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ABSTRACT

In response to the need for a comprehensive child services program, the Parent Education Follow Through Program was developed. It combines a program of social action with emphasis on functional relationships between the home and impinging social systems. The major features of the program include the following: (1) comprehensive services (social, psychological, and medical); (2) home visitations; (3) home learning activities and corresponding parental teaching behaviors; and (4) parental committees and meetings which are organized to facilitate parental involvement. The data that have been collected to measure these program areas have shown that the model has had a positive impact upon children and their achievement as well as upon their families, school, and community. (Author)

Comprehensive Model for Child Services: Parent Education Follow Through Program

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Comprehensive Model for Child Services:

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Statement of Problem

There is a recognized need for delivery of appropriate child services encompassing a theoretical framework characteristic of ecological psychology (Brim, 1975; Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Gordon, 1977). This framework may be translated into educational programs linking the child's family and the diverse services offered by informal networks and formal agencies in the community.

This approach has been supported by a considerable body of research literature demonstrating that the home and the school environments in interaction with other systems have a direct impact upon children and their patterns and motives for achievement (Gordon, 1977). In essence, the child and family do not behave in isolation from other impinging environmental systems which include the school, local agencies, political/legal systems, and economic forces. This interaction of environments or agencies can be viewed as a transactional approach across systems or as a Community Impact Model.

Figure 1 is an adaptation of ideas from the work of Orville Brim (1975) and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1976) which clarifies the above-

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mentioned concepts of the Community Impact Model (Gordon, 1978). At the center of Figure 1 is the family as a micro-system. Its members engage in certain activities as a group and perform certain roles which enable the family to function in an organized way. But the family in turn is surrounded by three additional systems. The first of these is the meso-system, consisting of the neighborhood, the local stores, recreation facilities, local T.V., and the nearby school. The meso-system includes both formal and informal forces which shape and are shaped by the family. One can then move to the exo-system: to agencies, the world of work, and mass media. Finally, the economic, political and social systems which compose the macro-system all play fundamental roles in shaping the place, time, activity, and roles which occur within the family. Based upon this approach, any program of sound educational value should recognize the reciprocity that exists among these systems and design its intervention strategies accordingly.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Applied Research and Developmental Framework for Child Services

In response to the need for a comprehensive child services program, the late Ira J. Gordon developed the Parent Education Follow Through Program (PEFTP) combining a program of social action with research and development efforts that emphasize transactional relationships between the home and impinging social systems.

Basic to the program is the assumption that parents exert a major influence upon the intellectual development of their children, and that these parents serve as a vehicle by which new learning behaviors are passed on. To this end, the Parent Education Follow Through Program targets the home environment because it is a basic assumption of the program that success in this environment will lead to success in other environments as well. Once changes are made in these environments, it is anticipated that an improved relationship among the home, school, and community will emerge. The major features of the program include the following: (1) comprehensive services for participating families (social, psychological, and medical); (2) home visitors, labelled as parent educators, who visit parents in their homes and work in the classrooms with these parents' children; (3) home learning activities, which are developed by parents and staff at various sites and are brought into the home by the parent educator, with the emphasis placed upon parental teaching behavior when demonstrating these tasks; and (4) parent committees and meetings which are organized to facilitate increased parental involvement, allowing parents to become partners, along with teachers, in the educational development of their children. These features of parental involvement underscore six major roles of parents in the education of their children: teachers of their own children, paid paraprofessionals, decision makers and policy advisors through Policy Advisory Committees, adult learners of new skills, and volunteers

in the classroom (see Figure2). The parents' involvement in these roles facilitates their influence upon the program and also results in the enhancement of their own and their children's development.

Insert Figure 2 about here

One role of involvement for parents is as teachers of their own children. There is a special emphasis in the Parent Education Follow Through Program for helping parents learn more effective ways of teaching their own children at home. A second parental role, the paid paraprofessional home visitor, involves the parent as an employee in the program. In each of the Parent Education Follow Through communities, the persons hired as home visitors must be representative of the population which the program is serving. This home visitor works with other parents by portraying a model for them in the home and spends the remainder of the job time in the classrooms of the children. A third role involves parents as participants in decision making and in the governance activities of the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC). This role allows the parents to become skillful and self-confident advocates for their children. The fourth and fifth roles, namely adult learner and audience or recipients of information, involve parent education for self-enhancement. The personal satisfaction derived from this role helps to increase the parent's understanding of the child. In addition, the parent serves as a role model, thereby possibly

improving the parent/child relationship. In carrying out these roles, parents are asked to participate in classes or serve as recipients of information in many situations. The last, but certainly not the least important role, focuses upon the parent as a volunteer in the classroom. This type of work helps to inform parents about the school environment as well as helping the school perform a more efficient job of educating its students. Bringing these parents into the school results in changes in teachers as well as parents and children (Rubin, 1979).

