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#DEVELOPING TOGETHER :

AN INALA PROGRAM FOR

ABORIGINAL PARENTS AND INFANTS

*M. Henry

I. ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

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Although Bronfenbrenner's estimation of the importance of parents has been supported both directly by evidence on the relative influence of home and school (Coleman *et al.*, 1966; Douglas, 1964; Wiseman, 1967) and indirectly by the disappointing longer-term results of those Head Start programs that did *not* involve parents (Hunt, 1975), up till now little more than lip service, if that, has been paid by education authorities in Australia to the proposition that the most important first educators of children are their parents. Still less attention has been paid by State systems to the notion that parents can be helped to develop their competencies so as to become more effective in terms of their own goals for their children.

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) courses are one means, recently initiated officially in Queensland, to this end. Another was the proposal from the Queensland Department of Education that a project be instituted under the auspices of the Inala Family Education Centre to capitalise on the knowledge gained in the program described by Watts and Henry (1978). That program was designed to help urban Aboriginal mothers become more effective educators of their four and five-year-old children. In the present program the focus was to be on still younger Aboriginal infants and their mothers. This was based on the growing evidence of the importance for development of the first few years (White, 1975), and the benefits of working with parents at that stage (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Staines, 1974; Gordon, 1975)...

Philosophy of the Program

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...it is clear that a gap often exists between parents' own goals for their children and some of their child-rearing practices which may inhibit the realization of those goals. The narrowing of this gap, through a resolution of the deficit-difference controversy,

Extracts from Queensland Education Dept. publication of the same title. 1980.

* Mrs Margaret Henry, Brisbane.

is what constitutes that third approach to working with parents and children which was foreshadowed earlier. This approach has been described by Watts and Henry (1978):

Such a resolution is at least possible because there are in fact some goals and values which a minority group may *share* with a majority group but which it has been deprived of the possibility of implementing. Here, areas of deprivation need to be identified and measures taken to permit more effective realisation of goals. There are also goals and values on which majority and minority groups *differ*; here respect and appreciation of difference is the proper course.

Among the contributions of cultural deprivation theory to the Brisbane program was the recognition on the part of both the project staff and the participating parents of an area of overlap between mainstream parental goals and program goals - namely the desirability of school success; the recognition also of a disparity between those goals and some present means of achieving them; and the possibility or stimulating, by way of new information and ongoing support, new behaviours in the service of those goals.

The contribution to the Brisbane program of cultural difference theory lay in the respect of the program personnel for the values held by the parents, whether overlapping or different from their own; in the encouragement of parents to develop their own methods; in the wish of program personnel to listen to and learn from the mothers; in the ongoing modification of program procedures in the light of consultation and feedback from all its participants; in the increasing responsibility taken for the project by its Aboriginal staff members.

(Watts and Henry, 1978: 158)

As will be seen later, all these features played a part in the Inala program. In particular, the presence on the staff of a member of the Aboriginal community in which the program operates was built in from the start. Watts and Henry had established beyond doubt that a parent education program was feasible for urban Aboriginal mothers, in line with their own values and preferred life-style; and that parent educators, drawn from the ranks of the mothers themselves, could become successful teachers of other Aboriginal mothers, not only equipping themselves for new and valued careers but also serving as respected role models for others in their own community.

Aims of the Program

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Thus the aims of the program were:

1. To develop and implement a program with a group of young Aboriginal mothers - and where relevant their mothers and other family members - focusing both on the mothers and the infants. The program would hope to:
 - a. increase the mothers' knowledge of their children's stages of development;
 - b. enhance the mothers' role in promoting that development;
 - c. enhance the mutual responsiveness and enjoyment of the mothers and children through growth-promoting activities congruent with their own interests and life-styles.
2. To train an Aboriginal parent educator in this type of early childhood program.
3. To assess the effects of the program on the child-rearing goals, attitudes and practices of the mothers.
4. To assess the effectiveness of the Aboriginal parent educator.

