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THE IMPACT OF LDS PARENT EDUCATION ON SELF-ASSESSED PARENTAL  
ATTITUDES

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THE IMPACT OF LDS PARENT EDUCATION  
ON SELF-ASSESSED PARENTAL ATTITUDES

by

Steven Craig Fotheringham

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
In the Graduate College  
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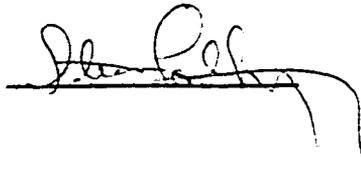
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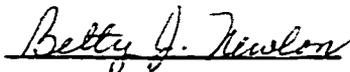
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## ABSTRACT

A Parent attitude survey was used to determine if members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who participated in a church parenting course differed in parental attitudes from members who did not participate in the course. The attitude areas of confidence, causation, acceptance, understanding and trust were measured.

By use of a linear regression statistic there was found no significant indication that parental attitudes differed between the two groups.

It was found that the age of the parent may be a factor in the amount of trust a parent has in his/her child. It was also shown that LDS women may perceive themselves as having more parenting confidence than LDS men.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has long been known for its emphasis on the family. Indeed one of its most fundamental tenets is the belief in the family as an eternal unit. According to Mormon doctrine, those who are worthy to attain a kingdom of Celestial glory will enjoy that realm with the rest of their righteous family members (McConkie, 1966).

With this fundamental belief it is easy to understand why the LDS Church is so concerned about happy, successful families. A former leader of the church, David O. McKay stated, "No other success can compensate for failure in the home" (McKay, 1964). Another leader echoed these sentiments with "The most important work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own home." (Lee, 1970).

With the family as the basic unit of the gospel, parents are keenly aware of the responsibility of raising their children correctly. This awareness however does not necessarily make them good parents. The LDS Church has long recognized the disparity between its belief in a happy home and reality. It is well aware of the minimal amount of training parents receive for "the most important work they will do" (Lee, 1970).

To help meet this need, Becoming a Better Parent, a ten week program consisting of ten two-hour sessions was developed by the Social Service Department of the LDS Church in 1974. This program was designed to assist parents in developing effective and healthier parent-child relationships.

Becoming a Better Parent is a group educational experience conducted by trained instructors involving short lectures, discussions, models, homework assignments and skill practice. The materials for this course were gathered from numerous child-parent books and magazine articles. The program developers relied heavily upon the following four works: Children-The Challenge (Dreikurs, 1964); Between Parent and Child, (Ginnott, 1971) and Between Parent and Teenager (Ginnott, 1971); and Your Child's Self-Esteem (Briggs, 1970). The course manual (Becoming a Better Parent) also includes teachings from church leaders and the scriptures.

Skills such as active listening, avoiding roadblocks to communication, encouragement and natural and logical consequences are a part of these training sessions. There is also an underlying emphasis on teaching principles that will enhance a parent's attitude towards children. Chapters on building self esteem in children and respectfully resolving differences are reflective of this emphasis.

This LDS parent education course is now more than 12 years old. Thousands of parents participate in it annually. It is well organized and is offered on a continuous basis throughout the year, throughout the church. In Southern Arizona, three or four separate sessions are taught for consecutive ten week periods from September to May.

With all of this involvement in parent education, it is surprising to discover that very little has been done to evaluate its effectiveness. Kyle L. Pehrson, a former student of The Catholic University of America is the only person that has performed any substantial research on the LDS parent education course. In 1980, he evaluated the effects of this course on LDS parents in the Washington D.C. area (Pehrson, 1980). Aside from his study, there is no other research.

The manual does furnish a brief questionnaire designed to be filled out at the end of the course. It in essence asks the parents if they feel they are better parents as a result of taking this course. Nothing has been done to collect or analyze participant's comments. One reason for this may be because it is a very subjective survey.

The main criteria for continuing the course is its face value. Evaluators can only assume that exposure to correct parenting principles and techniques would be

beneficial. The lack of research in this area may well reflect society's and religion's acceptance of this correlation. Carl Hereford, an early researcher in the field of parent education, wrote:

In relation to the time and money spent (on parent education) by educators and learners as well, the amount of evaluative research is practically negligible; and the quality of even this small amount tends, with a few exceptions, to be crude and superficial (Hereford, 1963).

#### THE PROBLEM

Because there has been so little evaluation of the effectiveness of the Becoming a Better Parent course, there is concern that the course may not be effective. With only one study conducted to date, there is room for further evaluation.

There seems to be a significant correlation between a parent's attitude and a child's mental health (Gordon, 1970). It is also assumed that parent education can enhance parental attitudes. Thus most studies that have been concerned with parent education courses have attempted to ascertain if, in fact, attitudes have been affected. This study will attempt to address a similar problem. It will seek to determine if the attitudes of those who participated in the Becoming A Better Parent Course differ significantly from those who have not participated in the course.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to compare the parental attitudes of those who have taken the LDS Parent Education Course to those who have not taken the course. It is also an effort to compare and validate the effectiveness of the Parent Education program described in Pehrson's (1980) previous study.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definition of terms will be used throughout this study.

