Parent Education in a Cooperative Nursery School

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PARENT EDUCATION IN A COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL

by

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INTRODUCTION

Parent education has existed for as long as one parent has attempted to help another, and for as long as we have records. To what extent it has served its purpose has not been fully established. Only the future will fully tell how successful parent education programs have been among those who participated in them, because the final measure of success of a parent education program is the degree to which it contributes to effective family relationships and to favorable growth and development of children in the home.

Parent education sometimes is defined as the use of educational techniques to influence parental role performance (4, p. 20). The individual striving to fulfill his role as a parent can look forward to help from parent education programs, if they successfully measure up to the definition of their goals in terms of actual practice. Parent education can be looked at as an attempt constructively to influence and change parental roles in a desired direction for the betterment of all those concerned.

History and background material of parent education

Since about 1800, parent education has been expanding. More things are being done to help parents to gain an understanding of their responsibility and of their role as parents. There is help available for those desiring added knowledge and assistance in child care and child rearing. The prime interest
of parent education is to help parents fully enjoy the family, as well as to accomplish the work parenthood requires.

Parents have in most cases the desire to rear their children in what is the best possible way for them to do. Parent education was established to help in promoting this interest. Groups such as private and commercial clubs, physicians, clergy, and nurses as well as national, state, and local organizations all have pushed this type of education. Books, pamphlets, films, and many other visual aids and helps have been made available to benefit the parent.

Parent education seems to have taken on the characteristics of the swing of a giant pendulum. Sometimes this pendulum has been thrown off balance because of the ideas and methods used. The swing of the pendulum has been influenced by the ideas of prominent educators who have been influential forces on popular opinion at various times. To show the effect of various methods on the sway of parent attitudes, the following educators and their research on methods of parent education are discussed.

Vincent (38) brings out that trends in infant care and parent education have fluctuated during different periods of time. As early as the second century A.D. there was an awareness of the problems of child rearing. The Greek physician Soranus of Ephesus wrote a treatise entitled On Midwifery and the Diseases of Women. He included a section on care and feeding of infants, advising parents that the baby be fed from the breast at regular intervals. However, pediatricians of today have no evidence to favor breast feedings over artificial means.
Another trend that has varied from time to time pertains to infant care and discipline. The decade before 1935 was known as the "mother's age.

During this era, the mother knew best. She had complete say as to what was best for baby. However, during the next period, 1935-45, there was a complete switch, resulting in this period having been called the "baby's decade"; mothers were considered to be secondary to infant care "experts" and baby demand.

The evidence is clear that during each period the parents were influenced by the education and ideas of the so-called experts. From Vincent (38) we have noted that men of influential standing wrote to advise parents in child rearing practices as far back as the second century A.D. Parental attitudes changed from time to time to suit what was thought to be for the betterment of the child.

Miller and Swanson (25, p. 27) write: "The present day changes in child rearing are only the most recent of a long series of such modifications."

History shows that child training practices relate to social and intellectual trends of the culture.

Stendler (31) further shows that there has been considerable influence on parents to bring about desired changes in child rearing practices. In 1890 it was felt that the greatest concern was for moral development of the child. The child was showered with love, the mother being the main source and the most important figure. Then in 1900, a child was disciplined by punishment to impress right from wrong. Emphasis was placed on character and habit.
training. In 1910 the experts advocated strict scheduling for the infant to prevent his becoming dominating. A child was disciplined to produce good character; everything was done according to a set pattern. In 1920 there was a split between character development and physical development. Considerable interest was being given to nutrition. The influence of Watsonian behaviorism was being felt, and again the idea of very strict schedule was practiced. In 1930 interest began to be directed toward personality development. Behavior and its causes were thought to be important. The trend was to move away from the strict training and discipline which characterized earlier child care practices. Finally, in 1940 equal concern was given to physical and personality development. Increased emphasis on "mothering" was strongly advocated. The mental hygiene approach was stressed for child rearing.

Wolfenstein (41) also has outlined some of the trends in infant care. In 1914-1921 the stress was on the child's autoerotic impulses. The prevailing view, at that time, was that thumb sucking and masturbation if not interfered with promptly and rigorously, would grow beyond control and result in permanent damage to the child. Some authorities advocated that the child was to be bound hand and foot while in bed to prevent thumb sucking, touching his genitals, or rubbing his thighs together.

During the period 1929-1939, autoerotism seemed less dangerous, and considerable stress was placed on rigorous bowel training, with strict emphasis on regularity. Weaning and introduction of solid foods was accomplished with
great firmness. The danger was thought to be that the baby might dominate the parent. Successful child training meant winning out against the child in the struggle for domination.

In the period between 1942-1945, the child came to be viewed as quite harmless; he seemed devoid of sexual or dominating impulses. He was free to explore his world. Mildness was advocated in all areas. In 1951 there was an attempt to continue mildness, but some anxiety of 1929 that the child might dominate the parents reappeared.

In 1928 Watson (39) gave parents these ideas about caring for their children. He pointed out that there is danger of too much mother love. He felt that mothers had a tendency to give children the love and attention that rightfully should be given to their husbands. She showered love on the child because her husband was away all day, and in this way found a way to fulfill her need to love someone. Watson felt that love responses can be brought out in a newborn child, and thus it learns to expect love and attention. The effects of too much coddling in infancy are that the child reports his ills to others because he is used to being comforted and kissed better by his mother, and it results in invalidism—a way of getting attention. Watson advised that the sensible way to treat children is to shake hands in the morning and kiss them on the forehead at night. Treat them as young adults, never hug them, kiss them, or let them sit on your lap.

Escalona (8) has summarized the theories of 1949 as follows: The adults were expected to meet the needs of the younger child. At that time public opinion
recognized the need for affection and an intimate relationship between mother and child. Writers during this period prized self-expression, sincerity of feeling, and spontaneous interest above good manners, self-restraint, or intellectual achievement.

Social class influences

Much research has been done to determine the differences in behavior among parents of the various social class groups, and also to see if there was much difference between Negroes and whites.

Klatskin's (16) report, on the whole, shows a general shift toward leniency of discipline in all classes, these being divided into upper-middle, lower middle, and upper-lower, although the classes may differ in degree of such leniency in some areas. The report suggests that parental child care practices are capable of modification through instruction, and that it is possible to alter the influence of social class membership on child care.

The study by Ericson (7) was made as an attempt to find if systematic class differences in training could be found. The conclusions were that there were systematic social class differences in training children in crucial matters. Middle class children are probably subjected to more frustration in learning and are probably more anxious as a result of these pressures than are the lower class children. Lower class families tend to be more lenient in the training of their children.

Davis and Havinghurst (6) show from their research that there are
considerable degrees of social class differences in child rearing practices, much greater, in fact, than the differences between Negroes and whites of the same social class. They found that middle class families are more rigorous than lower class families in their training of children for feeding and cleanliness habits and generally begin training of the child earlier. Middle-class families place more emphasis on the early assumption of responsibility for self and on individual achievement. Middle-class families are less permissive than lower class families.

Kohn's (18) study points out differences between the patterns of discipline behavior shown by two social classes, working-class parents, and middle-class parents. There is a distinction between the son and the daughter in behavior warranting physical punishment. The working-class parent might punish his son for signs of aggression in wild play and physical combat with his brothers and sisters. This punishment would not be for aggressive behavior as such, but for disturbances arising out of aggressive behavior. Mothers attempt to force compliance to orders given but they oftentimes back down. The fathers might resort to physical punishment only when the disturbance caused by his son is such as to cause annoyance. He usually just ignores the son's actions. He does, however, physically punish his son for combat with others.

The daughter of the working-class parent is more likely to receive punishment for swiping things or for fights with children other than her brothers and sisters. When the daughter refuses to do as she is told, she will be punished, although the son usually gets away with such behavior. A
daughter must be a lady. Something more is expected of a girl than of a boy—she must not only refrain from doing what she is not supposed to do, but must also carry out actions her mother wants her to do.

The middle-class parent does not use physical punishment because of the act. Such punishment is used when the son or daughter displays violent or aggressive outbursts of temper. The child's actions are interpreted and differentiated by the parent as such. A fit of temper would warrant physical punishment, but excitement and boisterous outcries that go along with wild play would be overlooked. Sons and daughters are physically punished for the same reasons. The daughter receives punishment for the same things as her brother.