Evaluative Research

The program's comprehensive thrust for parent involvement as mentioned above requires multiple evaluation techniques to adequately and validly measure any evidence of success. Similar approaches have been taken by other researchers evaluating early childhood education programs. Rindskopf (1978), in advocating multiple techniques of evaluation, stated:

> With perfect information from flawlessly designed and executed evaluations of social programs in short supply, evaluators are urged to look to gathering many kinds of evidence and analyzing it by multiple methods to reduce the incidence of erroneous conclusions. (p. 75)

The evaluative research discussed in this paper highlights both qualitative and quantitative indicators of program success.

The data that are discussed were collected in the PEFTP communities which are located throughout the United States in six urban and four rural settings and serve approximately 8,000 families and their elementary school children in kindergarten through third grade. This program has been implemented in these communities for the past eleven years and several different types of data have been collected. These data sources include: (1) descriptive data which include records of quality and quantity of home visits made to participating children, parent participation, and parental volunteering; (2) child achievement data from standardized achievement tests for grades K-3, data focusing on parental teaching behaviors and child achievement, and data on vertical diffusion; and (3) case study information focusing upon the program's impact in these communities. Each of these data was analyzed according to its relationship to the parental roles previously mentioned. A discussion of these three data categories follows (Olmsted, Rubin, & True, 1979).

Descriptive data. The first category of data deals with descriptive statistics which focus upon: (1) home visitations made by paraprofessionals into the homes of parents in our program and paraprofessional time spent with the teacher in planning for these home visitations; (2) parent decision making and attendance at meetings and activities; and (3) parental classroom volunteering.

Data pertaining to the home visitation component of our program

illustrate the key roles of parents as teachers of one's own child and of paraprofessional. In our program, paraprofessionals visit the homes of our children as well as work with these children and their teachers in their respective classrooms. These home visits distinguish our program from other Follow Through programs which emphasize the classroom more than the home. By visiting a child's home and working in the classroom, the paraprofessional helps to develop the partnership between the home and the school. Moreover, it is during this visit that the paraprofessional helps the parent become a more effective teacher of his or her own child.

The number of planned home visits varies from family to family. Typically, most of our communities require one home visit per week for each child. After each visit, the paraprofessional completes a home visit observation report designated as the Parent Educator Weekly Report (PEWR). Success for this component of our program was evidenced by more than 80% of the children receiving at least 80% of their planned visits.

In Table 1 are presented the data concerning the percentage of families receiving at least 80% of the scheduled home visits. In one of the communities, 100% of all Follow Through families received at least 80% of their scheduled home visits during the 1977-78 school year. To place this in perspective, over 6,143 families were in the program in 1977-78 and approximately 150,000 home visits were made.

Insert Table 1 about here

Planning for these home visitations is essential in our parent involvement program. Therefore, the program requires that the teacher and paraprofessional parent educator jointly plan for the week's home visits. These planning data are recorded on the PEWR and evidence of success for this part of our program took the following form. First, the time indicated on the PEWR was examined and those times showing more than one-half (½) hour per week were included in the count. If, of the total paraprofessional-teacher dyads, 75% indicated at least ½ hour planning time, the requirement was met. Data indicate that an extremely high percentage of paraprofessional-teacher planning has been taking place and the median community percentage has risen from 81% in 1976-77 to 100% in 1977-78.

As a program stressing parent involvement, we are particularly interested in determining both the number of decisions made by parents at meetings and the number of parents who attend these policy making meetings and activities. These data stress the parental roles of decision maker, adult learner, and audience. They were collected continuously by participating communities utilizing minutes and sign-in sheets at the meetings and activities. Evidence of success for these components of our programs was shown by: (1) the frequencies of parental decisions being made which were relevant to the program;

(2) at least 35% of the parents attending a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting; and (3) at least 20% of the parents attending a PAC activity.

Data concerning decisions made by parents at PAC meetings are presented in Table 2. Examples of these decisions address topics such as: determining the criteria for the selection of paraprofessionals, writing proposals, and gathering information for presentation in Washington, D.C. to support the future funding of the program. In one of our communities, a total of 680 decisions were made at 173 different meetings during the 1977-78 school year.

