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ABSTRACT

Preservice training workshops involving instructions, role-playing, and feedback have been effectively utilized to train Teaching Parents for community-based homes for the treatment of youth in trouble. The present study extended this workshop model to the inservice training and followup of institutional cottage workers as they served retarded youths. Before- and after-training as well as post-check observations were made of two groups of cottage workers as they worked with retarded youths on a social (fine-taking) and maintenance (sink-cleaning) task. The results of the multiple baseline design used indicated that the training effectively increased the groups' use of "teaching interaction" skills. However, the increases observed for the groups were not representative of the majority of the data for individual trainees and specific teaching skills. In addition, long term post-checks indicated a slight decline in the groups' data. An on-the-job retraining, monitoring, and feedback system is suggested (and is currently being experimentally investigated) as a means to remediate the deficits not handled by the initial training. (Author)

Institutional Cottage Workers Become Teaching Parents[1]

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Abstract

Pre-service training workshops involving instructions, role-playing and feedback have been effectively utilized to train Teaching Parents for community-based homes for the treatment of youths in trouble. The present study extended this workshop model to the in-service training and follow up of institutional cottage workers as they served retarded youths. Before- and after-training as well as post-check observations were made of two groups of cottage workers as they worked with retarded youths on a social (fine-taking) and maintenance (sink-cleaning) task. The results of the multiple baseline design used indicated that the training effectively increased the groups' use of "teaching interaction" skills. However, the increases observed for the groups were not representative of the majority of the data for individual trainees and specific teaching skills. In addition, long term post checks indicated a slight decline in the groups data. An on-the-job retraining monitoring and feedback system is suggested (and is currently being experimentally investigated) as a means to remediate the deficits not handled by the initial training.

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The Teaching Family Model for community-based treatment of youths in trouble has been developed, elaborated and documented (see Fixsen, Phillips & Wolf, 1973 for a concise description). One of the crucial ingredients of the Teaching Family Model is the skills of the Teaching Parents in handling all aspects of the treatment program for a home with 5-8 youths. To train these skills workshops have been developed (Kirigin, Ayala, Brown, Phillips, Fixsen & Wolf, 1972; Maloney, Bedlington, Maloney & Timbers, 1974.) that involve instructions, role-playing and feedback to the Teaching Parent trainees as well as extensive follow-up. However, to date, experimental analyses of the effectiveness such training workshops have been limited to within-workshop, role-playing situations and utilizing pre-post, control group experimental designs. The purpose of the present study was to extend this workshop model to the training of cottage workers in an institution for mentally retarded persons and to experimentally analyze the effectiveness of the workshop on the trainees' acquisition and long term maintenance of the "teaching interaction" skill employed by Teaching Parents. In addition, the observations in this study were made when the trainees were working with the youths that they were responsible for on an everyday basis.

Method

Trainees and Setting

The trainees for this study were 21 cottage workers from the first and second shifts for the two cottages of the Education Program Unit at Western Carolina Center. Most had little or no higher education but a few had undergraduate degrees. Each cottage worker who was to be a Teaching Parent was responsible for a family group of 8-10 moderately-mildy retarded youths.

Procedures and Experimental Design

The total training consisted of approximately 40 hours of instructions, role-playing and feedback spread across 4 weeks. The instructional materials were modeled after those presented in The Teaching-Family Handbook (Phillips, Phillips, Fixsen & Wolf, 1972) but were modified to fit the setting and population involved. The data presented here were the results of the approximately 10 hours of the training that concerned the use of the "teaching interaction" to train the youths in social and maintenance skills. The "teaching interaction" includes the use of instructions (breaking the task into steps), role-playing (providing a chance for the youth to practice the task) and feedback (corrective and positive) by the Teaching Parent when instructing youths. The 21 trainees were split into two groups based on the shift they worked. Two checklists were developed to cover

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Insert sample checklists about here

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in detail the behaviors that the trainees were to engage in when appropriately using the "teaching interaction" procedure to instruct youths in the completion of social (fine-taking) and maintenance (sink cleaning) tasks. All trainees were then observed twice prior to training while

attempting to instruct a youth in the completion of both social and maintenance tasks. Following the second observation, the first shift trainees (Group A, N=9) were trained. A third observation was then made of all trainees. For the first shift group this was a post-training observation while for the second shift group (Group B, N=12) this was a third pre-training observation. Prior to the fourth observation the second shift group was also trained. Fifth and sixth post-check observations were made 5 1/2-8 1/2 and 14 1/2-17 1/2 weeks following training. Thus, a Multiple Baseline Experimental Design (Baer, Wolf & Risly, 1968) across groups was employed to demonstrate a functional relationship between the acquisition of Teaching Parent Skills (the use of the "teaching interaction") and the training procedures employed.

