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Attitudes toward parenting and child rearing practices among homeless women in a transitional housing facility

Yvette L. Morelon
CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT
SOCIAL WORK

MORELON, YVETTE L. B.S., UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF 1991

ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENTING AND CHILD REARING PRACTICES AMONG HOMELESS WOMEN IN A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FACILITY

Advisor: Sandra J. Foster, Ph.D.

Thesis dated: March, 1996

The overall objective of this study is to access attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices among homeless women in a transitional housing facility. The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory was used to measure parenting behavior before and after treatment. The inventory measures which Inappropriate Expectations of Children, Inability to be Empathically Aware of Children's Needs; Parental Value of Physical Punishment; and Family Role Reversal. The treatment included six one hour sessions on the following topics Family of Origin, Empathy, Inappropriate Expectations of Children, Discipline, Family Role Reversal and Well Baby Care. A self administered pre/post test was eleven women participated. The study showed a positive relationship between parenting skills training and attitudes toward parenting and child rearing practices.
ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENTING AND CHILD REARING PRACTICES AMONG HOMELESS WOMEN IN A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FACILITY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
YVETTE LOUISE MORELON

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MARCH 1996
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I remained focused on the goal even in the midst of the battle.

A heartfelt thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Young who did the initial editing of the thesis. A sincere thanks to Mrs. Cynthia Ratchford for always being supportive and encouraging me to hold on. I would also like to thank my roommates: Carla Morelon, Delesia & Lisa Bender who endured me throughout these stressful two years. A very special thanks to my classmate Ola Scott who told me "Just Do It". Dr. Jerome Schiele who gave me the knowledge base which made the research portion of the thesis less stressful. I would not have completed this thesis without the instruction of my thesis advisor, Dr. Sandra Foster whose positive nature made this experience bearable and who I want to be just like when I grow up. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Delores Morelon - my shero and the wind beneath my wings. I am blessed with the strength of God and my mother.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Parents in today's society are faced with multiple demands in raising their children. Society places a high value on the need for parents to establish optimum conditions for their children's growth and development.\(^1\) Social work providers may not agree on what method or procedure is most effective in improving child-rearing practices but social workers can all agree that the need to prepare parents to raise their children is great.

Satir regarded the rearing of a family as probably the most difficult job in the world and stated her belief in the essential need for effort in parent training. Gordon has criticized the public in blaming parents for the problems of children and called for greater efforts to assist parents to become more effective in raising their children.\(^2\)

The merging of public and private agency support for parent training took place at the National Conference of Social Work in May 1954. In the early history of parenting training development, these efforts were viewed as becoming an important part of the cultural pattern of the times.

Since the seventies, educators and the federal government shifted their emphasis from trying to overcome parental influence to enlisting the support of

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\(^2\) Ibid.
families. Society recognized the need for large-scale training programs for parents.

During the past twenty years, social workers have utilized parent training efforts in delivering services for their clients. The most commonly used parenting training programs focus on skills building in the area of problem solving process. In the area of problem solving, social work practice orientations play a significant role in determining the specific training approaches and teaching to be taught.\(^3\) Social workers in a variety of settings have made great use of a variety of parent training programs in their social service agencies.

The first parent training program to be used on a national and international scale was Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). The core of PET is the concept of problem "ownership" that enables parents to understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. This distinction of PET is that it determines the parent's choice of various problem solving skills.\(^4\) The PET model utilizes a variety of methodologies to teach parenting skills including tape recording, lectures, role playing, notebooks with home exercise and immediate application of these skills to family interaction.

Parenting programs target such groups as abusive parents, separated and divorced parents, stepparents and their spouses, teenage parents, grandfathers, single fathers and emotionally disturbed parents. These groups of parents are more likely to receive therapeutically oriented training than other training programs discussed.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.
During the past several years, a new subgroup of parents who need parenting training is the homeless. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless more than 40 percent of homeless people are families, which represents the fastest growing homeless group. These families are at greater risk for child abuse since family disruption, adequate shelter and financial problems increase due to homelessness.