"Working-class parents are more likely to respond in terms of the immediate consequences of the child's actions, middle-class parents in terms of their interpretation of the child's intent in acting as he does." (18, p. 364)

Parents are most likely to accord high priority to those values which seem most important. For working-class parents, the values center around qualities that assure respectability; for the middle-class parents, values center around internalized standards of conduct.

Rosen (27) states that from babyhood on, much of the middle-class children's affect is likely to be associated with achievement-related behavior structured by the practices and values of his parents. The preschool period tends to be a time when early demands are placed on the child by the parent. This is reflected in such areas as early toilet training, and intense concern
with cleanliness. As the child grows, he frequently is urged to demonstrate his developing maturity in such areas as early walking, talking, and self care. It is this behavior that causes parents to display intense parental pride and often lavish rewards on the child. It is precisely this atmosphere which provides a most fertile environment for the child.

From the beginning of the child’s school career, the middle-class child will be more likely than his lower-class counterpart to have standards of excellence in scholastic behavior set by his parents. Another thing which is stressed more with the middle-class child than the lower-class child is the notion that success is desirable and possible, as well as being widespread. Those who push achievement are associated much more with the middle class than with the lower class. To embrace the achievement value system which stresses willingness to work hard, plan, and make the proper sacrifices, and individual should be able to manipulate his environment to insure his success.

White (40) feels that child-rearing practices have changed as a result of different reference groups which the middle-class and working-class mothers have used. One of the reasons for these changes is that the middle class is very responsive to new and different ideas in their environment. Those ideas transmitted to them by the experts and through mass media seem to be of most importance. These middle-class persons tend to rely on other people outside their one family group, their environment, and on certain authorities in the field of child rearing. Both the middle-class and the working-class parents
rely on mass-media; however, the middle class is more discriminating.

Some studies show that experts' ideas on child-rearing have changed from decade to decade. It seems reasonable, then, that if middle-class parents respond to certain sources of opinion, such as experts or other people, the middle class would change their practice of child rearing as they learn of better ideas and methods.

There were no significant differences between sources of ideas about child rearing practices, and there were no class differences resulting from mothers reading newspapers and magazines; but there were differences mentioned concerning mothers reading specific books written by experts. The middle-class mothers mentioned experts' books over references to friends or other people more often than the working-class mothers did.

The available evidence is consistent with the belief that a change in child rearing practices has taken place, and that this change is due to the different reference groups which are used by the different classes.

In a study by Boek, Sussman, and Yankauer (3) 1,433 upstate New York families were studied to determine social class influences on child rearing practices. Children in this study ranged from three months to six months of age. Social class differences in child care practices were found in those areas concerning family planning, use of literature, feeding practices, and mothers' educational and occupational aspirations for her child. The classes were divided in accordance to the Warner Index of Status Characteristics.
Bronfenbrenner (5) feels that middle-class parents especially have moved away from the more rigid, strict styles of care and discipline advocated in the early 1920's and 1930's, and toward modes of response involving greater tolerance of the child's impulses and desires, freer expression of affection, and increased reliance on psychological methods of discipline. Differences in how children are trained by the different classes have narrowed during recent years.

Roeflin's study (11) was performed to determine child rearing practices of rural families. One conclusion was that neither the socio-economic status of a farm family, nor the type of child care resources used was the only determining factor in the child rearing practices of pre-school children. Neither the age nor education of the parent seemed to have much influence. What seemed to be the determining factors were past experiences of the mother, her friends and relatives, use of printed material about children, some of the community resources, number of children, and position of the child in the family.

Children's behavior is influenced by parent education

Experts have tried to find the best behavior of children and how to go about bringing it to the surface. There has been considerable concern about behavior problems for as long as there have been parents and children. It has been the aim of parents, educators, clergy, and everyone to find the best means for bringing about the best results in childhood behavior.

Childhood is a time of development. It is important that children be educated and patterned to bring forth the best performance for each of them
as unique individuals. What this performance is has been debated, disagreed about, and undecided as many times as there are different people concerned with it.

Gilda (9) reports that at the turn of the twentieth century parenthood ideals underwent a change. William James, well-known for his ideas on education, preached pragmatism—the theory that we should learn by experience or trying, rather than by doctrine or conviction. Many conventional ideas about child rearing practices were disregarded. The parents who were intellectuals were most concerned with these changes. Parents were told to keep hands off children because it was the personal experience of the child that was important. The important job of the parent was to maintain a degree of detachment so that the normal development of the child could proceed. Parents must not, however, let the child have the upper hand and come to think that he was the center of everything.

Thomas (37) supports this theory. He feels that one should have sufficient faith in human nature to let it take its course with as much freedom as is compatible with the fact that we must all be acceptable members of society. He felt that children should have freedom of expression, but that there should be well-understood limitations.

Kanner (12) feels that culture has an influence on children. It creates problems of conduct and education while it shapes healthy, independent, useful citizens. Education is an attempt to reach the models of living, acting, and
thinking set up by the culture. And children are expected to comply with the culture.

He says that over-anxious and over-protective parents harm their children. When parents’ and child’s wishes differ, the parents often force compliance. And, by doing so, they cause a rebelliousness which grows out of defiance to these culturally determined parental habits. Kanner also points out that childhood is not a preparation for the future life—it is life.

A baby is not a small adult, says Gildea (9); what goes on in a baby’s mind cannot be determined by adult standards. There must be judgment and understanding on the baby’s level. This is why parent education is so important.

Sewell (29) found that in personality formation and development, the important thing is probably the attitudes and behavior of the mother toward the child. Such practices as breast feeding, gradual weaning, demand schedule, and early and late induction to bowel and bladder training, which have been so much emphasized in the psychological analytic literature, were almost barren in terms of relation to personality adjustment as measured in his study.

Through all the research on parent education, there can be found one main concern, that of parents trying to do what is best for their children. They are aware of the importance of providing opportunity for the growth of well-adjusted, unmutilated, self-confident children. They are interested in the cause of better educational programs to help parents find the best methods of child-rearing.

Yet, the pendulum is still swinging and the problems still exist. Parent
Parent education is moving, and through this movement we can see a changing group of parents. We see from the examples given that the different beliefs and methods of various times have done much to influence the behavior of parents toward their children. What our beliefs are today and tomorrow will depend on what we learn about ourselves and our children. Parent education is worthwhile only when it beneficially affects the beliefs and the behavior of the individual trying to fulfill his role of parent.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature was set up to include: (a) the fundamental reasons for parent education in child rearing and child care, and (b) the value of parent education programs and studies as a means of producing change in parental attitudes.

An investigation of the literature shows some, though limited, information on change in parental attitudes resulting from participation in a parent education program.

Reasons for parent education

The following studies promote an understanding of the fundamental reasons for parent education in child rearing and child care. A basic understanding of parent education, its existence, its being, and its growth is essential and important.

Brim (4) points out that educational programs for parents have existed in this country for as long as we have records. During the past three generations, from about 1880 on, there has been a continuous expansion of these programs. At the present time, many organizations, both public and private, commercial and nonprofit, at the national, state, and local levels are engaged in educating parents about child rearing. Physicians, clergymen, teachers, and nurses are counseling parents regarding better means of child care. Parents participate in groups to discuss child rearing; they read books,
pamphlets, magazines, and newspaper columns; view films, plays, and television programs; and listen to lectures and radio programs, all concerned with educating the parents in child care.

Parent education as seen by Brim (4) can be described as an activity using educational methods in order to bring about change in parental role performance. There is no specific or definite end aimed at through this education, but there are many different ends to be achieved from these experiences, such as a better understanding of children's needs, personal identification of problems, methods of solving these personal problems, understanding more about child care methods, and a realization that most parents face problems concerning child rearing.

According to Brim (4), there are two fundamental causes for the education of the American parent in the responsibilities of child rearing. The first of these is the breakdown of cultural traditions in child rearing practices which in turn is a result of still other related social changes. These include the change in status of today's women in our society in both their family and nonfamily roles; the decline in frequency of intergenerational family relations, derived from the fact that now in our society the majority of newly married couples establish residence away from their previous parental homes; and the increased contact through immigration and social mobility between members of different ethnic backgrounds and social classes who have contrasting cultural traditions of child care. All of these things contribute either to breaking away
from the individual’s old cultural traditions of child training, or to his exposure
to new ways of rearing children which are a challenge to him.