Two observers observed the trainees throughout the study. Approximately every third trainee the two observers observed the behavior of the same trainee simultaneously but independently to allow for an assessment of inter-observer reliability. These two observers were aware of the purpose of the study but were not told which trainees were in which group until following the study. In addition, a third observer, naive to the development of the checklists and the expected outcome of the study, served as a reliability observer 18 times (9 times for each task) across the before-training, after-training and post-check phases of the study. Reliability was assessed by comparing both observer's records question by question and dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements. Mean reliability between the primary observers was 94.5% for the social task (range: 72.7% to 100%). The mean reliability between the primary observers and the naive observers for the social task was 89.9% (range: 72.7% to 100%). Mean reliability between the primary observers was 87.2% for the

maintenance task (range: 63.1% to 100%). The mean reliability between the primary observers and the naive observers for the maintenance task was 84.4% (range: 68.4% to 100%). These means were calculated by summing the percent agreement for each observation and dividing this sum by the number of observations.

Results

Figure 1 displays the results for the groups of trainees during before-training, after-training and post-check observations. The data displayed are the percent of checklist items (i.e., individual teaching skills that, in combination, make up the "teaching interaction" skill) checked "yes" during a given observation. These percentages are the groups' means for a given observation and were calculated by summing the group's mean percent "yes" for all "yes/no" checklist items and dividing this sum by the total number of "yes/no" checklist items (items 1-7 on the Social Task checklist and items 1, 2 and 4 on the Maintenance Task checklist).

During the before-training observations for the Social Task, Group A's mean was 25% (range: 24-26%). This mean rose to 49% (range: 39-54%) during the after-training and post-check observations. Group B's before-training mean for the Social Task was 21% (range: 20-22%). During after-training and post-check observations their mean rose to 33% (range: 30-37%). For the Maintenance Task, Group A's before-training mean was 46% (range: 44-47%). This mean rose to 78% (range: 72-84%) during after-training and post-check observations. Group B's before-training mean for the Maintenance task was 52% (range: 50-56%). During the after-training and post-check observations their mean rose to 85% (range: 78-90%). Thus, for both tasks and each group of trainees, the mean percent of teaching skills used appropriately was low and stable

before training and increased to a stable higher percent during after-training and post-check observations.

With 21 trainees and two tasks for each trainee there were 42 (2x21) opportunities for the training to produce increases in the individual trainees' appropriate use of the teaching skills that make up the "teaching interaction". The group-mean results (presented above) were representative of 14 increases observed for individual trainees. However, for the other 28 opportunities for increases in the individual trainees' behavior there was either some degree of overlap between the before-training and after-training or post-check data or an upward trend in the before-training data such that the increase observed in the after-training and post-check data may have been a continuation of that trend rather than a result of the training. There was no instance, in the data for the individual trainees, of a decrease from before-training to after-training and post-check observations. Thus, for one third (14/42) of the opportunities for the training to produce increases in the individual trainees' data, it did produce increases. However, for two thirds (28/42) of the opportunities, it produced no change in the individual trainees' data.

On the Social Task checklist there were 11 "yes/no" questions across the seven checklist items. This provided 22 opportunities across the two groups (2x11), for the training to produce increases in the specific teaching skills referenced by the 11 "yes/no" questions. For seven of the 22 opportunities increases were observed, for 14 there were no changes (using the criterion described above) and for one there was a decrease from before-training to after-training and post-check observations. On the Maintenance Task checklist, there were

four "yes/no" questions (items 1, 2, 4 a and 4 b) and two "number of" questions (items 3a and 3b) across the four checklist items. This provided 12 opportunities (2x6) for the training to produce increases in the specific teaching skills referenced by the four "yes/no" and two "number of" questions. For eight of the 12 opportunities increases were observed and for four there were no changes (using the criterion described above). Thus, for slightly less than one third (7/22) of the opportunities for the training to produce increases in the specific teaching skills involved in the Social Task, it did produce increases. However, for slightly less than two thirds (14/22) of the opportunities, it produced no change and for one opportunity it produced a decrease in the groups' use of the specific teaching skills. For two thirds (8/12) of the opportunities for the training to produce increases in the specific teaching skills involved in the Maintenance Task, it did produce increases. However, for one third (4/12) of the opportunities it produced no changes.