Insert Table 2 about here

In Table 3, data are presented concerning parent attendance at various PAC meetings which focus upon topics such as hiring of personnel, proposal writing, and reviewing actions taken by parents to support the future funding of the program. In addition, these data reflect attendance at committee meetings such as the following:

Executive
Home Learning Activity Development and Evaluation
Grievance
Comprehensive Services
Career Development
Evaluation
Curriculum
Personnel

Attendance at these meetings has remained consistently high over a five year period.

Insert Table 3 about here

In addition to these meetings, parents have attended such PAC activity functions as Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes and banquets honoring active parents in the program. The parental roles demonstrated at these GED classes and banquets are those of an adult learner and audience, respectively. As one will observe in Table 3, attendance at these and other activities has steadily increased over a five year period. The median percentage of families attending activity functions at least one time across all communities has increased from 15% in 1973-74 to 50% in 1977-78.

The last type of descriptive data pertains to the involvement of parents as volunteers in the classroom. The program emphasizes this role of volunteering which includes classroom activities for parents such as housekeeping, clerical, instructional, materials development, and evaluation. Sign-in sheets are provided for the parents in each classroom and evidence of success in this area is shown by having at least 35% of the parents volunteering in the classroom.

These parental volunteering data are reflected in Table 4. The percentage of parents who have volunteered in the classroom at least once has increased from 1973-74 to 1977-78. These high percentages indicate the active involvement on the part of parents

when participating in classroom activities such as teaching, keeping records, evaluating, and developing materials.

Insert Table 4 about here

These descriptive data, which cover diverse areas of parental involvement, are impressive in that they show the successful impact of the program as evidenced by the high level of parent involvement in the home, classroom, and at PAC meetings and activities at which parents make decisions regarding their children, the Follow Through program, the school system, and the community (Rubin, 1979).

Inferential data. In addition to the foregoing descriptive data, inferential data were collected to demonstrate other aspects of program effectiveness. These data include child achievement data, the relationship between program related teaching behaviors and child achievement and, finally, the effect the program has had upon members of the family other than the targeted child (Olmsted, Rubin, & True, 1979).

The assessment of child achievement data has been conducted by PFTP evaluation staff as well as outside research corporations. Both forms of evaluation have concluded similar results. Based on these evaluations, it can generally be inferred that child achievement behavior is influenced by the involvement of parents in all of the six roles previously mentioned, and specifically by the role of parent as teacher of own child.

The external evaluations were conducted by the Stanford Research Institute and Abt Associates (1977) on a longitudinal basis. A reanalysis of these data was conducted by House, Glass, McLean, & Walker (1977). Both studies provided significant evidence for the effectiveness of the PEFTP. The Abt evaluation ranked the PEFTP second in basic skills and affective domains and also high in Cognitive Conceptual skills. The longitudinal effects showed that the PEFTP produced positive effects in raising the academic achievement levels of its participants. The results are especially significant given certain comparison and PEFTP group differences. For example, the Follow Through children had lower scores on readiness tests, they represented fewer intact families, and most families were of lower socioeconomic levels (Greenwood, Ware, & Gordon, in preparation). The comparison groups exhibited a 15-20 point advantage in IQ scores over PEFTP children. Comparison children also came from middle to upper middle class socioeconomic backgrounds. For these reasons, we can conclude that results in which PEFTP children perform better than or equal to non-PEFTP children are favorable to the program.

Analysis of child achievement for PEFTP children and non-PEFTP comparison group children has been done by the project staff annually. MANOVA, MANCOVA, ANOVA, and ANCOVA are used to analyze these data. Evaluation is conducted utilizing the scores of the community-specific achievement tests rather than selecting one

achievement test to use across all communities. Also, in some PEFTP communities, a comparable non-PEFTP sample could not be located. Consequently, the data presented here are from eight of the ten PEFTP sites and are summarized across various achievement batteries.

A summary of the analyses of child achievement test results for 1973 through 1978 indicates effects favoring the PEFTP children at about 35.4% with the effects favoring the comparison group at 21.9%. No significant difference occurred in 42.7% of the statistical analyses that were performed (Olmsted, Rubin, True, & Revicki, in press). Again, results which indicate that PEFTP children perform better than or equal to non-PEFTP children are considered favorable to the program.