The second fundamental cause of this social movement is the growing
belief on the part of many persons that there exist better ways of rearing chil-
dren than those prescribed by traditions. This belief came about because of
research in the area of child development in both Europe and the United
States, which started shortly after the turn of the century and gave hope of providing a
new body of knowledge about desirable ways to rear children.

There are dangers in parent education movements and a study of parent
education must recognize this fact. Bruch (1) warns that there is danger of
the parent education movement becoming classified as harmful because of
weaknesses and errors in the operation of the parent education movement at
present. She believe that there must be more humility on the part of the
expert, including sincere respect and sympathy for the participants. When
this humility has been achieved, the parent educator can be of real help in
bringing about improvements in psychological aspects of child care.

In order to know what parent educators should be doing, there needs to
be some way to judge the effectiveness of their work as Ridenour (28, p.187) has
observed. We can rarely say that "such and such a method is good parent
education, and here is the proof of it." Instead, we must rely on the combina-
tion of demand and opinion. They may give us assistance in finding what the
probable value is but they do not give us proof of the value. However, it seems
that parent education seems to be moving in the right direction in developing a body of knowledge about children and families and behavior. Since much of this knowledge takes the form of increased sensitivity to the many factors affecting learning, it appears likely that as understanding increases in parent education, the effectiveness of those involved in it will also increase.

Value of parent education

The value of parent education programs is emphasized by Luckey (22). She believes that the variety and range of value-oriented parent education groups is great. They include groups which place a high premium on knowledge, groups which emphasize emotional adjustment or maturity, others which conform to an absolute religious and moral law, still others which rely on love as the only absolute, and some which place primacy on democratic principles, or conformity to the now existing middle-class social norms. Luckey (22, p. 266) states:

Value content is of two qualities--the overt and the covert. It is important to recognize the subtle value content within the materials we use and, most important, the value content within each of us as individuals. Knowing our own values, we can appreciate our capabilities and recognize our limitations.

LeShan and LeShan (20) point out that value orientations and goal setting behavior of children come directly from their parents' value orientations. Child-rearing techniques may modify the effect, but the largest impact is related to "what the parents are and do, rather than what they say." The extent that child-rearing practices reflect basic parental values do relate to the development of values in children, but our tendency to simplify this relationship has
created problems. Rearing a child as a comfortable, understood, satisfied individual, does not give us a goal-directed citizen with high moral and ethical standards; and likewise, not every discontented, unappreciated, rejected child has grown up without good values and goals. Basic parental values seem to have a much more direct relationship with end results than was anticipated: demand feeding, reasonable toilet training, gentle discipline—these may reinforce and modify—but they are not the sources of moral strength.

One study by LeShan and LeShan (20) followed up 200 children who had been studied in detail during the period 1925–1932. At that time they were of pre-school age. Now, as young parents themselves, they were evaluated again. One sample of these children were given love and support; yet clear standards and limitations were given them. They were directed on how they ought to behave. The other sample of children came from homes that had a greater tendency to permit them to develop their own standards and values; they were free to choose for themselves more often. The parents were less authoritative in guiding these children's education. The findings were that the adults coming from home with more structure and clearer standards seemed to have more confidence in themselves and in others. They had more definite ideas as to their future and they believed that work, not fate, was the way to accomplishment. Neither group was seriously unhappy or disturbed. However, the second group was more inclined to drift and less inclined to have clearly planned goals which they would work to attain.
Today the prevailing point of view of parent education is established upon the ever-changing needs of the growing individual. The first parental requisite, from this point of view, is the attainment of self-insight, or self-understanding. Stogdill (33, p. 827), for example, says: "The parents must be made more than superficially aware of the priceless value of an unmutilated child personality."

Stott and Bersin (34) indicate that Spock, Jersild, and Aldrich have stressed the importance of understanding the common growth processes and developmental sequences. They also have emphasized the significance of individual differences in rate and pattern of development which result in varying degrees of readiness for specific achievements in children of the same chronological age.

Radke (26) found that the present trend is in the direction of "standards and principles which child psychologists have advocated, toward greater respect for the child's personality, and toward less autocratic, unreasonable, and emotional discipline." The results of her study show evidence that scientific principles have come into use in the home and are accepted as part of the home culture pattern for the people represented in her study. Modern media of communication such as radio, television, magazines, newspapers, films, and others represented formalized parent education programs which contributed to this trend.

In discussion of what makes a good leader for group study, Stogdill (33, p. 63) concludes that:
leadership is not a matter of passive status, or of the more possession of some combination of traits. It appears rather to be a working relationship among members of a group, in which the leader acquires status through active participation and demonstration of his capacity for carrying cooperative tasks through to completion.

Concerning the effectiveness of parent education, there have been remarkable changes in the attitudes of learners toward their needs—changes brought about by an increase of parents’ knowledge and interest in child development.

A measurement of effectiveness is difficult and has seldom been attempted. Hedrick’s (10) endeavor to measure not only attitude but also the change in attitude toward self-reliance in children which occurred during a six-week parent education program, is one of the few such studies of this kind.

A similar study by Stott and Berson (34) was concerned with the measurement of common attitudes and beliefs of prospective parents concerning small children, how they behaved, etc., with an evaluation of changes in their attitudes resulting from attendance at a series of eight weekly educational meetings set up to help prepare them for parenthood. A scale of 30 statements was given to measure such attitudes and was given 28 couples who made up the group. These statements were given at the beginning of the course and again at the end. The attitudes expressed in these statements ranged from child-oriented, highly permissive, and lenient, on the one hand, to the authoritarian and prohibitive on the other. A matched group of parents, not enrolled in the program, were tested twice on the same attitude scale, at about the same interval. The results of this study are as follows:
1. On the whole, and with few exceptions, changes in individual attitudes after participation in the series of pre-parental meetings were in the positive directions; that is, toward the permissive and away from the rigid, authoritarian view of child care and discipline.

2. The average differences in results between the first and second tests or the experimental groups were highly significant statistically, while the comparable differences for the control group were not. It appears, therefore, that the pre-parental program produced a desired modification of attitudes and point of view, over and above that produced by interaction between obstetrician and patient and the usual guidance given during the course of pregnancy.

3. A study of relative susceptibility to change in attitudes involving four areas of child care showed resistance to change in the following increasing order: Discipline, feeding, toileting, and sleep. On this particular question further research is needed. (34, p. 191)

Another study along this line was made by McFerran (24) to find what effect parent group meetings had on the parents involved. The people of these groups varied in age, economic status, and intellectual capacity. Both Negroes and whites, male and female were included. The important ingredient in selection of the participants in this group was the similarity of their problems.

Meetings geared to the intellectual capacity, knowledge, experiences, and interests of the people involved can give them an enriching experience and can assist in helping them become better parents. It is hard to know just how lasting the effect will be. In order that these new-found feelings might be continued and developed further after the meetings are over, consideration of ways to get the families participating in a second series of meetings should be talked about to help move them into other community group activities.

Some direct quotations from different parents reveal what they think was
gained from these group meetings.

"The meetings helped me more when I get home and think about them."

"My wife talks about nothing else. Although she doesn't talk much in the meetings, we discuss everything that happened. This is the first thing she has been interested in that we can talk together."

"It is the only time I have to sit down and think." (24, p. 228)

Knickerbocker (17) in his study does not deal directly with present education. He is more concerned with group dynamics. Indirectly, however, through his study of the leader's role, he brings out different things which are necessary for leadership and apply in parent education. He implies that the reason people are in a group at any time is because through this group or through the leader of the group they anticipate finding a way to satisfy their needs. The group develops a leader for organization and to show that it is a unit. The people in the group accept directions from the leader. The leader is leader only in terms of his functional relationship to his group. He is followed because it is a means of fulfilling people's needs. The leader organizes the group toward the accomplishment of a desired end through controlled means. A leader is developed in parent education to fulfill the needs of parents and children in the various problems in child-rearing.

Group parent education seems to be worthwhile as indicated in a study by Shapiro (30). After exposure to a series of group discussion meetings, the members of an experimental group modified their child-rearing attitudes in predicted directions, toward increased good judgment and lessened authoritarianism. This was statistically significant as measured by the questionnaire and
by the staff ratings as well. However, the control group did not show significant modifications in child-rearing attitudes.

