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Exploring Childhood: Discovering Teens

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EXPLORING CHILDHOOD: DISCOVERING TEENS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Secondary Education

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Education Specialist

by

Nancy R. Erickson

July 1976

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD: DISCOVERING TEENS

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EXPLORING CHILDHOOD: DISCOVERING TEENS

Nancy R. Erickson

July 1973

35 pages

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This is a study of a practicum-based child development curriculum for eighth grade students in a middle school setting. One hundred students were tested on self-image concepts and attitudes toward young children after they had been exposed to the curriculum. The experimental group was involved in the "Exploring Childhood" course which gave them experience in actual child care agencies in the community. The control group students used the more traditional child development unit in the home economics program.

Testing showed that the experimental group made significantly higher self-concept scores than the control group. There was no significant difference between the two groups in their attitudes toward young children.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

It has become obvious, even with the most cursory study, that attitudes and practices in child care have changed in recent years in America. The women's movement has brought more women into the working force, significantly increasing the need for low-cost, high quality child care. At the same time, just when the need is greater, families have become fragmented to the extent that "grand-parenting" and "neighboring" are not very important aspects of child care. The encouragement of independence for teenagers and older children has probably limited their usefulness as caretakers of younger brothers and sisters. Overall, there seems to be a pervasive "uncaring" between generations. Just when there is a greater need for better day care for children, the family structure is making it more difficult to achieve.

It will be necessary then to explore child care needs and try to find some alternatives to traditional family-oriented caretaking. One approach would be to concentrate on improving attitudes and techniques for the people who are now responsible for child care; there are programs which have this emphasis (Drew, 1973 and Stevens, 1974). Another choice would be to tap some new sources of people that could be trained for child care. Harris (1974) and Orvis (1972) have found this to be worthwhile. A third possibility suggested by some projects (Frost, 1975) is to start child care intervention long before the child is on the scene.

The idea fosters work with teenagers in teaching and practicing good parenting skills. A basic foundation in child development and some realistic, supervised experience working with young children will hopefully produce young adults who are capable, confident, much more effective parents. The "Exploring Childhood" program used in this study has exactly this emphasis. Students are encouraged to use the basic skills and information that they acquire in the classroom as they work with young children at field sites.

Significance of Problem

Several aspects of this problem are important. First, providing the best possible care for young children so that they have the opportunity to develop to the extent of their individual potential is of obvious significance. Secondly, finding and developing alternative caretakers that will fit the needs of individual families is the more practical aspect of the problem.

Perhaps most significant, however, is the need to develop programs and techniques that will help young adults to make enlightened, well-considered decisions about child care whether they choose to have families of their own or to be involved in child care professionally in the future. It is this last, more fundamental problem that will be the focus of this study.

This investigation is an attempt to find out more about the caretaker's influence on the young child. In addition, it may be that the experience of taking care of young children has an influence on the personal growth of the caretaker.

Since increasingly in our culture children are cared for by a variety of adults, their early years involve many more experiences than

just "mothering." Both parents, as well as teachers, day-care aides, babysitters and older children all perform the role of caretaker from time to time.

If all of these people have an influence on the child, and if this influence is important enough that it establishes lifelong patterns, then maybe we should devote an even greater portion of our resources specifically to training these caretakers to have an optimal influence on children.

Limitations of Study

This study will explore only the reactions of eighth grade home economics students in one middle school to the "Exploring Childhood" program as outlined by the Education Development Center, Inc. (1974). The audio-visual aids and teaching unit suggestions of this program will be the basis of the study but since the format is flexible, other materials will also be utilized. Specifically the Parent Magazine filmstrips "Understanding Early Childhood" (1975) and the textbook Exploring Home and Family Living (Fleck, 1971) will be used.

The study will attempt to measure the reaction of these young people to a planned program of child development. It will also attempt to measure changes in attitudes toward young children and caretaking. It will be interesting to know what changes the students might show in self-esteem or self-image as they study family-related problems.

It should be noted that the experimental and control groups are matched classes. However, one group meets in the morning and one in the afternoon, likely resulting in some inherent interest and attention differences because of this time factor. Also, there will obviously be a five month age difference between the students who participate in the

fall semester and those who take part in the spring. Nevertheless, there will be an experimental and control group during both the spring and fall classes.

In addition, the teenagers will experience some differences in the preschool children with whom they work. Probably they will see a change in levels of maturity and ability between the fall and spring preschoolers.

Statement of Hypothesis

Middle school students who have been exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum will have a more positive attitude toward young children, and will show higher self-esteem than those who have not taken the course.

