Parent Project EBP

Overall conclusions. The Parent Project workshop participants who continued to

participate in both the program and the research study over seven weeks reported quite positive

results, as did their focal adolescents. Youth and parents report higher levels of parental support,

and reviewed literature suggests that higher levels of parental support are predictive of higher

levels of school achievement (Barber & Olsen, 1997) and prosocial engagement outside the

home (Barber et al., 2005). Although youth do not report a significant change in grades over

these 7 weeks, parents do. We view youth report of grades as more valid than parent report;

however, it is nonetheless noteworthy that parents are apparently feeling more hopeful about

their adolescent's school achievement. Research by Taylor and Lopez (2005) suggests that these

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higher expectations might, in and of themselves, promote higher performance from adolescents

over time.

Workshop participants also reported that they were engaging in higher levels of

behavioral control at week 8 than prior to the workshop, and youth agree that their mothers are,

but report no significant change in their fathers' behavioral control. This finding is not

surprising, given that the majority of Parent Project participants are mothers who had first-hand

(rather than trickle-down) training. Recent evidence suggests that around the world, mother's

behavioral control is uniquely (negatively) predictive of adolescent antisocial behavior (Barber et

al., 2005; Stolz et al., 2005), thus it is important that after only 7 weeks, both participants and

their youth agree that the level of this key, maternal variable has changed.

Youth and parents also report a corresponding decrease in antisocial behavior. While it

was possible that this hypothesized outcome might have taken longer to appear, or that antisocial

behavior might have even increased in the short-term as an initial reaction to the sudden increase

in parental regulation, it is quite promising that behaviors such as stealing, swearing, hanging out

with deviant peers, and using drugs and alcohol significantly decrease in the short-term. One of

Parent Project's goals is to empower parents to stay with the process, and early success is a key

element of that process.

Limitations of the study and implications for future research. This study is limited in

several ways that suggest corresponding limitations on the validity and generalizeability of the

findings. First, although we utilized a strong initial sampling frame for our quantitative study (all

Parent Project workshop attendees at all workshops in the United States taking place over a

specified period), our pre-post comparisons were based on participants who remained in the

program and in the research study at week 8, and are therefore based on data from a relatively

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small percentage of individuals in the initial sampling frame (39% of parents and 32% of youth).

Second, the impact of the program on these individuals after week 8 was not addressed in the

present study. Third, although we included both parent and youth quantitative reports and

additionally utilized qualitative data from workshop participants, we did not solicit qualitative

feedback from youth, nor did we solicit or include the reports of a neutral informant such as a

teacher. Last, the research design did not include random assignment of parents to treatment or

control conditions. Thus, it is possible that the results suggested in the present study are part of a

familial developmental trajectory such that parents seek help when they are in "rock bottom"

conditions, and in the natural course of family life, both parenting and youth outcomes regress

toward the mean (see Streiner, 2001).

Given these study limitations, future research on the effectiveness of this and other parent

education programs should seek to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data from multiple

informants at pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up intervals. Additionally, program

evaluators should endeavor to maximize the initial response rate relative to the sampling frame,

and utilize the resulting data to identify risk-factors for program and/or research study drop-out.

Ideally, random assignment to a control condition and multiple treatment conditions would best

address the impact of Parent Project relative to alternative options for parents of at-risk

adolescents. Lastly, one of the benefits of a "research – practice calibration" (Law, Stolz, &

Wells, 2005, p. 1) in which a program theory is specified and compared with social scientific

research findings, is that it identifies non-targeted potential outcomes of an intervention. The

literature reviewed in the present manuscript relative to the Parent Project logic model suggests

that the program might also be significantly increasing youth social initiative and decreasing

youth depression (Barber et al., 2005; Stolz et al., 2005), thus we suggest that these constructs be

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measured in future Parent Project evaluation efforts to potentially document non-targeted

benefits of the program.

Implications for programming. Despite the limitations of the study, the "take away"

message regarding the evaluated program is quite encouraging. The skills taught were

appreciated by the participants, were quite suitable to the problems these parents were

experiencing, and appeared to generally translate into improved parenting and youth
functioning.

Parents appreciated the opportunity to share resources to address their practical needs.

Participants' satisfaction with the program is important, because research has shown that high

participant commitment is related to the practice of skills (Rodgers, Hunter, & Rogers, 1993).

Practitioners working with parents of at-risk youth should note the stated needs of these

parents for supportive relationships with other parents in similar situations. In other words, one

strength of The Parent Project is simply that it brings together parents with similar problems.

Program facilitators can capitalize on that strength by providing adequate discussion time in

which supportive bonds can develop. It is noteworthy that the retention rate for the qualitative

study was much higher than that for the quantitative study (86% compared to 55%), and that

many focus group participants indicated that they felt much more supported by the group as a

result of their initial focus group experience. One participant indicated that she "felt sorry for"

the workshop participants who did not have the initial focus group opportunity. Program

facilitators of this and other programs might also consider whether 15 minutes of material
could

be removed from the 3-hour workshop to allow for a mid-workshop break. Additionally,

program staff should identify participants who are most at-risk for program drop-out and (a)

encourage their continuation in the program and/or (b) alter the program to better meet their

needs.