Becoming a Better Parent (B.P.) A parent education course of instruction developed by the Social Service Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (L.D.S.). It will also be referred to as the L.D.S. Parent Education Course. It emphasizes the following: (1) Listening skills (2) Building self-esteem in children (3) Discipline skills (4) Resolving differences and (5) Meeting basic human needs (L.D.S., 1974).

Parental attitudes: Attitudes of trust, confidence, acceptance, causation and understanding as reflected in child-rearing techniques. In this study, those beliefs, opinions and values parents express on the Parent Attitude Survey Scale will be considered parental attitudes.

Parent Attitude Survey Scale (PASS): An instrument

developed by Carl F. Hereford designed to measure parent's attitudes of trust, confidence, acceptance, causation, and understanding as reflected in child-rearing techniques (Hereford, 1963).

Child-rearing techniques: Approaches to coping with the parent child relationship as instructed in the B.P. manual (LDS, 1974) and as reflected on the PASS (Hereford, 1963).

Stake: A geographical unit of members of the L.D.S. church, numbering approximately 4,000 people.

#### HYPOTHESES

Parents who participated in the Becoming a Better Parent Course will exhibit a difference in attitudes as measured by the Parent Attitude Survey Scale than those who did not participate in the course.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to parents who are members of the LDS Church in Southern, Arizona. Subjects will consist of those who have taken the parenting course along with a corresponding sample of parents who have not taken the course.

It will also be limited by the amount of subjects who respond to the PASS questionnaire. It is acknowledged that behavior change may not necessarily

follow reported change in attitude. This study will not seek to determine if the parenting skills that are taught in the course are actually implemented.

#### SUMMARY

The introductory chapter of the study presented a statement of the problem to be investigated, the purpose of the study, the definitions of terms used, hypotheses to be tested and the limitations of the study. In chapter II the literature related to this investigation will be reviewed. The design and procedures of this study are described in chapter III. Included in chapter III is a description of the population of the study, the instrument and procedures to be used to gather data, the experimental design and the statistical analyses. In chapter IV the results of the investigation will be presented. In chapter V a summary and discussion of the findings will be given. In chapter V the conclusions and recommendations for further study will also be presented.

## CHAPTER II

### THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature will consist of three parts:

1. Research regarding the different courses on parent education offered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from its origin. This will be a historical view of the various programs the church has tried from 1830 to 1985.

2. Research regarding the correlation between attitudinal change and behavioral change.

3. The principles of the LDS Parent Education Program. This will include a description of the course and any previous studies concerned with it.

### HISTORICAL VIEW OF PARENT EDUCATION IN THE L.D.S. CHURCH

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was officially organized on April 6, 1830. In the years following, five major organizations have developed within the church. These include: The Young Men's Organization; and The Young Woman's Organization; The Relief Society; The Priesthood Quorums; and The Sunday School Organization. The latter three were involved in parent education at different times during the church's existance.

#### The Relief Society

Under the direction of Joseph Smith (the Church's

founder), the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo was organized on March 17, 1842, with Emma Smith as its founding president. Joseph counseled the women to "provoke the brethren to good works in looking to the wants of the poor, searching after objects of charity, and in administering to their wants-[and] to assist, by correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the community." (Allen and Leonard, 1976).

The last meetings of the Nauvoo Relief Society were held in March 1844. The organization had grown to 1,342 women before it was discontinued upon their departure from Illinois. It was revived in 1869 in the Salt Lake valley under the name of the Relief Society.

The first official parenting classes were taught in 1902. For twelve years the Relief Society offered a mothers' class. The lessons were prepared independently in each stake to meet local interests and needs. "Occasional lectures on other topics paved the way for a definite educational offering, organized around a four-week lesson format" (Allen and Leonard, 1976).

By 1915 the Relief Society adopted a standardized lesson format. The new lessons were published first in a monthly Bulletin and, commencing in 1915, in the Relief Society Magazine. The parenting lesson came under the heading of Home Ethics. Lessons included such topics as: Honesty; Let Love Rule; Respect and Mutual Interest in The

Home; Work; Economy in The Home; and Considering the Feelings of Others (Relief Society, 1914).

In 1971 The Relief Society Magazine was replaced by a yearly teacher's manual. The parent education classes came under the heading of Social Relations. These, like the Home Ethics lessons were designed to teach "communication and basic parent guidance" (LDS, 1971).

From 1973 to the present the parenting portion of the Relief Society came under the heading of "Mother Education". The expressed objective of these monthly lessons is to teach "practical knowledge in child and youth guidance" (LDS, 1972).

#### The Priesthood Quorums

The counterpart organization to the Relief Society for the men is the Priesthood Quorums. The direction for organizing Priesthood holders into quorums was given as early as 1835, by Joseph Smith. However, not until 1877 when the ecclesiastical ward became the primary local unit of church membership did priesthood quorums fully develop.