A second area of positive impact has been the relationship between parental teaching behaviors and achievement, as indicated by a study videotaping parents teaching their children a particular task. Parents whose children had been in the program for one year were compared with parents of non-PEFTP children. These videotapes were scored for the number of Desirable Teaching Behaviors (DTBs) used (see Appendix A). These teaching behaviors are stressed during home visits and are used in teaching the home learning activities. The results indicated that PEFTP parents had a mean of 24.0 DTBs used during the teaching session. Non-PEFTP parents scored a mean of 14.5 desirable teaching behaviors used. The

difference was statistically significant; $F(1,63) = 6.35$, $p < .05$; leading one to infer that participation in the PEFT program increased the parents' use of desirable teaching behaviors and improved parent child interaction. In another study of this type (Olmsted, 1977), it was shown that the number of DTBs used by the parent correlated with reading ($r = .50$, $p < .001$) and with math ($r = .35$, $p < .05$).

A third area of effectiveness has been shown in studies of vertical diffusion (Kinard, 1974; Moreno, 1974; Ware, Organ, Olmsted, & Moreno, 1974). Vertical diffusion refers to the phenomenon by which members of the family other than the target child are affected by the program. Our studies of vertical diffusion showed positive effects on school readiness for siblings of PEFTP children. These studies found that children coming from PEFTP homes scored higher on the Preschool Inventory than did comparable children coming from non-PEFTP homes. This research supports the assumption that if the PEFTP changes parental teaching style and parent-child interaction, then the parents may apply these newly acquired skills with their younger children (Olmsted, Rubin, & True, 1979).

Case study data. Because the Parent Education Follow Through Program combines educational innovation, parent/community involvement, and comprehensive services, it requires multiple evaluation techniques as mentioned earlier, and during the 1977-78 school year, its community impact was recorded through a naturalistic approach to prepare community case studies, our third evaluative approach.

Emphasizing the program's impact from the participants' perspectives, this qualitative evaluation represented an attempt to maintain sensitivity to local conditions in the communities and to the wide range of desired outcomes of the program's large-scale social intervention (True, 1979).

Observation, interviews, and analysis of unsynthesized records were integrated to illuminate issues and impact. The primary concern was description and interpretation; taking into account the unique pattern of circumstances in the communities, the evaluation was adaptable and eclectic.

Central to the design was the uncovering of participants' perspectives through open-ended, discursive forms of interviews. Parents, parent educators, community leaders, school personnel, and others were interviewed by trained fieldworkers to elicit in-depth accounts of personal and institutional impact.

Aspects of the ethnographic approach were used to gather data, and anthropological concepts provided a theoretical framework for viewing social process. The fieldworkers were guided by the method's perspective and its multifactorial, in vivo approach to uncover process effects, yet no claim is made that the final descriptive accounts are ethnographies of change. As pointed out by Wolcott (1975), "one does not have to be an ethnographer to avail himself of elements of an ethnographic approach in his research" (p. 116).

One fieldworker was assigned to each community and was re-

sponsible for collecting relevant data and preparing the final narrative. Four doctoral students in education collected data for seven communities. All the communities had been invited to participate in the study. Seven expressed a strong desire to do so, as indicated on an inventory distributed at the beginning of the 1977-78 school year.

Before beginning data collection in communities, the field-workers participated in training sessions with Follow Through staff. The sessions focused on: orientation to Follow Through programs in general and the Parent Education Model in particular, clarification of objectives and procedures for the impact study, and introductory training in anthropological theory and methods.

As could be expected, site variation in impact had occurred, reflecting community differences in racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics as well as specific circumstances (e.g., desegregation, teacher strikes, natural disasters). Yet, certain patterns emerged indicating cross-community impact, notably in the areas of delivery of comprehensive services, cross-cultural linkages, career development, and program development.

One major area of impact has been increased parental involvement in decision making, fostering improvement in the delivery of comprehensive social, psychological, and medical services for needy families. With the cooperation and encouragement of Follow Through personnel, parents have become more informed consumers of services and more effective advocates for improved delivery. In a south-

western site, for example, coordination and active advocacy by parents have improved the health and well-being of many minority families and contributed significantly to their children's educational advancement. In a three-year survey, parents indicated health services provided by the program met a critical need in the community.

The emergence of parent coalitions to improve child services also had the noticeable effect of enhancing cross-cultrual sensitivity in multiethnic communities. Cooperative efforts to help children have created bonds of unity and understanding where division and discord had existed before. In a midwestern site, for example, program efforts to integrate Chippewa culture into school activities and curriculum development have promoted involvement of Native American parents in school and community affairs, thus improving community dialogue and fostering pride in and appreciation of the cultural traditions of the Chippewa.