Implementation of Aims: Methods and Instruments

- Aim 1.* Work with parents would proceed by way of home visits, group meetings and a lending library of developmental books and materials.
- Aim 2.* After a short intensive period of reading and discussion, the parent educator would receive extensive on-the-job training throughout the year.
- Aim 3.* Low budget requirements and the need, with this age group of mothers and infants, to avoid tedious and inappropriate evaluative tasks (such as block-sorting) suggested the following forms of assessment:
- a) a structured interview, administered at the beginning of the program and again late in the year, tapping maternal child-rearing goals, attitudes and practices;
 - b) ongoing reports made by project staff;
 - c) the mothers' own expressed reactions to the program;
 - d) a pre and post observational record, to be made in the home by an independent observer.

Aim 4. At a number of points towards the end of the assessment period, the instrument devised in the Watts and Henry (1978) program to assess parent educator effectiveness would be administered.

The parent educator would also undertake her own report.

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Program Personnel

At the time of the setting up of the program, the Inala Family Education Centre was fortunate to have on its staff an experienced Aboriginal Community Education Counsellor, Mrs Trish Daanen, who had worked closely with Aboriginal secondary students and their families, and who had conducted a STEP course with some of the girls now that they were parents or shortly to become so.

Several of these young women had expressed an interest in learning more about the development of their babies and Mrs Daanen welcomed the opportunity to work in a program with this focus.

Mrs Margaret Henry, teacher, co-author of *Focus on Parent/Child: Extending the Teaching Competence of Urban Aboriginal Mothers* (Watts and Henry, 1978) and Senior Parent Educator on that project, was available to serve as consultant. Mr Ross Clark, Guidance Officer at the Centre, and Mr Wayne Dyer, Teacher-in-Charge, provided background support.

Shortly after the program began at the beginning of the 1979 school year, Mrs Daanen found that family circumstances would soon require her to move from Brisbane.

A suitable replacement was found in Mrs Jeannie Barney who, like Mrs Daanen, was a respected member of the Aboriginal community and whose experiences included work as a primary school teacher aide and sports coaching activities with secondary school and older age groups. Most importantly, Mrs Barney was a parent participant in the earlier Watts and Henry program.

From April until the end of September, 1979, Mrs Barney worked closely with Mrs Henry who gradually withdrew from the leadership role until, in October, Mrs Barney, always with the ongoing support of the I.F.E.C. staff, assumed virtually full responsibility for the program. At this time the structured interviews and home observations undertaken at the start of the program were again carried out to allow program assessment at that stage.

Until the end of the school year, the consultant met once a month with Mrs Barney, and at times, the Guidance Officer, Mr Clark, to discuss the progress of the program.

Training of the Aboriginal Parent Educator

The training first of Mrs Daanen and then of Mrs Barney followed a similar pattern; in the case of the former, it was of course, curtailed by her move. Both women, through their former work in the schools and their outside activities, had acquired skills in interacting with adults as well as with children. Their training in this new field of parent education took place largely on the job, but before this, an intensive month's background work with the consultant encompassed the following areas:

a) Infant Development and Activities

Since a major aim of the program was to alert parents to the stages of development that infants go through, it was important that the parent educator and the consultant should cover the broad outlines of those stages across the age range of the children in the project in 1979 - i.e. 6 months to about three years.

Books found extremely useful for the purposes of background reading and discussion were:

You and Your Baby (Staines and Mitchell, 1978)

Baby Development Through Baby Play (Gordon, 1973)

Child Development Through Child Play (Gordon *et al.*, 1973)

Films highly pertinent in this area included:

Rock-a-bye Baby. USA, Time Life, 1971 (30 min. col.)

The Young Child Is. 1973 (25 min. col.)

Childhood: the enchanted years. USA, MGM, 1971 (51 min. col.)

If at first you don't succeed, you don't succeed. U.K., British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972 (46 min. col.)

Water Play. Sweden, Starfilm, 1973. (17 min. col.)

Bang. USA, Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational 1969 (3 min. col.)

Learning through the arts. USA, Churchill, 1967 (22 min. col.)

