

This Week's Citation Classic

Hawkins R P, Peterson R F, Schweid E & Bijou S W. Behavior therapy in the home: amelioration of problem parent-child relations with the parent in a therapeutic role. *J. Exp. Child Psychol.* 4:99-107, 1966. [University of Washington, Seattle, WA]

The negative relationship between an 'unmanageable' four-year-old and his mother was systematically assessed and modified in its natural environment, the home, with the mother as 'therapist' and using a functional analysis of the various stimuli and behaviors. Effects were evaluated experimentally, with follow-up 24 days after termination. [The Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI™) indicates that this paper has been cited over 140 times since 1966.]

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"On finishing my PhD I had the opportunity to teach psychology at the University of Washington and work in the child development laboratory, directed by Sid Bijou. That lab's atmosphere facilitated highly creative work with normal, retarded, and maladjusted children, including some excellent parent training in the child development clinic by Bob Wahler and colleagues.

"Bob Peterson was my graduate assistant, and he had worked with Wahler training parents. We agreed to continue this work, but when a real case of a naughty four-year-old with a distraught mother came along, I felt that we should take our parent training out of the laboratory and into the home.

"I had worked a year in an excellent child guidance clinic and was convinced that their traditional manner of treating children's problems was largely fruitless. Assessment ('diagnosis') of the problem was done in the clinic—using parents' verbal reports and various tests that had little to do with the problem presented—while the real problem behavior and its causes were in the daily home, school, or community of the child. The clinicians' interventions consisted of little more than patient listening and the making of vague suggestions as to how the parent might behave differently toward the child. And the effectiveness of this treatment was evaluated primarily in terms of how the parent said the child was changing, which

was probably more influenced by the parent's desire to please the clinician (or terminate treatment), than by the child's real behavior. This whole process of therapy by talking in a clinician's office seemed highly questionable.

"Bob and I decided to carry out both the assessment and the treatment in the child's home and to document the results objectively, and Bijou agreed. Edda Schweid, a graduate student, agreed to help us. Our assessment was a 'functional analysis' of the behavior of mother and son, like those in Ulrich, Stachnik, and Mabry,¹ and the intervention was similarly based.

"The results were excellent, and we experimentally demonstrated that they were due to our intervention. We went back and took data 24 days later for three sessions and found the effects lasting. About four years later I talked with the mother by telephone and found that she'd had no recurrence of the problems. Peterson was at least as responsible for the research as I.

"This research, along with work by a few others, has led to thousands of parent training programs around the nation, to a greater appreciation for intervening in 'the natural environment,' and to a large body of applied research² which accounts for much of the citation of this study. Our following up the case after intervention was over, our measuring some of the mother's behavior, and our direct involvement in the home are other reasons.

"Having seen the myriad 'mistakes' we parents make in child-rearing, I became convinced that enough is now known about the culturally critical job of parenting that we should require high school training in the practical skills of that job, and I wrote a few articles to that effect.³ The idea now seems accepted by most educated people in our country, but there are few such programs thus far, and they seldom include the 'laboratory' experience that makes the difference between learning about something and learning to do something. Yet it is a beginning.

"I am now developing a program in which trained, closely supervised foster parents clinically treat a severely maladjusted youth in their own home."

1. Ulrich R, Stachnik T & Mabry J. Control of human behavior. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1966. Vol. 1.
2. Graziano A M. Parents as behavior therapists. (Hersen M, Eisler R M & Miller P M, eds.) Progress in behavior modification. New York: Academic Press, 1977. Vol. 4.
3. Hawkins R P. It's time we taught the young how to be good parents (and don't you wish we'd started a long time ago?). *Psychol. Today* 11:28-40, 1972.