is inadequate knowledge from scientific literature to either confirm or deny the validity of the assumptions.[53] As well, the application of these assumptions to practice is difficult in many respects.

The implications of these ideas will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Theoretical bases of parent education groups are varied. One such base reflects a humanistic perspective as articulated by Rogers (1961)[54], Maslow (1968)[55] and others. It includes such values as openness, trust, equality, dignity and respect. The humanistic perspective provides theoretical concepts of the nature of man as a being in the process of becoming, with potentials that can best be tapped when man is validated, engaged in meaningful and significant relationships that are open, genuine and fulfilling. Freedom of choice and individual responsibility are other central concepts of the humanistic theories.

Since the focus of most parent education groups is educational, various theories of learning are employed.

Both Lewin (1944)[56] and Meyer (1966)[57] provide a fundamental

principle concerning the beginning of any adult education situation. This is the principle of starting where the student is, which is indicated by allowing learners to participate in the definition of realistic and challenging goals.[58]

The personal involvement of learners in all aspects of the educational experience including its planning, implementation and evaluation is an advocated theoretical concept of Lewin (1944)[59], Meyer (1966)[60], Pettas (1979)[61], Johnson and Johnson (1975)[62], Bradford, et al (1968)[63] and Knowles (1970)[64]. These authors are also unanimous in advocating that learning must be related to the past/present personal experiences of the learners.

Price (1976) believes that an educational experience must include a framework for learning and a workable structure.[65] This provides some coherent direction for the learning process.

Theories about adult learning also suggest that a variety of learning approaches and methods are necessary since some persons may become anxious in an experiential, participatory learning situation if they have been conditioned to learn from a didactic authoritarian, leader-centered approach and hence, expect this method in a learning environment (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971).[66]

Group dynamics theory is a core concept in parent education groups, particularly for groups which focus more upon the emotional, attitudinal, unconscious aspects of parents. Such groups tend to use a mutual discussion format in which the development of a supportive cohesive group is an asset. The importance of mutual group goals,

group cohesion, open supportive communication, and so on, is advocated by most parent education groups.

Parent education groups which focus upon specific parent behaviours as targets for change rely heavily upon learning theories which include specific behaviour modification principles such as reinforcement and modelling, (Brim, 1959).[67]

Certainly, systems theory provides a rationale for parent education groups. Changes in one part of the system will have ramifications for other parts of the system. Therefore, according to the theory, modifications within parents will create modifications within the children of the family system.

A primary construct from psychoanalytic theory is utilized as a major rationale for parent education groups which focus upon parental attitudes and emotions. It is the notion that insight into attitudes and emotions can be a prerequisite to behaviour change. This construct is articulated by Urban and Ford (1971):

> ... a person's overall behavioural organization is governed and regulated by his cognitive functions amplified and attenuated by the emotional patterns that have become associated with them... Since it is assumed that a person's actions are judged by such subjective behaviour, it is anticipated that if the person can be brought to think and hence feel differently, he will necessarily come to act differently as well.[68]

Theories of child development are used extensively to shape the content of parent education groups. Concepts from the theories of Freud (psycho-sexual development), Erikson (psycho-social development), Piaget (genetic epistemology), Skinner (operant conditioning), Bandura (social learning) and others are utilized in various ways as frameworks

in guiding parental comprehension of child development.[69]

The theories espoused by a particular parent education group will shape its approach and content. Most parent education groups are eclectic in the approaches and content used. The approach and content used in a particular program is dependent not only upon its theoretical bases but also upon the underlying values and assumptions of the program leader and/or sponsor. Types of approaches may be used singly or in combination in a specific program.

The approaches used vary on a continuum from the lecture, leader-centered, traditional classroom approach at the one extreme, to the group discussion, group-centered leadership, mutual participation approach, at the other extreme.[70]

Parent education groups which make underlying assumptions about the primacy of specific parental behaviours in having direct effects on children's behaviour, and which adhere to theories of behaviour learning, tend to lean toward the traditional classroom approach of didactic instruction. There the working objective is to train the parent in behaving in specific and prescriptive ways in various parent-child situations. Content is provided by the instructor who may use personal examples from the parents' experiences to illustrate the prepared information. Content may include behaviour modification techniques, as in behaviour modification group designs, or applied prescribed guidelines from popular primers, (e.g. Children, The Challenge, Dreikurs, 1958[71]; Parent Effectiveness Training, Gordon, 1970[72]) singly or in combination. Lectures, audio-visual

aids, speakers, role-playing, modelling and distribution of reading materials are some of the techniques used to assist in training parents to modify specific behaviour patterns.[73]

Parent education groups which assume that attitudes and feelings of parents are essential determinants of a child's personality and/or which assume that there are multiple determinants of a child's personality that often invalidate specific, prescribed guidelines, tend to base their approaches on the application of theories which are more therapeutic (group dynamics, psychoanalytic) and which promote an experiential and dynamic view of the learning process. The working objectives are to involve the parents in experiential learning processes in a group setting, to provide opportunities of mutual support, exploration of ideas, attitudes, feelings and behaviour (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971).[74] The content is determined by the parents themselves from personal experiences. Thus, the content is problem-centered, not subject-centered (Knowles, 1970)[75] and there is more of a tendency to fit the learning situation to the everyday situation, rather than the other way around, (Meyers, 1966)[76]. Primarily through a group discussion format, parents engage in a cyclical process of sharing experiences; discussing common elements and themes; exploring alternatives; trying out any new ways of thinking, feeling or acting in a supportive group atmosphere, as well as in the everyday situation; sharing new modified experiences, and so on.

Hereford (1963)[77] and Auerbach (1968)[78] are firm advocates of this group-centered, participatory approach.

Most parent education groups combine the two extreme approaches in varying degrees. The assumption made is that all approaches are potentially valid. The parent is encouraged to modify his/her parenting practices by making use of information and advice dispensed by a leader as well as from comments and descriptions of the other parents. In many cases the approach is that a leader will introduce a topic for discussion, provide some information on the topic, and then open up the session for group discussion.

Regardless of the approach used, the content of all parent education groups can be classified under one or more of the following categories as outlined by Croake and Glover (1977): Child development norms, general personality functioning, child rearing techniques and situations, methods of discipline, emotions and their expressions, interpersonal communications, parent-child relations, practical advice and theoretical approaches.[79]

There has been much speculation about which approach is most valid, (Brim, 1959).[80] To date there is no definite response to this question.

The structure of parent education groups varies in terms of "time-frames" and size. Time-frames extend on a continuum from "one-shot sessions", to time limited programs of several weeks, to open-ended programs that continue indefinitely.[81] Sessions average two hours.[82] The size of groups can average from five to twenty-five participants. Recommendations of ideal group time-frames and size have been made by a number of researchers, but these are based on

experience, rather than on systematic analysis.[83]

There has been significant research to indicate that participation in a parent education group is directly related to socio-economic status.[84]

Boger (1974)[85], Anchor (1977)[86] and Gabel et al (1975)[87] have shown that most parents attending parent education groups have high educational levels and occupational status.

Proportionately, more mothers than fathers participate (Mitchell and McManis, 1977).[88]

In studying the characteristics of drop-outs from nineteen parent education groups, Mannino (1969) discovered that the drop-outs had lower levels of education with lower occupations (clerical, sales). He suggests that there is greater compatability among program aims and approaches and middle class values.[89]

Anchor (1977) has provided another possible explanation for the dominance of middle and upper-middle class parents in parent education groups: "Parents of higher educational levels probably realize the need for parent education more than the parents of lower levels. Educated parents simply may enjoy the intellectual stimulation of social interaction involved in attending training classes".[90] There has, however, been a lack of studies which could attempt to verify these assumptions. Research also indicates that parent education groups are most often geared to parents of young children (Brim, 1959).[91]

Leadership is an essential component of parent education groups. Leaders come from a host of disciplines including teachers, social workers, psychologists, clergy and medical practitioners. They

may be highly trained professionals or laypersons.[92]

The leader has significant influence over the approach and content of a parent education group. The roles adopted and skills employed by the leader can often determine the degree of satisfaction parents have with the program (Auerbach, 1968)[93], (Brim, 1959)[94], (Dingmeyer and McKay, 1976)[95].

Leader approaches vary on a continuum from leader-centered to group-centered.

Leader-centered leaders assume the traditional teacher - student classroom style. Information is transmitted in a didactic manner to parents who become recipients of the learning experience. It is assumed that group members wish to learn factual information from knowledgeable experts, (Brim, 1959).[96]

Group-centered leadership, on the other hand, is viewed as an equally shared interactional process among group members. This premise, which is advocated by Gordon (1955, 1977)[97] is rooted in the humanistic and existential view whereby man/woman is seen as the creator, not victim, of his/her environment, and where every person is viewed as having intrinsic value.

Dr. Spock is another advocate of a group centered approach to leadership. He has expressed the view that the proper role of the parent educator is to be supportive, comforting to the parent and that attempts to change parents through education result in the production of anxiety and in poorer child rearing.[98] The roles of a

group-centered leader may be defined as a mediator (Shulman, 1979)[99], participant-observer (Slavson, 1958)[100], and initiator of the educational process. In an extreme example of group-centered leadership, responsibility for aims, approach, method, content and evaluation resides among the group members.

Hereford (1963) goes further and suggests that only a non-professional leader (usually a parent) can undertake the job of "facilitating the processes of the group", which Hereford considers to be the sole necessary leader role. He believes that a trained leader unavoidably connotes the notion of "expert" which has an inhibitory influence on the individual growth and self-development of each parent.[101]

Most writers of parent education adopt a position approximating the middle ground between expert and mediator. Pickarts and Fargo (1971) suggest that the leader takes an active teaching role in assisting parents to sharpen their decision-making ability. The leader is a trained professional who provides both didactic information and utilizes his/her skills to engage parents in a mutual problem-solving process.[102]

Brim (1959) provides a similar description:

> The middle-of-the-road practice has been to use persons of professional background who elicit by their leadership the knowledge and experience of the group members, who seek to involve the members in the problem and to bring to bear on the solution their own personal data, who encourage the parents' own problem-solving, but who supply information as needed to fill gaps in parent experience.[103]

Auerbach (1954) states that the leader's role is not that of

a therapist or an instructor or an authority, but of someone skilled in the art of helping the group members to think for themselves.

> He may...introduce information...as varied data from reputable sources ...He may give his own personal opinion, identifying it (as such). But whatever he does, he must use this situation to direct the thinking of the group back to its proper focus and to the goals of the group - namely, the development of their ability to find their own answers...[104]

Somers (1963) states that it is the responsibility of a leader to help direct the educational process, provide any relevant knowledge and to assist in reducing anxieties and resistance.[105] Price (1976) suggests that a leader needs to provide a framework for learning and a workable structure that remains tentative.[106] It is suggested that the complete absence of direction, particularly in the initial phases of a group, can arouse distress and anxiety among members.

Leadership skills are considered by most writers to be essential to competent leadership in parent education groups. Brim (1959)[107], Pickarts and Fargo (1971)[108], Auerbach (1968)[109], Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976)[110], Slavson (1958)[111], Somers (1963)[112] and Hereford (1963)[113] define some of the skills considered essential: empathy, questioning, summarizing, linking, knowledge, problem solving and listening skills. Respect, sincerity, openness, empathic understanding and a sense of humour are some personal qualities of a leader which connote a sense of acceptance within the group, thereby facilitating

communication, learning and relaxation (Jackins, 1965)[114], (Johnson and Johnson, 1975)[115], (Gibb, 1961)[116].

Effective leadership techniques are also described as summarizing, encouraging (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976)[117], confirmation, reinforcement, repetition (Pettas, 1979)[118], modelling, role-playing (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971)[119] and providing structured feedback time (Knowles, 1975)[120].

In summary, most writers in the field of parent education seem to suggest that competent leadership requires both knowledge and skills in group process.[121]

EVALUATION STUDIES

Evaluation is considered by most writers to be a necessary component of programming. Outcome evaluation studies provide a means of determining outcomes and effects of a program, and subsequently, the effectiveness of a program. Outcome evaluation studies of parent education groups have been sporadic, limited and contradictory (Caldwell-Brown, 1976)[122], (Brim, 1959)[123], (Tramontana et al, 1980)[124]. A survey of existing research studies follows. It is noted that most studies were undertaken in the United States, but their results are being considered relevant to the Canadian situation. This assumption is based on the notion that both countries share similar cultures and lifestyles.

Some outcome evaluation studies of parent education groups tend to focus upon outcomes of specific approaches used. Research by Hereford (1963)[125] and Hausman (1974)[126] indicates that the use of a participatory group discussion approach improves the opportunity for a successful outcome. On the other hand, Durrett and Kelly (1974)[127],

Carkhuff and Bierman (1970)[128], Pearlstein (1977)[129], and Fairbank (1978)[130] have data which suggest that an approach foccussing upon the didactic training of specific parental skills and techniques produces greater gains in communication between parents and children than does a traditional therapeutic counselling approach, a group discussion approach or a control group.

There are studies that attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of three principal parent education group designs, namely the Adlerian/Dreikurs, Parent Effectiveness Training and Behaviour Modification designs.

The Adlerian/Dreikurs design assumes that behaviour is purposeful and goal-directed. The aim is to teach parents specific techniques for encouraging their children toward responsibility, participation and belonging in the family group, as well as specific discipline techniques such as natural and logical consequences (Dreikurs, 1958).[131] A study by Croake (1977) determined that parents from five different study groups using the text, Children: The Challenge by Dreikurs as a discussion guide, "... made significantly higher mean gain scores on tests designed to measure democratic attitudes and positive behaviour toward children than parents in three different control groups".[132] However, Mahoney (1975)[133] and Beutler et al (1979)[134] found that there were no significant changes in attitude or behaviour for parents who attended an Adlerian child management group program or a S.T.E.P. program (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting - a program which subscribes to Adlerian/Dreikurs principles).

