Parental Participation in a Sex Education Program

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and is required to write a critique as a part of the final examination for the methods course.

It might be pointed out, also, that during the “instant replay” following the taping, neither instructor is present. The notes given to the student are felt to be adequate for this initial viewing. Also, hearing and seeing oneself for the first time on video tape can involve some trauma, and it is reasoned that this need not be shared with others. In addition, one of the basic purposes of the experience is to develop in the prospective teacher an attitude of self-evaluation and criticism. The development of this attitude is most important because the teacher will seldom have the advantage of outside supervision in the actual classroom situation. It is also felt that the student exposed to this use of video taping will be more inclined to use the method later for self-analysis.

Finally, the student is requested to review the tape at his convenience 3-4 times before the end of the school term. This is arranged through the Audio-Visual Center, and can be done to fit a schedule.

It has been found, from student feedback, that this experience is apparently well received. In the three years in which the procedure has been followed, almost 100 students have participated in this activity, and only one negative response has been received from evaluation questionnaires. Some unedited, randomly-selected, student reactions follow:

There is no better way of learning about yourself than observing what you are teaching.

A valuable asset in showing me mistakes which otherwise might go unnoticed.

It scared the hell out of me . . . and it's a lot of work, but I would very much like to try it more often.

It's a truth teller . . . and one sees himself as he actually is.

You can see errors you have, much more vividly, than if people just tell you about them.

I really was able to see what I was doing wrong and where I can improve.

It is anticipated that the college will continue this experience as an integral part of the methods course, but changes and modifications will be considered on the basis of student reaction and technological advances of the future.

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**Musab U. Siddiqi**

Abstract — This paper reports selected findings of an evaluative study of parental participation in a sex education program. One of the hypotheses is confirmed, and the direction of findings suggests the need for further development and testing of hypotheses in this area.

Among the notable developments in American society since World War II, accompanying changes in institutions which have altered the relation of marriage, family, and courtship to the rest of society, has been an accelerated change in sex mores. This change has been made manifest as a sharpening gap between generations, which has resulted in the pressure to shift the task of sex education to the schools. Inevitably this, in turn, has stimulated extreme traditionalistic reactions against such education on the part of John Birchers and other radical rightwingers.

These developments have meant that the teachers upon whom the burden of sex education has tended to rest are faced with the problem of educating the parents, too; or if not “educating” them, at least acquainting them with their programs and winning their cooperation.

Hence, when the proposal was made to undertake a pilot parent training project to accompany the sex education program in St. Paul, Minnesota, an opportunity was provided to examine some of the sociological dimensions of the changes in society and culture of which the rise of sex education is a part. A review of the recent history of sex education was undertaken. On the basis of materials reviewed, a number of hypotheses were developed.

It was proposed to gather data for the test of these hypotheses on the basis of self-administered questionnaires given before and after the special parent training program in St. Paul. Scales were designed for this purpose and were tested for reliability and validity. The major means of analysis of the data were t-test and analysis of variance.

The questionnaires were administered to 71 persons signing up for five classes conducted by five teachers. At the conclusion of the study, 18 of the original group declined to complete the post-training questionnaire. Hence, as a result of this and other contingencies, only 53 usable cases could be obtained.
While a total of twenty-one hypotheses in all were developed, they varied in generality. The three hypotheses reported here were of a general nature. This study was intended to measure the liberal-traditional range of attitudes parents hold toward sex education, as well as to measure their attitudes toward issues concerning sex education in schools. The liberal-traditional distinction was made on the basis that those people who oppose new ideas, new methods of accomplishing certain goals, and newly-emerging patterns of behavior, usually tend to support the traditional patterns because they feel more secure with them. In contrast to traditionalists, there are people who, while respecting traditions, feel that if changed circumstances require new ways of coping with problems, then such new methods should be given a chance to prove their usefulness. These people are usually open to new experiences and do not feel threatened by changes.

Admittedly, a person who is liberal on one issue may not be liberal on another. But as Ira Reisse (Reisse, 1965) suggests, one may reasonably identify some underlying qualities of a “liberal” in a general sense: (1) a favorable attitude toward change and toward the use of intellect in achieving change, and a correspondingly low evaluation of traditional ways of doing things; (2) a high value on individual expression and freedom from oppression; (3) a universalistic view stressing concern for all men and not just those like oneself. In contrast, a traditional person supports the existing order and values individual expression and freedom less than the liberal does. Hence:

**HYPOTHESIS 1:** Politically traditional people are more likely than liberals to have unfavorable attitudes toward sex education.

This hypothesis was formulated on the basis of evidence from other related studies with regard to open-mindedness and closed-mindedness or “dogmatism” and “opinionation” (Rokeach, 1960).

Hovland and his associates have pointed out that the techniques of opinion and attitude change involve obtaining the audience’s attention, comprehension, and acceptance of communication (Hovland and Janis, 1959). In the St. Paul situation, it must be noted, the parental sex education program was organized at the request and with the cooperation of many parents, and they enrolled in the classes voluntarily. Therefore:

**HYPOTHESIS 2:** After exposure to sex education training in this program, parents will have more favorable attitudes than before toward sex education.

Social psychologists have pointed out that members are likely to change their own minds so as to conform to the group’s position or, especially, with those members at or close to the modal position of the group. This process tends to operate more forcefully when the issue at hand is more important for the group, or when the members perceive it as more important (Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb, 1956). Therefore:

**HYPOTHESIS 3:** Greatest change is likely to occur among those participants in the course who scored low on the Sex Education Questionnaire when they responded to it the first time.

### Direction & Significance of Findings

As indicated, scores were calculated on the various questionnaire items intended to test the hypotheses. Moreover, t-tests were calculated to obtain some indication of the significance of the difference between groups which our hypotheses predicted. The following table reports both the direction of the findings and the significance of the results. A sign of + indicates that the findings are in the predicted direction whereas a sign of − indicates that the findings are against the predicted direction. N.S. = Not significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Directional Significance</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Politically traditional people are more likely than liberals to have unfavorable attitudes toward sex education.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) After exposure to sex education training in this program, parents will have more favorable attitudes than before toward sex education.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Greatest change is likely to occur among those participants in the course who scored low on the Sex Education Questionnaire when they responded to it the first time.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While only one of our hypotheses proved to be significant statistically, it is noteworthy that findings in all instances were in the predicted direction. In view of the limitations of the sample and the tentative character of the research instruments, such findings would appear most favorable for generating hypotheses for follow-up studies in sex education.

### References