Definition of Terms

Caretaker - any person, teenager or adult, who has the responsibility for young children.

Child - for this study, children from birth to five years old who need the care of others.

"Exploring Childhood" - the child development curriculum designed by Educational Development Center, Inc.

Student - those eighth graders involved in the "Exploring Childhood" project.

SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CURRENT RELATED LITERATURE

In exploring this topic four general areas become obvious. First, several government and private studies have established the presence of increasing need for high quality child care.

Secondly, many recent studies have substantiated that caretakers of young children find themselves in a position of considerable influence in several areas of growth and development. Four of these studies specifically explored how the caretaker influences intellectual and language development, interactive behavior, and success orientation in children.

The third area to explore is the possibility of intervention to guide this influence of caretakers. The suggestions that home may be the best place for intervention and that parents can play an effective role in intervention have been made in several studies.

Lastly, there may be great potential in using the talents of people other than parents and teachers as influential caretakers. Especially there is the possibility of using high school students in this field to the mutual benefit to the children and to themselves.

Need for Child Care

Several factors are responsible for the need to expand the availability of day care services and facilities. The first of these is an increase in the number of mothers of young children who are under thirty-five years of age and working. U. S. Department of Labor figures

illustrate the increasing number of working mothers with children under seventeen years of age.

A second factor contributing to the need for expanding day care service concerns the poor. While economic need is not the main reason women work, there are many poor mothers who might take advantage of job training programs and be able to work if adequate child care facilities were available for the children (Keyserling, 1967).

Meeting the needs of the working mothers' children is a third factor responsible for the increased need for adequate day care facilities and services.

The increase in employment of mothers is expected to continue. For example, the U. S. Department of Commerce (1971) estimates that the number of working mothers between twenty and forty-four years of age with preschool children will increase to 6.6 million in 1985. Reasons for the increase in maternal employment include federal legislation outlawing sex discrimination, the expanding job market of the 1960's, and the decline in birth rate among twenty-one to twenty-four year old wives. In addition, there is the changing attitude of society, employers, and families toward working mothers, increased educational attainment, and aspiration for better levels of living (U. S. Department of Commerce).

Economic need is not the main reason women work according to a survey by the Child Welfare League of America (Ruderman, 1968), a group concerned with public attitudes toward day care. Child care arrangements made by working mothers, and the status of organized day care facilities, revealed that many attitudes toward working mothers reflect ignorance and bias. The general conclusion of the Child Welfare League was the

inaccuracy of equating maternal employment with deprivation and poverty. For this reason, the Child Welfare League strongly recommends that the concept of day care only for special children should be changed. Day care should be conceptualized as a child care program for all income levels of society which emphasizes the child's needs rather than his parents' economic or social circumstances (Ruderman).

The critical shortage of child personnel trained to work with children from infancy through adolescence calls for the creation of training programs at the sub-professional level. A publication by the Ohio State University Center for Vocational and Technical Education (Berry, 1971) offers guidelines for use in establishing such programs at the secondary, post-secondary, or adult training level.

Fischer (1970), who suggests the use of high school students as caretakers, also recommends that day care programs should not be exclusively for the poor. "Small children could suffer irreparable damage if they are denied the opportunity to associate with a peer group that is racially, socially, and economically integrated."

Influence of Caretakers

Bossard and Boll (1954) in their text, The Sociology of Child Development, name attitudes as the basic factor affecting family interaction. They say that, particularly so far as the child is concerned, the attitudes of the parents, first toward parenthood, and second, toward children comprise this basic factor.

Some researchers have questioned students in the classroom regarding their wishes to have children, how many, what sex, and related matters. On the basis of the answers it has been concluded that the students will become accepting or rejecting parents. It seems to

Bossard and Boll that this is naive, to say the least. Attitudes toward parenthood come into focus at the time parenthood is anticipated or becomes a reality and in relation to circumstances as they exist at those times.

The specific attitudes derive from many sources. The coming of a child to a middle-class American couple constitutes a crisis event. They romanticize the idea of parenthood but have little actual preparation for the more mundane realities of it, such as sleepless nights, a great deal of hard work, loss of social life, and the like.

Still another source of attitudes toward parenthood is the reasons a child is wanted. The ability to plan families has brought with it a greater importance in the motives for having them.

A further source of attitudes toward parenthood is to be found in the parent's reaction to the changes in family living which result from the coming children. There is also the parents' willingness or unwillingness to accept the social aureole of parenthood, which denotes society's projection of the idealization of parenthood upon the individual father or mother. These parents are regarded quite differently from what they would be if they were alone, "We accord them the pathos of the mores" (Bossard and Boll). To this social aureole of parenthood there is the reaction of the individual parent.