So, too, has the program nurtured cross-cultural communication in a southwestern site where the staff has encouraged the development of multicultural curricula responsive to the Hispanic population and promoted collaborative projects linking Blacks and Hispanics for the improvement of school programs and the delivery of comprehensive services. Recognizing the unique sociocultural characteristics of this community and the other sites, the model sponsor has encouraged site variation responsive to community needs. The sponsor has provided principles and guidance for parental participation,

leaving specific curriculum decisions to local educators.

Another significant area of impact has been career development of low income parents. By providing paraprofessional and non-professional positions and by offering incentives and training for career advancement, the program has helped many parents become self-sufficient, better their socioeconomic status, and gain more self-confidence. As reported by parents and educators, the personal growth and career advancement of parents helped to motivate children as seen in the children's school achievement.

Recognition of the program's impact in diverse areas has prompted the development of similar programs in various model sites. Spin-off programs include a nationally validated Home Base program, parent centers, pre-natal and preschool parent education programs, and special programs to help parents with handicapped children. In general, the findings of the impact evaluation support the view that in order to be effective, programs must recognize the right of parents to participate actively in the education of their children, thereby, establishing partnerships of parity to improve child services (True, 1979).

Conclusions

The data presented here demonstrate the successful impact that the program has had upon parents, children, school, school system, and the community. The descriptive statistics indicated the model's impact in diverse areas: frequency of home visitations

made by paraprofessionals into the homes of participating parents and planning for these visits on the part of the teachers and parent educators; parental decision-making; frequency of parental attendance at Policy Advisory Committee meetings and activities by parents and classroom volunteering. The inferential statistics showed that Follow Through children achieved better than or equal to comparison groups in most communities, that PEFTP parents used significantly more Desirable Teaching Behaviors than non-PEFTP parents, that a relationship exists between the use of the Desirable Teaching Behaviors and child achievement, and that vertical diffusion is evident in participating families. Moreover, the case study data showed the model's social, political, and economic effects. The case studies highlighted impact in the areas of comprehensive services (social, medical, dental, and psychological), cross-cultural communication, linkages, career development, and program development.

Implications

The Parent Education Follow Through Program for child services represents a needsresponsive, holistic intervention, which yields positive effects in the complex network of cultural, social, institutional, and psychological variables of the learning milieu. Recognizing the interlocking social systems impinging on the learning process, the model sponsor has translated theory into practice by providing an educational program emphasizing the diverse roles of parents. The multi-faceted approach advocated by the sponsor has

fostered personal and institutional improvement directly related to child development and thus underscored the need for a social systems perspective for child services. Central to the design is the role of the sponsor as a change agent in translating a theoretical framework for implementation into actual practices of ongoing educational settings.

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Appendix A

Desirable Teaching Behaviors for The Parent Education Follow Through Program

1. Before starting an activity, explain what you are going to do.
2. Before starting an activity, give the learner time to familiarize himself or herself with the materials.
3. Ask questions which have more than one correct answer.
4. Ask questions which require multiple-word answers.
5. Encourage the learner to enlarge upon his or her answer.
6. Get the learner to ask questions.
7. Give the learner time to think about the problem; don't be too quick to help.
8. Get the learner to make judgments on the basis of evidence rather than by guessing.
9. Praise the learner when he or she does well or takes small steps in the right direction.
10. Let the learner know when his or her answer or work is wrong, but do so in a positive or neutral manner.

Note. This information was taken from the files of the Parent Education Follow Through Program located at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Table 1

Percentages of Families Receiving Completed Home Visits[a,b]

1974 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1973 - 1974	8	23	49
1974 - 1975	22	58	81
1975 - 1976	11	66	83
1976 - 1977	55	90	98
1977 - 1978	76	91	100

[a]These percentages reflect those families receiving greater than 80% of the scheduled home visits.

[b]The years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

Table 2

Number of Decisions Made

at Policy Advisory Committee Meetings[a]

1976 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1975-76			
Decisions	7	25	235
Meetings[b]	9	8	138
1976-77			
Decisions	46	107	376
Meetings[b]	20	13	66
1977-78			
Decisions	50	263	680
Meetings[b]	16	60	173

[a]The years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

[b]The numbers indicate the number of meetings at which these decisions were made.