In the Parent Effectiveness Training design, parents are given training in specific techniques which are supposed to teach them to listen actively to their children and to communicate with them in ways that respect the individuality of the child, leading to a "no-lose" method of resolving conflicts.[135] Mee (1977) reports that parents who completed a PET group showed substantial gains in "... developing counselling qualities in parents and more democratic problem solving".[136] Mitchell and McManis (1977) concluded that parents receiving Parent Effectiveness Training expressed significantly less authoritarian attitudes on a post-test measure.[137]

Rinn and Markle (1977) undertook a review of Parent Effectiveness Training studies, which have claimed to demonstrate the effectiveness of this educational design in improving parent attitudes and/or behaviours (Peterson, 1971; Piercy and Brush, 1971; Gracia, 1971; Larson, 1971; Hanley, 1973; Andelin, 1975; Stern, 1971; Knight, 1974; and Miles, 1974)[138]. Rinn and Markle determined that there are significant methodological problems with all nine studies which thereby invalidates the results. Rinn and Markel conclude that the data available on "PET" for the review do not support the assumption that "PET" is effective.[139] In separate studies, Anchor (1977)[140] and Kowalewski (1977)[141] found no support for the expectation that Parent Effectiveness Training courses facilitate sustained desireable changes in parents.

Behaviour modification designed groups train parents to use techniques of operant learning, reinforcement and limit setting.

Forehand and Kine (1974) reported that, in their study, eight parents trained in behaviour modification principles were able to significantly improve child compliance.[142] Johnson and Brown (1969) demonstrated that parent training in behaviour modification made desireable changes in problematic parent-child relationships.[143] O'Dell (1974) undertook a review of seventy articles pertaining to the use of behaviour modification principles in helping parents. He concluded that training parents in behaviour modification is very promising for preventable mental health but its effectiveness has yet to be empirically demonstrated.[144]

In their studies, however, Kowalewski (1977)[145] and Anchor (1977)[146] concluded that behaviour modification training in parent education groups did not yield any substantial changes or improvements in parents. Beutler et al (1979) studies the effectiveness of using Becker's Parents Are Teachers (1971)[147] as a behaviour modification guide in parent education groups. They conclude there is no evidence that parent training classes in behaviour modification produce substantially better results.[148]

In summary, at the present time, there has been no conclusive empirical evidence yet of the effectiveness of any particular approach in parent education groups, (Brim, 1959[149], Pickarts and Fargo, 1971[150]).

It has been suggested that the effectiveness of any particular approach is tied to the specific learning needs of the parents (Tramontana et al, 1980).[151] Determination of the specific learning needs of various types of parents has yet to conclusively be made, however,

in the literature.

There are a number of studies which attempt to determine the outcomes of parent education groups generally.

Croake (1977) cites seven early studies dating from 1936 to 1956 which claim that involvement in a parent education group will make significant improvements in parent attitudes and knowledge.[152] Endres and Evans (1969) compared a parent education group with a placebo control group (unstructured discussion group) and concluded that there was greater knowledge produced and significant attitudes changes in the parent education group, although there was no evidence of overt behaviour change.[153] Tramontana et al (1980) have reviewed seven studies done since 1972 which claim to demonstrate significant positive effects of parent education groups on parent attitudes or behaviour (Larson, 1971; Taylor and Holdt, 1974; Berrett, 1975; Frazier and Matthes, 1975; Freeman, 1975; Croake and Burness, 1976; and Guernay, 1977).[154]

One author suggests that effective changes in parental attitudes and behaviour are not related to parent education per se as the critical factor which accounts for differences between persons receiving a parent education program and those who do not. Rather, since there was no significant difference between a parent education group and a placebo control group in this study, perhaps many of these differences would be achieved by offering parents a program of any kind in which special attention is received and in which they simply are prompted to think about their children and their roles as parents, (Freeman, 1975).[155]

Caldwell-Brown (1976) states that parent training courses more commonly do not bring about changes in behaviour and that parents

can probably use the techniques they learn only imperfectly and sporadically. However, she suggests that there are effective outcomes which are therapeutic in nature; greater parental self-esteem, validation for parenting style, a greater sense of not being alone and a realization that other parents share the same concerns.[156]

There are many authors who claim that there are, as yet, no demonstrated positive effects of parent education groups on parents' attitudes and behaviour. Friedman (1969)[157], Brim (1959)[158] and Pickarts and Fargo (1971)[159] have stated this view. Chilman (1973)[160] has indicated that the impact of parent education groups on low income families is likely to be minimal.

Croake (1977) has critized the seven early studies, cited earlier, for significant methodological problems.[161] Likewise, Tramontana et al (1980) have shown that major methodological problems exist with all seven studies reviewed in their article that claim effectiveness. Some of these concerns are non-randomization, small "N" population, and high variability.[162] Indeed, they cite one study (Knight, 1974) which reported negative effects of parent education groups. In that study, PET parents were found to be significantly more anxious than control group parents at post-test with the eneuretic daughters of these parents exhibiting a significantly higher rate of bedwetting than the eneuretic daughters of parents who had not received PET.[163] The authors conclude:

> The most positive statement one can legitimately make at this time is that parent education shows some promise as a means of prevention and intervention in mental health, but its

> effectiveness in any meaningful sense has yet to be empirically demonstrated.[164]

In summary, existing literature pertaining to evaluation of specific approaches used, as well as outcomes in parent education groups is sporadic, limited and contradictory. This is because of a number of possible reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, there is no definitive operational definition of good parenting. The essential components of good parenting have not been scientifically demonstrated and, consequently, desired outcomes are difficult to define precisely and accurately. Indeed, since the conception of good parenting is a value issue, it can never be scientifically proven. Second, the measuring instruments used tend to be relatively crude so that the specific determination of outcomes is difficult, if not faulty (Rinn and Markle, 1977).[165] As well, in many instances, the researcher of a specific parent education group program is often the leader or sponsor of the program itself, (Croake, 1977).[166] This may result in the researcher using a procedure that is biased in favour of the approach used in the program, thereby accounting partially for the contradictory evidence that exists concerning specific approaches. As was indicated earlier, it has been suggested that the effectiveness of any particular approach may be tied to the specific learning needs of the parents, but determination of the specific learning needs of various types of parents has yet to be conclusively made (Tramontana et al, 1980).[167] Both Croake (1977)[168] and Tramontana et al (1980)[169] have suggested that there has been a lack of descriptive studies which make more precise specifications of exactly what happens in parent education groups; of

characteristics of those who attend them; or detailed descriptions of content and approaches, thereby, making it difficult to generalize and replicate existing evaluation studies.

Another reason for the contradictions in the results of parent education research may be because evaluation of outcomes is often limited to changes in parental attitudes and behaviour toward their children. It could be that parents are experiencing other outcomes not directly related to the ones usually investigated in the research. It may be useful to gather parents' perceptions of the process and outcomes of parent education programs as one means by which these aspects can be more fully determined.

With this in mind, an attempt will be made to provide a descriptive analysis of three different existing parent education groups using a compilation of parent perceptions as part of the procedure. It is anticipated that such a study will explore many of the issues confronting parent education groups and, thereby, lead to the formulation of questions to be considered by researchers and practitioners in the parent education field.

An explanation of the method used in this present study will be given in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II: METHOD

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, it was shown that there currently are a limited number of studies of all types existing in the area of parent education, such descriptions of the phenomenon are sketchy, and explanatory and experimental studies so far provide limited, contradictory results. It is a basic tenet of research method that descriptive and exploratory studies ought to logically precede, or at least accompany, research aimed at providing explanatory or evaluation outcome results. This is done in order to discover new ideas or insights, formulate a problem for more precise investigation and/or for developing hypotheses leading to more refined research, (Selltiz, et al, 1976)[1]. Both Croake (1977)[2] and Tramontana, et al (1980)[3] indicate there is a need for more description in parent education studies. It is necessary to gain a more complete understanding of the processes involved in parent education groups in order that relevant questions may be posed, hypotheses raised and possible conclusions considered. By identifying and analyzing the underlying value premises, assumptions, theoretical bases, structure, procedures, content and leadership styles existing in parent education groups, a more complete and detailed description of the processes will result. Auerbach (1968)[4], Pickarts and Fargo (1971)[5], Brim (1959)[6] and others have each described such variables but usually in general, abstract terms only. There have been few attempts (Hereford, 1963)[7] to describe the processes of specific on-going parent education groups,

as they are occurring in actual situations, in the community. The purpose of the present study is a further attempt to describe some of the processes of parent education programs.

SAMPLE

In order to describe some of the processes inherent within parent education groups, three actual groups that currently are being run on an on-going basis in Calgary were selected for study. Each group has its own unique format in terms of approaches and/or content. One of the groups chosen was a Parent Effectiveness Training group (PET) that is offered on an on-going basis at a family service agency. The second group chosen for this study is named "Effective Parenting" (EP) and is offered three times annually by the Continuing Education Department of the Calgary Board of Education. A Behaviour Management group (BM) which is led five times yearly by a psychologist at a local hospital served as a third study group. These three particular parent education groups were chosen because they have been courses prominent in the Calgary Community for a number of years and because their curriculums vary from one another.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

Parent Effectiveness Training programs are the most abundant and dominant of all parent education groups. In 1976 it was reported that over 1,000,000 copies of the book, Parent Effectiveness Training, had been sold and that over 250,000 parents in the United States alone

had participated in a Pet group program, (Gordon, 1976).[8] Developed by Thomas Gordon, a Psychologist, in 1962 in Pasadena, California, the basic assumption that underlies this approach is that parents and children can develop a warm, intimate relationship based on mutual love and respect, (Gordon, 1970).[9] The working objective is to train parents to use specific methods and skills that will assist parents "... to listen actively to their children and to communicate with them in ways that respect the individuality of the child leading to a "no-lose" method of resolving conflicts", (Croake, 1977).[10] Underlying values include respect, equality, openness, honesty and trust. PET reflects a humanistic stance as articulated by Rogers (1961)[11] and Maslow (1954)[12]. It is based upon such theoretical orientations as systems theory, communication theory and learning theory.

Effective Parenting programs were conceived and developed by the Continuing Education Department of the Calgary Board of Education in 1974. This program has a generic focus in that the values, theories and content include Parent Effective Training principles as well as those of Rudolph Dreikurs (1958, 1964)[13], a disciple of Alfred Adler. Since the principles of PET have been already described, they will not be deliniated here. Dreikurs bases his ideas on the writings and theory of Adler, whose basic underlying assumption is that behaviour is purposeful and goal-directed with the primary goal being to achieve a sense of belonging in one's social group. The aim of the Dreikurs approach is to help parents understand the purpose of the children's behaviour and learn specific techniques for encouraging

their children toward responsibility, participation and belonging in the family group, (Croake, 1977).[14] These techniques include conscious, deliberate and systematic encouragement to develop self-confidence and a discipline technique termed natural and logical consequences. Natural consequences involve letting the child experience the natural consequence for his misbehaviour. (e.g. a child who does not come home in time for dinner, goes hungry). Logical consequences are contrived by the parents, and are logically related to the misbehaviour, (e.g. a child who misses his curfew is forbidden from going out the next evening). While Dreikurs would subscribe to the same underlying values as PET, he would also include order, responsibility and rationality as essential values. The EP program combines elements of PET with Dreikurs primarily because of the sponsor's belief that parents require more directive discipline techniques than is provided in the PET approach.

Behaviour Modification/Management programs are based on principles of learning theory which state that behaviours are contingent upon the use of positive and negative reinforcers. BM programs focus on assisting parents to determine the specific types of reinforcers such as attention, praise and tokens to use to modify behaviour in the desired direction in a given situation. Parents are trained to use behaviour modification techniques as skills that can be employed to encourage positive behaviour and discourage problematic behaviour. Value premises of BM programs would include order, responsibility, control, respect, honesty, openness and trust.

The subjects consisted of the parents enrolled in a recently completed PET group, EP group or BM group. A total of thirty-two parents out of a possible forty-eight subjects participated in the study. The selection criteria of this representative sample was arbitrarily put at a minimum of two-thirds attendance of the course. Only seven parents who were eligible for the study failed to return questionnaires; the other nine parents attended less than the selected minimum number of times. Subjects were chosen from three different parent education groups to provide a wider perspective.

PROCEDURES

Two procedures were conducted in order to elicit descriptive data from the three parent education groups.

In the first procedure, the investigator conducted a semi-structured interview with each of the three program leaders. Question guidelines used in the interview are presented in Appendix A.

The purposes of conducting a semi-structured interview were to determine some of the relevant variables in the parent education group process from the leaders' points of view; to gather leaders' descriptions of these variables as they relate to their particular programs; to provide leaders with an opportunity to present insights and opinions regarding their programs specifically and parent education generally. The interview procedure is considered by Babbie (1973)[15] and Selltiz, et al (1976)[16] to be an acceptable research method of gathering such information. It was decided that a semi-structured interview would

provide some consistency among the individual interviews, while also allowing enough flexibility to enable the respondents to raise issues and questions that were not considered by the investigator.

Each interview was conducted by the investigator separately with the three leaders a few weeks prior to the commencement of each program.

The second procedure used was to construct and administer a detailed questionnaire to the parents of each program who had attended at least two-thirds of the weekly sessions. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix B. It consists of forty-four questions, some of which are closed-ended questions and others which are open-ended questions. One purpose of the questionnaire was to provide a means by which parents, as program participants, could describe in their own words such variables as leadership qualities and style, content, procedures, other group members and outcome results. Another purpose was to determine through any variance of responses whether there were any significant correlations among the described variables, (e.g. were there specific aspects of the process which were directly related to perceived effectiveness of the leader and helpfulness of the program?). A further purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information regarding the types of persons who attended the parent education groups and whether, in fact, they tended to be relatively well-educated, middle-class mothers, as described in the literature. As well, the questionnaire results of the three groups were compared to determine commonalities and differences in the responses among the parents of each program. It was also decided

that the responses of the parents in the questionnaires would be compared to the responses of the leaders in the interviews to see whether there were any significant differences between their descriptions of the program process.

