SYSTEMATIC TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE PARENTING: EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOR CHANGE OF PARENTS AND CHILD: A REPLICATION STUDY

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of an Adlerian based parent study program entitled Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) among military parents. The Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale (APACBS) was used to measure the parent's perception of their Target Child's behavior.

Fourty-seven subjects were randomly assigned to a Solomon Four Group design. Neither ANCOVA or ANOVA yielded a significant change in the parent's perception of their Target Child's behavior ($p < .05$). Thus, the hypotheses that stated, parents who participated in a STEP program would perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than would parents who did not participate in the program, could not be accepted. However, the hypotheses which stated male participants would not perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than would female participants and that there would be no significant interaction between the group and sex variables were accepted ($p < .05$). Support was also given to the hypotheses that the pretest scores would not sensitize the posttest.

Findings indicate that STEP may be equally applied to fathers and mothers and it may act as a motivator toward

encouraging parents to read parenting literature. Further research is needed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The military is a special subculture which places many demands upon its members. Among the greatest of these demands is the father's absence from the family. Frances and Gale (1973) report that within the military family structure the wife is the usual presenting patient in a psychiatric unit followed by the children. Macintosh (1968) found that a significant number of these wives have symptoms directly relating to the father's absence because of military duty. Similar findings indicate that the extent of the father's absence is predictive of emotional disturbance in presenting children (Pedersen, 1966). Paternal deprivation creates a particular frustration and anxiety for the parent-child relationship, a situation frequently encountered by military families when father is away from the home on temporary duty (Rosenfeld, Rosenstein and Raab, 1973; Peck and Schroeder, 1976). The reason, as indicated by Rosenfeld et al (1973, p. 37), is that the wife, "must take on the functions usually fulfilled by the father, among others those of disciplinarian and mediator between the child and society. This is an area of particular difficulty and anxiety for most mothers."

Much current research has dealt with the pathology of paternal deprivation, while only alluding to the need for more preventative methods of intervention (Hillenbrand, 1976). A logical starting point would appear to be the parent-child relationship. If this is true, then a program which can aid parents to improve their relationships with their children would be a preventative means of dealing with paternal depriation pathologies.

Such a program has been developed by Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976, p. 4) called Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). The program according to the authors has been, "effective for thousands of parents. Its study method is based on reading, discussion, exercises reflecting typical concerns, encouragement of and by participants, and putting the principles and techniques into practice in one's own family." The program combines communication skills with Adlerian psychology, in a parent group setting, for the purpose of improving parent-child relationships. Another reason for selecting STEP as a model program is that it can be directed by either "inexperienced lay" or by professional leaders. This is significant, because it allows for immediate implementation at any military base where the need for such a program exists.

Purpose of the Study

While the STEP program (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976) is currently receiving positive feedback from parents and leaders alike, few studies have been conducted to test its effectiveness with both parents. To the author's knowledge, no research on STEP has been conducted with an all military population. This study used a replication approach of earlier research conducted by McKay (1976a, p. 5) whose purpose it was:

> . . . to assess its value in helping parents improve their relationships with their children. This study attempted to validate STEP. The investigator studied whether participation in a STEP group resulted in positive changes in both mother and child behavior.

Unfortunately, McKay did not use fathers in his study or control for basic variables such as pretest sensitization or the Hawthorne effect. The present study used a Solomon Four Group design, a Placebo Group, and included fathers within the special population that was tested.

Theoretical Rationale

The basic assumptions made in STEP are derived from the philosophies of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs. McKay (1976a, p. 5) notes:

> The Adlerian philosophy views faulty relationships between parents and children as the lack of (1) parental understanding of children's behavior, and (2) child training methods which facilitate mutual respect.

People, according to Adler, are social beings. They need to feel that they are accepted and needed by those around them, and that they are a part of their society. People need to feel that they belong. This type of philosophy is considered to be an individual psychology, because it views humans holistically. The term individual psychology for Adler, according to Mosak and Dreikurs (1973, p. 36), ". . . referred rather to his holistic stance that man could be understood only as a whole, that man was an indivisible unity." Therefore both the human being and his behavior should be considered in conjunction with his social situation.

All behavior has a purpose or goal which motivates the individual to action. The individual may not be aware of his goal, but he is aware of the consequences of his action, which represents the individual's attempt to belong. This reflects one's social interest, which according to Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963, p. 9), ". . . reflects our attitudes toward our fellow man. The individual with sufficient social interest accepts responsiblity not only for himself but also to and for the group." Thus having an understanding of another's goal can help one to understand why and how the other behaves.

Individuals act subjectively.

> We are influenced not by the facts but by our particular interpretation of them. It is more important to know how (one) feels than to know the concrete details of his act. All behavior makes sense to the individual in terms of the way in which he views the world. (This is referred to as the individual's "private logic.") Our senses receive images that are interpreted subjectively. Each individual interprets reality in a slightly different manner (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs, 1963, p. 11).

Individuals are free to choose how they will respond to stimuli, and may use their own creativity to do so. One's creativity is also used to formulate a personal plan for being accepted in the world, i.e., "belonging" in the world. This plan is what Adler called one's life style. The life style combines the attitudes, goals, and beliefs that make up one's personality. The life style is formed in the child's interactions with his environment, especially within the context of his family, since this forms his earliest social environment. It is within the family the child learns to belong in society. If the child cannot find a means to belong in a useful manner he becomes discouraged and misbehaves. Misbehavior yields recognition and this is perceived as a means of belonging. No matter what type of behavior the individual chooses, he is always responsible for it.