Visits to the Lady Gowrie Centre Mother and Toddlers' Group, and observation and discussion of the children's activities both with the mothers and with the Centre staff made it possible to ground the preliminary study of infant development in a real-life situation.

b) Age-appropriate materials

Both the Mother and Toddlers' Group and the Family Day Care Section of the Lady Gowrie Centre proved invaluable sources of ideas for appropriate materials for the lending library component of the program. We are indebted to the staff of both sections of the Centre for their willing time and suggestions not only about ready-made toys and books, but also about materials that we and the mothers could make ourselves.

c) Choosing the Library

This provided still another opportunity for discussion between parent educator and consultant of principles relating to the developmental stages and the play needs of infants. As well, choosing the library demanded consideration of the potential of the toys and books for firing the parents' own creative activity, and for promoting parent-infant interaction.

d) Working with parent

The books just mentioned of Staines and Mitchell, and Gordon and his associates are specially directed to parents and those working with them. They share exactly our approach of fostering parental enjoyment and encouragement of children, of seeking to strengthen the strengths parents already possess but may not be aware that they have. These books were a constant source of reference throughout the program. As well, we were able to build on the knowledge gained and recounted in *Focus on Parent/Child: Extending the Teaching Competence of Urban Aboriginal Mothers* (Watts and Henry, 1978).

In particular, the sections on developmental behaviours (Hess, 1969) and on the pitfalls and intricacies of the three-way relationships involving parent, child and parent educator formed useful starting points for inducting the parent educator into the philosophy of the new program, an induction which would soon be translated into on-the-job practice in the two culminating training components:

- e) Participation in Home Visits and Group Meetings
- f) Participation in Planning and Evaluation Sessions

Here, as had been planned from the start, the parent educator gradually assumed more and more responsibility for the program. An account of her progress in these two key areas will be left until the final section of the report.

Extent of the Program

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...The program was planned to encompass six parents only, with three individual home visits taking place on each of two mornings every week, and an afternoon session allotted for planning and evaluation. A further morning once a month was set aside for a group meeting of all the mothers and children.

In the event, two more mothers asked to join the program, and were accommodated by virtue of some extra time being given on a voluntary basis by the consultant.

For eight mothers, then, program hours encompassed:

Home visits: 8 hours per week (including travel, record keeping and library maintenance);

Planning and
evaluation: 2½ hours per week;

Group meetings: 3 hours per month.

The Mothers

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Thus the program's parental clientele consisted of seven teenage mothers (or at one period, six teenage mothers and one grandmother) and one more mature mother.

At the start of the program the ages of the younger mothers ranged from 16 to 19 with a mean age of 17 years. Five of these young women had left school at Year 10, the other two at Year 9. The eighth mother had left school at the end of Year 7.

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II. THE PROGRAM IN OPERATION

Home Visits

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How did the semi-structured approach work in the new program? On the one hand, the mothers' openness to new perspectives on their babies stage of development led to the regular presentation of what Karen Martin has termed "different and new methods of play" which mothers and babies could try out; on the other hand, a respect for the unique approaches of both the mothers and the babies generated discussion and demonstration of activities already within the family repertoire as well as many "follow-up" sessions in which mothers recounted how the newly introduced ideas had worked during the past week, what adaptations they had made, or what quite different happenings they had found noteworthy. In Karen Martin's words, a real "exchange" took place of "methods of play and communication", which could only sharpen the parents' awareness of their own role in their babies' development.

Some illustrations, expanded from the year's log book, (names deleted), will best bring these principles to life.

1. Encouraging Existing Developmental Behaviours

The parent educator, consultant, Mother and baby girl (22 months) are sitting in the lounge room. In response to consultant's question, "What's she been doing this week?" - Mother starts to laugh. "Oh, it was funny. She was playing with her teaset, and I had a look in the cup and she had a whole lot of little bits of torn up paper in it. I couldn't think what they were supposed to be and then it hit me - teabags!" A discussion follows of ways in which little children learn by imitating what the grown-ups do. Mother has other examples: child tries to make bed, carry dishes to the sink. Parent Educator draws Mother's attention to the ways she can talk to child while these things are happening - not telling her what *to do*, but what she and Mum *are doing*, e.g. talking about the teabags will help child understand what they're for, what they do, even though she can't say the words herself yet. Consultant points out, too, some of the learning possibilities in child's teaset - filling, holding, pouring, all help muscle skills, co-ordination, control; estimating how much teapot, cup will hold develops ideas of quantities. "It's the start of maths!" Mother looks thoughtful.