The results of both the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires will be analyzed in order to raise possible questions and hypotheses for practice, for future research, and to propose some tentative conclusions.

The use of questionnaires to elicit descriptive information is a widely accepted practice (Selltiz, 1976)[17], (Babbie, 1973)[18]. In each of the three parent education programs, leaders regularly administer a brief, limited questionnaire which parents fill out during the last session. The use of the study questionnaire allowed for the provision of more descriptive details, and it is considered significant that the investigator administering this questionnaire was not a program leader, but an independent researcher. Croake (1977) has reported that the investigator in studies of parent education groups tends often to be the leader of the program as well. He states that there is a need for independent investigators which will counter possible bias that may result when the researcher is also the leader of the program being investigated.[19]

The questionnaire was constructed by referring to a number of different sources. First, the guidelines for constructing questionnaires, as outlined by Babbie (1973)[20], and Selltiz, et al (1976)[21], were followed. Next, the literature review and the results of the leader

interviews were used to identify some of the important variables in the process of parent education groups. This provided a framework for developing questions related to these variables which included leadership qualities and skills, approaches, content, procedures, influence of group members and outcome results. The brief questionnaires used regularly by the three program leaders were referred to for possible questions as well. The most significant source used was the questionnaire constructed by Marteinson (1971)[22] which solicited client perceptions of marital counselling. This questionnaire included questions that were determined to be relevant for the study of parent education groups as well, and, therefore, a number of them were used.

The statistical procedures used to analyze the questionnaire results were supposed to include correlation coefficient calculations to determine possible significant relationships among variables; as well as calculation of percentage and frequency responses.

A formal pre-test of the questionnaire was not undertaken. Attempts to solicit subjects for a pre-test through advertising in two newsletters which are published by the Calgary Family Life Education Council and the Parent Resource Unit of Alberta Social Services and Community Health, and which are mailed to professionals and laypersons involved in parent education, failed to locate any volunteers. A formal pre-test had not been considered essential since much of the questionnaire is identical to the Marteinson questionnaire. This had been successfully used in her 1971 study and had yielded sufficient

variance in responses to allow for a meaningful statistical analysis using Chi Square calculations. Therefore, further attempts to locate volunteers were discontinued. The three leaders, as well as three professors from the Faculty of Social Welfare at the University of Calgary, were given questionnaire copies to criticize prior to the instrument being employed in the study. Their comments and criticisms were used to consolidate the questionnaire by eliminating redundant and irrelevant questions.

Each eligible parent-subject was given a questionnaire at the second last session of each program with instructions to complete the questionnaire and return it to the investigator at the beginning of the last session. This procedure was followed because it was believed that a higher response rate would result than if parents had been instructed to mail the questionnaire at their convenience. In addition, it was decided that parents would have had sufficient exposure to their respective programs by the end of the second last session to enable them to adequately complete the questionnaire.

After the data from the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires were gathered, an analysis of the information was undertaken. In the following chapter, a description of the results will be presented.

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CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III - RESULTS

The results of the semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the PET, EP and BM programs will be reported first, followed by an analysis of the questionnaire results.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS

First, the leaders of the three programs will be described.

The leader of the PET Program has a Master of Social Work Degree and is employed at a family service agency which is mandated to provide counselling, family life education and immigration services. The leader became involved in PET approximately ten years ago when he took a leadership training course in PET. Since this time, he has been regularly leading PET groups two or three times annually and he is probably one of the most experienced leaders of parent education groups in Calgary.

The Effective Parenting program has co-leadership. One leader has a Master of Social Work Degree and has been employed in child welfare, juvenile probation and handicapped services. She has experience leading adolescent groups while employed in probation. She had led one EP group prior to this group being studied. The other leader has had previous experience leading mothers' groups at the Observation Nursery School Centre. She has also led one other EP group previously. This is the first time that the two leaders have worked together.

The leader of the Behaviour Management group has a Master of

Arts degree in educational psychology. He has been leading BM groups five times annually since 1974. His leadership training began with on-the-job experience co-leading groups with an experienced group leader. He has led encounter groups in the past as well.

The leaders of the three programs are similar in that they have professional degrees and are experienced in leading groups. The PET and BM leaders have had significant experience leading their respective parent education programs.

STRUCTURE

The length and number of sessions in each program is relatively similar. The PET program usually runs for eight weekly sessions, three hours per session but in the group under study, seven sessions only were held. This was an experimental step initiated because the leader feels he begins to lose his sense of high interest after this point.

The EP program runs for seven weekly sessions for two and one-half hours in the evening. It is held in a junior high school in northeast Calgary.

The BM program consists of six weekly sessions of two and one-half hours duration. It is held in the evenings at the Alberta Children's Hospital. The programs are held in the evenings presumably because this would allow most working parents to participate.

CLIENTELE

The leader of the PET program describes his clientele as generally middle-class, university educated, reasonably sophisticated, and open to examining their parenting role. There may be as many as twenty-five participants in his program but fifteen is the average number. For the most part, the participants are experiencing some present frustration with their children and are wanting to establish a positive, closer relationship for the present and future, according to the leader. There is no screening process of participants, and therefore anyone who wishes to join the program may do so. There is a sliding fee scale of fifty dollars each or eighty dollars per couple at the top end of the scale.

The EP leader described the clientele that have attended the two programs she has co-led as generally middle-class, well educated with young children. Women have outnumbered men three to one and they are seeking alternative suggestions for thinking and behaving in their parenting role. There is a sense of frustration about the parent-child relationship with parents expressing a desire for the relationship to become less conflictual and more enjoyable. The average number of participants is sixteen. There is no screening process except that the program specifies a focus on the pre-school years in its advertising. There is a set fee of twenty dollars for each participant.

In the BM program, the leader describes his clientele as typically middle-class, possessing reasonably good verbal and analytical skills, who are concerned with their parent-child relationship and child

behaviour, but who are not experiencing severe difficulties in these areas. The parents are primarily couples with children in the three to seven year age range. The average size of the group is from ten to twelve parents. According to the BM leader, the overriding goal of the parents in this program is to learn how to become more effective in managing and controlling behaviour primarily for the purpose of establishing a better relationship rather than for establishing control per se. There is a screening process in which the leader meets individually with potential participants once before the start of the program to explain its central thrust and to increase their comfort level about the group. Usually the parents are referred to the program by a professional with the hospital. There is an eight dollar fee which covers the cost of the working text, Parents are Teachers.

It would appear that the clientele of the three programs are homogeneous with respect to the socio-economic status. They seem to be highly motivated to seek improved relationships with their children, are well educated and do not appear to be experiencing severe problems in their parent-child relationship. This profile is consistent with the literature's description of the clientele in parent education groups.

VALUES AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

The leaders were asked to describe their individual values and beliefs with respect to the parenting role.

The PET leader described his values and beliefs with respect to parenting as including the following: family members should be equal and operate on a democratic model; both parents and children have rights and needs; family closeness is very important but not at the expense of denying the individuality and separateness of each person; a family with both parents at home is important for modelling but single parent families are still capable of raising well-adjusted children.

His interpretation of Gordon's values and theoretical conceptions in PET is that parenting is approached on a high motivational level. The quality of the parent-child relationship is used as the primary motivator for parents' struggles. PET is based on the assumption that care and concern from the parent will persuade the child to reciprocate. This care and concern is demonstrated by clearly listening and hearing the child, and by clearly and openly communicating with the child. Techniques of behaviour modification and natural and logical consequences are seen as less sophisticated forms of influencing the child. PET allows for movement toward emotional expression which most parent-child interactions seem to lack, according to the leader.

One of the co-leaders of the EP program describes her values and beliefs on the parenting role as including the notions of mutual respect and equality in the parent-child relationship. She views equality as equality of rights, such as respect and self-worth, and not necessarily as equality of functions. Children are people who deserve to be treated as the parents themselves wish to be treated.

Such value premises are reflected in the program content which

includes techniques from Gordon and Dreikurs that are based on mutual respect and equality, in the leader's view. She believes that the combination of humanistic principles in PET and Dreikurs' theoretical conceptions on discipline and control provide a balanced, realistic view of the parenting role.

The leader of the BM program believes that the parenting role is difficult because it is a type of authority role. The role is made more difficult in light of the increased emphasis on the democratization of the relationships, in fluctuating social standards, and lack of role models to show the way in contemporary society. In his opinion, the challenge of parenthood is to create a positive atmosphere at home and act in a position of leadership rather than authority in the face of these difficulties.

The primary theoretical conception of the BM program is the notion that parental attention is a potential positive or negative reinforcer of children's behaviour. The emphasis is on teaching parents to reduce the amount of negative attention (nagging, coaxing) they give to children as a means of encouraging desirable behaviour. The book, Parents are Teachers, by Becker, provides a succinct explanation of this conception, in the BM leader's opinion and, therefore, this text provides the core content for the program.

It would appear that the beliefs of the three leaders regarding the parenting role have distinct similarities. Equality, democratization, and close, positive family relationships are common themes. Though their beliefs are similar, it is noted that the theoretical conceptions

used in the three programs are not identical. This suggests that there are probably a number of different approaches/conceptions that may be used in parent education programs which, nevertheless, reflect similar beliefs.

GOALS

Leaders were asked to specify the goals and desired outcomes they hope to achieve in their programs.

The goals that the PET leader has set for himself as leader are to provide an adult learning experience that is experiential and also directive, as well as to increase parents' levels of comfort with honest emotional expression.

The goals the EP leader wishes to achieve are to establish a "group learning environment" that is both informative and supportive and which encourages the active participation of the parents in the learning process.

The BM leader describes his goals as including the provision of a group structure that will enable parents to increase their level of confidence. He states that it is not as important for the parents to learn the theoretical orientation well as it is to inspire parents in a more general way to take more initiative, be more responsible and resourceful in their parenting role. Therefore, the BM leader's primary goal is to provide a structured learning experience through which he can inspire parents.

Again, it is noted that the stated goals of the three

leaders suggest similarities: to provide a structured learning experience; to increase parents' levels of comfort and confidence; to encourage parents' participation and involvement in the learning experience as well as in the home environment. It is interesting that none of the leaders specifically expressed the desire that parents learn to use adequately the skills and techniques which form the basis of the content given in each program. It seems that the leaders feel it is important to provide directive information, but not necessarily as an end in itself. There seems to be an acknowledgement of the desirability of other possible outcomes which may be more therapeutic than educational in nature.

CONTENT

In the PET program, content is structured, conceptually oriented and initiated by the leader. There are five specific skills focussing on listening, expressing and problem-solving which are presented by the leader and then practised and discussed by the participants. These skills are called: active listening; "I" messages; no-lose problem solving; influencing values and time management. A framework, termed Problem Ownership Chart, is presented which is used to assist parents in deciding the appropriate skill to use in a particular situation.

The methods employed by the PET leader include a variety of techniques: modelling; role-playing; practising; the PET book; homework; lectures; one audio-visual presentation; and group discussion.

In the EP group, content is also structured, conceptionally

oriented, and leader-initiated. As well as the five PET skills, content includes natural and logical consequences and other theoretical conceptions from Dreikurs. In each weekly session, a specific skill or other information is presented by the leaders in a lecturette format after which parents break into small groups to discuss the information and practice the skills. This is followed by having the entire group re-form to discuss the results of the small group experiences and to answer questions. Each co-leader takes responsibility for introducing content with the other co-leader supplementing additional information where deemed appropriate. The group members are encouraged to participate and become involved after the information has been initially presented. Role-playing, modelling, lecturettes, small group discussions and hand-outs are techniques by which the content is presented.

Content is also structured, conceptually-oriented, and leader initiated in the BM program. It is focussed on presenting one specific technique (behaviour modification) as opposed to offering a number of specific skills for consumption. The BM leader systematically presents one chapter or unit from the book, Parents are Teachers, each week. He lectures at the beginning of each session for up to fifteen minutes and then encourages the active involvement of the group. This is done by using a parent's concern as an example to illustrate the information and by engaging the parents in an exploratory problem-solving process whereby he asks relevant questions and provides suggestions to assist the parents through this process. Other methods include such techniques as role-playing, modelling, homework assignments and the use of audio-visual

material.

In the three programs, each of the leaders utilizes an approach that combines didactic instruction and group participation. The leaders are directive regarding the content and approach, but appear to be flexible in using parents' examples and input to augment their curriculum. While the leaders state that they emphasize the importance of group involvement in the learning through encouraging a process of mutual inquiry and problem-solving, they also provide specific prescriptions. No doubt, this is a more expedient procedure than one which attempts to involve parents in the discovery of alternative skills and techniques themselves, but it also connotes the notion of leaders as experts and may produce a sense of dependency by the parents on the leaders.

It is noted that each leader employs a variety of techniques to present content. This may reflect an acknowledgement of the idea that parents learn in a variety of ways through both didactic and experiential means. However, all the parents are exposed to this same varied approach and it could be the case that some learn better than others in an essentially lecture format, for example, and might profit more from an approach that emphasizes this format.

LEADER ROLES AND SKILLS

Leaders were asked to define their roles and specify skills they consider to be important in their programs.

The PET leader views his leadership role as an expert, resource

person and a facilitator of group discussion. He views these two roles as equally important. He defines his essential leadership skills and qualities as openness, feedback, listening and expressing skills, sincerity and acceptance. The PET leader does not usually employ a co-leader.