Another important assumption is that all individuals have an equal amount of social worth and value, which in a democratic society can best be demonstrated by respecting the rights and responsibilities of every one else. This

allows for freedom, which requires a degree of order, "but the order is not imposed by an autocratic authority for his benefit, but is maintained by each for the benefit of all. This does not imply unrestricted freedom, but rather freedom within well-defined restrictions, which give a sense of security and a certainty within the social structure or family" (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964, pp. 9-10).

McKay (1976a, pp. 8-9) feels:

> The climate of our times suggests a democratic child-training philosophy which permits children to make choices within limits, allows them to be responsible for the consequences of their decisions, fosters social interest (a willingness to cooperate and participate in the give and take of life), emphasizes mutual respect, and provides encouragement for coping with the difficulities of life. The Adlerian philosophy is one of the child-rearing systems which provides a foundation for building democratic relationships between parents and children.
>
> STEP (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976) attempts to help parents learn democratic child-training procedures, and understand themselves and their children from an Adlerian perspective.

The basic Adlerian principles espoused in the STEP program include: social equality, mutual respect, democratic relationships, purpose of behavior, the four goals of misbehavior, life styles, family atmosphere and values, sex roles, family constellation methods of training, encouragement, parental beliefs and behaviors which foster misbehavior and those which do the opposite while fostering responsibility, natural and logical consequences with choices, family

meetings and parent self-confidence. The communication principles include: roles parents play in talking with their children, reflective listening skills, brainstorming, constructing "I" messages, pinpointing, and collective decision making.

Statement of the Problem

Will parent participation in a STEP group result in measurable changes in the military parents' ratings of the behavior of the children with whom they are most concerned?

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1--For those participants who will be pre and posttested on the APACBS, where their pretest scores are used as a covariate, it is hypothesized that:

a. Parents who participate in the STEP program will perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than will parents of the Comparison Group who do not participate in the STEP program, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

b. Parents who participate in the STEP program will perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than will parents of the Placebo Group who do not participate in the STEP program, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

c. Male participants will not perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive

than will female participants, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

d. There will be no significant interaction between the group and sex variables.

Hypothesis 2--For those participants who received the posttest without the pretest it is hypothesized that:

a. Parents who participate in the STEP program will perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than will parents who do not participate in the STEP program, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

b. Male participants will not perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than will female participants, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

c. There will be no significant interaction between the group and sex variables.

Hypothesis 3--The posttest mean scores of the Pretest-Treatment-Posttest Group will not be significantly different from the posttest mean scores of the Treatment-Posttest-Group and the posttest mean scores of the Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group will not be significantly different from the Posttest Only Comparison Group.

Definition of Terms

The terms STEP, Target Child, and the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale, as used in the above hypotheses are defined by McKay, (1976b, p. 23), as follows:

STEP--A nine session parent study group program taught in weekly two hour meetings. The topics and format of the program are determined by the STEP leader's manual.

Target Child--A child between the ages of four and 13 whom the parent identified as a child with whom they would like to improve their relationship.

Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale--A thirty-two item seven point interval Likert-type rating scale which assesses the parents' perceptions of their Target Child's behavior. The scale was constructed by the investigator (Gary McKay) to test change in specific behaviors which are dealt with in STEP. The parents are asked to rate each behavior on a continuum from "always" to "never". Both responsible and irresponsible child behaviors are represented in the items. This scale can be found in Appendix A.

The current study reduced the number of STEP sessions from nine to six by combining session two (Understanding more about your child and about yourself as a parent) with session three (Encouragement: Building your child's confidence and feelings of worth), session six (Natural and logical

consequences: A method of discipline that develops responsibility) with session seven (Applying natural and logical consequencies to other concerns), and session eight (The family meeting) with session nine (Developing confidence and using your potential).

Review of Literature

The review of the literature found a disparaging number of research studies dealing with preventative intervention methodologies for presenting pathologies of military families resulting from temporary parental deprivation. This is surprising when one considers the variety of studies dealing with father absence among military families as presented below.

Crumley and Blumenthal, 1973; Francis and Gale, 1973; Macintosh, 1968; Pedersen, 1966, all reported that a significant number of military dependents who were separated from their husband or father and were referred to a military psychiatrist, had symptoms directly relating to military induced separation. All but Francis and Gale (1973), whose study was compiled through observations made in a military psychiatric clinic, used non-equivalent control groups. Francis and Gale (1973, p. 178) found that:

> The usual therapy had been individual with little utilization of the family members, although it was frequently the underlying deficits within the marriage that predisposed the individual decompensation. A therapeutic effort directed toward a conjoint or family approach increased the strength

> of its members to collectively cope with the unusual stress of the military environment (Francis and Gale, 1973, p. 178).

A recent study by Beckman, Marsella and Finney (1979), used 24 wives (not reported as being referred to military psychiatrists) of nuclear submarine personnel and measured levels of depression under conditions of husband absent and husband present. The Zung Depression Scale and the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist were used as the test instruments. The results showed that wives had significantly higher depression scores during the period of husband absence.