Also, those who attended four or more meetings in the series of group discussions achieved much greater change than did those who attended three or fewer meetings.

Along with this it is shown that the change of child-rearing attitudes of the experimental group measured by the questionnaire showed the result of gains fairly evenly distributed among the complete group of those parents who changed and was not the result of strong changes on the part of a few parents only.

Those parents whose initial scores represented the more desirable attitudes improved much more than did those whose beginning scores represented the less desirable attitudes. Those who attended three or fewer meetings in most cases were those who achieved the least desirable initial scores.

The findings, as revealed in the spoken and written comments of the observers, are in agreement with the statistical findings and with the experience of educators working with parent education groups. The findings, subject to certain limitations, support the belief that exposure to group discussion methods will modify parental child-rearing attitudes according to the amount of exposure to group discussion. These group discussion meetings can oftentimes bring about a desired change in child-rearing attitudes without need for therapeutic help.
There are three major trends in social science research which seem particularly important to the problems of parent education today, according to LeShan and LeShan (20).

The deepening understanding of the social pressures placed upon our society, and the attempt to conform instead of being individuals is one trend. In addition there is need for an increased awareness that value-orientations must be evident in the adult before they can be sought in a child; and that the child-rearing techniques of adults will not by themselves create values. The third trend would be a gradual realization that no one technique or one method, no one scientific research tool, no one point of view or ideal will solve all our problems. The fact must be faced that many different people with different kinds of backgrounds and different methods or approaches to parent education have all contributed to our knowledge about effective parenthood. No one method, discipline, or approach can do the job alone.

Lehner (19) in her study of parental attitudes brings out the following findings: After being exposed to group discussion experiences, parents modified their child-rearing attitudes to a measurable degree, toward increased good judgment and lessened authoritarianism. Parents who attended four or more meetings in the series of group discussions showed significantly greater change than those attending three or fewer meetings. Lehner's study was similar in design to that done by Shapiro and the results are essentially the same. The control group in her study which did not participate in the program had primarily the same attitude at the conclusion of the study as they did at the beginning. There
was some change but the findings were not statistically significant.

The fathers in the experimental group modified their attitudes in one area of the study even though they did not participate in the cooperative nursery school experience. This area was more permissiveness in aggression toward parents. The other three areas of the study were dependency, child aggression toward other children, and relationship with other children. These three areas showed a wide range in change of attitudes on the part of the fathers.

Mothers who participated in the cooperative nursery school experience and participated in the greatest number of discussion group meetings showed the greatest amount of change in attitudes. Mothers who participated in this program of parent education modified their attitudes toward more permissive behavior, and toward understanding and insight into the feelings experienced by her child.

This study indicates that participation in a cooperative nursery school program can change parental attitudes toward child guidance and better child rearing practices. Also, fathers' attitudes can be changed and modified as a result of influence of mothers' participation in this program. The findings indicate that there are differences between the attitudes of mothers and fathers toward child behavior and that not all the parental attitudes toward child behavior were influence in the same ways.

Fathers appear to be more interested in child-rearing today. However, it is hard to get fathers to participate in parent education programs. Kawin (14) feels that there should be special efforts directed at getting fathers to
participate. She feels that one of the greatest limitations in the program is
that the groups are largely made up of mothers, but not because fathers have
no interest. Those who have had years of experience in parent education work
agree that they have never known fathers to be so interested in the care, guid­
ance, and education of their children as the young fathers are today.

Special efforts must be made to bring fathers into study-discussion
groups. These might be groups where mothers, teachers, and other professional
workers and laymen participate, or they may be groups composed of fathers only.
Some men would be more willing to participate in the latter groups. The main
thing is to get them interested and active, regardless of what type of groups are
necessary. There are some advantages in mothers, fathers, and educators all
working together.

Landreth (2) feels that parents want parent education, and also they
want their children in nursery schools. About half the parents questioned in
her study of prekindergarten attendance wanted parent education as part of the
nursery school program. There were many more who wanted to have oppor­
tunities for parent conferences, parent meetings, and parent observation of
the children in their participation of actual play experiences. The study went
on to show that only 14 percent of the 8,000 first-graders involved had the
chance to attend nursery schools. However, Landreth stated that nearly half
the parents would have liked their children to have had the experience of nursery
school programs.
Kawin (14) has called attention to some of the benefits which may be derived from parent education. Parents enter such programs to increase their knowledge and understanding of children, and of themselves. They want to use this knowledge and understanding to help children become mature, responsible citizens. The purpose is to stimulate parents to seek such knowledge and understanding and to be able to differentiate what is known from what is unknown. There needs to be a feeling of humility among parent educators because there are so few proved answers to questions about bringing up children. Parents may gain feelings of security and adequacy in their relationship with their children. They need confidence in their own judgment in guiding their children. They then may feel satisfaction in their role as parents. These study-discussion groups help parents grow in their abilities to share their knowledge and experiences with other group members. They find a basis of common interest in their common problems.

Kawin (14, p. 23) states:

In the ultimate evaluation of any parent education project the two most significant questions are: (1) To what extent do parents become more adequate, wiser, and happier parents through the experiences afforded by the project; and (2) To what extent do children themselves actually benefit through their parents' participation in such a project?

Nursery schools and cooperative nursery schools are beginning to play a big part in parent education, especially in the past few years. Taylor (36) feels that communities are being awakened through individual efforts of participating parents in parent education. There are many opportunities for leadership
which carry over into other fields of community life, making the community a better place to live. Families are tied closer together when there is a central goal for which to work. Parents use better disciplinary methods on their own children. Then, too, they are made more aware of the needs of the neighbor's child. Children are receiving many benefits from programs in parent education.

The term cooperative nursery school means primarily those neighborhood schools formed through the work of several families, with the parents helping one another through the organization and business affairs. A qualified teacher is in full charge every day. The mothers take turns helping with the children, rotating to give each the opportunity. The schools usually operate two and one-half hours each morning or afternoon, five days a week, and may be housed in unused schoolrooms, churches, recreation centers, or private homes. Some groups have built fine buildings for their cooperative group. All in all, there is the feeling of unity and cooperation that makes these projects an educational success.

The tendency now in the cooperative nursery school is to enroll the whole family rather than just the child. Fathers, mothers, grandparents, and other relatives are drawn into various activities. Fathers should and are expected to attend monthly educational and business meetings, and at regular intervals to contribute an evening or some time toward betterment of the school. They help with such things as finances, legal and health matters, architecture, according to their individual qualifications. Some schools run special sessions
so that fathers may observe and oftentimes work in guiding the children.

Taylor (36, p. 333) states: "No other single educational medium seems to have as many potentialities for significant parental and preparental education as cooperative nursery schools."

Macintyre and Gorman (23) reported on a new process to orient nursery school children. The plan included home visits by the nursery school teacher. The mother and child would visit the school individually. A briefing session with all the mothers to explain what will be done and how they can best help is arranged. There will be the actual play period with both mother and child in attendance for 45 minutes to 1 hour, starting with one day a week and building up to a maximum time. Discussion groups will meet periodically--with the mothers as a group and individual conferences when necessary. The purpose of the program is to learn how much can be done with parents and better ways of doing it.

Other possible means of achieving understanding and cooperation are school visitations, movies of nursery school activities, finding the interests of parents, and making use of such community resources as are available to help form study groups.

Lippitt (21) maintains that the tools for social change are action-research and training in human relations skills. He sees both of these as companion forces in which each strengthens the other, and in which each contributes to possibilities for more effective efforts to bring about social change.

His work does not deal with parent education, in a direct way. However,
the goal of parent education programs is to bring about social change in the sense that they attempt to motivate change, when needed, through the development of insight and understanding of children and of the parents themselves. The methods which Lippitt and others in the group dynamics field label as ineffective have also been demonstrated to be of little value in parent education. Autocratic leadership, leadership in which the proper role is seen as providing the answers, telling the parent-participants what they "ought" to be doing has not been found to be effective as a means of parent education leadership. Using group skills to help parents discover ways in which they can accept and apply that which is known about children has been found to be much more effective in accomplishing the purposes of parent education.