Zegiob and Forehand (1975), in a study of maternal interactive behavior, wanted to provide a replication of the findings of previous students and to extend them to include a race variable. The children were observed interacting with their mothers in both a command setting and a free play setting. Their results confirmed other studies. Middle class mothers were less critical, asked more questions, and gave more indirect commands than lower class mothers. During free play, white

mothers were more cooperative with their children than were black mothers. No other significant race differences were found.

Zegiob and Forehand also found that the command period may represent a more realistic sample of mother-child interaction than the free-play period. It was essentially a clean-up period during which the child put away toys, a task most children are required to perform at home. In this situation the lower class mothers were more directive and controlling, particularly with their daughters.

This may imply that children are locked into a pattern of interaction by the socio-economic class of the caretaker who works with them. For some children who may experience both lower class (parent) and middle class (teacher) caretakers there may be some confusion and upset about how interaction takes place.

Similar confusion is seen occasionally among the children in public middle schools. They are predominately from lower class families and even as older more sophisticated children, they will seem surprised and frustrated by the interactional pattern established in school. McCall (1970) recognized this need in establishing HELP (Home Economics Learning Packages). The generalization to be learned in the child development area is that "the child's interaction with people, whether in fulfilling routine needs or in play activity, contributes to the quality of his social adjustment."

Research by Kagan and Ender (1975) was designed to test reactions of mothers to the successes and failures of their children. A simple task was designated whereby children, with their mothers watching, could succeed and fail several times. The mothers could reward, punish, or do nothing by giving or taking away tokens which would ultimately be turned in for toys. Kagan and Ender wanted to determine

to what extent mothers' responses caused Anglo-American children to be more competitive, more rivalous, more assertive, less submissive, and more field independent and nonconforming than the children from the other groups studied. They started with the previously researched assumption that these qualities were correctly assigned to Anglo-American children.

The experiment was designed primarily to investigate the preferred reinforcement patterns of the mothers of the three groups.

The most striking result of the experiment was the qualitative difference between United States and Mexican mothers in the extent to which they discriminate successes from failures. Rural Mexican mothers give almost as many chips following failures as they do following successes. This difference may explain a number of cultural differences. From the point of view of the rural Mexican children in this experiment, it makes little difference whether they succeed or fail—their outcomes remain the same. From the point of view of the Anglo-American and Mexican-American children it is very important to succeed; they receive approximately twice as much following successes as failures. This emphasis on success among the United States mothers may explain why United States children tend to be more competitive, rivalous, and assertive.
(Kagan and Ender)

Parents in all groups apparently used the 'do nothing' response as a punishment, though some cultural differences were noticeable. The Mexican-American mothers used punishment more often than Anglo-American mothers. They also rewarded their boys more often than their girls and gave the boys more chips per reward.

Kagan and Ender were able to attribute this significantly to economic level not culture. These findings, together with other studies they cite, may explain why lower income children become less assertive, less achievement motivated, and less internally controlled. Matching these patterns with the life style of the parents suggests that parents probably reinforce children in ways that they themselves are reinforced. Through reactions to success and failure, parents are preparing their children for life experiences similar to their own.

Based on this research it would be interesting to know if the mothers were ever aware of the success of their children compared with all the others, and also if they felt at all involved in the successes and failures of the children. It may be a reciprocal outcome where mother response to success and failure reinforces certain personality traits in the child, and also where the mother shares vicariously the successes and failures of her children.

Still another study regarding maternal reactions to their children's successes and failures supported the idea that not only does the parents' interactive behavior and success orientation vary with socio-economic class but so does their verbalization technique. Holzman (1974) found this variance and further found that it led to differences in intellectual development of children. This leads to the question of using parental interaction as an improvement technique for children with impaired intelligence.

Apparently parents not only affect intellectual development but they can be effective in reversing the outcome of children with intellectual handicaps. Six children, ages three to five, were used in this study by MacDonald et al (1974) to determine the effects of a new language training technique. The experimenters set out to test several ideas. First, a new technique called Environment Language Intervention Strategy was used with language-delayed children. The second idea was to use parents as language trainers. Thirdly, they compared the progress these children made with progress made by children with normal language growth over the same time period.

The system seemed successful as the children showed considerable progress compared to the control group. Other aspects of this study are even more interesting. The parent-involvement was effective with parents

being able to learn the technique well enough to use it with children. Parents reported that as they used the technique it became a part of their daily life styles.