Other investigations have resulted in a strong emphases being placed on preventative intervention. Hillenbrand (1976, p. 456) concluded her study on the effects of father absence in military families by stating:

> A paramount question, which has not been asked frequently enough, is how intervention can be used to modify the negative effects of paternal deprivation.
>
> A prevention-oriented focus on health, rather than on pathology, may be of more pragmatic value than that espoused by the traditional medical model. A major aim should be that of learning how to enable families to react adaptively to crisis. . . .
>
> . . . it has been observed that the one parent family faces a multiplicity of adjustment problems which call for preventive social work. . . . Such support should aid the family to cope more adaptively with the absence of a parent--and to utilize the experience as a means for growth.

In her study no control group was used. Seventy-three boys and 53 girls in sixth grade were assessed on intelligence, classroom behavior, parental dominance, parental

identification, and family constellation. It was found that in first born boys cumulative father absence significantly increased the child's perception of the mother as the dominant parent. For boys with older siblings early father absence was related to increased aggression and dependency. Findings for the girls were not significant in the aforementioned variables. McCubbin (1980, p. 55) drew similar conclusions to those of Hillenbrand (1976) when he stated, "Family change is a natural part of adaptation to stress. That fact underscores the value of preventative intervention with family units by emphasizing positive coping before the impact of separation and reunion." McCubbin reached his conclusions by studying the effects of various coping mechanisms employed by wives during their husbands absence and the mechanisms effect on the father-child reintegration. Interestingly, one of the significant negative variables was, "maintaining family interaction and stability." It was suggested the reason for the negative relationship was that the father was not included in the process, thus the need for preventative intervention with the family prior to the impact of separation, that the father might be included. Preventative intervention was viewed as parental instruction by Grady (1977), who reported absent fathers to be one of a variety of early signs for potential child abuse cases.

Despite the preceding reports only one study was located which deals with a military preventative intervention

program of greater scope than the typical psychotherapist--client or chaplain as counselor intervention studies. Examples of these are Garrigan and Carmichael, 1979 and Peck and Schroeder, 1976.

Gemelli (1979) aware of the need within the military to promote a preventative program for healthy child development and effective parenting established such a program. Flexibility and reassessing concepts of child rearing were to be stressed instead of presenting the "right way of raising children" (Gemelli, 1979, p. 17). The program contained seven sessions covering topics of parenthood and pregnancy, infancy, early childhood, late childhood, early adolescence, late adolescence and child abuse. Each session lasted one and one half hours and was presented once a week in the Naval Regional Medical Center auditorium. The program was for adults and an average of 177 participated in the pilot program. Each session was broken down into a 45-minute presentation followed by a 15-minute break and then a question and answer period. While this was not a research study, Gemelli did feel the high participant rate was a good indicator of the need for that type of parenting program. A major draw back was the need for a qualified instructor.

Although no real research has been preformed on Gemelli's (1979) parenting program, several signficant studies have been conducted with STEP (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976)

during the last decade that have yielded positive results, as reported by Sellick (1979). Sellick's study is one of the most recent and contains an excellent bibliography of STEP research. Sellick compared three STEP parent study groups to a control group. The three treatment groups consisted of one group which received the "Parent's Handbook" from Systematic training for effective parenting (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976), along with the STEP presentation and a consultation, a second group which received the book and presentation, and a third group which received only the book. The Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design was used. Participants (64) were mothers who had volunteered, fathers were excluded. All three groups scored significantly higher in their perception of their Target Child's behavior than did the Control Group, as measured by their ratings on the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale (McKay, 1976a).

McKay's study (1976b) was one of the first to obtain significant findings for an Adlerian-based parent study group. He used a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design with a sample size of $n = 20$. All the participants were mothers who volunteered. He found there were significant changes in the mothers' perception of their Target Child's behavior after participation in a STEP group.

A summary of the literature indicates there are a variety of military studies referring to the need for

preventative intervention programs. Any literature however, on such programs is sparse. It also appears that currently there are no Adlerian-based programs (present thesis excepted) being studied for use with military populations. Finally, the majority of research on Adlerian-based parent study groups has resulted in positive significant results during the last ten years.

CHAPTER 2

PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the methods used to test the hypotheses presented in Chapter 1 of this study. The following material is discussed: The sampling procedures, research design, research and treatment procedures, methods of measurement, analysis of the data, and limitations of the study.

Sampling Procedures

This study was conducted with the cooperation of the Tucson Unified School District and involved parents whose children attended schools located within the perimeter of Davis Monthan Air Force Base (DMAFB). The schools had a combined enrollment of 875 students. A letter was sent home with the students inviting military parents to participate in a parent study group (Appendix B). Those parents who were interested in participating completed the reply request form and returned it to the school. Those who expressed interest were contacted by telephone to confirm their willingness to participate and ability to meet the following criteria: (1) the family was a "military family", (2) had a child between the ages of four and 13 whom they had

designated as a child with whom they would like to improve their relationship (Target Child), and (3) could attend the treatment sessions. The parents were then randomly assigned to one of the three treatment groups (couples who could participate were not separated, but each individual was counted as a separate subject).

Research Design

A Soloman Four Group design with a Placebo Group was used for the study (Figure 1). Five groups with nine to ten subjects each were used: The Pretest-Treatment-Posttest Group, the Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group, the Treatment-Posttest Group, the Posttest Only Comparison Group, and the Placebo Treatment Group. When given, each group received the same pretest and posttest. It is important to note that McKay (1976b) used only the first two groups of the above design in his study; i.e., a pretest-posttest control group design. All the subjects for the present study were randomly assigned to one of the five groups.