The EP leader defines her leadership role in essentially the same manner as the PET leader. She believes that important leadership skills include communication skills, problem-solving skills, openness and empathy.

The BM leader considers his roles as including being a resource person who has some knowledge and experience, but he labels himself a "preacher" in the sense that he attempts to inspire parents to work with the concepts, to risk and to take initiatives. He feels that he is a very structured, task-oriented leader and he considers important skills and qualities to be self-disclosure, openness, sense of humor, non-defensiveness and empathy.

A directive, knowledgeable, competent leader who possesses skills, such as openness and empathy which facilitate group discussion and involvement, is the profile of leadership in parent education groups made by the three program leaders. The combination of expertise and humanness seems to be considered advantageous to leadership in parent education groups, at least according to the three leaders interviewed. The expertise promotes respect and credibility while the ability to display humanness, to admit frustrations, mistakes or ignorance, seems to further enhance credibility as well as to facilitate

comfort and communication among the participants.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Leaders were asked to comment on the evaluation procedures they employ.

With respect to the PET program, a brief questionnaire is given to parents at the last session. Apart from this present study, there have been no other research studies conducted. The results of the questionnaires indicate that parents are almost universally positive regarding the program experience, but they express insecurity regarding the application of their skills.

A brief questionnaire is also administered to the parents of both the EP and BM programs at their completion. Both leaders indicated that parents tend to be generally positive in their responses. The BM leader feels that one reason for this is that the leaders administer the questionnaire themselves and parents are often reluctant to criticize them directly. There have been no other evaluative procedures followed, with the exception of this present study, in any of the three groups and there is also no follow-up procedure used. The relative absence of more objective evaluation studies is not unusual when compared to other therapeutic and educational programs, many of which also do not include an evaluation component. Inadequate funds, time and staff were given as reasons for the dearth of evaluation studies by the three program leaders.

Each leader was asked to comment on what they perceive to be

the strengths and weaknesses of their respective programs.

The PET leader feels that the strengths of his program lie in what he terms the reasonableness and attractiveness of the PET concepts themselves, as well as in his knowledgeable and skilled leadership. He cites criticisms of his program as insufficient focus given to group interaction needs and group support (therapeutic aspects) and not enough practice time for the skills.

On the other hand, the EP leader feels that the strength of the program lies in the supportive group climate and group learning environment advocated in the program. The primary improvement needed, in her opinion, is the provision of an even more formalized curriculum which she believes would minimize the possibility of a negative experience for parents. Parents would have a clearer idea of what to expect from a program that offers a directive, specific, formalized curriculum, according to the EP leader.

The BM leader views the strengths of his program as being the provision of a clear, structured curriculum taught by a directive leader. In his opinion, parents feel less frustration with this type of program than with programs where they are made to struggle to find their own answers, while feeling that the leader is holding back on providing suggestions and information. The BM leader admits that the perceived strength of his program is a double-edged sword in that dependency may be fostered and therapeutic functions are usually deemphasized.

It seems apparent that the educational and therapeutic functions inherent in the three parent education groups can each be perceived al-

ternatively as strengths or weaknesses of the groups. It is possible that some parents would prefer a program with an educational focus while others would desire a program with a therapeutic focus. These three programs are educationally focussed primarily, (especially the BM program), with some attention given to therapeutic functions such as support and acceptance. It would seem that a possible justification for emphasizing an educational focus in the three groups under investigation is the leaders' perception that parents are primarily concerned with finding alternatives and answers more so than receiving support, reassurance and acceptance for their present parenting practices. Is this a justifiable approach to use in terms of the outcomes for parents participating in these programs? Indeed, what are the actual outcomes? Does it really matter what emphasis is given to an educational versus therapeutic focus? Should both functions be present and in what degree? These questions have not yet been answered conclusively in the scientific literature.

These questions and others will be considered in the analysis of the questionnaire results. A description and analysis of the results of the semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the PET, EP and BM programs has been documented. In the next section, the results of the questionnaires will be reported, analyzed and compared to the interview results.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

In analyzing the results of the questionnaires, consideration was paid to a number of questions. Are the parents who attended the three parent education groups generally well educated, middle-class mothers, as reported in the literature? What are the parents' descriptions and assessments of their group's leadership, content, procedures, other group members and perceived outcomes? Are there any significant correlations between the described variables and perceptions of leader effectiveness and helpfulness of the program? How do the leaders, procedures, content, other group members and outcomes of the three programs compare according to parental perceptions? How do the leaders' descriptions and assessments of their respective programs compare with those of the parents?

Before the results of the questionnaires are reported, a note of caution regarding their interpretation is in order. After-only subjective data-gathering procedures are the weakest forms of research design, (Suchman, 1967).[1] Consequently the results of the questionnaires are tentative, inconclusive and suggestive at best. The results may raise questions, suggest possible conclusions and directions, but only very tentatively. Since all possible variables are not controlled in this type of research study, it is dangerous to infer definitive conclusions from the data. As well, it is important that the research carefully distinguish descriptions that apply only to the sample and those that are inferred to the population generally (Babbie, 1973).[2]

This point is emphasized when the sample size is relatively small, as it is in the present study.

An overview of the questionnaire results reveals that there is little variance among the described variables. As a result, it is impossible to infer possible significant relationships among the described variables. Consequently, there was no point in making correlation coefficient calculations. Therefore, the researcher will be unable to determine which specific variables are significantly related to the parents' perceptions of the leaders' effectiveness and the helpfulness of the program; nor will the researcher be able to suggest which variables seem to be most important to perceptions of leader effectiveness and the helpfulness of the program.

There are a number of possible reasons for the lack of variability among the parents' responses. Volsky (1965) provides one possible explanation:

> Once a client has asked for help and a person or agency has attempted to be of assistance, whether effective or not, the client is not likely to be critical or negative in appraising their efforts.[3]

Another explanation may be found in the Hawthorne Effect. This phenomenon refers to the importance of attention. It may be that parents rated the three programs highly, simply because the leader and other participants paid attention to them and to their concerns. A third explanation is provided by cognitive dissonance theory. This theory states that behaviour discrepant with one's beliefs, creates dissonance and efforts are made to reduce it, (Ruch and Zimbardo, 1971).[4] Thus it may

be that when a parent has paid money and regularly attended a program for a number of weeks, she/he may conclude that the experience must have been worthwhile, in order to avoid dissonance. As well, one might assume that, since the parents attended the programs voluntarily, they were highly motivated and receptive to the programs. Another possible reason for the lack of variance may be that the data instrument (questionnaire) was not sensitive enough to detect variance. Perhaps the response categories were too limited. Suggestions for the improvement of the data instrument will be made in the discussion chapter. Other possible interpretations of the lack of variance in the responses will be given in the detailed analysis of the data which follows.

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

There were thirty-two questionnaires analyzed; eleven parents from the PET program, eleven parents from the EP program, and ten parents from the BM program completed the questionnaires.

A description of the sex and marital status of the parents is provided in Tables I and II.

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY SEX N=32

Program	Male		Female	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage*
PET	4	36%	7	64%
EP	1	9%	10	91%
BM	5	50%	5	50%
Total	10	31%	22	69%

*Percentage figures have been rounded off to the nearest full percentage point.

The ratio of female to male participants was more than two to one. Such a finding is consistent throughout the literature. The BM program was equally balanced but there was a significantly greater number of women in the other two programs.

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY MARITAL STATUS N=32

	PET		EP		BM		TOTAL	
Marital Status	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Married	11	100%	10	91%	10	100%	31	97%
Common-Law	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Separated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Divorced	-	-	1	9%	-	-	1	3%
Widowed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	11	100%	11	100%	10	100%	32	100%

Overwhelmingly, married persons attended the three programs. Since women attended on the average twice as often as men, it would appear that wives are going to the groups much more often than their husbands. This is probably reflective of the traditional sex roles in which, historically, women have been primarily responsible for parenting. It may be that married parents attend these parent education groups because there could be more resources, support and time available with two parents in the household. This could mean that married parents have more opportunities to commit themselves to attend a community program for upwards of two months.

This distribution of respondents by annual family income is reported in Table III

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY TOTAL ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME N=32

	PET		EP		BM		TOTAL	
Income	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Under $ 5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
$ 6, - $10,000	-	-	1	9%	-	-	1	3%
$11, - $15,000	-	-	1	9%	-	-	1	3%
$16, - $20,000	3	27%	1	9%	-	-	4	13%
$21, - $25,000	2	18%	5	46%	2	20%	9	27%
$26, - $30,000	5	46%	-	-	3	30%	8	25%
$31, - $35,000	1	9%	1	9%	2	20%	4	13%
Over $35,000	-	-	2	18%	3	30%	5	16%
Total:	11	100%	11	100%	10	100%	32	100%

For the purposes of this study, the lower end of the middle class range was placed at $15,000 annual family income. Over ninety-three percent of parents attending the three parent education programs were in the middle class range. This is compatible with the literature results. It has been suggested that middle class parents are predominant in these programs because they reflect middle class values (Croake, 1977).[5]

TABLE IV

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATION LEVEL N=32

	PET		EP		BM		TOTAL	
Ed. Level	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Gr. 8 or Under	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gr. 9 - 11	2	18%	2	18%	1	10%	5	16%
High School Diploma	3	27%	6	55%	2	10%	11	34%
Post Secondary	6	55%	3	27%	7	70%	16	50%
Total:	11	100%	11	100%	10	100%	32	100%

It is noted that almost eighty-five percent of the parents have graduated from high school or better. This supports the finding in the literature that parents attending parent education programs tend to be well-educated. Perhaps the educational nature of the programs themselves, which seem to require reasonably sophisticated verbal and analytical skills on the part of the parents, fails to attract parents who have lesser educational experience. The parents who attended post-secondary schools were about equally divided between attendance at university and attendance at college or technical school.

With respect to the kinds of employment parents are engaged in, there was a relatively even mix. Two parents checked technical, one checked clerical, one checked professional, three checked business and four checked homemaker in the PET group. In the EP group, one checked technical, one checked professional, three checked clerical and seven checked homemaker. In the BM group, one checked technical, five

checked professional and four checked homemaker. In total, almost forty-seven percent of the parents are homemakers, approximately twenty-two percent are professionals, twelve percent are in technical vocations, twelve percent are employed in clerical positions, and about nine percent listed business. Although homemaking was the primary occupation, it would seem that over fifty percent of parents are heterogeneous with respect to occupation. It is interesting that such a high percentage of parents have an occupational role apart from their parenting role. This means that these parents are not totally immersed in the parenting role, but, nevertheless, there is a perception that this is an important enough role to warrant attendance at a parent education group.

In summary, the clientele in all three parent education groups tend to be overwhelmingly well-educated, married, and middle class. Although women's attendance in the programs approximated two-thirds of the total enrollment, it is interesting that male attendance was over thirty percent. This may be representative of the increasing involvement of men in the parenting role which has been occurring over the past ten years.

The rest of this section will include the parents' descriptions of leader characteristics, followed by descriptions of procedure and content, descriptions of other group members, assessments of perceived outcomes, the parents' evaluation of the programs, and will conclude with their comments on the questionnaire itself.

Tables V, VI and VII show the results of the parents' descriptions of some leadership characteristics in the PET, EP and BM programs respectively. Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 represent such practice skills of leadership as the ability to clarify and establish goals of participants' activity, to interpret the group process, to understand the dynamics of parent-child relationships, to engage participants in a mutual learning experience, in helping participants understand themselves more fully. Questions 10, 11, 12 and 13 represent such personal qualities of the leaders as trust, interest, openness and sincerity. It is suggested by the researcher as well as the leaders themselves that these are important attributes in the relationships between parents and leader.

TABLE V

DESCRIPTION OF LEADER CHARACTERISTICS IN PET PROGRAM N=11

	1**		2		3		4		5	
Questions	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
# 6 Explained Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	27%	8	73%
# 7 Mutual Understanding of goals	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	36%	7	64%
# 8 Feedback	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	100%
# 9 Understanding	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#10 Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%
#11 Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	18%	9	82%
#12 Openness Self-disclosure	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%
#13 Sincerity	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#14 Encouragement	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#15 Summarizing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	100%
#16 Soliciting group involvement	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#17 Pointing out similarities and differences	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	73%	3	27%
#18 Knowledge	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%
#19 Assisting parents to understand themselves	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%

*Response categories 1 and 2 reflect descriptions that the leader did not have or use these characteristics very much or at all. Response category 3 represents undecided opinions while response categories 4 and 5 refer to the leader possessing the characteristics in a moderate to a great degree. Please refer to the questionnaire in Appendix B for the specific description of the individual response categories for each question.