The element of the experiment that really emphasized the importance of the early childhood caretaker was that these retarded experimental children made virtually the same progress as normal children of comparable mental age. Apparently these retarded children could learn as well as their mental age equals with the help of early intervention. And the effectiveness was to a considerable degree enhanced by bringing the intervention out of school or clinic and into the home using the caretaker as trainer. Either parent, brothers and sisters, and even friends were encouraged to use the system with the children.

It seems that much can be accomplished by training the caretaker and by taking the training into the home.

Intervention

Frost (1975) reiterates that adults have an enormous potential influence on the development of the infant and young child. He says that mental retardation studies find environmental conditions, subject to improvement, not organic causes responsible for most of the depressed intellectuals functioning in our society. He reaffirms that socio-economic status powerfully affects child development, but poverty is not analogous to stimulus deprivation or to handicapping conditions. Although high risk children tend to concentrate in poverty populations they are found in every socio-economic group.

Frost further says that we are beginning to realize that if intervention programs are to be preventive rather than remedial they must occur earlier in the child's life. This should be at pre-natal

level or before. To be most effective educational programs must begin with young people by the time they are able to conceive and bear children. It is possible to plan the training of teenagers as potential parents and/or caretakers in such a way as to help them acquire some parenting skills before they need them.

These young people often are working mothers. Risk factors are increasing as more mothers work and the need for high quality day-care centers becomes obvious. It has already been established that the infant's and young child's early experience with caretakers influences his cognitive and affective development. Now there is a need to know more precisely what age infants and over what time span certain results are effected.

Frost points out that "individual differences are at work even during infancy. The more passive infant is probably most handicapped by an unstimulating environment. The more active, responsive baby may have difficulty experiencing a highly stimulating environment. Such behavioral differences in infants have decided influence on their growth since caretakers tend to be influenced by the activity level of the infant."

Further, it can be said that passive infants and children are assumed by their caretakers to be 'good' and their passivity leads to the ignoring of their stimulation needs by caretakers.

Since the caretaker has this tremendous influence it seems logical that programs should be instituted not only sooner in the child's life but in the environment in which he finds himself most of the time. School-type projects may fail because the child returns to the same home environment which has been judged inadequate. There are many reasons

why home intervention may be the best solution. First, the child engages in interaction with the total family, not just the mother. All of these people are potential caretakers for the child. Members of the family reinforce one another in caregiving attitudes and practices. Frost says that researchers now realize that the infant and family make mutual adaptations—the baby socializes the mother into motherhood. Further, helping the family members to learn positive caretaking practice is perhaps less important in affecting the child than the parent. In addition, the family is the most economical and potentially successful setting for helping the child.

Frost gives special attention to family help for high risk children who have discernible handicaps, nevertheless, it may be a good idea to apply the plan to needs of all children. Every child grows up at some risk and it follows that reducing this risk for all should be the goal. Even outwardly 'good' situations for child caring can be made better.

Stevens (1974) reports on a successful home learning project. It was developed as part of the parent involvement component of the Pre-kindergarten Program sponsored by the White Plains Public Schools, White Plains, New York. The primary goal was to determine whether a group consultation technique would significantly enhance the child's skill and cognitive development. The project was to assist the parent in structuring a more effective home learning environment.

The plan was to be a supplement to the regular classroom curriculum. While the children in the program did not show significantly different learning rates compared to the control group, several other outcomes were reported. Stevens felt that the more important impact of

such parent education programs may be in fostering the parent's view of himself as central to his child's learning. Opposed to this is the practice of sending a child to a learning center and then returning him to a drastically different environment at home. Maybe the emphasis should be different. Traditionally schools have striven to be warm, friendly, and home-like. Perhaps it would be more effective to make home more school-like, more learning oriented, giving the parent or caretaker a central role in learning.

In the White Plains study the emphasis was not to change the parent's style, but to enable the parent to achieve his parental goals more easily. The parent must be helped to enhance his parenting skills without changing his cultural and individual parenting style.

Other Caretakers Involved in Learning

Sandra Harris (1974) studied a day school where college students were used to help learning-disabled children. The school, jointly run by Rutgers University and Midland School, uses the behavior modifications approach. Undergraduate tutors implement individual programs for each child. Students who are generally bright, energetic, caring people and who have the time to devote to service activities are utilized in forming a man/woman power pool. If they are training for occupations in the helping professions, they welcome field experience.

Fifty undergraduates worked one day per week at the center. Each of ten children had a different tutor everyday. Surprisingly, this caused no confusion for the children, rather the variety of personalities was an advantage. On-the-job supervision allowed immediate staff intervention in the event problems arose. Parents were required to participate because lack of parent and community followthrough is the weakest link on the treatment chain.