McKay's independent and dependent variables were used for this study plus an additional independent variable (the Placebo). The independent variables were, "the materials and delivery system of Systematic training for effective parenting (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976)" for the treatment groups and group discussion of Children the challenge (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964) for the Placebo Group. The dependent variable

R	O_1	X	O_2
R	O_1		O_2
R		X	O_2
R			O_2
R	O_1	P	O_2

Figure 1. Solomon Four Group Design with Placebo Group

R - Randomized assignment of subjects to treatment groups

O_1 - Dependent variable measures before treatment

O_2 - Dependent variable measures after treatment

X - Independent variable (treatment)

P - Independent variable (Placebo)

was, "each parent's perception of his or her Target Child's behavior, as measured by the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale" (McKay, 1976b, p. 27).

This study also allowed for a description of extraneous variables which might have acted as participant contaminates. They were: Involvement in past parent study groups, experience with similar methods, involvement in family counseling, and exposure to previous parenting literature. In order to check for contamination following the posttest, a

short questionnaire was administered (Appendix C) to the subjects and each subject was verbally asked if he or she had been or currently was involved in counseling. This study also considered the possibility of pretest sensitization, while the Hawthorne effect was considered and measured through use of the Placebo Group.

Research Procedures

This study was conducted in a similar manner to that used by Gary McKay with the exceptions that the Mother-Child Interaction Exercise (Goula, 1976 and McKay, 1976b) was omitted and the treatment was completed in six weeks. This study was conducted as follows:

1. Prior to the first treatment session the subjects in the Comparison Group were contacted by telephone and arrangements were made for them to complete the pretest instrument. The other subjects who were to receive the pretest had the instrument administered to them at the commencement of their first session preceding any treatment. The instrument used was the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale (McKay, 1976a) which asked the parents to rate their Target Child's behavior.
2. All subjects involved in the treatment groups had the posttest instrument (the same instrument as

was used in the pretest) administered to them following the last treatment presentation. All the remaining subjects were contacted by telephone and appointments were made for them to complete the post-test. All subjects were given the questionnaire found in Appendix C and the Family Consent Form found in Appendix D with the posttest.

3. The Placebo Group had the instrument administered to them in the identical manner as the Pretest-Treatment-Posttest Group.

Treatment Procedures

The subjects who participated in the STEP group (treatment groups) received six weeks of treatment. Each week the parents attended one session for two hours. They used the STEP Parent's Handbook (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976), covering one or two chapters per week. The nine chapters contain the following information:

Chapter 1. Understanding Children's Behavior and Misbehavior--This chapter presents a "practical theory" of why children misbehave, the value and human worth of all individuals regardless of age, essentials of building positive relationships, defines encouragement, importance of communicating love to children, and the goals of positive behavior as well as misbehavior.

Chapter 2. Understanding More About Your Child and About Yourself as a Parent--In this chapter, parents learn how children use emotions in relation to their goals of misbehavior. Parents also learn how they formulated their life styles and how they form an important part of their children's life styles. Finally, parents are taught the advantages of being a responsible parent that allows their child to develop responsibility rather than a controlling or superior parent demanding perfection. This session helps parents realize how many of their expectations for their children are discouraging to the child rather than encouraging.

Chapter 3. Encouragement: Building Your Child's Confidence and Feelings of Worth--This chapter emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between "the deed" and "the doer of the deed" in relation to the child's feelings of self worth. This is emphasized as the basic difference between "praise" and "encouragement." Parents practice using the language of encouragement during the session.

Chapter 4. Communication: How to Listen to Your Child--Roles parents play when their children try to express their feelings are demonstrated, showing how they usually are a deterrent to communication. The ability to reflect a child's feeling in both content and emotion is taught as an

alternative method of communication, called reflective listening. Using open responses to promote communication is also practiced while emphasizing the importance of being aware of non-verbal communciation.

Chapter 5. Communication: Exploring Alternatives and Expressing Your Ideas and Feelings to Children--The previous session helps parents understand their children's concerns. This chapter aids parents to express their concerns and feelings without blaming others for them through the use of "I" messages. Both Chapter 4 and 5 are presented as a means of encouraging mutual respect between parent and child.

Chapter 6. Natural and Logical Consequences: A Method of Discipline that Develops Responsibility--Chapter 7. Applying Natural and Logical Consequences to Other Concerns--These chapters explain why reward-and-punishment deprive the child from learning responsibility for his actions, or lack of actions, and place all the responsiblity on the parents. They also prevent the child from making his own decisions and encourage resistance. As an alternative, natural and logical consequences are offered. These hold the child responsible for his actions by allowing him to make responsible decisions within limits and then to be accountable for the decision. Also the consequences are directly related to the behavior while reward-and-punish seldom is. Logical consequences force the child to make a choice and, therefore,

do not make the parent responsible for the child's decision. This fosters both mutual respect and mutual rights. Chapter 7 continues expanding the use of logical consequences as a means of acting, not reacting, to daily situations, emphasizing ownership for the concern or problem and acting accordingly.

Chapter 8. The Family Meeting--This chapter brings all the previously learned skills into play. Guidelines for family meetings, which encourage mutual respect, are presented along with leadership skills and methods of initiating the family meeting.

Chapter 9. Developing Confidence and Using Your Potential--The final chapter is offered as a means of encouragement for parents, to inhibit self-defeating attitudes prior to giving the program time to become effective. It also helps parents to defend themselves against uninformed sources of criticism, for their efforts of applying an alternative approach of parenting.