Social workers must address new ways to deal with the homeless mother and her children. Transitional housing shelters are one way to deal with homeless mothers and their children. Families First Family Development Center is a transitional housing facility for homeless women between the ages of 17-26 with their first child between the ages of 0-12 months. The purpose of the program is to empower the residents to achieve self sufficiency once they leave the program. The participants attend individual and group counseling. The group counseling consists of a Parenting Skills Group, a Nutrition Group and an Independent Skills Living Group. In order to remain a resident of the facility, the mother must be employed, attending a vocational program or completing her GED. This study seeks to determine the effectiveness of parent effectiveness training on homeless women in the Families First Family Development Center.

Statement of the Problem

The idea of parenting skills training is not a new idea. Historically the majority of parents seeking training have done so for the general purpose of improving the parent-child relationship through development of specific coping skills in the area of communication and problem solving. Parent training efforts

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focus on providing guidance for parents experiencing specific problems for their children. Society blames parents for the troubles of youth and for the troubles that young people appear to be causing to society.

Parents are blamed, but not trained. Parents take on the job each year of raising children and face one of the most difficult jobs that a person will ever have. Parents take on full responsibility for the physical and psychological health and raising of a child so they will become productive, cooperative and contributing to society.

Parents today rely almost universally on the same methods of raising children and deal with problems within their families that were used by their own parents, by their parents, by their grandparents. Unlike other institutions of civilization the parent-child relationship seems to remain unchanged. Parents still use methods that were used thousands of years ago.

Families today are probably of less assistance in providing parenting knowledge than were families of the past. Today, fewer people had the opportunity to learn about parenting from their parents.

Parents of differing ethnic groups and populations are good candidates for parent training. Changes in society facilitate the need for parent education. Increased numbers of parents who work, homeless families, substance abuse and welfare dependency are social changes that bring about new and unique parenting issues. These issues need to be considered carefully for their impact on parenting practices. The changes in society that alter expectations of parenting should encourage the implementation of more parent training in working with families.
Parent training is a vital social service intervention that has tremendous effect on the lives of families. Parent training is effective in helping parents to better parent their children.

**Significance of the Problem**

Social worker’s renewed concern with the family has occurred during a time of growing interest in the family. With the rise in homelessness, substance abuse, child abuse and violence committed by juveniles, the need for parent training is essential.

There is ample evidence to show that one of the major pressures on parents comes from poverty. Poverty creates particular pressures and limitations on parents and these constraints become conflated with skills in parenting.\(^6\) The wider social factors that may influence the conduct and practice of parents in relation to their children are essential in order to understand and to educate the parent. The inequalities in the opportunities for persons continue to grow and the routes out of poverty are decreasing. Parenting skills places an enormous responsibility and blame on the shoulder of individual particularly parents to raise their children without support systems.

In the face of burgeoning poverty, parenting skills training is a essential tool in helping parents become more affective in raising their children. Parenting skills training can enable mothers to enjoy their children but also achieve grater control and confidence thus hopefully eliminating problems later in the child’s life.

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\(^6\) Ibid.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Information gathered from the literature ultimately resulted in the Identification of four parenting and child rearing constructs most commonly associated with abusive parents. The review of literature will focus on the four constructs 1) Inappropriate Parental Expectations of the Child; 2) Lack of Empathy Toward Children's Needs; 3) Belief in Use of Corporal Punishment and 4) Family Role Reversal.

Inappropriate Parental Expectations of the Child

Beginning very early in the infant's life, abusive parents tend to inaccurately perceive the skills and abilities of their children. Steele and Pollock found that parents in their study group expected and demanded a great deal from their infants prematurely. Steele and Pollock concurred that abusive parents treated their children as adults, and added that the parents were incapable of understanding the particular stages of their children. In these misperceptions, infants are expected to act in a manner incongruent to what may reasonably be expected for their developmental state. Inappropriate expectations stem from the abusive parents own inadequate perceptions of self as well as from a lack of knowledge relative to the capabilities and needs of children at each developmental stage. Parents of these children treated them as


8 Ibid.
if they were older than they really are, children are often left to care for themselves, or are left to care for younger siblings. Children are expected to be toilet trained by six to twelve months of age; to be able to talk before two years of age; and to help with the washing, housecleaning, food preparation and serving at a very early age.