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2. Introducing New Ideas and Activities

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A major vehicle for the introduction of new ideas was the library. One of the major criteria, already outlined, for selection of library materials was their potential for sparking creative interaction between parents and children.

Puzzles were a good example. While some of the wooden inlay puzzles in the library would have been out of the children's range as *puzzles*, to be solved in solitary play, they provided fascinating opportunities for mutual discovery when parents participated too.

Child (21 months), Mother, P.E. and Consultant are all sitting on the floor with the wooden Aboriginal family puzzle. Child has tipped the figures out and is looking at them. Consultant to Mother: "They're a bit hard for him to put them in their right places yet. You might be able to find some other ways he can enjoy them." Mother (picks up the father and stands him up): "Look, here's the big Daddy - see, this is the Mummy, see her dress - like Mummy's dress" (she points from the figure's dress to hers while he follows). She goes through the family. His eyes light up when she gets to the baby for whom he clearly feels an affinity. Mother shows him the baby's eye - then his eye. Child: "Eye". He imitates her gesture, points to his eyes, then his Mother's, then the P.E.'s eye, then the baby's - "Eye, eye." Mother smiles with pleasure: "And that's the baby's hair. Your hair." (Points from one to the other...And so on.) P.E. and Consultant reinforce the value of talking to child about the wooden family, letting him relate them to himself and others.

Quite often it was the children who initiated the discoveries, surprising and delighting their mothers, as well as the P.E. and Consultant.

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Boy's Mother is trying out with the P.E. and Consultant the possibilities of old detergent bottles and a ball in a turn-taking game of knock-em-downs, increasing co-ordination and a sense of responsiveness. Child (23 months) has a different idea. He picks up one of the bottles, whacks at the ball with it, and invents, not detergent bottle bowls, but detergent bottle cricket.

The home visit was obviously a slightly unnatural situation in which all the participants sat down for half an hour or so to play

and talk together. Early in the program, some of the mothers expressed concern that helping their children develop might involve such semi-formal sessions. "I haven't got time to sit down with her." The parent educator and consultant were quick to stress that 'sitting down' for long periods with children was certainly not what the program was about, that responding to children, talking to them about what they or we are doing is something that can happen as we go about our usual activities, that, as White (1973) puts it, developmental mothers "get an enormous amount of teaching in 'on the fly.'" "

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3. Following Up Ideas

As Torrance (1963) says, "We do what we find rewarding."

Universally rewarding is the approving interest of other people in the things we do. That approval, that interest, can help to reinforce the intrinsic satisfactions of many of our activities.

Thus, in the program, we might ask a mother how she had got on with the scrapbook we had discussed making the week before. When she brought out a book full of pictures cut and labelled which she and her child showed us with joy, our great interest in what she had done and what he had learnt helped to reinforce the enjoyment they had both already found in making and using the book.

Her follow up of ideas introduced by us reinforced *our* feeling of enjoyment in the program as well. On the other hand, if ideas were never or seldom followed up, there was a clear message for us: either the idea or our presentation of it lacked appeal, was not seen as relevant to mothers' existing patterns of behaviour. This, of course, can and does happen rather often in the teaching situation: teachers teach (or try to) but learners do not learn. Sometimes teachers attempt to overcome this by employing a variety of inducements, both positive and negative. Except for the encouragement and interest already mentioned, we had recourse to no such inducements; in a program where attendance was totally voluntary, the concepts being put forward stood or fell on their own merits and our skill in presenting them.

Thus the feedback gained through follow up of parent and child activities was of particular importance to us. It enabled us (as of course should happen in any teaching program) to modify and adapt both our ideas and presentation, to become learners along with the parents and children, to be more responsive to their interests and wishes.