TABLE VI

DESCRIPTION OF LEADER CHARACTERISTICS IN EP PROGRAM N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
# 6 Explained Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	55%	5	45%
# 7 Mutual Understanding of goals	-	-	-	-	1	9%	4	36%	6	55%
# 8 Feedback	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
# 9 Understanding	-	-	-	-	2	18%	4	36%	5	45%
#10 Interest	-	-	-	-	3	27%	4	36%	4	36%
#11 Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%
#12 Openness Self-disclosure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	100%
#13 Sincerity	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#14 Encouragement	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#15 Summarizing	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%
#16 Soliciting group involvement	-	-	1	9%	-	-	2	18%	8	73%
#17 Pointing out similarities and differences	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	45%	6	55%
#18 Knowledge	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	82%	2	18%
#19 Assisting parents to understand themselves	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	64%	4	36%

TABLE VII

DESCRIPTION OF LEADER CHARACTERISTICS IN BM PROGRAM N=10

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
# 6 Explained Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	50%	5	50%
# 7 Mutual Understanding of goals	-	-	-	-	2	20%	5	50%	3	30%
# 8 Feedback	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	100%
# 9 Understanding	-	-	1	10%	1	10%	6	60%	2	20%
#10 Interest	-	-	-	-	2	20%	5	50%	3	30%
#11 Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	40%	6	60%
#12 Openness Self-disclosure	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	8	80%
#13 Sincerity	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	8	80%
#14 Encouragement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	100%
#15 Summarizing	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	30%	7	70%
#16 Soliciting group involvement	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10%	9	90%
#17 Pointing out similarities and differences	-	-	-	-	1	10%	6	60%	3	30%
#18 Knowledge	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	50%	5	50%
#19 Assisting parents to understand themselves	-	-	2	20%	1	10%	3	30%	4	40%

An analysis of Tables V, VI and VII reveals that the parents in all three parent education programs rated their respective leaders highly in each of the described leadership characteristics. The parents of the PET program were most decisive with no responses in the undecided column as compared to six and seven such responses in the EP and BM programs respectively. There were no negative assessments of the PET leader and only one negative response in the EP program concerning soliciting group involvement. There was one negative response concerning the BM leader's understanding of the parent and two negative responses concerning his ability to assist the parents to understand themselves. This is not surprising considering that the BM program is more directive and task oriented with the least emphasis given to therapeutic techniques and personal growth.

Feedback and encouragement were rated in the highest response category (5) by at least ninety percent of all parents, which indicates that a definite commonality exists among the three leaders' degree of use of the two skills in their programs.

Generally, it would appear that the parents overwhelmingly consider their leaders to be competent, knowledgeable, skilled as well as personally interested, understanding, open, sincere and trustworthy.

Question 22 is an open-ended question soliciting parents' descriptions about whether there was anything regarding the leaders that especially pleased or displeased them. As could be expected from the preceding tables, there were no comments expressing any particular displeasure with the leaders.

Overall, the majority of parents, sixty-nine percent, indicated

that such personal qualities of the leaders as acceptance, interest, sincerity and openness especially pleased them. Thirty-one percent specified such leader skills as roleplaying and knowledge to be especially pleasing characteristics.

In the PET group, ten parents responded to this question with sixty percent indicating interest, sincerity, friendliness and acceptance and forty percent specifying the role-playing skills as especially pleasing characteristics. In the EP group, eight parents responded with each mentioning acceptance, sincerity and openness with personal experiences as pleasing characteristics. Nine parents from the BM program responded with eight giving identical responses to those from the EP program and one citing the leader's knowledge of material.

It is probable that the ability of the leaders to convey a sense of acceptance, interest, friendliness, openness and sincerity promotes ease and comfort within the parents which likely reduces defensiveness, enhances participation and, subsequently, satisfaction. Such humanistic qualities may be essential determinants of participants' satisfaction with the leader of a parent education group. At the same time, it may also be that a leader of a parent education program who possesses knowledge, understands his/her material well and is able to convey this knowledge through experiential demonstration (role-playing) can enhance the possibility of participant satisfaction with her/his leadership. It is noted that the parents' descriptions of pleasing characteristics of leadership correspond closely to the leaders' own description of the important components of their leadership.

Question 23 sought information pertaining to the parents' assessment of co-leadership in their program, if it existed. Co-leadership occurred in the EP program only. Two parents rated the co-leaders as having worked fairly well together while six parents rated them as having worked very well together. Therefore, according to the parents, co-leadership was a positive aspect of the EP program.

Question 26 sought parents' descriptions of the procedures and content used in their groups. There was significant variance among the parents' descriptions in all three groups which suggests that the individual categories may have been too ambiguous and that the parents' interpretations and definitions of the categories differed.

In the PET program all parents checked "I" messages, problem solving techniques and active listening. These skills form the core content, according to the leader. Role playing, group discussions, modelling, books and homework assignments were unanimously checked as procedures that were used. However, only approximately fifty percent of the parents checked lectures, limit setting and rules and natural and logical consequences with only one person checking rewards and punishment. It is not surprising that this result for these categories occurred, since they are used only tangentially in the program, according to the PET leader.

Regarding the EP program, parents were unanimous in checking group discussion and homework assignments as procedures used, and in checking "I" messages, problem-solving techniques, natural and logical consequences and active listening as content. It seems that parents

were quite aware of the core content of the program. However, under fifty percent checked lecture, rewards and punishments, and limit setting and rules. Again, the reason for this may be in the tangential use of these activities in this particular program. It is interesting that only eight parents checked books and role-playing, while only six parents checked modelling. It could be that only eight parents used books in the program and there may have been some confusion among the parents over the meaning of the terms role-playing and modelling.

In the BM program, most or all parents indicated that group discussion, modelling, role playing, problem solving techniques, "I" messages, natural and logical consequences, homework assignments and books (Parents are Teachers) were used. The curious finding is that only four parents checked lecture, only six checked rewards and punishments and only five checked limit setting and rules. According to the BM leader, lecture is used frequently and rewards and punishments and limit setting and rules are integral aspects of Becker's book, as well as the program itself. It may be that parents who did not check these activities did not connect them with the procedures and content of the program. Perhaps these parents were not as keenly aware of the procedures and content as they were of other aspects of the program such as leadership, other group members, or their role in the group.

Questions 27 through 30 solicited parental assessments of the most helpful and least helpful activities that occurred in their respective programs.

All parents but one each of the PET, EP and BM groups responded to the question regarding the most helpful activities. In the three groups, there were thirty-nine responses concerning specific content and fifteen responses dealing with procedures or techniques used by the leader. Individually, there were sixteen, fourteen and nine responses regarding content in the PET, EP and BM programs respectively; while there were six, three and six responses concerning procedures in the PET, EP and BM programs. Regarding the references to content, in total there were fifteen references to problem solving, ten to active listening, nine to "I" messages, three to natural and logical consequences and two to limit setting and rules. Problem solving was the one specific activity cited as most helpful in all three programs. Parents' explanations of these choices were similar in the three groups. Essentially, they explained that these were alternative methods and techniques that, as parents, they could employ in the home to facilitate communication, make discipline more consistent and effective and to help solve mutual problems more satisfactorally. Some indicated that these techniques could be used in all their relationships and not only with their children. A few parents mentioned that the use of these methods had created a more positive home environment already, but a number of parents stated that simply the knowledge of alternatives was sufficient to make them feel more comfortable and resourceful.

With respect to the references to procedures and techniques used by the leaders, seven parents cited group discussion, five indicated role playing, two mentioned modelling and one parent felt that

the use of tapes was the most important activity. There was no procedure or techniques cited that was common in all three groups. Those parents who cited group discussion explained that it was an effective means of involving the participants, in order to share ideas, get input and discuss possible alternatives and solutions with another. Role playing, modelling and tapes were felt to be important because they were helpful demonstration techniques which greatly facilitated learning and understanding.

Regarding the activities considered to be least helpful by the parents, seven parents from the PET program, three from the EP program and six from the BM program made comments. A number of the parents who did not respond indicated that there was no activity they considered to be least helpful in their program. In total, there were twenty-one responses: ten responses concerning content and eleven responses concerning procedures and leader techniques.

Of the ten responses concerning content, three referred to limit setting and rules, two to rewards and punishments, two to problem solving, two to "I" messages and one to natural and logical consequences. Limit setting and rules was cited by a parent in each of the three programs. Parents who indicated that limit setting and rules, rewards and punishments or natural and logical consequences were the least helpful content materials, stated that these techniques were ineffective or undesired discipline methods. Except for limit setting and rules, these activities were chosen by parents who attended programs that dealt with them only tangentially. For example, rewards and

punishments were chosen by parents who attended the PET and EP program, while natural and logical consequences was chosen by a parent who attended the PET program.

The two parents who cited problem solving as least helpful felt that the method was too difficult to implement at home while the two parents who picked "I" messages, stated that there had been no noticeable changes at home when this technique was used.

Regarding procedures and leader techniques considered to be least helpful, five parents referred to homework assignments, two to role playing, two to lecture, and two to group discussions. Homework was an activity cited in all three programs. Parents indicated that homework was a waste of time or too time consuming. Two parents, one each from the PET and BM program stated that role playing was too difficult for them to perform, especially the child role. Two parents, one each from the PET and EP programs mentioned that the lectures were boring and a waste of time because the presented material could have been read as easily from a book. On the other hand, two parents each from the PET and BM programs indicated that group discussion was least helpful because other parents' problems were too different from their own and they wished more factual information.

Results of the data just presented show that there is considerable variance among parents' perceptions of the most and least helpful activities in their respective programs. For example, some parents indicated that problem solving and "I" messages were most helpful content materials while others gave the opposite view. Some

parents felt that group discussion and role playing were most helpful procedures whereas others expressed an opposing opinion. This would seem to reinforce the notion that adults have differing learning needs. A program that includes participants who are relatively homogeneous with respect to learning needs would probably enhance the satisfaction, indeed the learning, of the participants.

For these three groups, there was no specific activity that clearly dominated as most or least helpful. Problem solving was cited in almost fifty percent of the comments regarding the most helpful activity and homework assignments was the activity listed most often as least helpful. However, based only on this data, no conclusions can be made about whether these two activities ought to be emphasized or de-emphasized in the three programs. Again, such a decision is probably best made in relation to the learning needs of the participants in a given program.

The data from this sample do suggest that content presented only tangentially in a program is likely to be considered least helpful. As well, it appears that parents do find the learning of alternative ways of behaving and thinking a most helpful activity in a parent education program since there were thirty-nine comments which specifically referred to this. Nevertheless, this finding must take into consideration the fact that this is the focus of the curriculum of the three programs. Therefore it cannot be concluded that this activity in fact is "the" most important one that a parent education group can offer. Too, since much of the program content of the three groups

is concerned with offering alternative specific techniques for parents to learn to apply in their relationships at home, and in view of the fact that there was contradiction concerning role playing as an effective demonstration technique, it would seem that these three programs ought to regularly employ a combination of demonstration techniques such as role playing, modelling and the use of tapes.

Questions 33, 34, 35 and 37 sought parental descriptions of other group members and the group atmosphere. It is felt that the relationship with other group members is an important aspect of a parent's learning in and satisfaction with a parent education group.

Tables VIII, IX and X report the results of parents' descriptions of other group members in each of the three programs.

TABLE VIII

DESCRIPTIONS OF OTHER GROUP MEMBERS IN PET PROGRAM N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
**	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#33 Group members problems were too different	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	73%	3	27%
#34 No one in group with whom to feel comfortable	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	36%	7	64%
#35 Group members were helpful	-	-	-	-	2	18%	4	36%	5	45%
#37 Group atmosphere was warm and receptive	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	45%	6	55%

**Higher numbers (4, 5) indicate a positive assessment of other group members. Lower numbers (1, 2) indicate a negative assessment of other group members. # 3 is undecided.

TABLE IX

DESCRIPTIONS OF OTHER GROUP MEMBERS IN EP PROGRAM N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#33 Group members problems were too different	2	18%	-	-	-	-	7	64%	2	18%
#34 No one in group with whom to feel comfortable	1	9%	-	-	-	-	4	36%	6	55%
#35 Group members were helpful	-	-	1	9%	1	9%	5	45%	4	36%
#37 Group atmosphere was warm and receptive	-	-	1	9%	-	-	6	55%	4	36%

TABLE X

DESCRIPTIONS OF OTHER GROUP MEMBERS IN BM PROGRAM N=10

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#33 Group members problems were too different	2	20%	1	10%	1	10%	4	40%	2	20%
#34 No one in group with whom to feel comfortable	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	50%	5	50%
#35 Group members were helpful	-	-	3	30%	-	-	5	50%	2	20%
#37 Group atmosphere was warm and receptive	-	-	1	10%	-	-	4	40%	5	50%

Question 33 refers to the extent to which parents felt other groups members' problems and concerns to be relevant to their own. It is believed that parents learn best from one another when problems are similar and that, when this is the case, a sense of reassurance and comfort may result from a collecting feeling of "being in the same boat", (Caldwell-Brown).[6] The data shows that a vast majority in the PET and EP programs believed other group members' problems were similar to their own. A smaller majority, sixty percent, believed this to be true in the BM program. This lower percentage may be reflective of a greater specificity of problems occurring in the behaviour management group than in the other two groups which deal with more abstract issues. A greater problem specificity would illustrate more distinct differences among each parent's particular situation.

Question 34 is based on the assumption that comfort in the group would lead to enhanced learning and participant satisfaction. With the exception of one, all parents in each group indicated that there was someone in the group with whom they could feel comfortable.

Regarding question 35, all but four parents felt other group members were helpful. Three parents were undecided. The four parents had also indicated that other group members' problems were too different from their own. This suggests that helpful group members are those who share similar concerns. As well, when one compares the responses of the three parents who gave undecided responses to question 35 with

their positive responses to question 34, it suggests that a group member may be comfortable to be with, but not necessarily helpful.

In question 37, all but two parents rated the group atmosphere as warm and receptive.

In general, it would appear that the overwhelming majority of parents believe that other parents with similar concerns are helpful, as well as comfortable to be with and that this helps to provide a warm and receptive group atmosphere. There is probably a sense of comfort and reassurance that results from realizing that other parents are facing similar problems and concerns. It could be that it is this sense of comfort and reassurance that is helpful, and not only that other parents can offer alternative suggestions which deal with mutual problems. The data do not prove that the characteristics of other group members, just described, are essential determinants of the overall effectiveness of a parent education program in terms of the extent of a parent's learning, but it is suggested here that they are probably essential determinants of participant satisfaction.

A number of questions related to parental perceptions of outcomes as well as to their assessments of the overall effectiveness of their respective programs. Tables XI, XII and XIII show the data results of the outcomes, while Tables XIV, XV and XVI show the overall evaluation results of the three parent education programs, according to the parent subjects. It is anticipated that further data concerning outcomes will be revealed in the analysis of the information regarding overall evaluation.