The effects of inappropriate parental expectations upon children are devastating. Kalmuss et. al. suggest that when these expectations are impossible to meet, biologically and/or cognitively, children perceive themselves as being worthless, as failures, and as unacceptable and disappointing to adults. Lew Bank et. al. examined the parenting practices of single parents and their expectations of their children. Bank found that these socioeconomically disadvantaged mothers had less effective discipline and had unrealistic expectations of their children. The study found that these mothers expected their sons to provide them with emotional and economic support. Bank concluded that negative contextual factors associated with single mother families influenced antisocial child behavior.

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Lack of Empathy Towards Children's Needs

A second common parenting trait among abusive parents is their inability to be empathically aware of their children's needs, and to be able to respond to those needs in an appropriate manner. Offerman, in her study of personality variables of abusive parents, found that mothers had unrealistic views of their children's abilities and the inability to be empathic with their children. It has been reported that not only did abusive parents have a high expectation and demand for their infant's or child's performance but limited abilities and helplessness.

Empathic awareness of a child's needs entails the ability of a parent to understand the condition or state of mind of the child without actually experiencing the feelings of the child. To empathize as a parent is to participate in the child's feelings and ideas. Abusive parents often demonstrate the inability to be empathically aware of their infant's or child's needs. Based on a fear of "spoiling" their child, abusive parents often ignore their child that results in their child's need being unmet. Parents place a lot of emphasis on a child being a good girl or boy, acting "right" and being obedient to authoritative figures.

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15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.
Breams et al. examined the effects of empathy in parenting strategy choices. Breams concluded that the good child received more rewards and talking strategies, whereas the acting-out child received more negative and ignoring interventions.

The long term effects of inadequate empathic parenting during the early years of life are debilitating and enduring to the lives of children. Children who are ignored and whose basic needs are neglected early in life fail to develop a basic sense of trust in self and in others. Children who live in a world where parents pay no attention to their lives, and where they are not permitted to count on their parents for their basic needs and where parents provide little or no basis for learning respect for rules and for being able to distinguish right from wrong. Children fail to develop confidence in themselves and in their basic abilities when their parents do not respond to their needs empathically. Parents who do not respond empathically to their children do not believe that violence, cruelty and causing pain to children is considered wrong. The results are viewed as detrimental to the lives of children and cause low self esteem later in life.

**Parental Value of Physical Punishment**

The third parenting behavior commonly associated with abusive parents is their strong belief in the value of physical punishment. These parents believe that children should not be given in to or allowed to make any decisions. Flynn found that abusive parents consider corporal punishment a necessary part of

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18 Ibid.

parenting and strongly defend their right to use physical force in their disciplinary practices.\textsuperscript{20}

Giles-Sims et al. examined the frequency in which mothers spanked their children. Giles-Sims research focused on the age and sex of the child, maternal characteristics and family characteristics in their assessment of spanking patterns. Research found that younger children received more spankings, unmarried mothers spanked their children more and different religious groups tended to spank their children more frequently.\textsuperscript{21}

Physical attacks by abusive parents are not often an impulsive discharge of anger by the parent toward their children. Studies have shown that abusive parents use physical punishment to correct certain bad conduct with their children. Parents tend to punish and criticize their children for the same things that they were punished for as children and punishment becomes a traditional family value.

The effects of physical abuse upon children are demonstrated as children develop antisocial personalities. Steele describes the tendency of children to identify with the aggressive parent and pattern after their behavior when they become parents.\textsuperscript{22} According to Steele, in an effort to gain some measure of self-protection and master, children identify very strongly with the aggressor and develop a set pattern of discharging aggression against the outside world in


order to experience recurrent serious expressions of violence in their own family learn and believe violence is useful way to solve problems. These children tend to punish their children more severely when they become parents. Abused children sometimes become abusive parents.