Conclusions of the study suggested that two groups of readily available workers, parents and college students, can effectively be utilized to provide the kind of intensive care needed for the treatment of severely deviant children.

In conducting projects that use similar student help, it is important that the child care worker provide students with a meaningful experience. Otherwise they will simply be visitors who get under foot, not adjunct staff fulfilling a useful function.

Another successful plan using students is New York University's Education, Training, and Research Program for Teachers' Aides. Here training sessions for young people over eighteen years, with I. Q.'s ranging from 75—90, have made nursery school aides of otherwise unhappy, unemployable dropouts. The advantages to these young adults are obvious, but important too is the quality of empathy and patience to the nursery school children. The author (Orvis, 1972) emphasizes the need for a certain type of nursery school supervisor, who is interested in the aide and who is rewarded by helping the individual grow in ability to function.

A program with a slightly different perspective trains babysitters who work in private homes. These are low income homes where mothers on public assistance can receive money to pay babysitters. In the Detroit area Jeanette Drew (1973) reports on a Child Care Aide Training Project at Wayne State University. Again college students were used. Thirty-six were selected to train the child care aides.

It was found that generally adequate care was being provided by the babysitters. The challenge, then, became one of designing a program of intervention, rather than simply supplying information. Student trainers tried to help the aides develop skills that would help them

deal more effectively with situations causing behavior problems. At the same time they introduced information to help improve the aides' understanding of children's needs and environmental deficiencies.

Education for Parenthood

In recent years the federal government has seen the need for an intervention program to help people become more effective parents. Reacting to studies such as DeLissovoy (1973) several programs have been funded.

In a study on child care by adolescent parents, Vladimir DeLissovoy found that young parents were not familiar with developmental norms, and that in general caring for their children proved to be a trying experience for the majority of young couples. He says, "We must conclude that experience with younger brothers or sisters and occasional babysitting jobs had not helped these parents understand how a child develops or that much knowledge and patience are required for raising children. In addition, when the young parents turned to their families for advice, the help they received was limited."

A realistic approach to helping young people become effective parents is necessary. One major national step in this direction is the Education for Parenthood program. A joint Office of Education-Office of Child Development effort, it is designed to help teenage boys and girls across the nation prepare for parenthood by learning about child development and family relationships—not only in class but also through working with young children.

One program of the Education for Parenthood project is "Exploring Childhood." This new curriculum, developed by the Education Development Center of Cambridge, Massachusetts, under an Office of Child Development

grant, was tested in 234 junior and senior high schools during the 1973-74 school year. The Education of Parenthood Exchange reports the following:

In 1973-74, Exploring Childhood's first year of use in classrooms across the country, program evaluators conducted an extensive field test. All teachers and students were sent questionnaires to fill out at the beginning and end of the program. From the 234 classrooms using Exploring Childhood materials, 90 high school and 10 junior high school sites were selected to form a sample population. Throughout the year, teachers, students, and field site teachers in the sample population answered questionnaires. In addition, five sites from different parts of the country and representing urban, rural, and suburban populations, were selected for intensive study. Evaluators visited these classrooms and their field sites regularly to observe student behavior, and they interviewed students, teachers, and field site teachers several times during the year. Data collected from these activities have been compiled into a 48-page summary report which is available from Education Development Center. Findings include the following:

Eighty percent of the students said they could not have learned what they did without the experience of working with children at field sites. They viewed their work with children as the most powerful source of learning in the program.

Seventy-five percent of the students in the sample population felt they learned a great deal about how young children think and feel; this new understanding included an awareness that children's needs, emotions, and abilities are different from those of adolescents or adults; also, that no two children are exactly alike—each responds differently because of personal values, home life, and experiences.

Sixty percent felt that their ability to interact well with children increased substantially. For example, they reported that they developed more patience, and that they could interpret children's needs and reasons for behaving in certain ways more accurately. Students attributed this growth to an increased ability to relate to children on their own level.

Nearly 50 percent reported that they learned a great deal about themselves as a result of taking Exploring Childhood. Specifically, they felt more conscious of their own feelings and actions when working with children, and of the responsibilities involved in parenting. (Glickman, 1975)

Another interesting federally funded project is that developed at Indiana University (Smith, 1974). The Institute for Child Study in Bloomington has received a grant from the Bureau of Education for the

Handicapped, Office of Education, to conduct a three-year project, known as the FEED project (Facilitative Environments Encouraging Development).