TABLE XI

DESCRIPTIONS OF OUTCOMES IN PET PROGRAM N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#19 Achieved a clear-cut and realistic understanding of self and relationship with children	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	64%	4	36%
#31 Degree interactions at home have been affected	-	-	-	-	4	36%	3	28%	4	36%
#36 I learned more about myself	-	-	1	9%	1	9%	7	64%	2	18%

TABLE XII

DESCRIPTIONS OF OUTCOMES IN EP PROGRAM N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#19 Achieved a clear-cut and realistic understanding of self and relationship with children	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	64%	4	36%
#31 Degree interactions at home have been affected	-	-	-	-	4	36%	6	55%	1	9%
#36 I learned more about myself	-	-	1	9%	1	9%	5	45%	4	36%

TABLE XIII

DESCRIPTIONS OF OUTCOMES IN BM PROGRAM N=10

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#19 Achieved a clear-cut and realistic understanding of self and relationship with children	-	-	2	20%	1	10%	3	30%	4	40%
#31 Degree interactions at home have been affected	-	-	2	20%	1	10%	6	60%	1	10%
#36 I learned more about myself	-	-	3	30%	3	30%	3	30%	1	10%

The results of question nineteen reveal that parents in the PET and EP programs were unanimous in describing themselves as having gained a clearcut and realistic understanding of themselves and their relationships with their children. The content focus of these programs on such matters as communication, values, problem ownership and equalizing power certainly must contribute to encouraging a process of thinking about the parenting role and interactions with children. This is not to imply that such a focus is necessarily the most facilitative approach to use in encouraging a process of introspection and mutual inquiry, only that it seems to be one means of doing this. Subsequently, parents perceive themselves as achieving more understanding about themselves and their relationships with their children. Considering that thirty percent of the parents in the BM program were either undecided or negative in

their response to this question, it might be assumed that the focus of this program is more directed toward processing immediate concrete tasks which may not lend itself as well to encouraging a process of introspection and inquiry in an overall, generalized abstract sense.

Question 31 solicited the parents' perceptions of the degree to which the home atmosphere and interactions with their children have been affected by attending the parenting group. It is a fundamental premise of parent education groups generally and a primary reason for parents to attend, that participation in a parent education group will improve the quality of the parent-child relationship and the home atmosphere. An analysis of the results in Tables XI, XII and XIII reveals that almost sixty-six percent of all the subjects feel that the atmosphere and interactions at home had been affected positively. Twenty-eight percent of the subjects were undecided and two parents, both from the BM program, (six percent of the total N), gave negative responses to this question. Question 32 asked parents to provide explanations for their responses to the previous questions.

Of the parents who indicated that the home atmosphere and parent-child interactions had been affected positively as a result of attending one of the three parent education groups, their responses can be divided into comments regarding changes within themselves, changes within the children or changes within the interaction/relationship between the parent and child. The majority of positive parent

responses in each of the three programs dealt with changes within the interaction between the parent and child. Thirty-six percent of the parents in the PET program referred to improved communication between themselves and their children (more open, honest expressions, less yelling and nagging, more involvement by the children in expressing their feelings). One parent commented: "I am more honest and relaxed when I talk to my children. They also seem glad to be able to be given the chance to speak." Twenty-seven percent of the PET group parents noted an increased sense of confidence within and acceptance of themselves as parents. There were no direct references by the parents in the PET program to changes within the children themselves. Of the thirty-six percent who gave undecided responses, all were unanimous in stating that they were unsure of using the new techniques and that their old patterns of thinking and behaving were so entrenched, it made it difficult to use some of the alternative methods advocated in the PET program.

In the EP program, thirty-six percent of the parents cited similar improvements in communication as were stated by the PET program parents. As well, twenty-seven percent perceive themselves as having become more self-confident and self-aware. There were three references to perceived changes within the children: more co-operation, increased confidence and self-awareness. An example of the parents' comments follows: "I feel I am more aware and confident in the parenting role. My kids seem more confident as well and

have also become more co-operative as a result."

As in the PET program, the explanation from the thirty-six percent of undecided responses showed that there was either more time needed to perceive changes or that the use of the new techniques required too much effort and were difficult to apply because "the old habits die hard".

In the BM program, there was a similar thirty-six percent of parents' comments describing improved communication between the parents and the children. Two parents also indicated that they were generally more relaxed, confident and self-aware. There were three references to changes within the children. They were seen as more loving, obedient, confident and co-operative.

There was no response from the one undecided opinion. Of the two negative responses, one parent stated that he learned nothing new from the program, whereas the other parent indicated that there were no perceived changes since the old habits were entrenched too firmly for him to modify his approach at home.

Generally, most parents in the three programs perceive that there have been positive changes in the home atmosphere and interaction with their children. Although some of these parents claimed that the changes were due to their use of the alternative techniques taught in the three programs, it cannot be concluded, from this data, that, in fact, the key variable in the perceived changes was the application by the parents of the program content. It may be that changes occur simply because the parents are more aware of their parenting

role and are perceived by the children as trying to improve the relationship.

The data indicates that there were no perceived adverse effects in the home atmosphere and interactions which resulted from the parents' participation in the programs. The two negative comments referred to the perception that improvements had not materialized, rather than that negative changes occurred. This could be considered a significant finding in that some might say the worth of a program generally can be measured not only in terms of positive outcomes generated but also in that, at least, no harmful effects occur.

The fact that twenty-eight percent of the parents felt the new techniques were too difficult in the face of habitual patterns of thinking and behaving, suggests that the three parent education programs might consider modifying some of the content to fit the parents' experiences and habits, rather than focussing almost exclusively on modifying the parents' way of thinking and behaving in ways which fit the content.

A note of caution about the interpretation of these data results is in order. Parental perceptions of changes are unavoidably subjective and, consequently, they can be considered unreliable by objective researchers. An approach that measures changes in a more objective fashion, such as the use of independent observers starting with baseline measurements of key variables in the interaction between the parents and children would, probably, yield more precise data.

Nevertheless, this researcher believes that parental perceptions, subjective as they may be, reveal important information about how the parents are viewing the home atmosphere and interaction after recently having completed a parent education program. It is hypothesized that if parents believe themselves to be more relaxed and confident and that communication has improved, there will be a higher degree of motivation for parenting which will, in turn, lead to improved relationships between the parents and children.

With respect to question 36, the majority of all parents indicated that they learned more about themselves. The smaller percentage in the BM program indicates again that the focus of the program was concentrated upon specific, immediate tasks rather than upon any kind of general inquiry into the nature of the parents themselves.

Tables XIV, XV and XVI show the results of the parent subjects' assessments of the effectiveness of the leader, the degree to which the parent education group met their expectations and the degree to which they felt their group was helpful. The ratings were supplemented by open-ended questions which sought more detailed explanations for the responses.

TABLE XIV

EVALUATION OF PET PROGRAM BY PARENTS N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#20 How effective was the leader?	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9%	10	91%
#24 Did program meet expectations?	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	45%	6	55%
#39 How helpful was the program?	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	45%	6	55%

TABLE XV

EVALUATION OF EP PROGRAM BY PARENTS N=11

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#20 How effective was the leader?	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	45%	6	55%
#24 Did program meet expectations?	-	-	-	-	1	9%	6	55%	4	36%
#39 How helpful was the program?	-	-	-	-	1	9%	7	64%	3	27%

TABLE XVI

EVALUATION OF BM PROGRAM BY PARENTS N=10

	1		2		3		4		5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
#20 How effective was the leader?	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	8	80%
#24 Did program meet expectations?	-	-	-	-	2	20%	2	20%	6	60%
#39 How helpful was the program?	-	-	2	20%	-	-	4	40%	4	40%

Question 20 was designed for the purpose of determining the parents-subjects' assessments of the effectiveness of their leaders. Fully one hundred percent of the responses indicated that the three leaders were effective in the groups. Parent-subjects provided explanations for their responses in question 21. In the PET program, parents cited a number of specific skills, techniques and qualities employed by the leader. The leader's ability to effectively use role-playing and modelling as ways to clarify the content was chosen most often by the PET parents. (thirty-six percent). Other common themes included the leader's openness, sincerity and interest (eighteen percent), and his ability to involve group members (twenty-seven percent). The leader's knowledge, his ability to prompt a process of inquiry about parenting and to encourage group members were also mentioned.

Parents in the EP program cited the leaders' openness about their personal parenting experiences most often (thirty-six percent).

A smaller percentage mentioned the leader's abilities to be reasonably structured and directive (eighteen percent) and in prompting a thinking process about parenting (eighteen percent). Other comments included the approachability, acceptance and reassurance shown by the leaders. Despite the positive unaniminity among the responses in question 20, there were two critical comments made in question 21. These concerned one parent's feeling that more time was needed in the group and another parent's perception that the leaders spoke with too much jargon.

The responses from the BM program were mixed. Openness, directiveness, encouragement, empathy, knowledge, ability to involve group members as well as to role-play, model and give helpful suggestions all were mentioned.

It seems apparent that effectiveness of the three leaders is measured by their abilities to employ a variety of teaching skills, by their personal qualities, as well as by being knowledgeable. The determination of leader effectiveness by a parent education group does not seem to be contingent upon just one or a few specific leader characteristics, but upon a variety of them. This result may reflect the differing learning needs that parents have. When the explanations are compared to the favourable responses given to the parents' descriptions of various leader characteristics in Tables V, VI and VII, one notes that there are even more characteristics which could be potentially related to leader effectiveness. This data does not show whether any of these specific components of leadership are significantly related to the participants' perception of effectiveness, nor does the data indicate

whether it is necessary for a specific number of components to be present or in what specific combination in order to determine effectiveness. This data does suggest that parents probably perceive the essential components of leader effectiveness differently and in different combinations depending, perhaps, on their specific learning needs. Nevertheless, some general conclusions, albeit tentative, can be made about this question. Generally, it would appear that in parent education programs a knowledgeable leader who employs a variety of teaching skills (such as roleplaying, modelling, encouraging involvement of group members), along with displaying humanistic qualities (e.g. openness, acceptance, empathy, interest, sincerity) is likely to be considered effective by the participants of the program.

Question 24 sought the parents' opinions about the degree to which the parent education program met their expectations. All but three parents, who were undecided, indicated that the program had indeed met their expectations. In question 25, parents provided rationales for their choices. The PET parents stated that the use of group discussion procedures enabled them to be exposed to a cross-section of different viewpoints. As well, parents indicated that they learned about a number of alternative ways of thinking and behaving and felt more aware, at ease, understanding and secure as parents.

In the EP program, parents also cited the group discussion process and various outcomes similar to the ones described by the PET parents. At the same time, there were three comments, including one from the parent whose response was undecided, concerning the desire

for a lengthier program which would have better met their expectations. One parent also referred to the need for more group participation: "I felt there was not enough time to cover the course. It could easily be lengthened. Also, there could have been more individual participation. I never felt they quite approved of our verbal contributions, and always felt they would rather talk themselves."

The BM parents also spoke of the opportunity to meet and share with other parents through group discussion. The learning of alternatives and the feeling of greater awareness and reassurance were also mentioned. A representative comment follows: "The group helped me to achieve a greater awareness of what I was doing and that I wasn't the only one with problems."

In summary, the parents of the three programs are indicating that their expectations were achieved because the opportunity was provided for them to meet and share with other parents through the group discussion and because alternatives were provided. The resulting feelings of reassurance, greater awareness and security seem to have contributed to meeting the parents' expectations.

Qeustion 39 concerns the parents' assessments of the helpfulness of their program. As expected, in considering the other data, parents overwhelmingly rated the three programs as having been helpful. It was expected that if parents rated their leader as effective and the program as having met their expectations, they would also rate the program as having been helpful. The two BM parents who rated the program

as not very helpful also were either undecided or negative in their responses to perceived outcomes (see Table XIII) and in their assessments of the degree to which the program met their expectations.

Question 40 solicited open-ended comments about the parents' reasons for their responses to the previous question. Comments were virtually identical to those from question 25. The opportunity to meet and share with others, the learning of alternatives, and the feelings of greater awareness, ease and understanding were given as reasons for having felt helped in the group.

"I found I wasn't the only parent that feels frustration. I felt relieved to find out there were alternatives. It felt good to hear other parents describe their experiences. This encouraged me to try the new techniques."

Similar comments were made by the EP parents. A representative quotation follows:

"Because of group participation, I feel more at ease and relaxed about my job as a parent. I no longer feel that I have more or less to deal with than do many others. I also feel more confident at handling future situations."

An interesting comment came from the parent who gave an undecided response. This parent felt that the theory is good on paper but extremely difficult to apply. It may be that the focus of the program on learning specific skills made this parent feel less secure and confident because of her ability in applying them.

Parents in the BM program provided essentially the same reasons for having felt helped as their counterparts in the other two programs. The two parents who indicated that the program was not very helpful agreed that the results of using the behaviour modification techniques at home were limited because the problems there were too difficult to be dealt with by the techniques.

In summary, the parents from the three programs reinforced their comments made concerning the degree to which expectations were met, by citing essentially identical reasons for having felt helped by the group. The combination of mutual learning and therapeutic outcomes is probably essential for an overall positive rating in the participants' perception of helpfulness in parent education programs.

Question 41 was designed to gather information concerning the parents' opinions of the most helpful places to obtain help with the parent-child relationship. This question attempted to determine whether the parents' attitudes about the parent education program they attended would affect their behaviour to the extent that they would recommend the program to others. Tables XVII, XVIII and XIX record the responses of the parents in each of the three programs.