The parents of each session were led by a master's student in counseling and guidance who had an understanding for Adlerian methods of child rearing. The leader used the STEP program for teaching and leading the six STEP treatment sessions. The STEP program contained the following materials:

1. STEP Leader's Manual: It provided background for leading group discussions and contained a lesson plan for each session.
2. STEP Parent's Handbook: It was distributed to each parent in the group and was used for reference during the sessions and was to be studied at home prior to each session. The Handbook contents were described above. It was highly illustrated with color cartoons, charts, points to remember for each chapter, and a combination check off and self evaluation form for each chapter's implementation.
3. Cassettes: Each cassette provided simulated situations which are common to parent-child relationships, solicited group solutions, and then provided a possible solution. There was a cassette for each session.
4. Posters: A full color cartoon poster which depicted a typical scene from the concept for that session.
5. Instructional Charts: Enlarged reproductions of the charts contained in the Parent's Handbook. They summarized the material contained in each chapter.

6. Discussion Guide Cards: Contained guidelines for the group to follow while participating as a group and were displayed for all to see throughout each session.
7. Introductory Tape: Designed for stimulating interest in a large group to become involved in a STEP program. It was not used in this study.
8. Brochure: Same function as number seven, also not used.

Lesson Format and Sequence

The first session began with getting acquainted exercises, an explanation of the objectives of the program, and outlined the method of presentation and use of the Discussion Guide Cards. Lesson one then began and followed the same outline for presentation as did the remaining eight sessions, which was as follows:

1. Use of the poster as an introduction to the topic.
2. Discussion of the "Activity for the Week: (beginning with the second week).
3. Discussed the current week's reading assignment.
4. Reviewed and discussed the Instructional Chart.
5. Presented the cassette for the session.
6. Considered solutions to the problem presented on the cassette and then finished cassette.

7. Group summarized the session with the leader.
8. "Activity for the Week" was assigned along with the next week reading assignment.

The leader had the special responsibilities for keeping each session within the two hour limit, keeping attendance, thoroughly understanding the program and being able to present it without deviating from the manual.

Placebo Procedures

The Placebo Group was to meet for two hours each week during the six week treatment period. The parents were to meet as a discussion group focusing on child problems and discipline but without a structured approach. Children the challenge (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964), was to be used for a reading and reference source.

Method of Measurement

The method used for this study was identical to McKay's first method of measurement. McKay (1976b, p. 37) stated:

> The parents were tested by an instrument which measured the parents' perception of the Target Child's behavior. . . . The following instrument was used:
>
> The Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale is a seven point interval Likert-type rating scale constructed by the investigaor to measure the parents' perceptions of their Target Child's behavior.

McKay also presented the following information about the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale (APACBS). A reliability test of the APACBS scale was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha test for internal consistency ranged from .90 to .91. The Pearson *r* test for stability over time yielded a coefficient of .97. The Cronbach's alpha range during the research project was .81 to .89. The Pearson *r* test yielded a coefficient of .83.

Sellick (1979) obtained the following reliability findings. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the Control Group (r = .94) showed that the instrument is reliable over time. The Cronbach's alpha test for internal consistency ranged from .89 on the pretest to .93 on the posttest. These data replicate the findings of McKay (1976b). Each participant's score was determined by summing the ratings for each of the 32 items in the APACBS. In order to correct for missing values on the individual items of the APACBS, each subject's mean score will be substituted for any of his or her missing values. From these substitutions, adjusted mean scores was calculated and used in the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) procedures.

Limitations of the Study

The investigator recognizes the following limitations of this study:

1. All subjects were volunteers who could possess characteristics that would greatly differ from a non-volunteer group.
2. The study investigated change in the perception of the parents for their Target Child only--other siblings in the family were excluded.
3. The number of subjects (46) was small and involved only military families.
4. The results may not be generalized beyond the population from which the sample was chosen.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if participation by military parents in a STEP program would increase their attitudinal perception of their Target Child's behavior in a positive direction and be significantly greater than the perception of military parents who did not participate in a STEP program, as measured by the APACBS.

Results

The following data is based on the information supplied by the 33 subjects (20 mothers and 13 fathers) who completed the study. This represents 86.5% of those participants who began the study in either one of the two STEP groups or one of the two Comparison groups, the remaining 13.5% dropped out of the study. The Placebo Group was dropped from the study due to an insufficient number of subjects following the second session. The .05 level of significance was used for all statistical tests.

Hypothesis 1--For those participants who were pre and posttested on the APACBS, where their pretest scores were used as a covariate, it was hypothesized that:

a. Parents who participated in the STEP program would perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than would parents of the Comparison Group who did not participate in the STEP program, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

b. Male participants would not perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than would female participants, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

c. There would be no significant interaction between the group and sex variables.

Two way ANCOVA yielded an F value of 2.11 for the covariates. This was not significant and the pretest scores were accepted as comparable. The group and sex main effects yielded F values of .74 and .04 respectively and an F value of .15 was obtained for the interactions of group by sex. None of these values were statistically signficant, as shown in Table 1. Hypothesis 1a therefore, is rejected while 1b and 1c are accepted.

Hypothesis 2--For those participants who received the posttest without the pretest it was hypothesized that:

a. Parents who particpated in the STEP program would perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than would parents who did not participate in the STEP program, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

Table 1. ANCOVA, Parents' Scores on APACBS with Pretest as Covariate

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Pretest	329.47	1	329.47	2.11	.175
Group	115.45	1	115.45	.74	.409
Sex	6.24	1	6.24	.04	.845
Group by Sex Interaction	23.70	1	23.70	.15	.705
Residual	1721.71	11	156.52		
Total	2200.86	15	146.72		

Analysis of Covariance: Total n = 16

b. Male participants would not perceive their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive than would female particpants, as measured by their ratings on the APACBS.

c. There would be no significant interaction between the group and sex variables.