The Melchezidek Priesthood Quorum manuals from 1914 to 1964 deal only with doctrinal subjects. Little was said to the men (at least in the manuals) in regards to parenting. However, the 1965 manual reflects a significant change in emphasis.

In 1965 the L.D.S. Church was presided over by

President David O. McKay. Under his direction a program was instituted in the church, called The Family Home Evening. Earlier the church had attempted a similar program called Family Night but it met with little success.

Sensing the need for families to be together more often, the Family Home Evening was designed to eliminate all church activities on Monday nights, allowing families to spend the entire evening uninterrupted. Family councils, lessons and entertaining activities were encouraged.

This emphasis was reflected in the 1965 Priesthood Quorum Manual. In contrast with a completely doctrinal emphasis, the new manual included topics like: "Why a Family Home Evening Program; Proper Environment For Our Heavenly Father's Children; Family Councils; and Praying Together Brings Strength to The Home."

Since 1965 the Priesthood Quorums have dealt with parent (father) education with a regularity similar to that of the Relief Society. Each annual Priesthood manual consists of several parenting lessons (LDS, 1965).

#### The Sunday School Organization

The first Sunday School was established by Richard Ballantyne in 1849. It was intended mainly for the benefit of young people. It wasn't until the twentieth century that the Sunday School held adult classes on a churchwide

basis (Allen and Leonard, 1976).

In 1904 in Weber Stake, Utah, Parents' classes were added to the Sunday School curriculum. In 1906 this addition was approved for all Sunday Schools.

The purpose was to gain the active cooperation of the parents in securing better preparation of lessons and orderly conduct of the Sunday Schools. This soon led to preparation of lessons for parents. A series was published under the title, "Parent and Child." (Hill, 1949).

In 1946 the General Sunday School Board decided to offer a course on the Latter-day Saint family for youth 18 years of age or older. The success of this course led to the creation of a new department titled "Family Relations". This department included three courses: 1. Marriage and its Prerequisites; 2. Parent and Child in the Latter-day Saint Home; and 3. Parents and Youth. The Lessons were "designed to help parents understand their children and to sense their responsibilities as Latter-day Saint parents" (Hill, 1949).

The Family Relations course evolved into a marriage enrichment class designed to "strengthen the marital bond between husband and wife; as a result, the family itself will be strengthened" (LDS, 1974). At this point the responsibility for teaching parent education was assumed by the Social Service department of the church. That program will be reviewed later in this paper.

THE EFFECT OF ATTITUDES ON BEHAVIOR

In the early 1930s, Richard LaPiere commenced a journey that would result in what has come to be regarded as one of the major studies concerning the relationship between a person's attitudes and behaviors. This journey entailed traveling with a young Chinese couple around the western United States. This was not a sight-seeing tour but rather a carefully designed experiment that lasted two years and covered over ten thousand miles.

Traveling with this couple, LaPiere recorded how they were treated in the various hotels, auto camps, tourist homes and restaurants they visited. "Of the 251 establishments approached, one auto camp refused to accomodate them" (LaPiere, 1934).

Questionnaires were sent to the accommodating places after a lapse of six months to inquire as to whether the establishments would serve Chinese. Responses were obtained from 128 of the 250 polled. Ninety-one per cent of the restaurants responded with a "no" (they would not serve Chinese). The rest were uncertain. Only one person responded "yes" and then "reminisced about the nice Chinese couple she had put up six months earlier" (LaPiere, 1934).

Thus the assumed correlation between attitudes and behaviors was seriously questioned. In his concluding remarks LaPiere explains, "if we would know the extent to which [his belief] restrains his behavior, it is to his

behavior that we must look, not to his questionnaire response..." (LaPiere, 1934).

In 1972 William H. Bruvold questioned if there was consistency among attitudes and behaviors with regards to water reclamation and use of public swimming facilities. He found that when more than one belief or more than one type of behavior were considered together there was a strong attitude-behavior consistency (Bruvold, 1972).

Dating from before LaPiere to Bruvold to the researchers of today the attitude-behavior question has been analyzed, dissected, and revisited time and time again. Newer, more sophisticated methods have been employed to answer one of social science's most fundamental questions and the results are still found wanting.

Deutscher suggests that one of the reasons for the ambiguous results is that while attitudes can be easily recorded by questionnaires, behaviors are not as straightforward. Attitudes can be quantitatively assessed while behaviors are more of a qualitative nature (Deutscher, 1966). It is easy to obtain self-reported attitudes and yet few researchers have the time or means (like LaPiere) to assess behaviors.

With these concerns in mind, researchers still continue to grapple with this question. Social, political, and economic decisions are made daily under the assumption that behaviors automatically follow attitudes and beliefs.

Hence, many feel that in spite of methodological difficulties and past findings the subject is worthy of further investigation.