TABLE XVII

DESCRIPTION OF RANKINGS IN PET PROGRAM N=11

INDIVIDUAL PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Psychiatrist	-	6	6	-	5	6	5	-	-	-	5
Medical Doctor	-	5	5	-	4	5	6	-	-	1	6
Counsellor (social worker, psychologist, family therapist)	-	2	3	-	2	2	2	2	3	2	3
This Parenting Group	1*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Another Parenting Group	-	4	2	-	6	4	3	3	2	-	2
Minister, Priest, Rabbi	-	3	4	-	3	3	4	-	-	-	4
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7*

* #1 indicates first choice. #7 indicates last choice.

TABLE XVIII

DESCRIPTION OF RANKINGS IN EP PROGRAM N=11

INDIVIDUAL PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Psychiatrist	4	-	-	1*	-	-	5	-	-	4	4
Medical Doctor	5	-	-	4	-	4	4	-	-	2	6
Counsellor (social worker, psychologist, family therapist)	3	2	-	5	3	-	2	1	1	3	3
This Parenting Group	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	-	3	1	1
Another Parenting Group	2	3	-	3	2	3	3	-	-	-	2
Minister, Priest, Rabbi	-	-	-	6	-	2	6	-	2	5	5
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* #1 indicates first choice. #7 indicates last choice.

TABLE XIX

DESCRIPTION OF RANKINGS IN BM PROGRAM N=10

INDIVIDUAL PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Psychiatrist	4	4	5	3	5	3	-	5	3	6
Medical Doctor	5	5	2	1*	1	1	1	2	6	4
Counsellor (social worker, psychologist, family therapist)	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	6	5	2
This Parenting Group	1	1	3	-	3	-	3	1.	1	1
Another Parenting Group	2	3	4	-	4	-	-	3	4	3
Minister, Priest, Rabbi	4	6	6	-	6	-	-	4	7*	5
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-

* #1 indicates first choice. #7 indicates last choice.

PET parents overwhelmingly chose this parenting group as most helpful in dealing with parent-child relationships. This was followed by "counsellor" or "another parenting group". A similar result was made by the EP parents. BM parents seemed less certain on this question. Although "this parenting group" was listed first most often, it was closely followed by "medical doctor" and then by "counsellor" and "another parenting group". A possible reason for the high rating of medical doctor may be that the setting of the BM program is a hospital.

The results indicate that parent-subjects would, for the most part, recommend the program they attended to others before any other course of action. This is another indication of the general sense of satisfaction with the three programs among the parent-subjects.

Question 42 sought the parent-subjects' opinions of how the parenting group could be made more effective. Thirty-six percent of the comments made by the PET parents pertained to the desire for a lengthier course or a follow-up program. One parent suggested a program for teens as well. There were a variety of individual suggestions including providing a bibliography, using more positive examples to illustrate the skills, more focus on the book and less on individual participation and more practice time for problem solving.

EP parents suggested providing a lengthier course, (thirty-nine percent), and using more group discussion, (thirty percent). Individual comments included providing hand-outs and having leaders use

less jargon.

Concerning the BM program, parents indicated strongly the desire for a lengthier course,(seventy-five percent). Suggestions were also made regarding the increased use of group discussion.

The desire for a lengthier program is a common theme among the parent-subjects of all three programs. Most often, parents commented on the difficulty in learning the skills in such a short period of time and the need for more practice and group discussions to reinforce learning. Perhaps this is an indication that these programs are providing too much structured content for a six to eight week course. It could also be reflective of insecurity and anxiety within the parents regarding the application of the skills in the home environment. It is likely that many of the parents came to feel comfortable in the group, enjoyed the interaction with and support of other parents, as well as gaining a sense of encouragement and confidence from their participation in the program. As a result, it becomes difficult to break up the group, go separate ways and lose that sense of challenge and support provided within the program.

Questions 43 and 44 sought opinions about the questionnaire itself and about any general comments the parents wished to make. There were only eight comments made about the questionnaire. Three parents felt the questionnaire was too long; one stated that questions 24 and 39 were redundant; one indicated that the questions were easy to answer; one wished that the questionnaire would be administered at least six months after the course; and one mentioned that the questionnaire enabled

him to evaluate the course and its effects on himself.

There was only one general comment made. It concerned the parent's wish for better screening procedures in the PET program because she found it hard to relate to the parents of young children since her children are adolescents.

The results of the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires have been reported. In the last chapter, a discussion will be undertaken to analyze these results, relate them to the literature review findings in Chapter I and determine recommendations for practice and research.

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CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV - DISCUSSION

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY METHOD

There are a number of limitations of the study method which need to be addressed. It was mentioned earlier that the study results were based upon subjective data-gathering procedures. Therefore, the results must be considered tentative and inconclusive. The lack of variance in the responses to the questionnaire items meant that the determination of significant relationships between variables was impossible. It could be that the data gathering instrument was not sensitive enough to detect subtle differences among the various responses. It is suggested that the response categories be increased to perhaps ten items as a means by which any possible variation might be detected. A formal pre-test, if done, would have indicated that there was insufficient variance and modifications could have been made prior to administering the questionnaire in the study.

As well, the questionnaire included some terms which are somewhat limited in wording and interpretation. Trust, sincerity, openness, role-playing and modelling were such terms. It is difficult to define these terms precisely so that they translate into meaningful questionnaire items.

Another limitation of the study method was that the questionnaires were administered within the week of the last session of each program. It would be interesting to administer the questionnaire a few months after the termination of the programs and compare the results. A longer term follow-up procedure might yield more objective assessments

by the parent-subjects.

Despite the limitations of the study method, it is felt that there is merit in involving the parents of parent education programs in describing/evaluating such programs. Probably, it enhances the sense of their own value as individuals as well as possibly providing information for future patterns of service.[1]

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The data results point to a number of questions and suggest some possible directions for parent education programs.

It is noted that the profile of the parent-subjects as overwhelmingly well-educated, married and middle-class is consistent with the findings in the literature and the descriptions made by the leaders. As Mannino and Conant (1969) have suggested, there is a greater compatability among program aims and approaches and middle-class values which accounts for the relative homogeneity among the clientele.[2] Since there is a high degree of homogeneity among the parents of this study, the findings ought to be related only to this group and should not be immediately inferred to other classes or types of parents. Further research might attempt to determine whether a parent education program is a viable method of learning for parents of lower classes who have had limited education and, if so, what kinds of modifications in aims and approaches would be necessary.

The data results pertaining to leadership and the three parent education programs suggest that the perceived effectiveness of, and satisfaction with, the leaders were contingent upon a combination

of humanistic qualities (interest, sincerity, trust, understanding) and knowledge and teaching skills. The humanistic qualities promote ease and comfort within the parents, leading to a reduction of defensiveness (Gibb, 1961)[3], enhancement of individual participation and group discussion and, subsequently, satisfaction. This finding is consistent with adult education theory which suggests that comfort and personal involvement with the learning experience are important components of adult learning (Meyer, 1966;[4] Knowles, 1975[5]).

The ability of the leaders to convey knowledge and to demonstrate a variety of teaching skills satisfied the stated desire of the parents to learn alternative ways of thinking and behaving as a result of attending the parent education programs.

The question that remains to be answered is whether there are certain humanistic qualities which are more essential determinants of perceived effectiveness or satisfaction with the leaders.

As well, are there specific teaching skills or approaches which are more closely related to participant satisfaction? For example, is the ability of the leader to involve the participants in a process of mutual inquiry more satisfying than his/her ability to effectively use role-playing or modelling? The data from this study indicate that the perceived importance and helpfulness of various teaching skills or approaches is probably related to the specific learning needs of the participants. The data has shown that learning needs vary from one to another. It has yet to be determined what types of parents learn best from what kinds of teaching skills or approaches. Until this has been

done, it is probably a good idea for leaders of parent education programs to employ a variety of teaching skills and approaches to enhance overall satisfaction among the participants.

The favourable responses given by the parent-subjects of each of the programs concerning the effectiveness of the leader, overall helpfulness of the program and the degree to which expectations were met, suggest that the approaches and content used in the three programs are valid means of achieving these results. However, are they, in fact, the most preferred approaches and content to use? It was suggested in the literature review that: "Child rearing is a process of bringing to bear on the child's behaviour a complicated interaction of context and process variables", (Griffore, 1980).[6] Is the essential focus of the three programs, which is to teach specific behavioural skills, too simplistic in view of this assertion? Are they too prescriptive? Brim (1959) speaks of the negative results of "rules" which can promote dependency by the parents on the leader, reduce creativity and spontenaity on the part of the parents, and even result in the production of guilt and anxiety for those who are unable to behave toward their children in accord with the advice.[7]

Research has also shown that not only is it not possible to accurately predict the effects of a specific parental behaviour on a child, but there has yet to be an universally accepted determination made of what constitutes a good parent or a well-adjusted child (Brim, 1959;[8] Tramontana, 1980;[9] Griffore, 1980[10]). When one adds to this, the notion as presented in the literature review that there are many

possible determinants of parental actions, then one is led to agree with Tramontana's conclusion that, "Persons engaging in parent education should periodically be humbled by realizing that it is a grandiose notion that we, as professionals, know what parents must know to be effective in their role".[11] In view of all this, it is suggested that the skills and practical suggestions offered by the three leaders must be considered cautionary and tentative. As Griffore (1980) has stated:

> This would mean identifying the limits of the techniques, observing that the techniques are not completely reliable, that there are several desireable effects that they will not accomplish and some undesireable effects that might result.[12]

At the present time, it is important for parent education programs to have multiple conceptions of good parenting and well-adjusted children, given the uncertainty surrounding these characteristics.

It may be that too much time is given to the presentation and practice of specific skills such as "I" messages and natural and logical consequences. Although the parents in this study indicated the desire for learning alternative ways of thinking and behaving, it may be that alternatives could be better identified and explored using a different approach. In the study, parents indicated that the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with other parents provided them with alternatives and made them feel more at ease and reassured. This emphasizes the importance of advocating a group discussion approach and encouraging individual participation. Perhaps the specific skills provided by the leaders could be better used less as techniques to be

demonstrated and practiced, and more as general themes for discussion among the leaders and participants.

A sizeable number of participants felt that the techniques advocated by the program leaders were too difficult in the face of old habits. This may be indicative of the need for the content to be more problem-centered rather than subject centered (Knowles, 1972)[13] and for the learning situation to better fit the parents' everyday experiences and situation rather than the other way around (Meyers, 1966).[14] Learning is best when it can be incorporated into one's existing capabilities (Hereford, 1963),[15] These notions reinforce further the importance of involving participants in their learning experience through mutual sharing and discussion, augmented by the knowledge and input of the program leader.

Another significant finding that relates to content concerns the expressed desire among a substantial proportion of the parent-subjects for a longer or follow-up course. Perhaps there is too much structured content provided for a six to eight week course. The program leaders might consider experimenting with a longer or follow-up program.

The data concerning perceived outcomes by the parent-subjects reveal that there are a number of different outcomes which may result from attendance in a parent education program. This suggests that the effectiveness of a parent education program can be determined in a number of ways, depending upon the particular outcomes being examined. As was shown in the literature review, the proof of effectiveness of parent education programs has yet to be conclusively made. Most studies which attempt to evaluate such programs focus upon the degree

to which interactions between the parents and children have improved and in what ways, as a result of the parents' attendance in the programs. It has already been suggested that this may be too limited a focus for determining effectiveness. Nevertheless, the majority of parents in this study perceive the interactions at home as having improved. Again, it must be noted that these subjective assessments do not constitute proof of positive changes in the interactions at home. Nor can a direct relationship be assumed between this perceived outcome and the content or approach of the individual programs. If, indeed, positive changes have occurred, it could be simply because parents have been prompted to think about their children and their roles as parents, which leads them to become more aware and involved in the interactions occurring at home (Freeman, 1975).[16] Indeed, this prompting of a process of inquiry is considered by some writers to be as relevant a justification for parent education programs, as any resultant behaviour change (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971).[17] Whether or not any actual improvements do occur in the interactions between the parents and children, it is hypothesized that if parents believe that positive changes have occurred, they will experience a higher degree of motivation for parenting which will, in fact, lead to improved relationships.

A number of parents indicated that the exposure to alternative ways of thinking and behaving was a positive outcome. The challenge of learning alternatives is probably an essential prerequisite to an overall perception of satisfaction among the participants who were predominantly middle-class and well-educated. The extent to which parents learn the

alternatives so that they can apply them meaningfully is open to question. Caldwell-Brown (1976) has stated that parents probably can apply the alternative techniques they are exposed to only imperfectly and sporadically.[18] Nevertheless, the value of being exposed to alternative ways of thinking and behaving can be found in the comments made by many of the parent-subjects of this study. It appears that these parents gained a sense of reassurance, confidence and security as a result of being exposed to alternatives.

Similar outcomes resulted from the opportunity for the parents to meet and share with other parents in the group. A greater sense of comfort, reassurance and ease were reported by the parent-subjects of all three programs because they were able to interact with one another. Such therapeutic outcomes appear to be the most significant result for parents attending parent education programs. Since these therapeutic outcomes resulted for most of the parents of each program studied, it may be suggested that they occur independently of any particular approach or content format.

If, in fact, therapeutic outcomes outweigh educational outcomes for most parents attending education programs, would it be advisable for such programs to adapt their approach in order that therapeutic outcomes may be enhanced? This would mean concentrating less on providing a structured format of presenting and practicing specific techniques and skills put forth by the leader and advocating more group discussion which would be mediated by the leader. There would be greater regard given to the parents' abilities to find their own answers and more vali-

dation for what they are already doing with less emphasis on prescriptive guidelines provided by the leader. This modified approach is given credence by the writings of Ivan Illich. Illich decries the use of prescriptions meted out by experts to others who become dependent upon their advice and direction. In his view, the attempts to create professionalized parents would be dangerous and debilitating.[19]

While such an approach might be a preferred one for most parents who attend parent education programs, this must be put into perspective with the notion that adults have different learning needs. This notion is substantiated by the data results which showed that there was considerable variance in the responses of parents concerning the most and least helpful activities of the three programs. Generally speaking, it is probable that a sizeable number of parents would rather prefer a didactic, structured approach in parent education programs.