FEED is an educational project that helps boys and girls in junior high school learn about child development through classroom instruction and direct exposure to infants and children in hospitals and preschool centers for handicapped children. Currently the project has two field sites, Gary, Indiana, and New York City. In Spring 1976 a program was initiated in Bloomington, Indiana, and in Fall 1976 another field site will be started in Owensboro, Kentucky.

During the field experiences, students act as teacher assistants, teaching, caring for, and playing with young children. This experience provides the basis for later discussion, question asking, and summarizing the week's experiences.

All of these government funded projects are predicated on the notion that intervention should be pushed all the way back to the training of young potential parents.

Summary

In exploring the current literature related to the problems of child care and parent training, it has been established that:

1. More families will require a variety of child care techniques as mothers spend increasing time out of their homes.
2. Caretakers, whoever they are, have tremendous potential influence on young children.
3. In intervening in caretaker training or directly with the child, we must be careful to provide a consistent environment for the child.

4. Learning that goes on at home where the child spends most of his time is very important. Parents need to get involved in the child's learning or other caretakers must be trained to work in the home.
5. Intervention should involve young potential parents in order to improve their parenting skills.

PROPOSED PROJECT

Procedure

The eighth grade general homemaking students at Foust Middle School will have as part of their home economics curriculum a nine-week unit in child development called "Exploring Childhood." This is a program in which adolescents work with young children while learning about child development and their own identities. It gives adolescents the chance to have responsible roles working with young children, to develop the skills to perform those roles, and to prepare for parenting and careers involving the care and welfare of young children.

The developers (Education Development Center, 1974) of "Exploring Childhood" state the perspective of the program in this way:

Human development is a process of continual growth and potential in which the individual, from the moment of birth, influences the people and the world around him, and is shaped by those people and that world. This view might be defined as mutuality, reciprocity, or interaction. However defined, the message declares that one is influenced by one's past, by one's peers and elders, and by one's culture; but that one is bound by none of these. More than promoting any specific body of information or any particular skill, Exploring Childhood suggests an attitude toward development that stresses the capacity of the person—whether child, adolescent, or adult—to synthesize past experience and to continue to grow in relationship with others.

We view the young child as an active being endowed from the start with resources for coping, for growth, and for human interaction. It follows that we see the high school student's role as supporting and extending a young child's normal daily experience rather than, for example, redirecting a child's activity for narrowly defined cognitive and/or affective learning goals.

There will be approximately one hundred students involved in the study. They will participate in the nine-week program in classes of twenty-five. One morning class and one afternoon class will meet each semester, with the morning class serving as the experimental group and the afternoon class the control group. All of the students in the experimental group will be exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum and will have direct contact with young children at a field site location. The following field sites will be used: Lee Elementary School, Goodloe Elementary School, Longfellow Parent-Child Nursery, and Father Connor Nursery School. The afternoon control group will be exposed to the child care unit that is a regular part of the general home economics curriculum.

Since all the classes are carefully set up by the counselor and administrators to be equivalent groups, the tests will be administered only at the end of the course work. Then the scores of the experimental and control groups will be compared. In the Foust Middle School the students are assigned to homerooms and then to home economics classes by the counselor, Mrs. Mary Posey, before school starts in September. She uses school records and specifically the Metropolitan Achievement Test and Otis-Lennon scores to group students so that the homerooms will be statistically equivalent in relation to sex, race, feeder school, and academic ability. Maintaining this balance is the only consideration in assigning new students to homerooms as they may enter school.

Null Hypotheses

There will be no statistical difference in personal self-esteem between middle school students who have been exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum and those who have not.

There will be no statistical difference in attitude toward young children between middle school students who have been exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum and those who have not.

The null hypotheses will be rejected at the .05 level of significance.

Sources of Data and Instruments

In order to determine the effectiveness of this program the students will be tested with the following instruments.

1. California Psychological Inventory

The study will use the scales in Class I which share a common emphasis on feelings of interpersonal adequacy and in effectiveness of what may be termed role manifestations of personality (Gough, 1975). The scores of the six scales will be averaged to arrive at one self-esteem score. The student t-test will be used for statistical analysis.

2. How Do You Feel About Children?

This is an attitude test which was written by the Department of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to be used in training child care workers. It will be slightly modified for reasons of clarity, readability, and scorability. The instrument will give an attitude score for each student. The student t-test will be used for statistical analysis.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE

Text

In November 1975 and April 1976 the California Psychological Inventory and the attitude test "How Do You Feel About Children" were given to the eighth grade home economics students who were involved in the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum. The results of these tests showed that one of the null hypotheses may be rejected and one must be accepted.

