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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade parent education programs, following either a democratic or behavior modification model, have gained in recognition and support. To investigate the effectiveness of Jean Illsley Clarke's parent education program, Self Esteem: A Family Affair, on self-esteem, conflict resolution, and family togetherness and flexibility, 27 intact families with a minimum of one adolescent child were assigned to either a control or treatment condition. In the treatment condition, the families attended eight, 2-hour class sessions in which Clarke's education program was implemented. The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES II), the Inventory of Parent Adolescent Conflict, and the Tennessee Self Concept Scale were administered to all families as pre- and post-tests. An analysis of the results showed that the course was effective in producing significant changes in family members' perceptions. Fathers perceived the family system as more adaptable and were more satisfied with family cohesion. Average family empathy was increased, and mothers perceived less dissonance with fathers, increased empathy with fathers, and less total dissonance. Adolescents in the experimental group compared to those in the control group perceived less dissonance with their fathers.  
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SELF-ESTEEM: A FAMILY AFFAIR -AN EVALUATION STUDY

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ABSTRACT

"Self-Esteem:A Family Affair - An Evaluation Study"

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Presented at the National Council On Family Relations Annual Meeting, St. Paul, MN., Oct 13, 1983.

This study is the first to investigate the effectiveness of Jean Illsley Clarke's parent education program Self-Esteem:A Family Affair. An experimental design measured three dependent variables: 1) perceptions of the family system (adaptability and cohesion), 2) family conflict, and 3) self-concept.

Thirty families volunteered for the study. Each family consisted of two parents and an adolescent age 11 to 19 (a total of 81 subjects completed the study). Families were randomly assigned to the experimental or control group. Following the pretest session the experimental families attended eight two hour weekly sessions of the Self-Esteem:A Family Affair class.

Analysis of variance was used to analyze the data at the .05 alpha level. Major differences emerged when comparing the control to the experimental families as a result of the Self-Esteem:A Family Affair class. Fathers were more satisfied with family cohesion and perceived their family system as more adaptable. Average family empathy was increased in the experimental families. Mothers perceived less dissonance with fathers, increased empathy with fathers, and less total dissonance. Experimental adolescents perceived less dissonance with their fathers compared to control fathers.

In summary, the research study showed that the Self-Esteem:A Family Affair program is effective in producing significant changes in family members perceptions. Implications for researchers and practitioners are discussed.

Parent education programs have gained recognition over the past decade and are viewed by many as a "national movement" (Gordon,1970). Dodson(1977) reports that according to his unscientific count there are approximately 1,823 books and pamphlets on the subject of child discipline. This count was not done systematically and currently it is six years old. Logically the count must certainly be higher than this today. A partial list of significant parent education programs conducted in the United States include Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon,1970), Systematic Training For Effective Parenting (Dinkmeyer & McKay,1976), Parents Are Teachers (Becker,1976) and Self-Esteem:A Family Affair (Clarke,1978). Many state governments, churches, and social service agencies have made substantial investment in developing human resources through parent education. Increasing enrollments in various parenting programs support the assumption that in today's changing society parents may not be equipped to parent children and,consequently feel less adequate in their roles as parents (Keniston,1977; Pinsker & Geoffroy,1981). The same heightened sense of interest concerning parent education also abounds among academicians and researchers.

A number of current reviews on parent education research draw the same conclusion; research on parent education is lacking in both quality and quantity (Croake & Glover,1977; Gilbert,1981; Hicks & Williams,1981; Tramontana,Sherrets & Authier,1980). Scholars encourage future research in this area to have increased precision by becoming more methodologically rigorous. Parent education has been divided into two theoretical camps (Hicks & Williams,1981); those programs associated with the democratic model have been placed into one and those associated with the behavior modification model have been placed into the other.

The programs that are associated with the democratic model include programs like Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon,1970,1976), the Dreikurs/Adlerian approach (Dreikurs & Stoltz,1964), Systematic Training For Effective Parenting (Dinkmeyer & McKay,1976) and Self-Esteem:A Family Affair (Clarke,1978). Some of these programs teach parents how to communicate more effectively. Others emphasize methods for resolving conflicts or ways of becoming more responsible. Even though their specific theoretical base may differ, all of these programs emphasize a democratic parent-child relationship and the principles of mutual respect are at their base. The behavior modification model includes programs like Parents Are Teachers (Becker,1971) and Family Modification (Patterson,1971). This approach involves teaching parents behavior modification techniques. These social learning techniques allow the parent to directly shape their child's behavior through the applied use of positive reinforcement, extinction procedures, and punishment.