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Group Meetings

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These creative workshop sessions, attended by mothers, babies and a number of relatives and friends, began with a 'getting to know you' morning, introducing both the participants and the notion of finding play materials in ordinary household items. Thus mothers fashioned wriggling caterpillars from pressure-pack lids, made mobiles from curtain rods and ribbons, turned ice cream cartons into posting boxes, and added eyelets and string to the pull-along wooden planes and boats with which the local Community Youth Support Scheme had most kindly augmented our toy library. Each mother also made a draw-string bag to hold current library borrowings.

On subsequent mornings we looked at ideas for water play, learnt how to make cloth books and scrap books, tried our hands (and those of the babies) at glove and finger puppets, investigated children's art and the messy delights of finger painting and vegetable printing, and, on one marathon day, heard a talk and saw a film on the theory of nutrition, put it into practice by making - and eating - gingerbread and healthful sandwich toppings, and were filmed ourselves by the Department of Education Film Unit.*

Several of these meetings were enhanced by the expertise of guest demonstrators; an Aboriginal Health Education Counsellor discussed nutrition; a teacher-librarian, accompanied by her own one-year-old, guided us through the intricacies of cloth books; an experienced pre-school director helped bring our puppets to life. On other mornings activity was sparked by a short, pertinent film.

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In general, as in the program of Watts and Henry (1978), the Mothers' Meetings served a variety of purposes. As well as being occasions for creative activity and for play, as Karen Martin has observed, the meetings fulfilled a social and morale-boosting function, gave a sense of group purpose to the whole project, permitted the reinforcement of teaching principles, widened perspectives on available community resources, brought the mothers into contact with interesting visitors, and allowed them to share - and thus lighten - common problems in group discussion. In the project's second year,

* *Just the Person* is a twenty-minute colour videotape of the Inala Program. It concentrates on the role of Mrs Barney as a Parent Educator and should be of use as a training tool or as a means of showing interested parents the nature of the program. Copies in either Phillips cassette or U-Matic formats can be purchased for \$20 per copy from the Film Centre, Nathan Avenue, Ashgrove, Queensland.

such group discussions may well be a growing feature of the meetings, now that the groundwork of mutual trust and confidence has been laid.

III. EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

The advantages of such a program are many. We are not only teaching our children but we're learning with them and they shall have some form of preparation for kindergarten. But, for me, there is nothing more fulfilling than to see my son repeat something I've shown him, and enjoy doing it. (Martin, 1979)

The effectiveness of the program will be considered in terms of its four aims.

Aim 1

It will be remembered that the first aim of the project was:

"to develop and implement a program with a group of young Aboriginal mothers - and where relevant their families - which would

- a. increase the mothers' knowledge of their children's stages of development;
- b. enhance the mothers' role in promoting that development;
- c. enhance the mutual responsiveness and enjoyment of the mothers and children through growth-promoting activities congruent with their own interests and life-style."

In the final paragraph of Karen Martin's article, reproduced above, we see this threefold aim translated into one mother's experience. In this sensitive summary are brought together several of the principles basic to the program. First, there is the principle that teachers, whether they be 'conventional' teachers, parent educators or parents, are also learners, about, from and with those whom they teach. Secondly, her mention of preparation for kindergarten, though never stressed in the program, suggests her awareness of the importance for future development of those 'growth-promoting activities' introduced or reinforced by the program; suggests too, the concern, already discussed, for their youngsters' school success felt by many parents from minority groups. Thirdly, the program's aim of promoting mutual responsiveness and enjoyment could hardly be better expressed than in her final sentence.

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Summarising to this point, the program in 1979 has operated by way of three components: weekly home visits, a lending library, and monthly group meetings. In each of these aspects it has proved possible to establish a program that is viable, attractive to the participants and able to be run at a modest cost.

Aim 2 - To train an Aboriginal Parent Educator in this type of early childhood program.