The null hypothesis which states that there will be no statistical difference in personal self-esteem between middle school students who have been exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum and those who have not is rejected.

The California Psychological Inventory was used to test this hypothesis. Six scores were averaged to arrive at one self-esteem score for each student. The scores of the experimental group were compared to the scores of the control group and were found to be significantly higher, reflecting a more positive feeling of self-esteem. The experimental group consisted of twenty-five students fall semester and twenty-six spring semester. The control group contained twenty-six students fall semester and twenty-eight spring semester.

The student t-test of significance (Van Dalen, 1966) was used for analysis and produced the result shown in Table 1. Since the table showing critical values of t does not include an entry for 103 df the

judgement of significance can be made on the basis of 60 df, which is more conservative. At 60 df a t of 2.00 is necessary for significance at the 5 percent level. The t value of 2.56 is larger and therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 1
SCORES ON CALIFORNIA PSYCHOLOGICAL INVENTORY

| | | Number of Students | Total Scores | Average Score |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Experimental Group | Fall | 25 | 552.5 | 22.1 |
| | Spring | 26 | 563.4 | 21.7 |
| Control Group | Fall | 26 | 569.5 | 21.9 |
| | Spring | 28 | 516.4 | 18.4 |

$$t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum X_1^2 + \sum X_2^2}{N_1 + N_2 - 2} \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2} \right)}}$$

Using the test scores on the California Psychological Inventory $t = 2.56$.

Several factors may have contributed to the difference in self-esteem seen between the experimental and the control groups. For one thing, as mentioned in the limitations of the study, the experimental group met in the morning for both the fall and spring classes while the control group met in the afternoon. There may be some inherent difference in interest and influence of the class because of this time difference.

The most obvious influence that could explain the difference in self-esteem scores is the specific child development curriculum that was

used with each group. In particular, the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum calls for students to spend time in a community nursery school working with young children in a practicum situation.

The control group also had practice with young children but it was in a "set-up" nursery where the preschoolers were brought to the middle school on a part-time basis. Many of the preschoolers were the younger siblings of students in the class and facilities for a nursery school were limited. Apparently this more traditional technique for giving student practice with small children does not produce so great an influence on the students as does the technique in which they are allowed to work in the community in real nursery school situations. Also there seems to have been a great deal of positive feeling established between the teenagers and the agencies for whom they worked. Since the students felt they were making a significant contribution this may have had considerable influence on their self-image and self-esteem.

The second null hypothesis, which states that there will be no statistical difference in attitude toward young children between middle school students who have been exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum and those who have not, must be accepted. This hypothesis was tested by an attitude test, "How Do You Feel About Children?" resulting in scores which showed that the experimental group felt more positively about young children than did the control group. However, this difference was not great enough to be statistically significant. The test was given to fifty-one students in the experimental groups and to fifty-four in the control groups and, using the student t-test for analysis, produced the results shown in Table 2. Since the critical

value of t for 60 df shows 2.00 at the 5 percent level of significance, the null hypothesis must be accepted.

TABLE 2
SCORES ON "HOW DO YOU FEEL
ABOUT CHILDREN"

| | | Number of Students | Total Scores | Average Score |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Experimental Group | Fall | 25 | 1938 | 77.5 |
| | Spring | 26 | 2021 | 77.7 |
| Control Group | Fall | 26 | 1930 | 74.2 |
| | Spring | 28 | 2116 | 75.6 |

$$t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum X_1^2 + \sum X_2^2}{N_1 + N_2 - 2} \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2} \right)}}$$

Using the attitude scores, $t = .8815$

Several factors may have contributed to the situation whereby the "Exploring Childhood" students felt insignificantly different toward young children than did their counterparts in the control group. First, the test itself may not have been adequate to measure this particular area of attitude. Secondly, in discussing the test afterwards with students there was an indication that the students were reflecting their own parents' attitudes toward children, not their own personal values. It may be that students who are thirteen to fourteen years old cannot separate their own feelings from those of their families. Perhaps they have not had enough experience in the adult role to be able to define how they feel about children.

Lastly, the child development curricula used with both groups involved a relatively short time and the testing was done immediately afterwards. It is possible that changes in attitudes may not be measured in so short a time, also some results may only be reflected at a later time when the students have a further opportunity to practice their caretaking skills.

Summary

This study of a child development curriculum was pursued in answer to a need in the Owensboro community for better education for parenthood. It was a problem that communities of all sizes and types are experiencing as they react to sociological changes in work, neighborhood, education, and child care practices. Many alternatives to traditional child care have been suggested and supported variously by local, state, and federal governments.