**Parent-Child Role Reversal**

A fourth common parenting behavior among abusive parents is their need to reverse parent-child roles. Children are expected to be sensitive to and responsible for much of their happiness of their parents. Steele describes role reversal as essentially the parenting acting like a needy child looking to his or her child as if they were an adult who should provide parental care and comfort. Zeanah and Klitzke describe parent-child role reversal as an interchanging of traditional role behaviors between a parent and child, so that the child adopts the patterns of the roles of the parents.

Ackely states that potential abusers both seek and shun intimate adult relationships. Potential abusers seek intimacy in order to obtain what was missing in their parental relationships. These parents have unrealistic views about relationships with their children and 1) obtain emotional support and warm

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23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.


without giving their children emotional support. 2) depend on their children to solve problems that the parents are otherwise expected to solve. 28

Although the phenomenon of role reversal is often associated with an inability to be emphatically aware of the children's needs, the two behaviors are markedly different. When abusive parents don't show empathic concern for their children, the children are often left to provide for their own needs. The emphasis is not placed on children assuming the role of the parents as in role reversal. Children are an integral part of family functions and often become a source of authority, control and decision making. 29

The effects of role reversal on abused children is devastating to the emotional development of the child. Assuming the role of their responsible parent, children fail to negotiate the developmental tasks which must be mastered at each stage of life if they are to achieve normal development and healthy adjustment. 30 Failure to perform any of the developmental tasks not only hampers development in succeeding stages but also further reinforces the feeling of inadequacy among abused children. 31 Children in role reversal situations have little sense of self esteem and see themselves as existing to meet their parents needs.

Theoretical Framework

28 Ibid.

29 Steven J. Bavolek, "Handbook for the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory" (Utah: Family Development Resources Inc., 1984)

30 Erick Erickson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950).

31 Kathleen Ell and Helen Northen, Families and Health Care: Psychosocial Practice (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990), 1-7.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that will be used to explain the relationships of this study is the ecological perspective. Ecology is the study of relations between organisms and their environments. Major assumptions of ecological perspective include: 1) that individual behavior is best explained within the total environmental context in which they exist; 2) that human environments are extremely complex and include physical dimensions as well as social, economic and political situations; and 3) that the individual must be able to adapt to ever changing environments. One's environment is an arrangement of many systems which include: the microsystem; the mesosystem or interpersonal relations within family, school or work context, the exosystem or social structures and institutions; and the macrosystem or cultural patterns and values. With regard to the present study, there is a particular interest to the macrosystem which would include relationships between parents and their children with regards to cultural patterns and values. Research has shown that inappropriate and abusive parenting and child rearing practices are learned. Children and adolescents who are abused are likely to repeat abusive behaviors upon becoming a parent. The ecological theory simply says that a person's environment which includes a number of systems significantly contributes to the

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33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
makeup of an individual. Since several systems influence a child's growth and development then values, and beliefs can be compromised.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

If the ecological model states that a number of systems influence a person's environment, then parenting skills classes will have a positive impact on the attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices. Here the research questions becomes, "Is there a positive and significant relationship between treatment and change in attitudes toward parenting and child rearing practices." The hypothesis may be formally stated as:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between parenting skills and attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study the following terms were placed in the form of descriptive and operational definitions.

**Parenting Skills Training:** Parent Training Program (PET) was developed by Thomas Gordon which focuses on skills building in the areas of parent-child communication and the problem solving process.\(^35\)

**Attitudes towards Parenting:** Parents are taught to decode the child's message and feed back to their child their understanding of feelings and thoughts contained in the communication which facilitates changes in attitudes and behaviors that will lead to improved parent-child relationships and family communication.\(^36\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.
Child Rearing Practices: At the core of PET is the concept of problem "ownership" that enables parents to understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.  