Therefore, it would appear that a variety of approaches is required in consideration of the heterogeneity of adult learning needs. If the particular learning needs for specific types of persons can be determined from future research, it is hypothesized that the effectiveness of parent education programs in terms of outcomes, both educational and therapeutic, will be enhanced if efforts are made to match parents to the kinds of programs which will best accommodate their learning needs.

Nevertheless, regardless of the kinds of specific outcomes which may or may not result from attendance in a parent education group, it is clear, that in general, the parents in this study were quite satis-

fied with their experiences in the respective programs. It is suggested that the value of these programs is revealed simply by the fact that the parents liked them. Is it not a presumptuous notion to suggest, as some writers have done, that this is an insufficient justification for the existence of parent education groups?

It is obvious that there are many questions about parent education programs that need to be addressed through rigorous, on-going evaluation studies. There appear to be promising results which can occur in parent education programs, but they must be viewed under the light of caution and critical scepticism in order that false assertions about the ability of such programs to solve the puzzle that is parenthood are avoided. There are no simple formulas within which parenting can be placed. In the philosophy of T. S. Garp, one must always be appreciative of the incredible complexity of persons.[20] It is by acknowledging this, that parent educators ought to remain humble while, simultaneously, continuing the endless search for ways by which the phenomenon of parenthood can be better understood.

It is hoped that, in some small way, this study has contributed to that search.

To conclude this study, some recommendations for practice and research will be listed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. The leaders and/or sponsors of parent education programs should consider including an on-going evaluation component that goes beyond the present practice of administering a simple questionnaire.

Such an evaluation component might include more objective assessments of outcomes and further analysis of the types of clientele in relation to their specific learning needs.

2. In order to provide greater compatability among clientele needs, desires, aims and content, a screening procedure should be used and/or more specific information about the particular nature of the program ought to be provided in its advertisements.

3. Consideration ought to be paid to using information and content in a modest, cautionary fashion, presenting it in terms of alternatives to be considered, rather than as prescriptions to be adopted. This recommendation is based upon data reported in the literature review.

4. Parent education programs, such as those in this study, ought to experiment with extending the duration of their courses and/or offering follow-up programs. It is the writer's feeling that perhaps more attention could be given to therapeutic and growth considerations for the parents themselves, in addition to providing a forum for the exploration of alternatives and the dispensing of information. This might allow for greater integration of content within one's existing point of reference.

5. Continued or greater recognition should be given to the value of personally involving parents in the learning experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

1. Long-term studies of the outcomes of parent education programs are required in order to determine what enduring effects have resulted

from parents' attendance in the programs.

2. Objective measurements of outcomes for parents, for children and in the interactions between parents and children should be undertaken. Such measurements would be part of a research design that would also include a control group, a placebo group, randomization and good sample size. Such a design may yield more precise data than subjective studies.

3. Research ought to be directed toward determining specific parent characteristics in relation to specific learning needs. Such research should be able to begin to answer the question of which parents will benefit most from parent education programs.

4. Studies of the relationship between process and outcomes should be undertaken to determine whether there are specific aspects of the process of parent education groups which are significantly related to specific outcomes.

5. Research ought to be conducted regarding the applicability of various types of approaches in parent education groups for low income, less educated parents.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTION GUIDELINES

APPENDIX A - QUESTION GUIDELINES

In Semi-Structured Interviews:

Give an overview of the program.

Describe your background and training as a leader.

Describe the duration of the program.

Describe the typical clientele which attend the program.

What are the concerns and goals of the parents attending the program?

Is there a screening process?

Is there a fee? How much is the fee?

As leader, what are your values and beliefs with respect to the parenting role?

What are the underlying theoretical constructs of the program?

As leader, what are your goals, objectives and desired outcomes for the program?

Describe the content of the program.

What are the educational techniques used?

Define your roles as leader?

What are some important leadership skills?

Describe the evaluation procedures used in the program.

What are the results of these evaluation procedures?

As leader, what do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

The following questionnaire has been designed to determine the important characteristics of parenting groups from the point of view of participants. It is hoped that the results will increase understanding of parenting group generally and serve to improve their quality.

You are being asked to complete this questionnaire because you are parents who have recently participated in a parenting group. Your opinions are highly desired to achieve a better understanding of what the parenting group has meant for you.

All answers will be treated with strict confidentiality. There are no right or wrong answers. Your comments, both positive and/or negative, are equally important.

Allow me to express my appreciation in advance for your anticipated co-operation in this research effort.

Bruce Buxton
Social Work Student
in Graduate Studies
University of Calgary

February, 1980

* * * * * * * * * * *

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Some of the questions offer several possible responses. Please check the response, (___), that best fits for you in the boxes provided.

Other questions are open-ended, and it is requested that you write your answer in the space provided.

Please feel free to use the back of the page if your answer is longer than the space provided.

* * * * * * * * * * *

SECTION I

The first section seeks to determine background data about the kinds of persons who attend parenting groups.

1. SEX

   Female ( ) Male ( )

2. MARITAL STATUS

   Single ( ) Married ( ) Common-Law ( ) Separated ( )

   Divorced ( ) Widowed ( )

3. TOTAL FAMILY INCOME ANNUALLY

Under $5,000	( )	$21,000 - $25,000	( )
$ 6,000 - $10,000	( )	$26,000 - $30,000	( )
$11,000 - $15,000	( )	$31,000 - $35,000	( )
$16,000 - $20,000	( )	Over $35,000	( )

4. LAST COMPLETED GRADE OF SCHOOL (SPECIFY)

   Grade 8 or Under ( )

   Grade 9 - 11 ( )

   High School Diploma ( )

   Post Secondary (Specify type and whether Diploma or Degree was completed) ( ) _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. KIND OF EMPLOYMENT

   Clerical ( )

   Professional ( )

   Homemaker ( )

   Manual ( )

   Technical ( )

   Administrative ( )

   Business ( )

   Unemployed ( )

   Other (Specify) ( ) _____

   _____

   _____

SECTION II

In this section there are a series of questions which ask you to rate on a scale your perception of the degree to which certain characteristics of leadership were used by the leader or leaders of your group. Please circle the number of the response which best represents your opinion.

6. DID THE GROUP LEADER EXPLAIN WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN THE GROUP, (WHAT HE WOULD DO, WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF YOU)?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If YES, How well did the group leader explain what was involved? (Please circle appropriate response.)

1	2	3	4	5
Poorly Explained	Not Very Well Explained	Undecided	Fairly Well Explained	Very Well Explained

7. DO YOU FEEL THERE WAS A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN YOU AND THE GROUP LEADER REGARDING MUTUAL GOALS AND THE PATHS TO THESE GOALS?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unclear	Fairly Unclear	Undecided	Fairly Clear	Very Clear

8. HOW OFTEN DID THE LEADER SEEK FEEDBACK ON THE GROUP FROM THE PARTICIPANTS?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Don't Know	Sometimes	Very Often

9. IN GENERAL, HOW WELL DID THE LEADER UNDERSTAND YOU?

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All Understood	Little Understanding	Don't Know	Good Understanding	Very Good Understanding

10. HOW INTERESTED WAS THE LEADER ABOUT YOU AS A PERSON?

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All Interested	Mostly Not Interested	Undecided	Moderately Interested	Very Interested

11. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE DEGREE OF TRUST YOU HAD IN YOUR LEADER?

1	2	3	4	5
Virtually No Trust	Little Trust	Don't Know	Moderately Trusted	A great deal of trust

SECTION II (Continued)

12. IN THE GROUP SESSIONS, HOW OFTEN DID THE LEADER CONVEY WHAT HE/SHE WAS THINKING OR FEELING?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Undecided	Sometimes	Frequently

13. WHICH DESCRIBES THE WAY THE LEADER EXPRESSED HIS/HER THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

1	2	3	4	5
Never Sincere	Seldom Sincere	Undecided	Often Sincere	Always Sincere

14. IN GROUP SESSIONS, HOW OFTEN DID THE LEADER PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE GROUP MEMBERS?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Undecided	Sometimes	Frequently

15. IN GROUP SESSIONS, HOW OFTEN DID THE LEADER SUMMARIZE THE CONTENT OF THE DISCUSSION?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Undecided	Sometimes	Frequently

16. IN GROUP SESSIONS, HOW OFTEN DID THE GROUP LEADER SOLICIT GROUP MEMBERS' COMMENTS, INPUT?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Undecided	Sometimes	Frequently

17. IN GROUP SESSIONS, HOW OFTEN DID THE LEADER POINT OUT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN GROUP MEMBERS' COMMENTS?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Undecided	Sometimes	Frequently

18. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK DESCRIBES THE UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEADER HAD OF PARENTING SKILLS?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Limited And Inaccurate	Somewhat Limited And Unrealistic	Undecided	Adequate And Realistic	Very Extensive And Realistic

SECTION II (Continued)

19. HOW WELL DID THE LEADER HELP YOU ACHIEVE A CLEARCUT AND REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF YOURSELF AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD/ CHILDREN?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Well At All	Not Very Well	Undecided	Fairly Well	Very Well

20. HOW EFFECTIVE DO YOU FEEL YOUR LEADER WAS IN THE GROUP?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Effective At All	Not Very Effective	Undecided	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective

21. WOULD YOU COMMENT ON YOUR REASONS FOR YOUR RESPONSE TO QUESTION #20.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. WAS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR LEADER THAT ESPECIALLY PLEASED OR DISPLEASED YOU? (Please check appropriate response.)

Yes ( ) No ( )

If YES, please describe: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. WAS THERE A CO-LEADER? Yes ( ) No ( )

If YES, How well do you feel the two leaders worked together in co-leading?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Poorly	Rather Poorly	Undecided	Fairly Well	Very well

SECTION III

This last section deals with some of the more general aspects of the parenting group.

24. DID THE PARENTING GROUP MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS? (Circle appropriate response)

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all	Slightly	Undecided	Yes, Somewhat	Yes, Very Much

25. WOULD YOU EXPLAIN HOW THE GROUP MET OR DID NOT MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

26. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DID THE LEADER USE IN THE GROUP SESSIONS? (Check those which apply)

- Group Discussion ☐
- Role Playing ☐
- Modelling (Demonstrating a skill) ☐
- "I" Messages ☐
- Problem Solving techniques ☐
- Natural and Logical Consequences ☐
- Active or Effective Listening Techniques ☐
- Lecture ☐
- Homework Assignments ☐
- Rewards and Punishments ☐
- Limit Setting and Rules ☐
- Books (please specify) ☐ _____

Others (please specify) ☐ _____

SECTION III (Continued)

27. OF ALL THE PREVIOUSLY CHECKED ACTIVITIES, OR OTHERS, WHICH DO YOU THINK WERE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOU? (List no more than TWO.)

1. _____

2. _____

28. IN WHAT WAYS WERE THEY MOST HELPFUL?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

29. OF ALL THE PREVIOUSLY CHECKED ACTIVITIES, OR OTHERS, WHICH DO YOU THINK WERE LEAST HELPFUL FOR YOU? (List no more than Two.)

1. _____

2. _____

30. IN WHAT WAYS WERE THEY LEAST HELPFUL?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

31. HOW HAS THE HOME ATMOSPHERE AND INTERACTION WITH YOUR CHILDREN BEEN AFFECTED BY ATTENDING THE PARENTING GROUP?

1	2	3	4	5
Negative Affect	Virtually No Affect	Undecided	Fairly Positive Affect	Very Positive Affect

SECTION III (Continued)

32. COULD YOU DESCRIBE IN WHAT WAYS THE HOME ATMOSPHERE AND INTERACTION WITH YOUR CHILDREN HAS BEEN AFFECTED OR NOT AFFECTED?

The following five questions each offer a statement about the group you attended. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by circling the appropriate response.

33. OTHER GROUP MEMBERS' PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS WERE TOO DIFFERENT FROM MY OWN.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

34. THERE WAS NO ONE IN THE GROUP WITH WHOM I COULD FEEL COMFORTABLE.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

35. GROUP MEMBERS WERE HELPFUL.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

36. I LEARNED MORE ABOUT MYSELF AS A PERSON.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

SECTION III (Continued)

37. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE GROUP WAS WARM AND RECEPTIVE.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

38. WAS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT THE LOCATION, DECOR, HOURS, ETC. THAT ESPECIALLY PLEASED AND/OR DISPLEASED YOU?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If YES, list what pleased and/or displeased you.

39. HOW HELPFUL, IN GENERAL, WAS THE PARENTING GROUP?

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Undecided	Fairly Helpful	Very Helpful

40. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE SOME OF THE REASONS FOR YOUR FEELING OF BEING HELPED OR NOT HELPED.

SECTION III (Continued)

41. IF YOU WERE ASKED BY FRIENDS WHERE THEY COULD OBTAIN HELP WITH THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU BE MOST LIKELY TO SUGGEST?
(Please rank in order, starting with "1" for your first choice, "2" for your second choice and so on.)

Psychiatrist ( )

Medical Doctor ( )

Counsellor (social worker, psychologist, family therapist) ( )

This Parenting Group ( )

Another Parenting Group ( )

Minister, Priest or Rabbi ( )

Other (Please Specify) ( ) _____

_____

_____

42. PLEASE SUGGEST WAYS AS TO HOW THE PARENTING GROUP COULD BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE.

SECTION IV

GENERAL COMMENTS

43. HAVE YOU ANY COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE?

44. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON?

* * * * * * * * * * * *

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

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