Discussion

The results for the groups' means indicated that the workshop training model (including instructions, role-playing and feedback) can be effective in training groups of cottage parents to use some of the specific teaching skills involved in "teaching interactions". The observations of both groups' performance were made concurrently with the training occurring at different points in time for each group of trainees. Therefore, the increases observed are most probably a function of the training procedures employed rather than a result of other variables extraneous to the study.

However, the group mean results were not representative of the

majority of the results for individual trainees' and specific teaching skills. In addition, for three of the four final post-check data points (2 groups x 2 tasks, see observation 6 on Figure 1) decreases were observed. Thus, the initial training was not successful for all trainees, all skills or for the long term. These qualifications along with practical considerations (e.g., staff turn over) have set the occasion for further experimental investigation of possible training methods. One possible alternative currently under investigation by the experimenters involves retraining the trainees using the same instructions, role-playing and feedback method but concurrently measuring the trainees on-the-job use of the "teaching interaction" and providing monitoring and feedback from the trainees' direct supervisors. In addition, data on the youths behavior is being abstracted from the institution's records to answer the most important question of how the trainees' use of the "teaching interaction" has benefitted the youths they serve.

The present study has replicated the results of previous investigations (Kirigin, et al., 1972 and Maloney, et al., 1974) by demonstrating the efficacy of the workshop training in improving the use of the "teaching interaction" by groups of trainees. In addition, the present study has extended these results in several ways: 1) It utilized a within subjects' design (a multiple baseline) and thereby analyzed the results for individual trainees and skills in the long run (i.e., with repeated before-training, after-training and post-check observations) rather than only immediately before (pre-) and immediately after (post) training. 2) Observations were made of the trainees' behavior as they worked with youths they normally served on an everyday basis. 3) The study was conducted within an institutional setting

as in-service training for cottage workers rather than as pre-service training for group home teaching parents. 4) The youths involved were retarded persons rather than youthful offenders. The major experimental questions remaining are: 1) Can these training techniques be augmented so that all trainees and all skills increase maximally and durably, (perhaps with the addition of on-the-job monitoring and feedback)? 2) Does the use of the "teaching interaction" by direct care workers have a positive effect on the youths being served (i.e., are their behavioral deficits remediated by the use of the "teaching interaction")? 3) If the answers to questions 1) and 2) are yes, can this training method be effectively used in other human service settings?