After considering all the different studies, it is evident that those involved as teachers in parent education should have a substantial background in child development and family life. Parent education is oriented to helping parents gain an understanding of themselves and their children. This is more than a gaining of new information and knowledge because such education deals with feelings and attitudes of the members involved. It is a professional service and it must be developed carefully with regard to the availability of adequately prepared personnel.

The knowledge today of children's needs and good child-rearing practices needs to be made available to all parents in such a way that it becomes incorporated into their thinking and feeling. The all-important task of child-rearing can not be left to chance.
METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Background

In the fall of 1962 the Department of Family and Child Development at Utah State University received a request for assistance in establishing a co-operative nursery school in Millard County at Fillmore, Utah. Mrs. Ronald Summers, the wife of a physician and a prominent member of the community, started this interest and was influential in pushing the idea along. The leaders of the community contacted the County Extension Service. The County Extension Agents typically are interested in developing activity programs for members of the community. They, therefore, were interested in providing leadership for this kind of program if sufficient community interest and support were to develop. The County Agents themselves did not have sufficient background in child development to be able to provide leadership in the development of this kind of program, so they requested assistance from the Utah State University Extension Service which has access to all operating departments of the University for resource assistance beyond the scope of the Extension personnel themselves. The request was then directed to the Department of Family and Child Development which has a primary interest in matters of this type.

Two representatives from the Department of Family and Child Development agreed to go to Fillmore to meet with the Extension Agents and the committee they had called together to work under their direction. The Extension
personnel became the leaders in this activity because it was through their office that the resource people needed by the project could be secured.

The County Agents formed a committee composed of the Millard County Superintendent of Schools, both Extension Agents, and Mrs. Summers, who had initiated the interest in developing a cooperative nursery school in the community. This committee met with the two child development specialists in a series of meetings extending over a period of three days.

Some of the things discussed in these meetings were the purposes of a cooperative nursery school, the equipment needed to operate such a school, and appropriate activities for children in such a program. Pamphlets, books, pictures, and other supplies were left with the committee members as samples, or as models of the kind of materials which might be most useful to preschool children in a cooperative nursery school.

Emphasis was placed on describing and explaining the cooperative plan for parent participation in a cooperative nursery school. In such an enterprise, the usual purposes of the program include both benefits to the children and education in child care and development for the parents. Parent education is a basic function of the typical cooperative nursery school. The organizers of this particular nursery school, however, were interested primarily in the potentials of the program as a source of benefits to children. Parent education was not meaningfully included among the purposes of the program as originally outlined, and did not become a part of the planned activities of the school as it
progressed throughout the year. One reason for the omission of a parent education emphasis in this particular nursery school was the absence of strong encouragement in this direction on the part of the Department of Family and Child Development representatives. No attempt was made to discourage a parent education orientation program, but no strong encouragement was given in this direction beyond calling attention to the parent education possibilities existing in cooperative nursery schools. When the program was defined without parent education emphasis, on the part of the local committee and parents, the department accepted this decision and decided to conduct a research project to investigate the possibilities of achieving some parent education goals through the use of a cooperative nursery school without support from parent discussion meetings, parent study groups, as they usually function as parts of a cooperative nursery school program.

Near the conclusion of the three-day conference involving the child development staff members and the local committee, a meeting was held with parents who were interested in participating in the cooperative nursery school program. There were approximately 20 parents in attendance at this meeting.

The primary purpose of this meeting was to inform the parents of the philosophy and purposes of a cooperative nursery school, and to attempt to determine if they were interested in participating in the proposed program. The University representatives outlined the purposes and philosophy of cooperative nursery schools, and there was considerable group discussion before the group decided to go ahead with the establishment of the Fillmore Cooperative Nursery School.
The Cooperative Nursery School was described in the meeting as being more than a place for children to play with others their own age. It was described as a place where parents may, through actual teaching experiences, add to their understanding and enjoyment of their children. It was also seen as a place where a child could gain socializing experiences and have contact with a wide range of sensory experiences beyond what most homes can individually provide. It was the latter function which was defined as more important by the Fillmore group, and which became the guiding purpose of their cooperative nursery school.

The purposes of the cooperative were further described as being (a) to help parents develop a more relaxed and loving leadership in the home as well as in the nursery school, and (b) to provide for the child freedom of expression, protection, and understanding in an atmosphere conducive to individual growth. The child in a cooperative nursery school situation should receive opportunity for extended social contacts, opportunities to learn to cooperate with others, to defend his rights, to express his interests and talents, to develop some balance between give and take, and to develop spontaneity and individuality in a group situation.

Parents who were to participate in the program were encouraged to recognize that children are investigating and reaching into the environment. They need opportunities for sensory experiences and exploration. They are in a social situation, but do not need to be grouped all the time. There is an important dimension of growth that comes from individuality and the pursuit of individual interests.
The parents' participation schedule in which each mother was to take her turn, in rotation in working with the children, was explained and discussed. The final action in the meeting was for the group to decide to move forward with plans for their cooperative nursery school.

The cooperative nursery school was to function five days a week. It would be held two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon with accommodations for twenty-five children in the morning and a similar number in the afternoon in each group. Children would range in age from three to five years old.

The school was originally planned to open at the American Legion Hall. After a brief period of operation, however, the hall was found to be inadequate, due to the lack of facilities to accommodate the children's needs. The primary problem was that the hall was located on the main street of the city. Therefore, the nursery school was soon moved to one unit of a duplex apartment house located off the main street of the city where traffic was less of a hazard. This apartment served the nursery school needs much better and provided more room both inside and outside. It was also less expensive to rent. This was an important consideration in view of the fact that the operating budget of the nursery school was based on a fee of $10.00 per month per child, or a maximum potential of $500.00 per month. The actual income more nearly approximated $350.00 per month.

Mrs. Richard White, wife of the high school principal, was selected to be the teacher. Mrs. White did not have a child of her own in the nursery school.
She was certified as an elementary school teacher, but did not have extensive background in the areas of child development or nursery school education. The committee placed the nursery school under the direction of Mrs. Summers, the original organizer of the enterprise. It was agreed by the committee that Mrs. White, the teacher would be assisted by two parents in the cooperative group each day. A schedule was worked out so that parents served in the nursery school on a rotating basis, each parent taking her turn in sequence.

Prior to the parent planning meeting, Mrs. Summers went to the school census report to find the names of children who lived in Fillmore and were in the age range of three to five years of age. Their names were taken and the children's parents were contacted. Mrs. Summers described the cooperative program to them, including the benefits the program would have for their children and for themselves. She also discussed what the responsibilities of the parents would be in the operation of the program. A large number of parents were interested and made definite arrangements for their children to attend. However, conflicts occurred which reduced the number of children who were finally to enter the program. Some parents found it difficult to arrange their schedule with that of the nursery school. Others who were interested in the school had smaller children at home who could not be arranged for in the parents' absence. Others faced such problems as financial difficulties, and transportation difficulties, all of which resulted in a reduced number of children enrolled in the nursery school. The final number enrolled was less than twenty children. This group comprised the experimental group for this study.
Throughout the year there were parent meetings and workshops held. In the workshops the parents helped make items needed by the school. However, there was no formal instruction in child care offered for these parents. The educational aids were pamphlets received through Utah State University Extension Division and actual participation in the cooperative nursery school activities. Mrs. White, the cooperative nursery school teacher, visited the Child Development Laboratory on Utah State University campus and received additional help from the staff members who had been to Fillmore to start the program.

Reason for the study

Lehner's study (19) earlier had shown that a cooperative nursery school, supported by weekly parent discussion-group meetings, could be successful in modifying parent attitudes toward children's behavior. The reason for this study was to investigate the extent to which parent attitudes might be modified in a cooperative nursery school oriented toward the benefits to be derived from the children, and in which parent education as a conscious and planned goal was minimal. This analysis required a parent attitude scale to be used in measurement. A scale was developed for this purpose.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated to deal with different aspects of this study. They are as follows:

(a) There will be differences in attitudes toward children's behavior
between men and women, those married more and less than ten years, those with and without any college education, men with professional and non-professional background, mothers who are and are not employed, as well as parents with small and large families.

(b) There will be differences in change or modification of attitudes towards children's behavior between the experimental group which participated in the cooperative nursery school program and the control group which had no comparable experience.