37 Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The type of research design used in this thesis is a one group pre test/post test design. The one group pre test/post test design measures the effect of parenting skills classes on attitudes toward parenting and child rearing practices. The design compares the pre-test and post-test results.

Sampling

The sample on which the present study is based was drawn from eleven women at a Families First Family Development Center. The participants were chosen using convenience sampling. This method was chosen to include the closest and most available subjects in the survey. The participants are homeless single women between the ages of 17-26 with their one child residing in a transitional housing facility.

Data Collection/Instrument

The Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) by Stephen J. Bavolek was designed to assess attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices. The AAPI is a 32 item inventory designed to assess parenting and child rearing strengths and weaknesses. Developed from four parenting patterns found to contribute to abusive parent-child interactions, scores from the AAPI indicate degrees of agreement and disagreement in the following constructs: A) Inappropriate expectations of children. B) Lack of empathy toward children's
needs; C) Belief in the Value of corporal punishment D) Family Role-Reversal. The responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.  

The range of high scores is 7-10 which indicates the person has less abusive attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices. The range of low scores is 1-4 which indicates that the person has more abusive attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices. High scores on "Inappropriate Expectations of Children" indicates a realistic understanding of developmental capabilities of children. Low scores on "Inappropriate Expectations of Children" indicate a general lack of understanding of children's developmental capabilities. High scores in "Empathy" indicate an individual is sensitive to the needs of children and place those needs in high regard. Low Scores in "Empathy" indicate that caregivers have difficulty in helping children find ways to meet their needs. High scores on "Corporeal Punishment" indicate the caregiver values the well being and self-concept of the child utilizes alternative, non-abusive means of punishment and discipline. Low scores on "Corporeal Punishment" indicate that caregivers feel that hitting is the only way children learn to obey rules and stay out of trouble. High scores in "Family Role Reversal" often indicate an understanding and acceptance of needs of self and children. Low scores on "Family Role Reversal" indicate children are perceived as objects for adults gratification.

Content validity of the AAPI was established through the analysis of responses from child rearing experts who rated items for inclusion on the inventory. Construct validity of the AAPI was established through the analysis of the data generated from inter-item correlations, inter-construct correlation's, and

factor analysis. Reliability of the inventory's internal consistency and stability were generated utilizing coefficient alpha and test-reliability approaches. 39

One social work intern administered the AAPI to the participants. The participants were given a pre test which was administered before the six week data collection period began. The post test was given at the end of the sixth parenting skill class. During the six weeks, the interviewer covered the following topics: Discipline, Parent Expectations of Children, Empathy, Family Role Reversal and Well Baby Health with each session lasting one hour. The participants were given oral instructors in how to complete the questionnaire. The participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and would not effect their residency at the facility.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS Windows batches system of the VAX Computer system of the Clark Atlanta University Center. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. Percentages were used to calculate data.

The t test will be used in analyzing the four constructs of the AAPI: A) Expectations of Children; B) Empathy; C) Belief in Physical Punishment D) Family Role Reversal.

39 Ibid.
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This study consisted of eleven adult women who resided at the Families First Family Development Center. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the women were African-American and twelve percent (12%) were Caucasian. The educational levels of the mothers ranged from eleven years of formal education to the completion of a bachelors degree. The education levels were as follows: ninety percent (90%) reported that they had a high school diploma or a GED certificate and ten percent (10%) reported that had a bachelor’s degree. Ninety percent (90%) of the participants reported they were never married and ten percent (10%) reported that they had been divorced. The average age of the participants was 20 years old. The mothers ranged in age from 17 to 23 years of age. The average annual income was less than ten thousand dollars.