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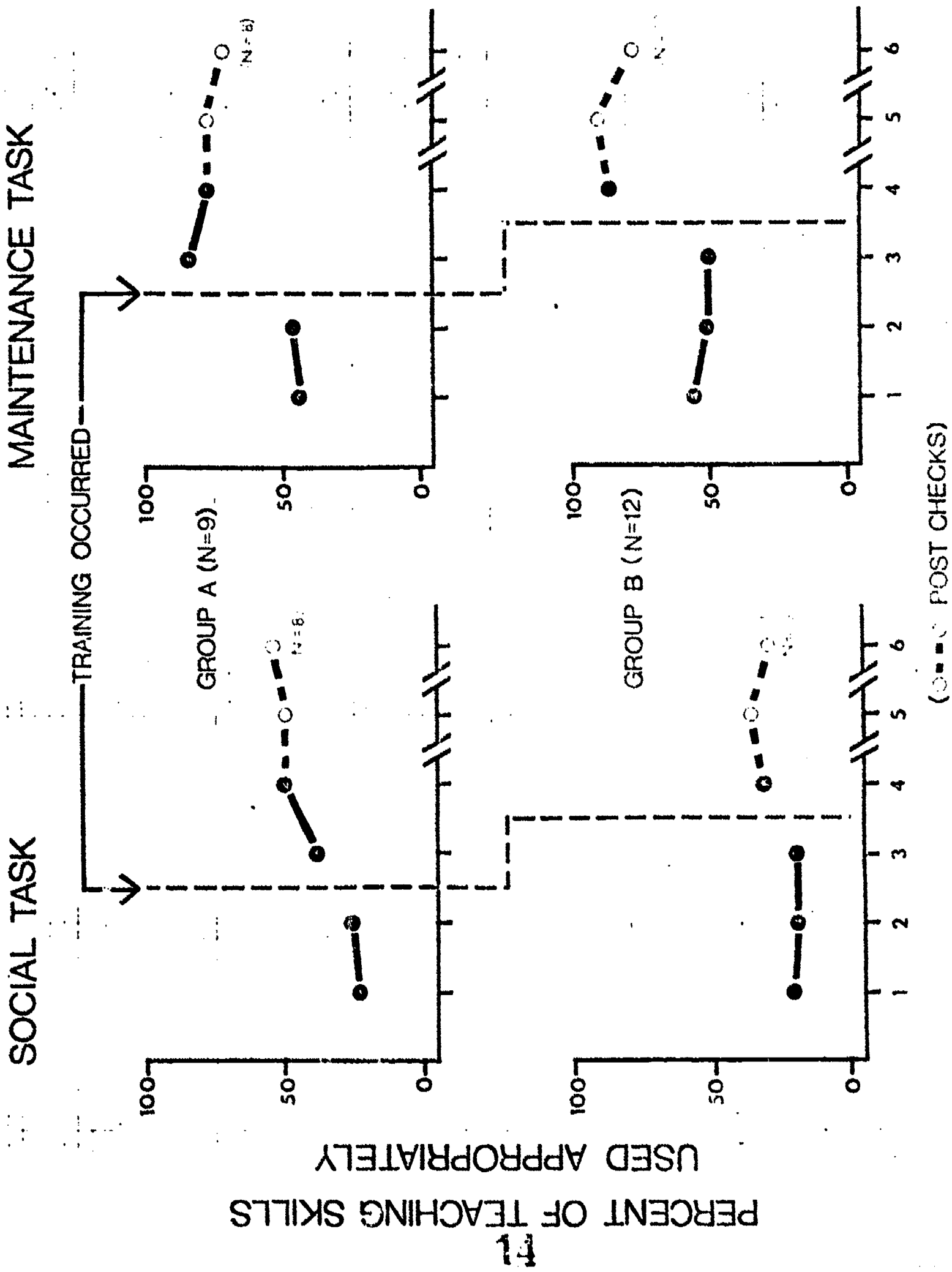
Footnote

[1]This study was conducted while the first author was Director of the School Program for the Education Program Unit of Western Carolina Center, Morganton, North Carolina 28655. The authors wish to express their thanks to Leonard McCook (Then Cottage Program Coordinator) for his preparation of the initial workshop materials; Judy Freeman (currently Assistant Cottage Program Coordinator) for her assistance with the retraining, monitoring and feedback system described; Dr. J. Iverson Riddle, Director of Western Carolina Center for his strong support of applied research; and most importantly the cottage workers without whose cooperation and participation the study would not have been possible. Reprints may be obtained by writing the first author % Department of Psychology, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001.

Figure Caption

Figure 1: The percent appropriate use of Teaching Parent skills by Group A and Group B trainees when working with residents on both social and maintenance tasks. The first four observations (●) were made at approximately one week intervals with the fifth and sixth observations (o) coming 5 1/2-8 1/2 and 14 1/2-17 1/2 weeks after the completion of training.



Sample Checklists:

Assessment of Teaching Parents' Instructional Skills: Social Task

1. Did the teaching parent explain the rationale for fining or the rationale for accepting criticism? Yes ____ No ____

2. Did the teaching parent explain the three steps included in appropriate fine-taking behavior?

   a) Eye contact — Yes ____ No ____
   b) Verbal acknowledgement — Yes ____ No ____
   c) absence of inappropriate responses — Yes ____ No ____

3. Did the teaching parent ask for the youth's acknowledgement after each step?

   a) Yes ____ No ____
   b) Yes ____ No ____
   c) Yes ____ No ____

4. Did the teaching parent model appropriate fine-taking behavior? Yes ____ No ____

5. Did the teaching parent give the youth the opportunity to practice? Yes ____ No ____

6. Did the teaching parent verbally reinforce the youth's practice at the end of the session? Yes ____ No ____

7. Did the youth receive tokens for the practice? Yes ____ No ____

Assessment of Teaching Parent Instructional Procedures: Maintenance Task

1. Does the teaching parent give the child a reason for the training session? Yes ____ No ____

2. Does the teaching parent break the task into at least 5 behavioral steps? Yes ____ No ____

3. How many behavioral steps did the teaching parent use and how many did he/she verbally reinforce?

   a) Number of steps _____

   b) Number of S^R _____

4. Is positive feedback given when the task is completed?

   a) Verbal — Yes ____ No ____
   b) Tokens or points — Yes ____ No ____