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In general, it is the consultant's view that the "apprenticeship" system outlined here is a very effective one. The consultant first models the parent educator role which is gradually assumed by the parent educator herself, as the consultant step by step withdraws. At all times during this process the consultant invites participation, suggestions and criticism from the parent educator from whom indeed she has much to learn, as she does also from the parents. After each joint home visit, on the way to the next family, ideas can be exchanged, jottings made in log books...to be expanded and clarified later at the regular weekly evaluation and planning sessions. As the consultant retires gradually into the background, these evaluation and planning meetings become, if anything, more essential, allowing the parent educator to consolidate her competence as she articulates for the consultant her operating principles in the visits she is now making solo. Then parent educator and consultant can further extend or refine these principles in the remaining joint visits that continue until the consultant's final withdrawal and the assumption of full autonomy by the parent educator.

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...it is the consultant's conviction at the end of 1979 that the close collaboration on home visits, and the detailed exchange of ideas and observation of methods which it makes possible, is of the greatest value in the training of parent educators.

Aim 3 - To assess the effects of the program on the child-rearing goals, attitudes and practices of the mothers.

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Areas of Change

All the mothers but one reported some increase in the amount of talking they did with their children. To what extent is this likely to be due to normal development, quite irrespective of the program? Because children are becoming verbal at about the age of eighteen months, and increasingly so thereafter (Brown 1973; Halliday 1975), and because mothers respond to their children's behaviour just as children do to their mothers' (Bell 1974) we should expect the amount

of talking between the mothers and the children to increase as a matter of course. In the absence of a control group it is impossible to disentangle normal developmental from program effects.

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The enjoyment of books, a further form of communication, reportedly increased in every household. Since at the beginning of the program five of the eight mothers did not think of books at all in relation to their children, or thought of them only for the future, the change at the end of the program to eager accounts of children pointing out pictures to or with their mothers may, with some confidence, be largely attributed to the program, particularly the library component and the demonstration readings that formed part of many home visits.

Summarising the reported changes in the *use of household resources for play*, we may note that at the first assessment there were seven negative (i.e. disapproving) mentions of children having recourse to everyday household objects, at the second assessment two. On the positive side, crediting mothers with a point for each approving mention of such use and a further point for any comment made on the child's *creative* or *imaginative* use of household things, there was a significant increase from six positive mentions at the beginning to twenty-six at the end.*

While it could be postulated that the mothers' later reactions were a response to the known predilections of the parent educator and the consultant, it is unlikely that this would have wholly accounted for the shift apparent here, especially as the mothers' answers were spontaneously in response to a general question on play things. It seems that the general thrust of the program, namely that home and the things about the home are full of opportunities for learning and enjoyment, may indeed have had an effect.

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Areas of little positive change

Perusal of the eight profiles reveals little change between January and October in the following areas: content of rules, maternal perceptions of children's orientation to achievement and independence, and management strategies.

Rules were overwhelmingly concerned with children's safety, a highly appropriate preoccupation at this stage of the children's development. There was also concern, both at the beginning and at

* $x^2 = 11.28$, d.f. = 1, $p < .01$

the end of the year, for the safety of household possessions. As has already been remarked, the balancing of this parental concern with the children's needs for exploration and discovery could well be an important subject for more focussed discussion within the program in its second year.

When the mothers were asked in January for their expectations of when their children would begin to show a motivation towards *achievement* and also *independence*, the mean ages they gave were 19 and 18 months respectively. In October, the mean age, given in answer to both questions was 20 months. Two mothers would not commit themselves to any expectation about achievement motivation at the first interview; at the second, they respectively nominated the ages of 19 months and 16 months.

It is clear that when mothers in the program spoke at the beginning of the year of the smiles that accompanied first successes in crawling up and down the steps, or of persevering in attempts to lift a bike over a ledge, they had a general awareness that their infants, well before the age of two, were progressing towards both achievement and independence, an awareness that was maintained virtually unchanged at the end of the program. Rather than describing the maintenance of this awareness, in which the program may have played a part, as indicating "no positive change", perhaps we should see it as a potentially important continuing contribution to the children's development.