"Exploring Childhood" is a curriculum for parenthood education which is supported by an agency of the federal government. It has been taught for three years at the Owensboro High School. In the summer of 1975, a decision was made to use the curriculum with eighth grade classes at the Foust Middle School in Owensboro in the 1975-76 school year. It was hoped that the teenage students in the program would show a change in attitudes toward young children and an indication of more positive self-esteem.

One hundred eighth grade students were involved in the study. Fifty experimental group students used the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum which included regular field site experience in nursery schools and elementary schools. Another fifty students in an equivalent control group used a more traditional child development curriculum which did not include practicum experience outside of school.

The California Psychological Inventory was used to test differences in self-esteem between the two groups and an attitude test, "How Do You Feel About Children," was used to test differences in attitudes toward children.

Conclusions

The results of the study showed that the students who were exposed to the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum and who, therefore, were included in the practicum experience at field sites, had a significantly more positive self-esteem than those students who received the more traditional child development course. The results also showed, however, no significant difference between the two groups regarding their attitude toward young children.

It appears that this practicum-based curriculum has the added benefit of improving the self-image and self-esteem of teenagers. This may be because the teenagers become personally involved with the children at the field sites and feel a new importance and worth as they make a contribution of their time and energy to the community agency involved.

The relative brevity of the course makes it difficult to change attitudes toward children. Generally the students reflected values in this area similar to those of their own families, and they did not change these attitudes over a short period of time.

Implications

There were many subjective indications that the "Exploring Childhood" curriculum was a successful experience in this middle school. The relationships established between the students and the children were very important to some individuals. Also, other school work became more meaningful to some and solutions to attendance problems were found for

still others. Students who went as "teams" to particular field sites formed close bonds among themselves and with the adults at the field sites. For many it was a first "job" with all the inherent responsibilities. Classroom discussion brought out situations in students' homes which helped some gain insights into their own family relationships. As they began to perceive their role as adults in taking care of children, they understood better their role as children in their own families.

The last results were gleaned from informal conversations and observations of students by teachers who worked with them in various ways throughout their experience with "Exploring Childhood." Any of the implications discussed would be interesting to pursue with experimental research. If it could be shown that a course of this type produced positive effects for students in several different areas, it would be possible to design a curriculum more nearly meeting the demands for better parenthood education.

APPENDIX 1

Name _____

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT CHILDREN?

Read each sentence carefully. If the sentence tells the way you feel:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| Not any of the time | - | write 1 in the blank |
| Part of the time | - | write 2 in the blank |
| Half of the time | - | write 3 in the blank |
| A lot of the time | - | write 4 in the blank |
| All of the time | - | write 5 in the blank |

- ___ 1. When I work with children, I feel that they understand me and I understand them.
- ___ 2. Children won't always do what I expect them to.
- ___ 3. I really don't expect children to act like adults.
- ___ 4. I feel easy and comfortable when I am working with children.
- ___ 5. I feel that I can listen to children and talk with children.
- ___ 6. I feel it is important to listen to children.
- ___ 7. I feel that I can take care of most children's problems.
- ___ 8. I like to work and play with children.
- ___ 9. Generally I am not upset when children are noisy.
- ___ 10. A good spanking hardly ever gets results.
- ___ 11. I feel that I see children as individuals.
- ___ 12. I regard children's behavior as suitable to their age.
- ___ 13. I feel I respect the rights and feelings of children.
- ___ 14. I realize that children have limitations.
- ___ 15. I feel I have a genuine desire to learn and understand more about the behavior patterns of children.

Directions: Those statements you agree with mark (+) in the blank to the left. Those you disagree with should be marked (0).

In answering a child's questions:

- ___ 1. satisfy his curiosity?
- ___ 2. tell him all he needs to know?
- ___ 3. answer any questions he asks?
- ___ 4. answer all questions briefly, but accurately?

- ___ 5. don't tell him he is too young?
- ___ 6. don't tell him you are busy and to stop bothering you?
- ___ 7. be honest?
- ___ 8. be interested?
- ___ 9. answer all of his questions?
- ___ 10. answer questions about sex?
- ___ 11. Each child grows at his own rate and in his own way.
- ___ 12. The basic pattern of development is not the same for all children.
- ___ 13. Brothers and sisters in the same family are never so much alike that they can be treated the same.
- ___ 14. Infants are different from each other as soon as they are born.
- ___ 15. Being told something by adults is not the only way children learn.

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