As presented in Table 2, ANOVA resulted in the group and sex main effects yielding F values of .53 and 1.00 respectively and an F value of 2.74 was obtained for the interactions of group by sex. None of these values were statistically significant, therefore, hypothesis 2a is rejected while 2b and 2c are accepted.

Hypothesis 3--The posttest mean scores of the Pretest-Treatment-Posttest Group would not be significantly different

Table 2. ANOVA, Parents' Scores on APACBS

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Group	72.10	1	72.00	.53	.478
Sex	135.45	1	135.45	1.00	.335
Group by Sex Interaction	371.25	1	371.25	2.74	.122
Residual	1760.15	13	135.40		
Total	2293.25	16	143.33		

Analysis of Variance: Total n = 17

from the posttest mean scores of the Treatment-Posttest Group and the posttest mean scores of the Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group would not be significantly different from the Posttest Only Comparison Group. Table 3 shows the obtained mean scores for each group and the results of a one-way ANOVA test for the four groups. The F value obtained was .85, which was not statistically significant, therefore the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Information obtained regarding known extraneous variables is as follows:

1. Parent participation in other parent study groups. None of the subjects reported concurrent involvement with other parent study programs. One mother (3.0% of total subjects) in the Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group had had previous parent study group experience with a group which had used a behavioristic

Table 3. Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores with One-Way ANOVA

Group	n	Pretest Means	Posttest Means
Pretest-Treatment-Posttest	10	145.141	157.500
Pretest-Posttest-Comparison	6	149.622	153.378
Treatment-Posttest	8		151.273
Posttest Only	9		148.776

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Between Groups	387.154	3	129.051	.85	.4781
Within Groups	4403.989	29	151.862		
Total	4791.143	32			

One-Way ANOVA: Total n = 33

psychological approach to parenting. Two mothers, one in the Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group and the other in the Treatment-Posttest Group (6.1% of total subjects) reported past involvement in an Adlerian Open Center Family Counseling group as a parent study group experience. The remaining 90.9% of the subjects reported no previous experience with parent student groups.

2. The history of each parents' experience with similar methods. None of the subjects had been involved in similar parent study group methods.

3. Parents' involvement in counseling. One mother in the Treatment-Posttest Group was concurrently involved in family counseling, the remaining subjects reported no concurrent or previous counseling experience.
4. Parents' previous exposure to parenting literature. Sixty-three point six percent of the parents reported none. Refer to Table 4.

The following is descriptive data that was obtained. The annual gross income was between $10,000 and $14,999 for the majority of the participants, with no subjects earning greater than $24,999. Dependent wives made up 51.5% of the study while non-commissioned officers comprised 39.4% (of these 23.1% were mothers) and officers (all fathers) completed the remaining 9.1%. Seventy-eight point eight percent of the subjects were between the ages of 26 and 35. One subject had earned less than a high school diploma while 36.3% had earned a degree beyond the high school level. Two thirds of the treatment subjects reported reading 75% to 100% of the STEP Parent's Handbook and 62.4% indicated they thought the program was extremely beneficial while 31.3% reported the program was beneficial. Positive correlations existed between the subjects' age and their posttest mean scores, the percent of the handbook read with their attendance, and the subjects' education level with their income. A negative

Table 4. Parents' Previous Exposure to Parenting Literature by Group and Sex

	None		Adlerian Only		Adlerian and Others		Others Only		Row Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Group										
Pretest-Treatment-Posttest	8	24.2	0	0	0	0	2	6.1	10	30.3
Pretest-Posttest-Comparison	2	6.1	0	0	3	9.1	1	3.0	6	18.2
Treatment-Posttest	4	12.1	2	6.1	1	3.0	1	3.0	8	24.2
Posttest Only	7	21.2	1	3.0	0	0	1	3.0	9	27.3
Column Total	21	63.6	3	9.1	4	12.1	5	15.2	33	100.0
Sex										
Male	11	33.3	0	0	1	3.0	1	3.0	13	39.4
Female	10	30.3	3	9.1	3	9.1	4	12.1	20	60.6
Column Total	21	63.6	3	9.1	4	12.1	5	15.2	33	100.0

= Number of Subjects
% = Percent of Total Subjects
Parenting Literature Read: Total n = 33

correlation existed between the subjects' education and their attendance at the STEP sessions.

Discussion

This study investigated the attitudinal perception of military parents toward their Target Child's behavior before and after involvement in a STEP program. The results do not indicate that participation in a STEP program will increase military parents' perceptions which they have toward their Target Child's behavior. This does not parallel McKay's (1976b) findings or the main stream of Adlerian parent study group research from the past decade. Sellick (1979), presented no less than 14 Adlerian research studies which had all obtained positive significance in their findings, as compared to six studies which found no positive significant difference between Adlerian treatment groups and comparison groups. While the present study did not find a positive statistical significance for the STEP program, the results did indicate movement toward a positive relationship that might have been significant had a larger sample size been available. Both of the treatment group's mean scores were greater than their equivalent comparison group's mean scores. The Pretest-Treatment-Posttest Group showed a gain of 12.36 mean scores as compared to a gain of only 3.76 mean scores by the equivalent Comparison Group. Also, none of the STEP

treatment participants reported the STEP program to be a waste of their time.