An example of these research difficulties was pointed out in an attitudinal study concerned with a phenomenon called the " Sleeper Effect". In the general sense the term sleeper effect refers to a delayed increase in any dependent variable.

In 1949, Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield (1949) designed an experiment that attempted to evaluate the impact of a World War II propaganda film on soldiers' beliefs. They found that initially the film had little affect because it was sponsored by the army and seen as biased and therefore untrustworthy. As time passed the source of the message was forgotten but the attitudes of the soldiers rose to correspond closer to the message itself. Thus, a delayed increase in the dependent variable was noted and termed the " Sleeper Effect".

Three experiments were designed to replicate the sleeper effect. Each in turn accepted the null hypothesis that proposed that the sleeper effect had no significant effect. And so the sleeper effect was laid to rest.

However, Cook, Gruder, Hennigan and Flay (1979) illustrate that prior to 1978 statistical and procedural conditions for an adequate test of the effect were not met. With a few provisions incorporated in the experimental

tests they were able to show that absolute effect can be obtained.

Thus we see the tenor of attitude research. A researcher's choice of methods may be closely related to his/her conclusions.

In reference to LaPiere's classical experiment, Deutcher (1966) extolled it as a model of scientific research. "Methodological precautions", "persistence", and "control" were all terms used by Deutcher to support LaPiere's "empirical conclusions". The thoughtful reader can only conclude that "no matter what one's theoretical orientation may be, he has no reason to expect to find congruence between attitudes and actions and every reason to expect to find discrepancies between them" (Deutcher, 1966).

In an equally convincing article, Dillehay (1973) dramatically points out some flaws in LaPiere's work. The questionnaires very likely revealed policy and not the attitude of the individual workers. It is also unlikely that the respondents were always the ones who waited on the Chinese couple. These are poignant concerns for such significant research.

With an idea of the attitude-behavior controversy, more recent research will be discussed to find if there is any consistency between what people say and what they do.

In a study involving 158 college students, Bentler

and Speckart (1981) sought to determine if attitudes that involved content pertinent to an individual would effect his/her behavior. The areas of dating, studying and exercise were chosen because of their apparent meaningfulness to the participants.

The results of the study supported the proposition that when pertinent content is considered, attitudes have a causal effect on behavior. The researchers concluded that "the view that attitudes have essentially no effects on behavior can be rejected with a high degree of confidence" (Bentler, Speckart, 1981).

Two of the most prolific authors on the subject of attitude and behavior, Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) reviewed 109 investigations. Their findings seem to be consistent with Bentler's. They discovered that when a person's attitude has a strong relation to the "target" behavior there is a high degree of correspondence between the two.

More recently Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) added a third component to the model. "Attitudes...influence intentions; and intentions influence behavior."

Another interesting twist was contributed to the subject by Zanna, Olson and Fazio (1980). They asked "whether an attitude inferred from past behaviors may better predict future behaviors than an attitude formed on the basis of nonverbal experience with the attitude object."

They found that past behaviors did influence atti-

tudes and that those who behaved consistently with their attitudes in the past had a strong predictable attitude-behavior correlation. This seems to support the idea that when content is pertinent to the subjects involved it has an effect on the attitude-behavior relationship.

In a different investigation, Fazio and Zanna (1978) found:

evidence supportive of the notion that various attitudinal qualities are associated with attitude-behavior consistency. The amount of direct experience an individual has had with the attitude object has now been found to be related to consistency in investigations where that variable has been assessed...(p. 400).

Do attitudes cause behaviors or do behaviors cause attitudes? Is there no correlation or is their correlation only when content is highly related? Considering LaPiere's findings, is there an inverse relationship?

Thirty years after LaPiere's journey, in his presidential address to the American Sociological Society, Herbert Blumer (1956) suggested that, not only do we know nothing about behavior, but that we don't know much about attitudes either:

The thousands of "variable" studies of attitudes, for instance, have not contributed to our knowledge of the abstract nature of an attitude; in a similar way the studies of cohesion, social integration, authority, or group morale have done nothing so far as I can detect, to clarify or augment generic knowledge of these categories. (p.683).

It is now 30 years after that despairing address. Some would contend that our progress has been significant.

Others would argue the opposite. All would maintain that the attitude-behavior question has many more journeys before it is answered.

#### PRINCIPLES OF THE LDS PARENT EDUCATION COURSE

The overall goal of the Becoming a Better Parent program is to give parents hope and restore confidence (LDS, 1974). The expressed theory is that while parenting requires a large variety of skills there are virtually no requirements for becoming a parent. The obvious result is that many couples find themselves ill prepared for the occupation of parenthood. This lack of preparation can lead to stress in the marriage, discouragement, feelings of failure and lowered self-esteem. These problems can further handicap a parent's efforts to effectively guide and train his/her children.

The Better Parent program and manual attempt to stop this destructive cycle by teaching techniques and principles of child rearing. Again the underlying theory is that increased skill will bring hope and confidence.