A number of studies have investigated the effectiveness of training parents in behavior modification skills (Forehand,Griest & Wells,1979; Lundeen,1977; Peed,Roberts & Forehand,1977). Likewise a number of studies have researched the effectiveness of teaching parent techniques that stress democratic methods of parenting (Freeman,1975; Larson,1972; Therrien,1979). Pinsker and Geoffroy (1981) have systematically compared the merits of both models.

The present study reports part of a larger project

(Bredehoft,1983). The primary objective was to provide an outcome 2. evaluation of the parenting class Self-Esteem:A Family Affair (Clarke,1978,1981) with parents who had an adolescent child age 11-19. No prior study on this parenting class exists. Only a few research studies have investigated parent education with parents and adolescent children (O'Connor,1974; Stanley,1978).

Self-Esteem:A Family Affair is a parenting class that has been extensively field tested. Over a four year period it has been utilized over 300 people in the building of its model (Clarke,1982b). Since its publication in 1978 Self-Esteem:A Family Affair has been taught to thousands of parents and families in Minneapolis-St.Paul, Seattle, Calgary, as well as in other cities across the country. The objective of the course is educational rather than therapeutic in nature (Clarke,1982b). The design of the course is a repetitive spiralling curriculum which has been both conceptually and developmentally linked together. The course's specific objectives attempt to teach and strengthen three areas:1) self-esteem 2)family togetherness and flexibility 3)conflict resolution (Clarke,1978,1980,1981,1982a,1982b).

## METHOD

### SUBJECTS

Thirty families responded to local advertising in two Minneapolis suburbs. Each volunteer family consisted of two married parents residing with their respective spouses and a minimum of one adolescent age 11-19 years old. If the family had more than one adolescent the family was permitted to select the one which would participate in the experiment. The majority of the parents were highly educated, held professional occupations, and were from the upper income bracket. All three members were willing to attend 10 two-hour sessions. One session to collect pretest data, eight for "class" sessions, and the last for the posttest data collection. Families were randomly assigned to either a treatment or control group. Following the pretest session parents and adolescents from the treatment group attended eight two-hour class sessions in which they experienced the highly structured course curriculum. The treatment program was presented at two different locations on two different nights of the week. Treatment families were allowed to select the night and location that would accommodate their schedule. Each group had a similar number of families represented. The control families received their classes after the posttest data collection had been completed. The experiment began with a total of 30 volunteer families. Following the pretest two families discontinued. One family's data was not included because they did not attend 50% or more of the classes. The treatment group had an overall attendance for the eight sessions of 75.5%.

The two instructors that co-lead the experimental intervention were the author of Self-Esteem: A Family Affair and a trained facilitator. Both had extensive experience in teaching the course. In addition to the two instructors, the researcher served in the role of recorder. This role was basically that of observer.

## MEASURES

There were three primary measures used to assess outcome. The instruments were selected because they purported to measure objectives similar to that of the treatment program. The three instruments selected were FACES II: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (Olson, Portner & Bell, 1982), the IFAC: Inventory of Parent-Adolescent Conflict (Olson, Portner & Bell, 1978) and, the TSCS: Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965). The subjects also completed a background information sheet requesting demographic information. The parents listed the number and ages of their children, family income, education level of each spouse, church denomination, and racial characteristics.

FACES II is a 30 item self report inventory which measures two dimensions within a family system; family cohesion and family adaptability (Olson, Portner & Bell, 1982). The instrument also yields scores that measure ideal levels of the same two dimensions, as well as satisfaction with them. The Inventory of Parent-Adolescent Conflict is an instrument that consists of 18 paragraph-length vignettes which describe hypothetical families in common conflict situations (Olson, Portner & Bell, 1978). The Tennessee Self Concept Scale is a 100 item self-report scale which measures individual self concept. The instrument yields a variety of subscale and aggregate scores (Fitts, 1965).

The three measures were collected from each parent and adolescent at both pretest and posttest. Analysis of variance confirmed that the groups were equivalent with respect to age, occupation, education, length of marriage, number of children, size of the town of residence, race, religion, and income. Thus, it appeared that the sample was a homogenous one.