Development of a scale to measure parent attitudes

The parent attitude measurement scale used for this study was one revised from that used by Lehner in her study of parent attitudes. Four main areas were selected to evaluate what seemed to be of particular importance in the life of the preschool child. The areas were (a) dependency, (b) child aggression toward parents, (c) child aggression toward other children, and (d) relationship of child to peers.

Because these types of behavior are typical and of considerable importance in a child's world, it was thought to be desirable to develop a scale to measure parental attitude and reactions displayed in connection with these types of behaviorisms.

Dependency was chosen because any incident where the child leaves, or is taken from, the family situation or the home is the first critical step in the preschool child's independence. This can oftentimes be a difficult transition for both parent and child.
Child aggression toward parents was selected because of its association with this age group. The child is beginning to get personal feelings about himself as an independent individual. These feelings, and the way they are expressed, are often looked upon as rebellion or aggression toward the parent.

Child aggression toward other children was chosen for its importance in the relationship of a child to his peer group. In the approach to establish himself with other children, a child often displays an aggressive attitude which in most cases is unacceptable to the parent.

Relationship with other children is important. It was chosen because as the child leaves his family's influence and moves into a new situation with his peers, he must establish himself. Often this is done by the child's attempting to control the group and experimenting as to the most acceptable means. The methods used by the child are sometimes unacceptable to the parent.

The next step in the development of this measurement scale was to choose appropriate questions that would best explain parental feelings about their children's behavior. There was a need for several choices of action in order that parents might best express their possible reactions. These choices were weighted according to desirable child development standards. There were five points allotted for the answer that best coincided with that of child development standards. Then the scale decreased in points according to answers down to the least desirable choice. These ratings were based on child development standards where the parent shows more tolerance and understanding, and
moderation rather than extremes in leniency or authoritarianism attitudes and severe disciplinary actions.

Questionnaire development

This study was dependent upon the parents' cooperation and participation. A short explanation about the questionnaire was written to introduce the questionnaire and the purpose of the study. It included instructions on how it was to be filled in, and an area of general information about the parent with such items as age, sex, birth date, marriage, years of schooling, religion, and number of children in the family.

The attitude scale was made up of 16 questions, 4 in the area of dependency, 4 in the area of aggression toward parents, 4 in the area of aggression toward other children, and 4 in the area of relationship with other children.

Each question had five possible reactions from which the parent could choose the one he thought best. The parent was asked to circle the one that represented the feelings that he might have expressed if he were confronted with such a decision.

The questionnaire was given twice, once at the beginning of the program in the fall of 1962, and again at the end of the program in the spring of 1963. It was assumed that the differences between the responses to the questionnaire would indicate any change of attitude that might have taken place.

The questions were weighted on a continuum from most to least desirable reactions. Five points were given for the most desirable response and so on down to the least desirable response which received one point. There were no points given if the answer was left blank.
The questionnaire

STUDY OF PARENT ATTITUDES

We are trying to learn about parent-child relationships. To do this we need the cooperation of many parents. You can help us a great deal by filling out the following questionnaire as frankly and as carefully as possible. Sincere and frank answers are requested so that valid data can be secured. Please do not put book answers; we want to find out how you really feel and what you really do.

You will note the questionnaire does not call for any mark of identification. Thus, your answers as well as the many others will be absolutely anonymous. We are not interested in individual answers but in how groups of parents respond to these statements; therefore, all of the responses will be treated as confidential and will be used for purposes of scientific research.

Please answer all questions. If you cannot give the exact answer to a question, answer the best you can. Circle one answer for each question listed, giving exactly what you would do in each case.

Owen W. Cahoon
Utah State University

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Sex: Male_________ Female_________ 2. Year of birth:_________

3. Year of Marriage:_________ 4. Draw a circle around the number of years of schooling you have completed:

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>123456789</td>
<td>1234</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade school</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
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5. Religious affiliation:

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<tr>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>L D. S.</td>
<td>Other</td>
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6. Husband’s occupation (be specific such as dairy farmer, drug store clerk, college professor, automobile mechanic, etc.)

7. Wife’s occupation during the past four years

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<tr>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
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1Quoted from the printed questionnaire used in this study.
8. Number of children in family: boys _______ girls _______

I. When my child cries when I try to leave him at nursery school, Sunday School, or some other group, I:
   A. Feel he is too little to leave me.
   B. Tell him goodbye and tell him I'll be back later for him.
   C. Tell him to be a big boy like the other children.
   D. Plan to stay until he no longer feels he needs me.
   E. Am ashamed of him.

II. When I am going about my daily work and my child hangs on me and follows me about, I:
   A. Tell him to go play somewhere else.
   B. Fix a place near me where he can play and assure him now and again that I am close by.
   C. Feel so irritated that I could scream.
   D. Shut him in another room.
   E. Feel he needs companionship and talk with him while I work or let him help me.

III. When my child becomes very fond of his nursery school teacher, Sunday School teacher, a friend or neighbor, I:
   A. Ask him every night if he loves mother the most.
   B. Am glad because it means he is becoming less dependent on me alone.
   C. Ignore it.
   D. Show him how much I admire the teacher and neighbor too.
   E. Try to make him jealous by pretending I love someone else.

IV. When my child cries and makes a fuss when I get ready to go out, I:
   A. Spank him and put him to bed.
   B. Arrange to have someone stay with him whom he enjoys.
   C. Wait until he is asleep and slip out.
   D. Tell him I am going and that I will be back soon.
   E. Ignore the crying and just leave.

V. When my child is quarrelsome in his play with other children, I:
   A. Try to find out what is the matter before I do anything.
   B. Feel angry and spank him.
   C. Take him away and tell him he has to play by himself.
   D. If it is possible, I wait to see if the children can settle it themselves.
   E. Send him to his room.
VI. When my child hits another child in his play group and hits him hard, I:

A. Take him away and tell him he cannot play any more
B. If no one is being seriously hurt, I wait to see if the children can settle it.
C. Tell the other children to hit him back.
D. Hit him so he will know how it feels.
E. Interest them both in something else.

VII. When my child shows off when others in his play group are behaving well, I:

A. Tell him to sit down and do as the other children are doing.
B. Do not notice what he is doing.
C. Tell him not to act silly.
D. Give him something else to do that interests him.
E. Take him out of the room.

VIII. When we have guests in the home with children about the same ages and my child takes toys away from other children with whom he is playing, I:

A. Give the toy he had taken right back.
B. Tell him he must play nicely or he can't play any more.
C. Wait to see if the children can work it out themselves.
D. Give him another toy that serves the purpose as well and help him give back the one he took.
E. Tell his father he has been a bad boy.

IX. When my child says angry and hateful things to me, I:

A. Tell him I know how it feels, but that we still have to do it.
B. Pleases me that he feels free to express himself.
C. Threaten to wash out his mouth with soap.
D. Tell him to go to his room until he is ready to apologize.
E. Disregard what he has said and quietly go on with what we are doing.

X. When my child hits or kicks me, I:

A. Hit him back, so he will know how it feels to hurt someone.
B. Leave the room until he has quieted down and then go back to see if he is ready to cooperate.
C. Hang onto him until he quits struggling, then help him to understand what he has done.
D. Give in; it's easier than to stand his temper.
E. Spank him.

XI. When my child kicks, screams, and throws thing, I:
A. Give in and do what he wants.
B. Send him to his room.
C. Spank him hard.
D. Try to find out why he acts like this.
E. Stop him and then stay with him until he calms down.

XII. When my child has a day when he breaks to pieces almost everything he handles, I:

A. Take his toys away and tell him he can have them back when he is ready to be careful.
B. Give him old things to play with that he can pull to pieces and break.
C. Spank his hands.
D. Tell him he’s a bad, destructive child.
E. Put my own breakable things away during the time he is growing through this period.

XIII. When my child is with a group of children and insists on playing by himself, I:

A. Tell him he must play with the other children.
B. Regard it as evidence of his individuality.
C. Take away the thing he likes to play with alone.
D. Understand that it takes children time to learn to play with others.
E. Tell him, I guess he’s a big baby and had better stay at home with mother.