It is felt that the difference between this and other parent education courses is that the authors tried to use only ideas that are in harmony with LDS Church teachings (LDS, 1974). Church leaders and scriptures are referred to frequently.

The following were developed by the church as course

objectives. As a result of taking the parent education course parents will be able to:

(1) Gain the confidence of their children so that their children will come to them with personal problems rather than going to other adults or friends.

(2) Help their children find their own solutions to their problems rather than feel responsible to solve their children's problems for them.

(3) Give credit when credit is due and build self-esteem in their children.

(4) Recognize and verbally describe feelings and emotions they and their children feel.

(5) Be understanding and considerate of their children's needs and treat their children with dignity and respect.

(6) Help their children develop a responsible, considerate attitude toward the needs of others, thus treating others with dignity and respect.

(7) Structure the environment to allow their children to learn from their experiences.

(8) Effectively influence children to modify unacceptable behavior.

(9) Prevent many problems before they arise.

(10) Reconcile differences between family members without being dictatorial.

(11) Unify communication patterns used in the

family so that all family members are using the same system.

(12) Support their children as they change so that children may learn from past mistakes rather than become defensive.

(13) Use church programs and resources to assist them in successfully rearing children (LDS Church, 1976).

Pehrson (1980) evaluated the effectiveness of the Parent Education Course with sixty LDS parents. The courses were held in Oakton, Virginia; College Park Maryland; Potomac, Maryland; and Gaithersburg, Maryland. Courses were conducted between October 1979 and February 1980.

Four groups were used in his research. The first (experimental) group included LDS parents who participated in the LDS Church's ten week parent education course. They were tested before and after the training. The second group consisted of LDS parents who did not participate in the parent education course. They were tested twice at ten week intervals. The third group were LDS parent who participated in the course , but were only tested after completion of the training. The fourth group consisted of non-LDS parents who participated in a parent education course offered by the community. They were tested before and after the training and compared to the first group (Pehrson, 1980).

Using the PASS, Pehrson sought to determine if the participating groups differed significantly in the areas of

confidence, causation, acceptance, understanding, trust, and real versus ideal parenting concepts.

He found: (1) That LDS parents who participated in the Parent Education Course did not perceive themselves as having more confidence than LDS parents who did not take the course; (2) That LDS parents who participated in the course did not perceive themselves as having more insight into the causation of their children's behavior than LDS parents who did not participate in the course; (3) That participating in the LDS parent education course had a positive influence on LDS parents as it relates to acceptance of their children's behavior and feelings; (4) That LDS parents who participated in the course perceived themselves as more understanding of their children than LDS parents who did not take the course; (5) That LDS parents who took the course did not perceive themselves as more trusting than LDS parents who did not take the course; and (6) That LDS parents who participated in the course reported a significantly greater decrease in the difference between real and ideal parenting skills than LDS parents not receiving the parent education course (Pehrson, 1980).

Pehrson also found the following four variables to account for significant variance: (1) level of church activity; (2) previous parent education; (3) number of children; and (4) age.

He concluded that the results of this study can be

"cautiously generalized beyond the LDS population." He added; " Generalization can most appropriately be made to other highly educated, middle class white populations" (Pehrson, 1980).

#### SUMMARY

The review of literature was concerned with three areas. The first section of the review looked at the history of parent education in the LDS Church. It noted the various organizations within the church that were involved in that area. The second section of the review briefly discussed the ambiguous nature of the connection between attitudes and behaviors. The third part of this chapter described the parenting course and previous studies that were connected with it.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The primary purpose of this study is to determine if participation in a parent education course will influence parental attitudes. This chapter will include: (1) the hypotheses; (2) the population, including sampling procedures; (3) the experimental treatment; (4) the instrument; (5) data collection and (6) data analysis.

### HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses will be stated here in the null form. The level of significance will be set at the .05 level. The sub-scales on the PASS will be measured separately for significance with the same hypotheses. They include: causation, confidence, acceptance, understanding and trust. The research hypotheses is:

Ho Among parents who participate in the LDS Parent Education Course there will be no difference in reported attitude change between those who took the training and those who did not, as demonstrated on the PASS, post test measures.

### POPULATION

The subjects for this study will be provided by the LDS Social Services in Arizona. They will include parents

who are members of the LDS Church who have completed the parent education course during 1984-1985.

The participants for the control group will be randomly drawn from the same geographical area as the treatment group. There will be an equal proportion of control subjects as treatment subjects.

#### THE EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT

Because of limits of time and resources there will be an admitted lack of control in this design. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to refer to it as quasi-experimental. The study will be in the form of a posttest-only control group design.

According to Campbell and Stanley, (1963) the pretest affords the researcher with the knowledge of how "equal" his/her experimental and control groups are. However, because pretesting is not always possible or desirable, randomization may be used to assure "lack of initial biases between groups" (Cambell and Stanley, 1963).