## RESULTS

All posttest scores were analyzed using analysis of variance with the exception of one, adolescent total self concept. Significant differences emerged at pretest in relation to this score, therefore, analysis of covariance was used to analyze it. There were a number of significant scores from FACES II which measured the family system. As presented in Table 1, the findings indicate that at posttest, treatment fathers demonstrated a significant increase in adaptability ( $F=4.227$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The treatment fathers were also more satisfied with the level of their family's cohesion ( $F=6.102$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The satisfaction score is derived by subtracting the real score from the ideal score. A score that is closer to zero indicates a greater amount of satisfaction. The

treatment fathers averaged 4.77 compared to the control fathers' 11.79. No significant differences were found between the two groups on the other family system variables, however, there were general trends noted in both the treatment and control groups which support the notion that the treatment group was influenced by the curriculum intervention.

Family conflict was assessed by The Inventory of Parent Adolescent Conflict. It was found that the treatment subjects significantly outperformed the controls on a number of scores. Treatment families were not significantly different from the control families in the amount of actual conflict, however, they averaged more family empathy (.69 as compared to .63;  $F=5.658$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Treatment mothers had a greater amount of empathy with their husbands (.69 as compared to .63;  $F=5.723$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Treatment mothers also perceived a lower amount of dissonance with their husband ( $F=4.188$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and a lower amount of total dissonance than did the control mothers ( $F=12.438$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Treatment mothers were not the only family members to have been influenced by the class in the area of conflict. The treatment adolescents outperformed the controls. The treatment adolescents scored significantly different from the control adolescents on total perceived dissonance ( $F=4.275$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and perceived dissonance with father ( $F=8.971$ ,  $p < .01$ ). No difference emerged between treatment and control fathers on total perceived dissonance.

Table 3 presents the self concept data as measured by the Tennessee Self Concept Scale. Nonsignificant changes emerged from the analysis of this data. Mothers, fathers, and adolescents in both treatment and control groups were similar to each other at posttest in relation to this aggregate score. The adolescent total self concept score was significant at pretest and therefore analysis of covariance was used to equate the scores.

## DICUSSION

Overall, analysis of variance indicated that the Self-Esteem:A Family Affair course produced differential results. The family member that perceived the family system differently after taking the course was father. According to FACES II, fathers that attended the class perceived their family system as more adaptable. Adaptability has to do with the extent to which the family system is flexible and able to change. This is the ability for a family system's power structure to adjust and change to the demands of new role relationships as well as situational and developmental stress. Because the father is still considered a strong power figure in the family who can influence the power structure of the family, this enhanced flexibility would be seen as beneficial. As the adolescent matures a greater amount of flexibility is required in their quest for independence. The experiences in the self esteem class apparently influenced fathers in this regard. It also affected their satisfaction with their family cohesion. At posttest, treatment fathers were more satisfied with family cohesion. Cohesion is composed of two components within the family system; emotional bonding and individual autonomy. The way treatment fathers saw their family's cohesion at posttest was closer to their ideal belief of how their family should be. This seems logical in the knowledge that the class curriculum stresses

that one can be autonomous and still have power and connections with its own family (Clarke, 1978). It is not clear as to why mothers and adolescents were not affected in the same way as fathers. One hunch might be that the mothers scores were higher to start with and had less room for growth.

The analysis revealed the greatest changes produced by Self-Esteem: A Family Affair took place in the area of family conflict and resolution. As measured by The Inventory of Parent Adolescent Conflict, significant changes occurred in average family empathy and mother empathy with father for the treatment subjects. The treatment subjects outperformed the control subjects in relation to mother perceived dissonance with father, adolescent perceived dissonance with father, mother total perceived dissonance, and adolescent total perceived dissonance. These results can be logically linked with the curriculum and objectives of Self-Esteem: A Family Affair. The four ways of parenting exercises and the responsibility exercises are practiced weekly. They strengthen one's ability to be empathetic and to perceive dissonance. Their emphasis is on communication. In the four ways of parenting exercises a parent may choose to role play their child and hear four types of messages which focus on the specific problem. Or they may choose to be the parent and sort through the messages they could give their child. In the responsibility exercises participants work through an exercise designed to identify clear messages about responsibility. Both exercises are theoretically linked with perceived dissonance and empathy.