XIV. When my child goes from one thing to another and can’t seem to settle on any one kind of play, I:

A. Tell him to sit in a chair until he can make up his mind.
B. Feel nervous and irritated about it.
C. Realize that his attention span is very short and arrange a variety of things to keep him interested.
D. Tell him if he can’t be good, I’ll give him away.
E. I do not feel concerned and pay no attention to it.

XV. If my child has an imaginary playmate, who is very real to him, I:

A. Talk with him and point out that he knows there is no such person.
B. Do not feel concerned and pay no attention to it.
C. Fear he will grow up to be a liar.
D. Arrange to have him have some real-life playmates.
E. Tell him it is silly.
XVI. When my child shows off in front of special guests, I:

A. Send him to his room.
B. Do not feel concerned and pay no attention to it.
C. Feel he needs to express his feelings.
D. Am embarrassed.
E. Give him some attention and get him interested in something.

The control and experimental groups

Two groups of parents were selected and used in this study. The experimental group consisted of those parents whose children were in the cooperative nursery school program. The control group consisted of parents with children between the ages of three to five, but who were not active in the program.

The parents who comprised the experimental group were given the questionnaire shortly after school started. They were asked to fill in the answer best explaining their personal feelings about children's various behaviors. They had the desire to best help their children in this new experience. They realized that their children needed association and understanding. This was their motivation when they enrolled their children in the nursery school. It is likely that their identification with the nursery school provided some motivation to them in helping with this study.

With the help and persuasion of Mrs. White, the cooperative nursery school teacher, the questionnaires were answered and returned. All parents in the original nursery school group completed the first questionnaire, and all who completed the year in the program completed the second.

Parents in the experimental group worked in the cooperative nursery school
with the children, in actual play experiences. They had certain scheduled days when they were to help in the school. They also participated in workshops and parents’ meetings to construct equipment needed in the nursery school, to work out problems of scheduling, and other administrative matters involved in the operation of the program. At no one time was there any formal instruction available from a child development teacher or parent educator. The main source of education was the actual daily experience gained while working with the children.

The control group was made up from names on the local school census. The parents who had children from the ages of three to five years of age constituted the control group. Many of these parents’ children were originally considered eligible for admittance to the cooperative nursery school. For various reasons they were not a part of the program, even though their parents were interested. These people were asked to help with the study by filling out the questionnaires. Many did so willingly, but there were some who refused to help with the study. Some of this group of parents had no knowledge of the cooperative nursery school program or what was offered for children. They had no knowledge of what to expect, and had not enrolled their children. None of the parents of the control group had any participation in the nursery school at any time.

Administration and collection of data

In administering the questionnaires to the parents, an introduction of the study and a request for their help was given. The same questionnaire was given to the parents of the experimental and control groups. Both father and mother
of each child in both groups were participants. The first questionnaire was
given about three weeks after the cooperative nursery school began. The
second questionnaire was given to both groups about a week before the program
was completed.

The data was collected from each parent after a reasonable period of time.
This time was allotted according to their particular need. Some parents had
conflicts and needed more time to complete their questionnaire than others.

Some of the parents in the control group refused to participate in the full
program. They reluctantly answered the first questionnaire, but refused to do
so twice. They said that once was enough, in some cases; in others, they said
that they didn't have the time to and didn't want to participate.

Weight key for questionnaire

The following is an indication of the value given to each statement in the
questionnaire. Five points is given for the most desirable answer continuing
down to one point which is given for the least desirable answer.

I. When my child cries when I try to leave him at nursery school, Sunday School,
or some other group, I:

(4) A. Feel he is too little to leave me.
(3) B. Tell him goodbye and tell him I’ll be back later for him.
(2) C. Tell him to be a big boy like the other children.
(5) D. Plan to stay until he no longer feels he needs me.
(1) E. Am ashamed of him.

II. When I am going about my daily work and my child hangs on me and follows
me about, I:

1. This key is quoted from the weight key which accompanied the questionnaire
for the supervisors’ use.
Tell him to go play somewhere else.
Fix a place near me where he can play and assure him now and again that I am close by.
Feel so irritated that I could scream.
Shut him in another room.
Feel he needs companionship and talk with him while I work or let him help me.

III. When my child becomes very fond of his nursery school teacher, Sunday School teacher, a friend or neighbor, I:

Ask him every night if he loves mother the most.
Am glad because it means he is becoming less dependent on me alone.
Ignore it.
Show him how much I admire the teacher and neighbor too.
Try to make him jealous by pretending I love someone else.

IV. When my child cries and makes a fuss when I get ready to go out, I:

Spank him and put him to bed.
Arrange to have someone stay with him whom he enjoys.
Wait until he is asleep and slip out.
Tell him I am going and that I will be back soon.
I ignore the crying and just leave.

V. When my child is quarrelsome in his play with other children, I:

Try to find out what is the matter before I do anything.
Feel angry and spank him.
Take him away and tell him he has to play by himself.
If it is possible, I wait to see if the children can settle it themselves.
Send him to his room.

VI. When my child hits another child in his play group and hits him hard, I:

Take him away and tell him he cannot play any more.
If no one is being seriously hurt, I wait to see if the children can settle it.
Tell the other children to hit him back.
Hit him so that he will know how it feels.
Interest them both in something else.

VII. When my child shows off when others in his play group are behaving well, I:

Tell him to sit down and do as the other children are doing.
Do not notice what he is doing.
(3) C. Tell him not to act silly.
(5) D. Give him something else to do that interests him.
(1) E. Take him out of the room.

VIII. When we have guests in the home with children about the same ages
and my child takes toys away from other children with whom he is
playing, I:

(1) A. Give the toy he has taken right back.
(2) B. Tell him he must play nicely or he can't play any more.
(5) C. Wait to see if the children can work it out themselves.
(4) D. Give him another toy that serves the purpose as well and help
him give back the one he took.
(3) E. Tell his father he has been a bad boy.

IX. When my child says angry and hateful things to me, I:

(5) A. Tell him I know how it feels, but that we still have to do it.
(4) B. Pleases me that he feels free to express himself.
(1) C. Threaten to wash out his mouth with soap.
(2) D. Tell him to go to his room until he is ready to apologize.
(3) E. Disregard what he has said and quietly go on with what we are doing.

X. When my child hits or kicks me, I:

(2) A. Hit him back so he will know how it feels to hurt someone.
(4) B. Leave the room until he has quieted down and then go back to see if
he is ready to cooperate.
(5) C. Hang onto him until he quits struggling, then help him to understand
what he has done.
(1) D. Give in, it's easier than to stand his temper.
(3) E. Spank him.

XI. When my child kicks, screams, and throws thing, I:

(1) A. Give in and do what he wants.
(3) B. Send him to his room.
(2) C. Spank him hard.
(4) D. Try to find out why he acts like this.
(5) E. Stop him and then stay with him until he calms down.

XII. When my child has a day when he breaks to pieces almost everything he
handles, I:

(3) A. Take his toys away and tell him he can have them back when he is ready
to be careful.
B. Give him old things to play with that he can pull to pieces and break.
C. Spank his hands.
D. Tell him he's a bad, destructive child.
E. Put my own breakable things away during the time he is growing through this period.

XIII. When my child is with a group of children and insists on playing by himself, I:
A. Tell him he must play with the other children.
B. Regard it as evidence of his individuality.
C. Take away the things he likes to play with alone.
D. Understand that it takes children time to learn to play with others.
E. Tell him I guess he's a big baby and had better stay at home with mother.

XIV. When my child goes from one thing to another and can't seem to settle on any one kind of play, I:
A. Tell him to sit in a chair until he can make up his mind.
B. Feel nervous and irritated about it.
C. Realize that his attention span is very short and arrange a variety of things to keep him interested.
D. Tell him if he can't be good, I'll give him away.
E. I do not feel concerned and pay no attention to it.

XV. If my child has an imaginary playmate, who is very real to him, I:
A. Talk with him and point out that he knows there is no such person.
B. Do not feel concerned and pay no attention to it.
C. Fear he will grow up to be a liar.
D. Arrange to have him have some real life playmates.
E. Tell him it is silly.

XVI. When my child shows off in front of special guests, I:
A. Send him to his room.
B. Do not feel concerned and pay no attention to it.
C. Feel he needs to express his feelings.
D. Am embarrassed.
E. Give him some attention and get him interested in something.
FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Findings

The first hypothesis stated that there will be differences in attitudes toward children's behavior between men and women, those married more and less than ten years, those with and without college education, men with professional and non-professional background, mothers who are and are not employed, as well as parents with small and large families.