The treatment group will consist of those parents who participated in the parent education course in the 1984-1985 (Sept.-June) year. Some of those who received training volunteered for the course, others were requested by their Bishop to attend. Requests to attend the parenting course does not necessarily reflect a particular need. It is more indicitive of the Church's emphasis to have all

members eventually attend.

The course (treatment) is a ten week, two hour per week program. The participants are asked to read the 93 page "Becoming a Better Parent" course manual. They are also encouraged to attend and contribute to each weekly session.

Every week specific parenting skills are taught. Parents are encouraged to try to incorporate these skills in their homes the following week. These attempts are reported on and discussed in the next session.

The skills taught in this course are not unique in the field of parent education. The authors of the course relied heavily upon the works of DR. Rudolf Dreikurs (Children-The Challenge), Dr. Haim G. Ginnett (Between Parent and Child/Teenager), and Dorothy Corkille Briggs (Your Child's Self-esteem). With these as well as authorities in the church as resources, the authors developed this program.

The following outline will give a general idea of what is involved in the ten week course:

- Session 1. Introduction, Overview, and developing listening skills
- Session 2. Listening to understand
- Session 3. Building self-esteem in children
- Session 4. General introduction to discipline skills
  - Part 1. Free agency and responsibility

- Part 2. The power of example
- Part 3. The language of reproof
- Session 5. Learning Obedience by experience
- Session 6. Guiding and training children
- Session 7. Resolving differences, Part A
- Session 8. Resolving differences, Part B
- Part 1. How to argue effectively
- Part 2. More about reconciling differences
- Session 9. Meeting basic human needs
- Session 10. "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethern"

Instructors are called by their individual stakes. They are trained by the LDS Social Services. They are involved in these courses until called to some other position in the church. Therefore the level of experience among the teachers ranges from one to five years. There were three instructors involved in the four stakes for the 1984-1985 year.

The control group will consist of members of the church who have not taken the course. They will be randomly selected from each of the four stakes. Because the stakes are divided geographically, a corresponding number of control participants will be selected from the respective Stakes of the experimental treatment participants.

## THE INSTRUMENT

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENT. The Parent Attitude Survey Scale, (PASS) was designed to assess parents' attitudes toward child rearing. It was developed in 1955 by Carl Hereford. It was developed as part of a research project on parent education in Austin Texas (Hereford, 1963). The PASS contains 77 statements to which the respondent may choose; "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Undecided", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree". The answers are weighed numerically, with a range of +2 for "Strongly Agree" to -2 for "Strongly Disagree". The scores are summed for each of the five scales. Therefore, a parent receives a separate score for each of the attitude areas.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCALES. The PASS was developed to measure five different parental attitudes. The first scale measures the degree to which a parent feels confident in his or her role. It is a self-assessed indication of how competent a person feels he or she is as a parent.

The second scale is concerned with causation, or the parent's understanding of what causes a child to behave as he/she does. This score indicates how much the parents feel their actions effect the behavior of their children. On one side of the scale the parents feel they are totally responsible for what their children do. On the other side, they believe that regardless of what a parent does the

child will act as he/she is "naturally" inclined to do.

Acceptance is the degree to which the parent accepts or rejects the child and his/her behavior. This scale assesses a parents acceptance of a child's feelings, needs for affection, and self-expression. The third scale measures acceptance.

The fourth scale, understanding relates to parent-child communication. Related items on this scale include; freedom of expression, communication, and joint participation in decision making.

The final scale, trust, measures the degree to which a parent accepts or rejects a child's individuality. If parents trust a child with increased decision making, it suggests they respect their child's individuality.

#### VALIDITY

Lewis evaluated parental attitude change in connection with the Parent Effectiveness Training course (PET). Regarding the the validity of the PASS she concluded:

Of the six cited studies in which the PASS was used as a measure of PET effect, the scores on the confidence and trust sub-tests showed significant differences between pre- and post-test measures in four of the studies for those parents who received treatment as opposed to controls who did not receive the PET. In three of those studies, the understanding and acceptance sub-tests scores were most noticeably affected by the PET, causation had the lowest overall difference. Based on the results shown in these four studies, it appears that the PASS is a valid measure of the effects of PET (Lewis, 1980).

Using the PASS, Pehrson measured parental attitude differences between those who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course and those who did not. Using a before-after design he assessed one experimental group and three control groups. Of the five scales measured he found significant differences in the areas of acceptance (.000 level of confidence), understanding (.001 level of confidence) and trust (.05 level of confidence) (Pehrson, 1980).

The studies cited by Lewis and the results reached by Pehrson seem to indicate that the PASS is a valid measure of the attitude sub-scales. Of the two education courses analyzed both reported a noticeable treatment effect in the areas of trust, acceptance and understanding.

#### RELIABILITY

To determine the reliability of the PASS, researchers used the split half reliability technique. They divided the questionnaire into two halves with the first seven items of each scale on one part and the last seven items on another part; the middle item being omitted (Hereford, 1963). A resultant high correlation coefficient of .80 was the mean score for the five scales involved. This indicated internal consistency and therefore high reliability.