The results did indicate that STEP is of equal value for fathers and mothers since neither sex significantly out performed the other. This study also lends support to the assumption that the pretest does not sensitize the posttest. The support given is that the null hypothesis could not be rejected in the third hypothesis of this study.

Information gained regarding the extraneous variables produced interesting results. There was a predominate absence of previous parenting preparation by the participants, despite the fact that they all could identify a Target Child. Eighty-five percent of the fathers and 50% of the mothers reported having read no previous parenting literature. It should also be noted that the parents who had been involved in Adlerian Open Center Family Counseling viewed the experience as involvement in a parent study group rather than as counseling.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS

Preventative intervention is quickly becoming the cry among military mental health practitioners and researchers. Actual research, however, is sparse on possible methods or programs of preventative intervention, with the exception of individual and family counseling studies. This is one of the few studies which has attempted to fill the void.

Although STEP was not substantiated as a means of altering military parents' preceptions about their Target Child's behavior, it did indicate the need for further study since all of the participants perceived the program as beneficial. STEP is a program that, from the results of the research, does not appear to have a built in sex bias and could therefore be implemented equally well with military mothers or fathers. The participating fathers' lack of exposure to previous parenting materials indicates a need to include fathers in parenting programs. There also appears to be a desire by military fathers to be a part of parenting programs, as indicated by the fathers who made up 39% of the total subjects for this study.

One of the more interesting findings of the study was that STEP participation appears to be a strong motivation for parents to read parenting skills material. This is significant when one considers the benefit of bibliotherapy as reported by Sellick (1979) and that the majority of military parents had read no parenting literature prior to involvement in the STEP program.

The surprise of the study was the incongruence between the reported benefit of the STEP program and the insignificant results on the APACBS, especially considering the majority of significant findings in recent years. The small n (33) may have been the major determinate for the results of this study. A larger sample needs to be studied prior to making any definite conclusions regarding STEP as a means of preventative intervention for paternal deprivation pathologies that might be presented by military families.

Other variables need to be studied. The short length of time for the treatment and administering the posttest prior to allowing a sufficient amount of time for the treatment to take effect may both have resulted in the partial rejection of hypotheses 1 and 2. The Hawthorne effect still needs to be tested and different instruments beside the APACBS need to be used in determining STEP's effectiveness. The effects and uses of STEP as a possible motivation toward bibliotherapy could be studied as well as actual

change, as opposed to perceived change, in behavior of the parents, the Target Child, or other children due to STEP involvement. Studies comparing couples to individuals for possible STEP benefit within the military would also be helpful. These are but a few of the variables which still need to be considered and may have affected the present study.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to investigate whether participation in a STEP group by military parents would result in a positive change of their attitudianal perception of their Target Child's behavior during a six week period.

Change of parents' perception was not significant at the .05 level, possibly due to the small sample size. The results did show that neither males or females perceived their Target Child's behavior as significantly more positive. The interaction between the sex and group main variables and pretest sensitization were not significant intervening variables. All participatns were volunteers, military or military dependents, and had received little or no previous parent training. The treatment participants indicated they felt the program (STEP) was beneficial.

The results of the study indicate that STEP may motivate military parents to begin reading parenting

literature, which may be considered as a type of preventative intervention for some paternal deprivation pathologies encountered by military mental health professionals. Further research is still needed.

APPENDIX A

ADLERIAN PARENTAL ASSESSMENT OF CHILD BEHAVIOR SCALE*

*McKay, G. D. Adlerian parental assessment of child behavior scale. Unpublished test, The University of Arizona, 1976. Reproduced by permission.

GROUP LEADER *David C. Brown*

PLEASE NOTE: All of the requested information is for the purpose of research. Individual responses will be held in strictest confidence.

NAME _____ DATE _____

IDENTIFIED CHILD* _____ AGE ____ SEX _____
*One of your children with whom you want to improve your relationship.

Your ethnic group: ( ) Caucasian ( ) Black ( ) Hispanic ( ) Asian
( ) American Indian ( ) Other _____

Your Sex: ( ) Male ( ) Female Single parent family _____
Two-parent family _____

Your Age: ( ) 20-25 ( ) 26-30 ( )31-35 ( ) 36-40 ( ) 41-45
( ) 46-50 ( ) Over 50

Your highest completed education: ( ) Did not finish high school
( ) High school ( ) Associate degree ( ) Bachelor's degree
( ) Graduate degree

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the number for each item which best describes your identified child's behavior as you see it. Please try to respond to every item.

Your Identified Child:	ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	VERY SELDOM	NEVER
1. Has to be called more than once to get out of bed in the morning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Gets dressed for school without being reminded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Remembers to take lunch money, books, etc. to school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Leaves for school without being reminded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Your Identified Child:	ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	VERY SELDOM	NEVER
5. Makes helpful suggestions during family discussions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Involves you in resolving verbal arguments with other children (for example: brother or sisters, or children in the neighborhood.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Involves you in resolving physical fights with other children (for example: brothers or sisters, or children in the neighborhood.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Does chores without being reminded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Figures out solutions to his/her own problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Changes behavior when told that it bothers you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Puts dirty clothes in hamper without being reminded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Argues with you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Leaves belongings scattered around the house.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Interrupts you at inappropriate times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Is on time for meals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Eats most food offered without being coaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Has table manners which are acceptable to you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Tattles on other children (for example: brothers or sisters, or children in the neighborhood.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Your Identified Child:	ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	VERY SELDOM	NEVER
19.	Throws temper tantrums.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	Shares problems (s)he can do independently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	Is considerate of your feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	Requests help on tasks (s)he can do independently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	Cleans up after snacking without being reminded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	Behaves in such a way that you find yourself feeling hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	Behaves in such a way that you find yourself feeling annoyed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	Behaves in such a way that you find yourself feeling discouraged, believing that the child cannot improve.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	Behaves in such a way that you find yourself feeling angry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	Stays with difficult tasks until they are completed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	Disturbs you when your are driving.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	Remembers where (s)he puts belongings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	Has to be told more than once to go to bed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	Is quiet after going to bed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PARENTS