The participants at the Families First Family Development Center in the shelter were given a pretest (AAPI) before the data collection period which lasted six weeks. The high score range was from 7-10. The low score range was from 1-4. During the pretest phase of the study the following results are presented: thirty-eight (38%) percent of the mothers had high scores regarding “Inappropriate Expectations of Children” which indicates that mothers had a realistic understanding the developmental capabilities of children and acceptance of these capabilities. Four (4) of the mothers had high scores in "Inappropriate Expectations of Children". Sixty-two percent (62%) of the mothers had low scores on “Inappropriate Expectations of Children” which indicates that mothers indicate a general lack of understanding of children’s developmental capabilities. Seven (7) of the Mothers had low scores in "Inappropriate Expectations of Children". Forty-Percent (45%) of mother had
high scores on "Lack of Empathy" which indicates that the mother is sensitive to the needs of the child and holds the needs in high regard. Five (5) of the mothers had high scores in "Lack of Empathy". Fifty-Five percent (55%) of the mothers had low scores in "Lack of Empathy" which indicates that mothers often have difficult helping children finds ways to meet their needs. Six (6) of the mothers had low scores in "Lack of Empathy". Thirty-Nine percent (39%) of mothers had high scores in "Belief of Corporal Punishment" which indicates that the mother values the well-being and self-concept of the child and utilized alternative forms of discipline. Five (5) of the mothers had high scores in "Belief in Corporal Punishment. Sixty-One percent (61%) of the mothers had high scores in the "Belief in Corporal Punishment" which indicates that mothers hitting is the only way children learn to obey rules and stay out of trouble. Six (6) of the mothers had low scores in "Belief of Corporal Punishment". Twenty-Eight percent (28%) of the mothers had high scores in "Family Role Reversal" which indicates that mothers had an understanding and acceptance of self and children. Three (3) of the mothers had high scores in "Family Role Reversal". Seventy-Two percent of the mothers had low scores in "Family Role Reversal" which indicates children are perceived as objects for adult gratification. Eight (8) of the mothers had low scores in "Family Role Reversal". Table 1 indicates the four constructs identified by the questionnaire. The table represents the scores in the pretest phase of the study.
### TABLE 1
Nonabusive Adults

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<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. INAPPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. LACK OF EMPATHY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. BELIEF IN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. FAMILY ROLE REVERSAL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the treatment phase of the study, the researcher facilitated six one hour sessions on the following topics: Family of Origin, Spanking and Alternative Styles of Discipline, Inappropriate Expectations of Children, Empathy in Parenting, Family Role Reversal and Well Baby Care. In the first session, the discussion centered around family of origin and parenting styles. The second session centered around mothers belief in the use of physical punishment as a form of discipline and alternative ways to discipline children. The third session centered around the developmental stages of children and the mothers perception of their child at different stages in the child’s life. The fourth session consisted of a discussion the needs of children and about the mother ability to meet those needs. The fifth session consisted of a discussion about the needs of the mother and the child. The discussion also centered around the mothers understanding of providing these needs. The last session consisted on well baby care. In this session, the discussion centered on immunization of the child and importance of having a primary care physician for the baby.
The post-test (AAPI) was given after the end of the six session of the treatment phase of the study. The results of the posttest are presented as follows: Seventy-One percent (71%) of the mothers had high scores in "Inappropriate Expectations of Children" which indicates that mothers had a realistic understanding of the developmental capabilities of children. Nine (9) of the mothers had high scores in "Inappropriate Expectations of Children". Twenty-Eight Percent (28%) of mothers had low scores on "Inappropriate Expectations" which indicates that mothers indicate a general lack of understanding of children’s developmental capabilities. Two(2) of the mothers had low scores on "Inappropriate Expectations of Children". Fifty-Eight percent (58%) of the mothers had high scores on "Lack of Empathy" which indicates that the mother is sensitive to the needs of children and pales those needs in high regards. Six (6) of the mothers had high scores on "Lack of Empathy". Forty-Two percent (42%) of the mothers had low scores on "Lack of Empathy" which indicates that mothers have difficulty helping children find ways to meet their needs. Five (5) of the mothers had low scores on "Lack of Empathy. Fifty-Five percent (55%) of mothers had high scores on "Belief in Corporal Punishment" which indicates that mothers fuse non abusive means of punishment and discipline and values the self-being and self-concept of the child. Six (6) of the mothers had high scores on "Belief of Corporal Punishment". Forty-Five percent of the mothers had low scores on "Belief in Corporal Punishment" which indicates that mothers feel it is okay to use physical punishment as a means of discipline. Five (5) of the mothers had low scores in "Belief of Corporal Punishment". Sixty percent (60%) of mothers had high scores in "Family Role Reversal" which indicates that mothers indicate an understanding an acceptance of the needs of self and children. Seven (7) of the mothers had high
scores in "Family Role Reversal". Forty percent (40%) of mothers had low scores on "Family Role Reversal" which indicates that children are perceived as objects for adult gratification. Four (4) of the mothers had low scores in "Family Role Reversal". Table 2 indicates the four constructs identified by the questionnaire (AAPI). Table 2 represents the analysis of scores in the posttest phase of the study.