### DATA COLLECTION

Each parent who participated in the parent education course during the 1984-85 year will be a sent letter soliciting their help with this study. (See Appendix B) They will be requested to fill out the PASS and return it by a specified date.

Approval for the project was requested and received from the LDS Social Services in Tucson.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The data will be analyzed using a linear regression statistic. This measure will take into account the variables; age, sex, level of church activity, previous parent education, and number of children in connection with the five scales on the PASS. It is assumed that the extraneous variables listed may have an effect on the statistical results.

### SUMMARY

This chapter was concerned with the methods involved in this research project. The hypotheses was restated in the null form. The population and sampling procedures were described in detail. The experimental treatment was outlined. The development and description of the instrument along with data collection and analysis were discussed.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to determine if those who participated in the LDS Parenting Course differed significantly in parental attitudes from those who had not taken the course. The attitudes measured were: confidence, causation, acceptance, understanding and trust. More specifically the null hypotheses stated:

Among parents who participate in the LDS Parent Education Course there will be no difference in reported attitudes between those who took the course and those who did not, as demonstrated on the PASS, post test measure.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The participants were sent an 83 question survey. Four of the questions were demographic. Two questions were concerned with previous parental training. Seventy-seven of the questions were from the PASS. Of the 114 surveyed 50 responded, for a response rate of 44%. It is felt that the length of the survey, the anonymity of the respondents and the limited period allowed for reply contributed to the low response rate. Despite the modest participation, the respondents were well balanced between those who had taken the course (27) and those who had not (23).

Of those who had not attended the course, 9 indicated that they had received parent education before. Only 12 of the 50 respondents claimed to have had no

previous parental education.

Level of church activity was measured. All but 2 individuals indicated 90-100% church activity. There was therefore minimal variance with regards to church activity.

Because the survey was sent to couples, the sex of the respondents was basically even. There were 26 males and 28 females who replied to the questionnaire.

The number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 9, with an average of 4 children per family.

The results of the survey were compiled and measured using a multiple regression statistic. The areas of sex, number of children, age of the respondent, parenting course completion, other parenting education and church activity were considered independent variables. The five attitude areas of confidence, causation, acceptance, understanding, and trust were considered dependent variables. Each independent variable was measured in connection with each dependent variable. The statistical results are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Confidence in respondents' parenting ability.

VARIABLE	B	F	SIGNIFICANCE	MULT. R	R SQUARE
Parent's Sex	3.24	7.06	.01	.35	.12
No. of Child.	.86	3.70	.06	.42	.17
Took Course	-1.43	1.15	.28	.44	.19
Other Par. Course	-1.66	1.72	.19	.46	.22
Church Activity	-2.26	1.32	.25	.48	.23
Age of Par.	-.86	1.00	.32	.50	.25

This indicates that parents who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course did not perceive themselves as having more confidence than Parents who did not take the course. The null hypothesis is retained. It does appear that the sex of the parent may be a significant factor in parental confidence, and that females saw themselves as having more parental confidence than males.

Table 2. Parents insight into the cause of childrens' behavior.

VARIABLE	B	F	SIGNIFICANCE	MULT. R	R.SQUARE
Parent's Sex	-1.99	1.36	.24	.10	.01
No. of Child.	.14	.49	.82	.11	.01
Took Course	-1.54	.68	.41	.12	.01
Other Par. Course	2.19	1.54	.22	.24	.06
Church Activity	2.65	.93	.33	.29	.08
Age of Par. -	.83	.48	.49	.31	.09

This indicates that parents who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course did not perceive themselves as having more insight into the causation of their children's behavior than parents who did not participate in the course. The null hypothesis is retained.

Table 3. Parents acceptance of their childrens' behavior.

VARIABLE	B	F	SIGNIFICANCE	MULT.R	R. SQUARE
Parents' Sex	.33	2.67	.90	.05	.00
No. of Child.	.63	.41	.94	.15	.02
Took Course	-3.63	1.54	.22	.19	.03
Other Par. Course	-1.83	.43	.51	.21	.04
Church Activity	1.70	.15	.69	.22	.05
Age of Par. -	.21	1.26	.26	.28	.08

This indicates that parents who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course did not perceive themselves as having more acceptance of their children's behavior than parents who did not participate in the course. The null hypothesis is retained.

Table 4. Parents' understanding of their children's behavior.

VARIABLES	B	F	SIGNIFICANCE	MULT. R	R. SQUARE
Parents' Sex	.76	.28	.59	.10	.01
No. of Child.	.55	1.10	.29	.21	.04
Took Course	-1.10	.50	.48	.22	.52
Other Par. Course	-.43	.87	.76	.23	.05
Church Activity	.64	.79	.78	.23	.05
Age of Par.	-.50	.24	.62	.25	.06

This indicates that parents who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course did not perceive themselves as having more understanding of their children than parents who did not participate in the course.