A Parent Discussion Group is the place to go if:

You are weary of telling, scolding, urging and reminding children to behave, to stop arguing, to wash, to eat, or to do school work.

You would like to see your child do better and be happier with school work.

You wish to air, share, and learn to cope with more everyday problems of child-adult relationships at home and at school.

In our culture we train for practically every kind of job, but we neglect training for our most important job--that of parenthood. This program is designed to help give training to parents in practical and effective methods of democratic family living. Parents who gain appropriate information through this program will be able to handle the normal day to day relationship with their children with greater ease, effectiveness and friendship.

Borman Elementary School, will soon be the meeting place for one of the following Parent Discussion Groups: 6 weekly sessions each 2 hours in length using Children: The challenge by Rudolf Dreikurs; or 6 weekly sessions each 2 hours in length using Systematic training for effective parenting by Dinkmeyer and McKay. Both formats are based on Adlerian child-raising methods. Your materials will be loaned to you by Developmental Career Guidance. The group leaders are lay people who have had training and experience in other discussion groups or counseling and guidance graduate students from The University of Arizona.

These particular groups will be part of a research project designed to evaluate the program's effectiveness. The information obtained from this study will assist the Project in determining if Parent Discussion Groups are meeting the needs of military parents, in improving their relationships with their children. In order to conduct this research participants will be asked to complete two tasks which will not involve more than one hour's time the week prior to the first meeting, and the week following the last meeting. Individual information obtained from this study will be confidential.

Due to research restrictions, two of the groups will be delayed until May. All groups will be asked to participate in the two tasks at the same time.

If you would be interested in joining a Parent Discussion Group, fill in the slip below, tear if off and have your child return it to school. Thank you for your interest. You will be contact soon.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

PHONE_____ SCHOOL_____

AGES OF CHILDREN_____

I would be interested in joining a: morning group_____
evening group_____

Please state days you could NOT attend meetings_____

We do not live close to the school our child is attending. Please place me in a group located near my home_____

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Barkenbush. Telephone number 296-2341.

APPENDIX C

POSTTEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond to the following:

Your Rank_____

Your gross family income (annual) ( ) 0 - 4,999
( ) 5,000 - 9,999 ( ) 10,000 - 14,999 ( ) 15,000 - 19,000
( ) 20,000 - 24,999 ( ) 25,000 - 29,999 ( ) 30,000 or more

Have you ever participated in any other parent study group?
( ) Yes ( ) No
If so, When_____
Where_____
Type of Program_____
Size of Group_____

Please list other parenting books (not the STEP Parent's Handbook) that you have read.

During this STEP parent study group:

Prior to this STEP parent study group:

What percentage of the STEP Parent's Handbook did you actually read? ( ) 75% to 100% ( ) 50% to 75% ( ) 25% to 50%
( ) 25% or less

Which statement best describes your feelings toward the STEP program:
( ) Extremely Beneficial ( ) Beneficial ( ) Undecided
( ) Not Very Beneficial ( ) A Waste of Time

Thank you for your participation,

APPENDIX D

FAMILY CONSENT FORM

The primary objective of this project, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting: Effects on Behavior Change of Parents and Child, A Replication Study, is to determine the effectiveness of a group study program entitled, "Systematic Training for Effective Parenting" (STEP), and to validate a previous study. Participation is totally voluntary and free of charge. This project requires that the mother or father of the family be active military with children between the ages of four and 13 living at home. The weekly STEP sessions will be approximately two hours in length for a period of six weeks. All sessions will be at Borman Elementary School located on D.M.A.F.B. The parents involved in the study will be asked to complete a behavioral checklist before and after the STEP sessions.

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of five groups two of which will not begin the six STEP sessions until after the other three groups have finished (for research purposes). All groups will be asked to participate in the behavioral checklist during the same weeks.

There may be some discomfort with regard to disrupting one's current parent-child interaction format. All parent-child interaction alternatives which are presented will be left to the discretion of the parents for implementation into their own family, thus minimizing this effect. It is expected that all families will benefit by improving their parent-child relationship.

Feel free to ask the principal investigator (David C. Brown) any questions throughout the project. You are free to withdraw at any time from either the project and or the STEP program without risk to your STEP group leader or principal investigator relationship. All information collected regarding your family will be held in strictest confidence by David C. Brown and his major advising professor.

"I have read the above 'Family Consent'. The nature, demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without incurring ill will. I also understand that this consent form will be filed in an area designated by the Human Subjects Committee with access restricted to the principal investigator or authorized representatives of the particular department. A copy of this consent form is available to me upon request."

Family's Signature_____Date_____

_____Date_____

_____Date_____

_____Date_____

Witnessed by:_____Date_____

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