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Seven of the eight mothers in the program initially reported that they would make use of verbal cues in their management strategies, four in situations where the child was 'good' as well as those where he was 'bad', three when the child was 'bad' only.

At the second interview, six of these seven mothers continued to support some use of verbal cue-giving. Three now favoured its use under all circumstances, two said they would provide verbal encouragement and appreciation of 'good' actions, while two others were not restricting their reported use of conceptual strategies to occasions when the child was 'bad'. Only one mother had dropped the reported use of such strategies altogether; perhaps reflecting a growing frustration as the child moved into a more independent-minded and negative phase.

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Why were there more positive changes in some mothers than in others?

Given, as has already been noted, that we cannot be certain of the degree to which the program contributed to any of the differential changes reported by the mothers, a more useful question for our purposes might still be whether it is possible to indicate some reasons why the program appeared to have more impact on some mothers than on others.

One characteristic that does *not* appear to have been a factor is the age of the child. We have seen that by the second interview, most of the mothers were reporting more communication with their children, more looking at books with them, more use of household resources for play, and more interactive enjoyment. This held across the wide age-group. Verbal interaction is a good example. While researchers such as Bruner (1975) and Wells (1978) have detailed the dependence of maternal speech patterns on the developing speech forms of their infants, this is in no way to say that what Staines and Mitchell (1978) call "communication chains" are not being forged between mother and children long before children are actually putting words together, indeed from birth on (Cohen and Beckwith, 1976). It is the general growth in these "communication chains", whatever the specific changes in their links, that is recorded in the data from the interviews, and this growth was reported whether the child was preverbal (Danny, 12-16 months), becoming verbal (Teddy, Tom, Helen, Greg, 16-24 months) or already verbal (Phillip, 25-35 months, Beth (27-36 months). This is another way of saying that an increase in maternal and child responsiveness - a major focus of the program - can occur at any age in infancy.

What does emerge from a sequential reading of the profiles is that the mothers who reported the most consistent increase in, or maintenance of, the developmental maternal behaviour tapped by the interview questions were those who were the most regular program attenders (80% and over), while few or inconsistent changes in attitude and practice were reported by those mothers whose attendance was irregular (below 80%).

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Aim 4 - To evaluate the effectiveness of the parent educator.

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In August, September and October, 1979, three supervisory visits were made by the consultant.

The most striking feature of these assessments is the reproduction of the finding of Watts and Henry (1978) that, in the earlier stages of a program, it is easier for the parent educator to work effectively with the child than with the mother.

In all three of the visits (each to a different family), the parent educator demonstrated high levels of rapport with the child, ability to secure his participation and hold it with warm encouragement, and ability to frame activities which were relevant to the child's interest and stage. As the parent educator's expertise grew, she was increasingly able to talk easily to the child about what she and he were doing together - in the first instance about a skittles game, in the second a magnetic dress-up set, in the third a home-made jigsaw. The one problem area - and it is a problem for all who are feeling their way in this new field of training - lay in the picking up of the child's cues and building on them flexibly and responsively. For example, when one of the children picked up a paper "jigsaw" piece and used it as a plane or a dart, there was an opportunity for exploration in this new direction initiated by the child.

In the parent educator's interaction with the mothers, it was again in this area of *responsiveness* (both the encouragement of the mother's responsiveness to the child and the parent educator's own responsiveness to the mother's ideas) that the greatest development could be anticipated, with time and the parent educator's growing expertise. When, for example, one of the little girls had pulled out a spoke from a library "shapes board", the mother began to tell eagerly how, by stacking a round shape on each end, the child had made a kind of two-wheeled roll-along. Here was a fascinating chance to build on a really creative discovery and the mother's obvious interest in it.

Such chances, offering themselves so often and so unexpectedly, were perhaps the feature of the present program that most delighted the consultant. They are chances especially present in work involving very young children. Their creativity is fresh and sharp and largely unblunted by the grinding down into conformity that has often happened even by the age of four or five. If divergent thinking is really prized in our society, such truly *early* childhood programs as the one described here may offer precious opportunities to help parents become more conscious of their children's creativity, to foster and preserve it.

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