**TABLE 2**

Nonabusive Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSTTEST</th>
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<tr>
<td>CONSTRUCT</td>
<td>HIGH SCORES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. INAPPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>9 71% 2 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. LACK OF EMPATHY</td>
<td>6 58% 5 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. BELIEF IN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT</td>
<td>6 55% 5 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. FAMILY ROLE REVERSAL</td>
<td>7 60% 4 40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that parenting training is effective in changing potentially abusive parenting and child rearing attitude practices. The majority of the participants felt that they were adequately informed during the parent training. Data analysis indicates that there is a positive relationship between parenting skills treatment classes and attitudes toward parenting and child rearing practices. The results indicate that the majority of participants in the study changed potentially abusive attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices.

In the pretest phase of the study, the majority of the women had high percentage of low scores in the four constructs identified by the AAPI. The literature review shows that parents who don’t have strong support systems, live in poverty and have unrealistic expectations with their children are more likely to have abusive attitudes toward their children. The percentage of mothers with low scores may be significant because the mothers at the Family Development Center have very weak support systems and often had abusive relationships with family members or with the father of the child. The weak support systems indicate the need for family intervention to begin before the child is born to strengthen coping strategies of the family system and to prevent future loss of support systems.

Where employment is concerned, most of the mothers reported that not having enough money for the basic needs in life made the job of parenting their children much more stressful. The implication concerning employment is strong because the majority of these mothers had either a high school diploma or a
GED certification. This suggests a need for more employment training for parents.

Of the four constructs identified in the AAPI, "Belief in Corporal Punishment" did not show a significant change in the scores. This may indicate that transmission of attitudes towards physical use of punishment is strong. Research has shown that single mothers are more likely to spank their kids than mothers who are married. In the comment phase of the study, the mothers felt that it was their responsibility to raise "good" children with strict discipline because they were single parents without a strong support system.

Conclusions

Based on the finding of this study, the following conclusions are warranted. Mothers feel it their obligation to raise "good" children and are readily seeking alternative parenting styles to raise their children. Many felt that they had to develop other support systems to help them parent their children. The results of the study indicate that many of the participants benefited from the parent skills training. Parent training can be beneficial in helping parents to stop transmission of certain harmful parenting techniques with their children.

The problem of parenting can be complicated by such issues as unemployment, homelessness, lack of employment and lack of support from family members. This has strong implication for the need to provide more community-based serves that are accessible to parents who need parent training. Five stages should be considered when planning for the delivery of services to the homeless mother and her children: prevention, crisis, intermediate needs, long-term and follow-up after placement.

It has been well documented that women are the primary caregivers of children and also with this population comes a number of questions that need to
be addressed by future research. These questions include: (1) What is the nature of current treatment approach and is it culturally sensitive to the needs of parents? and (2) How does homelessness affect the responses of support systems in the community and in social service settings?

Limitations

Other variables could have been included to elicit more information. With a larger sample size, a more rigorous data analysis could be used. The sample size was selected from one regional locale - a transitional housing facility in College Park, GA. This study did not represent other transitional housing facilities in metro Atlanta. The sample selection raises questions about the generalization of the findings, and it can be assumed that the selected participants in this study are representative of all participants in similar settings.