Table 5. Parents' trust in their children.

VARIABLES	B	F	SIGNIFICANCE	MULT. R	R. SQUARE
Parents' Sex	.89	.23	.99	.02	.00
No. of Child.	-1.17	3.05	.08	.02	.00
Took Course	-.22	.12	.91	.13	.01
Other Par. Course	2.19	1.34	.25	.17	.03
Church Activity	1.28	.19	.66	.17	.03
Age of Par.	.25	3.79	.05	.34	.11

This indicates that parents who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course did not perceive themselves as having more trust in their children than parents who did not participate in the course. The null hypothesis is retained. It appears that the age of the parent may be a significant factor in parental trust. Older parents saw themselves as having more trust in their children than younger parents.

### SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter was concerned with analyzing the results of PASS questionnaire. Each of the five parent attitude scales were compared with 6 independent variables. The null hypothesis was retained in each instance. There was no significant coorelation between participation in the parenting course and parental attitudes, when compared with parents who had not participated in the course.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Discussion of Conclusions

From the statistical analysis of the previous chapter, the null hypothesis must be retained. There appears to be no significant difference in parental attitudes, as reflected on the PASS, between those who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course and those who did not take the course.

One explanation for this lack of significance may be the type of individuals who responded to the questionnaire. Only 43% completed and returned the survey. These respondents may reflect similar values with regards to parental attitudes.

In connection with this is the factor that 94% of the respondents indicated they had previously had some form of parent education. Only 12 participants claimed to have never been involved in parent education.

Using a t-test, an additional measure was employed to determine if there was a difference between those who had some parent education and those had none. The results are in the following table.

Table 6. Previous parent education compared to no prior parental education.

Group 1 = Respondants with no previous parent education

Group 2 = Respondants who previously had some form of parent education

VARIABLE	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR	F VALUE	2-TAIL PROB
CONFIDENCE						
GROUP 1	12	36.83	4.56	1.31		
GROUP 2	38	34.76	4.14	.71	1.22	.62
CAUSATION						
GROUP 1	12	46.83	5.35	1.56		
GROUP 2	38	44.94	5.49	.94	1.05	.98
ACCEPTANCE						
GROUP 1	12	44.16	4.85	1.40		
GROUP 2	38	42.58	9.45	1.62	3.79	.02
UNDERSTANDING						
GROUP 1	12	45.91	5.50	1.58		
GROUP 2	38	43.47	3.97	.68	1.91	.14
TRUST						
GROUP 1	12	44.00	8.03	2.31		
GROUP 2	38	43.67	5.07	.87	2.50	.04

This would indicate that those who participated in the LDS Parent Education Course and those who had some other form of parent education did not differ significantly from those who had no previous parental education. In fact the only measures that show any significance, indicate that those who had no previous parent education scored higher than their counterparts

It cannot be concluded that the LDS Parenting Course is not a valid medium for attitudinal change. An acknowledged limitation of this study is that it did not measure the attitudes of course participants before their involvement in the course. It can however, be safely assumed that those who complete the course do not differ substantially in regards to parental attitudes, from those who do not take the course.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

A program that is used as extensively as the LDS Parent Education Course is worth further review. It is recommended that attitude change be measured by way of a pre-test, post-test design.

It is also recommended that another survey be developed. Situational cases requesting how the individual would respond may indicate skills learned in the class as well as underlying attitudes. Such an instrument may side-step the attitude-behavior question, and at the same time

assess the effectiveness of the course.

Some respondents expressed concern over ambiguous statements in the PASS. The length of the survey may have also introduced bias into the study.

A final recommendation would be to separate the participants according to teachers. The individual effectiveness of each teacher is a variable that may be significant.

#### SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the conclusions that can be drawn from the statistical findings. It was shown that the data analysis reflected no significance in the five attitude scales that are measured on the PASS. The correlation between previous parental education and no prior parental education was also addressed in this chapter. It was recommended that this project could be repeated with a pre-test, post-test design, with another instrument and with each teacher being considered separately.

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These consist of pages:

44-50- PARENT ATTITUDE SURVEY SCALE

51-52- PARENT ATTITUDE SURVEY SCALE SCORING CRITERIA

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## APPENDIX C

### LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Dear Brother and Sister:

For the last five years the Social Service department of the church has offered a ten week parent education course in Tucson. As a student of The University of Arizona I am gathering data for a study related to parent education. In an attempt to assess the parent education course 63 couples are being requested to participate in this study. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Enclosed is a Parent Attitude Survey that will require approximately 20 minutes of your time. There is a separate questionnaire for each of you. Please fill out the survey regardless if you attended the course or not. Be assured that all information will be kept confidential.

Please complete these in the evening (6-9 PM), and return them in the enclosed envelope no later than August 5. I thank you for your help. A summary of the results of this study will be furnished upon request. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Steve Fotheringham  
Researcher

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Tucson, Arizona, 85749

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