As reported in Table 3, no significant differences occurred in the measurement of self concept as measured by The Tennessee Self Concept Scale. There were no differences between treatment and control mothers, fathers, or adolescents. The performance of the experimental subjects was disappointing on the basis that the course, Self-Esteem: A Family Affair, purported to enhance self esteem. Why then did no changes in measured self concept result from the training? A number of possible answers to this question can be suggested. First, logically it may take a more powerful degree of intervention over a longer period of time to produce any measurable changes if it is true that a construct such as self concept is a relatively stable entity. Second, the subjects that volunteered scored high on self concept to start with. The particular design utilized in this study anticipates change; an increase in scores. If you start close to the top how much improvement can you expect? To test this argument one needs to repeat the experiment with a group that starts with low scores in self concept. Third, a strong argument could be made that the self concept scores of the treatment subjects will change over time due to the fact that the subjects now have the skills as well as new behaviors to produce it. All that is needed is a longer period of time for family members to use them within their family. The eight weeks from pretest to posttest may not be a sufficient length of time to accomplish this. The only way to validate this argument is to do a longitudinal study with multiple measures over time. Fourth, one might argue that the global nature of the instrument used to measure this variable could not measure the subtle nuances that the course produced. Whichever argument is selected the research of this nature must continue.

This course has implications for both researcher and practitioner in the light of such results as increased empathy, decreased dissonance, satisfaction with cohesion, and enhanced adaptability. Researchers should

investigate the use of this course and its effectiveness with families in which there is a high amount of conflict. Some families that fit into this category are court referred families in which there is physical or sexual abuse, chemical dependency, or juvenile delinquency. It would also be interesting to use it with single parents, and parents that come from less educated and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Practitioners may be able to apply it to a variety of populations such as adolescents who are preparing for adulthood or who have just become parents themselves. Researchers and practitioners alike can be encouraged by the results of the first study of Self-Esteem: A Family Affair.

Table 1  
 Family System (FACES II) Post-Means and F-ratios for  
 Self-Esteem: A Family Affair Treatment and Control Groups

Score	Family Member	Treatment (SEAFSA) Post-Means (N=13)	Control Post-Means (N=14)	F
Cohesion	Mother	61.46	57.86	1.881
	Father	60.62	55.86	2.475
	Adolescent	54.00	55.71	.028
Adaptability	Mother	52.31	50.50	1.281
	Father	50.21	47.80	4.227*
	Adolescent	47.62	49.29	.019
Cohesion Satisfaction	Mother	5.62	7.93	.718
	Father	4.77	11.79	6.102*
	Adolescent	5.69	4.21	.220
Adaptability Satisfaction	Mother	9.24	10.20	.318
	Father	10.85	11.43	.188
	Adolescent	10.84	7.21	.949

\*  $p < .05$

Table 2  
 Family Conflict (IPAC) Post-Means and F-ratios for  
 Self-Esteem: A Family Affair Treatment and Control Groups

Score	Treatment (SEAFA) Post-Means (N=13)	Control Post-Means (N=14)	F
Actual Conflict	10.15	10.29	.214
Average Family Empathy	.69	.63	5.658*
Mother Empathy with Father	.72	.62	5.723*
Mother Perceived Dissonance With Father	3.62	4.71	4.188*
Adolescent Perceived Dissonance With Father	2.92	4.71	8.971*
Mother Total Perceived Dissonance	8.46	11.00	12.438*
Father Total Perceived Dissonance	9.38	9.79	.582
Adolescent Total Perceived Dissonance	9.00	11.57	4.275*

\* p < .05  
 \*\* p < .05

Table 3  
 Self Concept (TSCS) Post-Means and F-ratios for  
 Self-Esteem: A Family Affair Treatment and Control Groups

Score	<u>Treatment (SEAF)</u> Post-Means (N=13)	<u>Control</u> Post-Means (N=14)	<u>F</u>
Mother Total Self Concept	355.46	364.07	.528
Father Total Self Concept	349.31	343.57	.573
Adolescent Total Self Concept	323.84	329.43	.248

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- 4. The fourth area is the 'Findings' which presents the results of the research.
- 5. The fifth area is the 'Conclusions' which summarizes the key points of the study.
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