Suggested Research Directions

The articles available in the review of the literature demonstrates that parenting skills training is effective in helping parents to become better children. Recommended endeavors for research are on incorporating parenting skills training in all facets of society.

Future research in this area of study may benefit from using a larger population for a more significant representation of the entire population. Future research may also benefit from a longitudinal study of parents who have participated in parenting training classes.
CHAPTER SIX
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Social work practitioners have historically been pioneers in the field of recognized maltreatment to human beings and attempting to develop solutions to problems that plagued society. As we enter a new decade, parent training classes will be one the issues social workers will face. As the need for parent training increases, social workers will face new challenges to develop resources to serve this population. These parents represent a constellation of ethnic groups, lifestyles, family systems and historical perspectives and social workers will inevitably confront this population in practice.

Having an adequate knowledge base about parent training is a crucial starting point in providing services to parents. It will serve as the basis for educating and consequently, empowering the client to become a better parent. The social worker's knowledge base must include issues specific to parent. Additionally, the social worker must be knowledgeable about cultural diversities and how it shapes family systems, family values and even how parents view themselves. This type of knowledge base is more apt to promote workers to develop and implement appropriate interventions.

Social Work Practice is equally a skill as it is an art. An important aspect of developing skill is understanding the theoretical framework that shapes the various approaches utilized by social workers, and knowing when one approach has advantages over another. An ecological systems approach is one such approach that has advantages when attempting to assess parenting systems. This approach allows the worker to view the client in terms of all the environmental system that clients interfaces with, and how the system have impact on the client. This approach is unique because it challenges the worker
to not blame the victim for circumstances the parent is experiencing and to advocate for changes within the system so that a better person-in-environment fit can be obtained.

Finally, social workers are challenged to actively and genuinely practice humanistic values, and allow these values to guide and direct all interactions with parents. These values are (1) recognition that parents are individual and therefore their perceptions and life experiences have value for them and (2) that the satisfaction of basic human needs is a primary responsibility of society, and this must be the basis upon which all needs are met, rather than person attitudes or convictions.
1. Young children should be expected to comfort their mother when she is feeling blue.  
2. Parents should never use physical punishment to teach their children right from wrong.  
3. Children should not be the main source of comfort and care for their parents.  
4. Young children should be expected to hug their mother when she is sad.  
5. Parents spoil their children by picking them up and comforting them when they cry.  
6. Children should not be expected to talk before the age of one year.  
7. A good child will comfort both of his/her parents after the parents have argued.  
8. Children seldom learn good behavior through the use of physical punishment.  
9. Children develop good, strong character through very strict discipline.  
10. Children under three years should not be expected to take care of themselves.  
11. Young children should be aware of ways to comfort their parents after a hard day's work.  
12. Parents should never slap their child when he/she has done something wrong.  
13. Children should always be spanked when they misbehave.  
14. Young children should not be responsible for the happiness of their parents.  
15. Parents have a responsibility to spank their children.  
16. Parents should expect their children to feed themselves by twelve months.  
17. Parents should expect their children to grow physically at about the same rate.  
18. Young children who feel secure often grow up expecting too much.
19. Children should always “pay the price” for misbehaving.

20. Children under three years should not be expected to feed, bathe, and clothe themselves.

21. Parents who are sensitive to their children’s feelings and moods often spoil their children.

22. Children often deserve more discipline than they get.

23. Children whose needs are left unattended will often grow up to be more independent.

24. Parents who encourage communication with their children only end up listening to complaints.

25. Children are more likely to learn appropriate behavior when they are spanked for misbehaving.

26. Children quit crying faster if they are ignored.

27. Children five months of age are seldom capable of sensing what their parents expect.

28. Children who are given too much love by their parents often grown up spoiled.

29. Children should never be forced to respect parental authority.

30. Young children should try to make their parent’s life more pleasurable.

31. Young children who are hugged and kissed usually grow up to be “sissies”.

32. Young children should not be expected to comfort their father when he is upset.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