The findings of this study do not support this hypothesis. The findings, summarized in Table 1, indicate that there are no significant differences in the attitudes of men and women toward children's behavior. This finding is contradictory to the results in Lehner's study (19), in which she investigated parental attitudes toward children's behavior and found significant differences between men and women. The questionnaire used in the present study was an adaptation of Lehner's questionnaire. There are sufficient differences between the two that no comparison can be made between Lehner's urban group and the more rural population used in this study.

Lehner's group had fewer children per family than was true of the parents included in this study. In the present study, more women than men completed both questionnaires. More men failed to do so because of lack of interest on their part. Perhaps the low-scoring ones, or less-motivated ones, by dropping out, raised the average of the men, because the ones left in the study were the
Table 1. Analysis of variance of parental attitudes toward child rearing for testing significance of differences between parents by sex, education, profession of husband, employment of mother, size of family, and participation in experimental program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean Square Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex MS  F</td>
<td>Age MS  F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1  21.002457</td>
<td>24.665514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1(NS)</td>
<td>&lt;1(NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>44  29.218325</td>
<td>29.135072</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table F with 1 and 44 degrees of freedom at <.05 = 4.06
ones who were less defensive about their attitudes, as well as more secure in holding and in reporting them. If true, this might account for the differences in findings between the two studies. This is, of course, not known.

Age, number of years married, education, father’s profession, and mother’s employment were all considered statistically in the study as shown in Table 1. According to the findings there was no statistical significance which would indicate that these things were influencing factors in this study. The distribution of average scores on the attitude toward children’s behavior scale is presented in Table 2. These average scores are more similar than was expected.

The absence of significant differences between the attitudes of men and women, those married more and less than ten years, those with and without college education, men with professional and non-professional background, mothers who are and are not employed, as well as parents with small and large families is difficult to explain. The absence of such differences may be due to the small sample used in the study, or to the failure of some members of the control group to complete the second questionnaire. A more provocative possibility is that the uniformity of attitudes toward child care in this situation is a product of community homogeneity. The study was conducted in a community of approximately 2,000. Residents of the community have generally grown up there. There are only a few who have moved into the town as new residents. Religiously, the community is homogeneous. Nearly all residents are members of the Latter-day Saint (Mormon) church. There was substantial variation in occupation and educational background
Table 2. Average scores on attitude toward children's behavior scale by categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experimental and control groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young married</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old married</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No college</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Profession of father</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-professional</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother's employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother employed</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother not employed</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small family</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large family</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of participants in the study, and if community homogeneity were to account for the absence of significant differences between the groups studied, it would indicate that such homogeneity was, in this instance, a more determining force than such individual factors.

The second hypothesis stated that there will be differences in change or modification of attitudes towards children's behavior between the experimental group members who participated in the cooperative nursery school program and the control group who had no comparable experience.

The findings fail to provide support for this hypothesis, as indicated in Table 1. The differences between scores on the first and second responses to the questionnaire are similar for members of the experimental and control groups.

In Lehner's investigation of the influence of participation in a cooperative nursery school program on parental attitudes toward children's behavior, the parents participated in an intensive study program as well as in the operation of the nursery school itself. Her study reported significant changes in parental attitudes as a result of participation in the cooperative nursery school. The finding in the present study that no significant changes occurred in parental attitudes as a result of participation in the nursery school program, may well have occurred because the nursery school was established as an activity in the interests of the children. Parent education was not a planned part of the program, and was not an expected goal.
A study program of some kind may be the key to the development of growth in understanding the meanings and purposes underlying children's behavior. Very often the behavior of a child may be considered to be cute, or naughty, or nice, and may be dismissed with little attempt to relate the behavior to generalizations about children's behavior in general, or to children's growth and learning. The availability of a group situation, such as a nursery school, to provide opportunity to observe interaction, spontaneity, and variations in behavior patterns among children, coupled with an opportunity to study children's behavior from a theoretical point of view, appears to be a most fruitful approach to parent education. Neither the study group or class situation, on the one hand, or the group behavior situation, on the other, appears to provide as effective an opportunity for learning as the combination of both together.

There has been, nevertheless, increasing enthusiasm on the part of the community and the parents involved in the cooperative nursery school in Fillmore. This help and enthusiasm has resulted in a continuation and growth of the program in that community. It seems clear that the parents who have participated in the program have found the experience to have been a beneficial one, and that they value it sufficiently to want to continue with it. Whether this interest in continuing the program is a product of their having found greater understanding of children and greater rewards in parenthood, or is a product of their feeling the program is of direct benefit to the children, is not known. It may be assumed that they recognize the values to children resulting from their being in the kind
of environment a cooperative nursery school can provide, in terms of socializing experiences and growth opportunities resulting from rich and varied sensory contacts with materials beyond the scope easily provided in most individual homes.

Summary and conclusion

Parent education has existed for a very long time. Its influence has resulted in the many changes of methods and attitudes of parents toward their children. Whether these changes are good or bad can be debated; however, the search goes on toward finding the best way to care for and rear children. Parents are deeply concerned with this problem and are working toward the acquired end of better understanding of children's needs.

Past traditions are changed or changing and what we have now is a part of this changing program. As more is learned, more changes occur. One changing area is people's attitudes. This research was undertaken to measure change in parent attitudes toward child rearing and child care practices as a result of parents' working with children in a cooperative nursery school situation.

A parent attitude scale was constructed to evaluate attitudes of parents in four particular areas of behavior. These areas are dependency, child aggression toward children, child aggression towards parents, and relationships with other children. A rating scale was designed to evaluate the answers given by the parents to questions concerning these four areas of behavior. Their responses are evaluated according to five choices of reaction to each question on the questionnaire.
The questionnaire was given to an experimental group, consisting of the parents who had children attending the cooperative nursery school, and a control group of parents with children of the same age range but who were not participants in the cooperative nursery school. The questionnaire was given twice to each group of parents, once at the beginning of the school year, and again at the conclusion of the nursery school year.

This study was set up to measure the results of change in parent attitudes from participation in the child centered cooperative nursery school. The findings were that there were no significant changes in the parents' attitudes toward child rearing resultant to this program.

Lehner ran a similar test in which she reported that there was a definite change in attitudes of the parents in the parent education program at Weber State University. In her program the parents participated in an intensive education program. They had group discussion meetings and instruction in child behavior patterns accompanying their actual participation in the nursery school situation.

In contrast to the Weber State University nursery school, the Fillmore cooperative nursery school had no planned program in parent education. Also, the teacher had not specialized in the area of the preschool child, even though she was an elementary school teacher, and well qualified to work with older children. The parents received no formal instruction in connection with the operation of the nursery school except in matters pertaining to the operation and administration of the school. There was no formal parent education program
in the Fillmore situation, and there appears to have been no significant changes in parent attitudes.

Any conclusions reached as a result of this study must be viewed with considerable uncertainty, at best. It must be recognized that the number of parents involved in the study was small and has some real limitations. Failure of some of the control group members, mostly fathers, to complete the second questionnaire has added another limitation to the study. The conclusion does appear to be justified, however, that parent attitudes are not quickly or easily modified, and that the cooperative nursery school program which will most effectively do so is likely to be the program which includes parent education as one of its defined and recognized goals. It seems possible, also, to conclude tentatively that the use of formal, academic study, led by someone with a strong educational background in the area of the preschool child, and integrated with planned experiences with children in the nursery school situation offers greater possibilities for achieving understanding of children's behavior than either activity alone.

Suggestions for further study

Suggestions for further research and study about parent education:

(a) Relative influence on parent attitudes of cooperatives led by teachers with and without strong backgrounds in child development needs further study.

(b) The relative ease or difficulty of overcoming tradition and finding new ways of dealing with children in rural and urban areas needs to be thoroughly investigated.
(c) During recent decades, there appears to have been substantial modification in parent attitudes toward child behavior among members of the middle class as a result of the influence of popular magazines, etc. It may be interesting to determine the effectiveness of such popular sources of information when used as part of a planned program in parent education.

(d) Community homogeneity as an influence on attitudes toward children's behavior needs to be investigated.
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