Table 3

Parental Involvement Data:

Percentages of Parents Who Attend Policy Advisory Committee Meetings and Activities[a]

1974 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
	Activities		
1973 - 1974	9	27	59
1974 - 1975	14	28	57
1975 - 1976	18	34	55
1976 - 1977	13	33	53
1977 - 1978	27	41	83
	Activities		
1973 - 1974	7	15	27
1974 - 1975	4	22	31
1975 - 1976	14	26	44
1976 - 1977	11	27	62
1977 - 1978	20	50	84

[a]The years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

Table 4

Parental Involvement Data:

Percentages of Parents Who Volunteered in the Classroom[a]

1974 - 1978

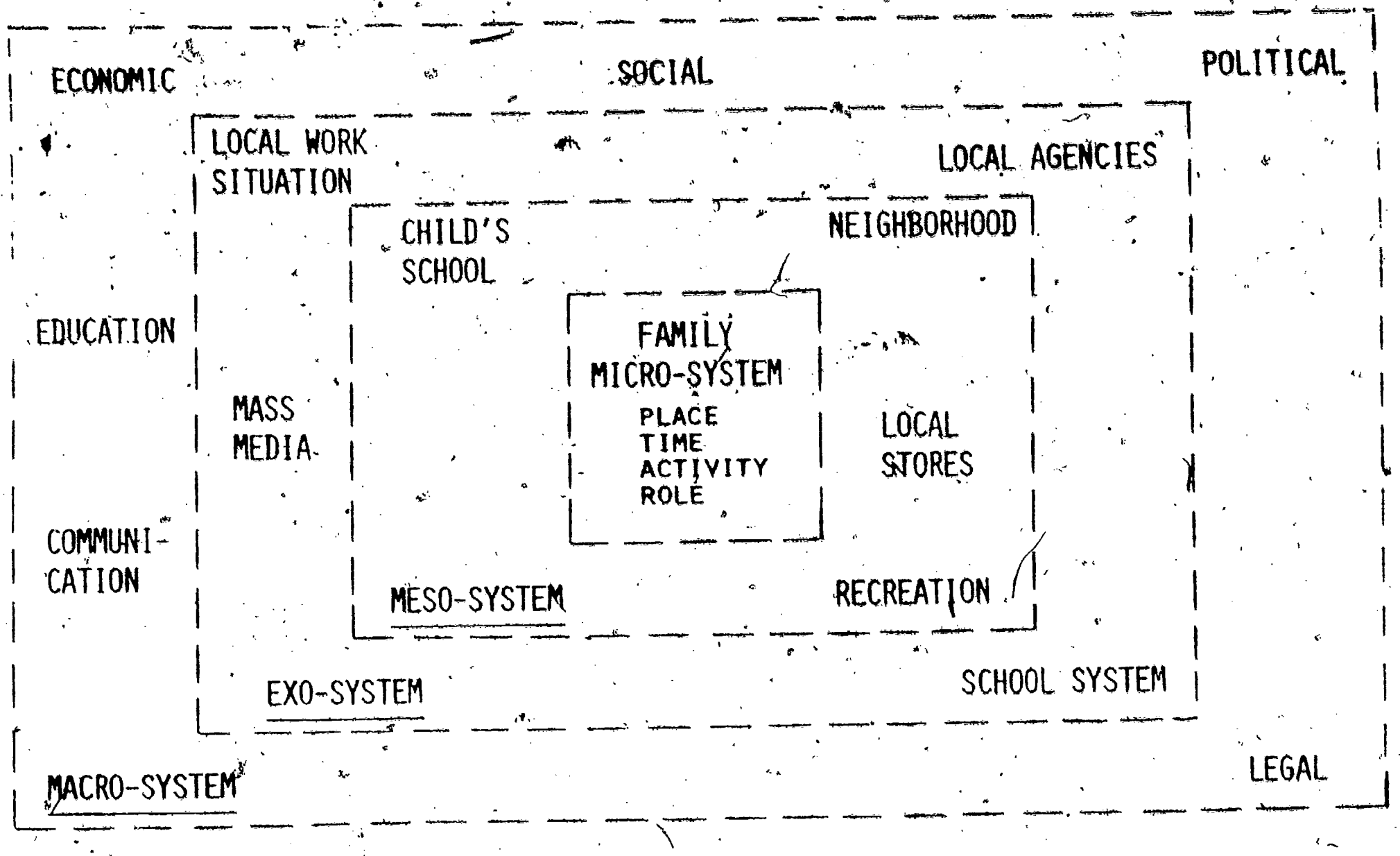
Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1973 - 1974	19	42	58
1974 - 1975	29	45	70
1975 - 1976	27	42	96
1976 - 1977	28	55	84
1977 - 1978	36	76	90

[a]The years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

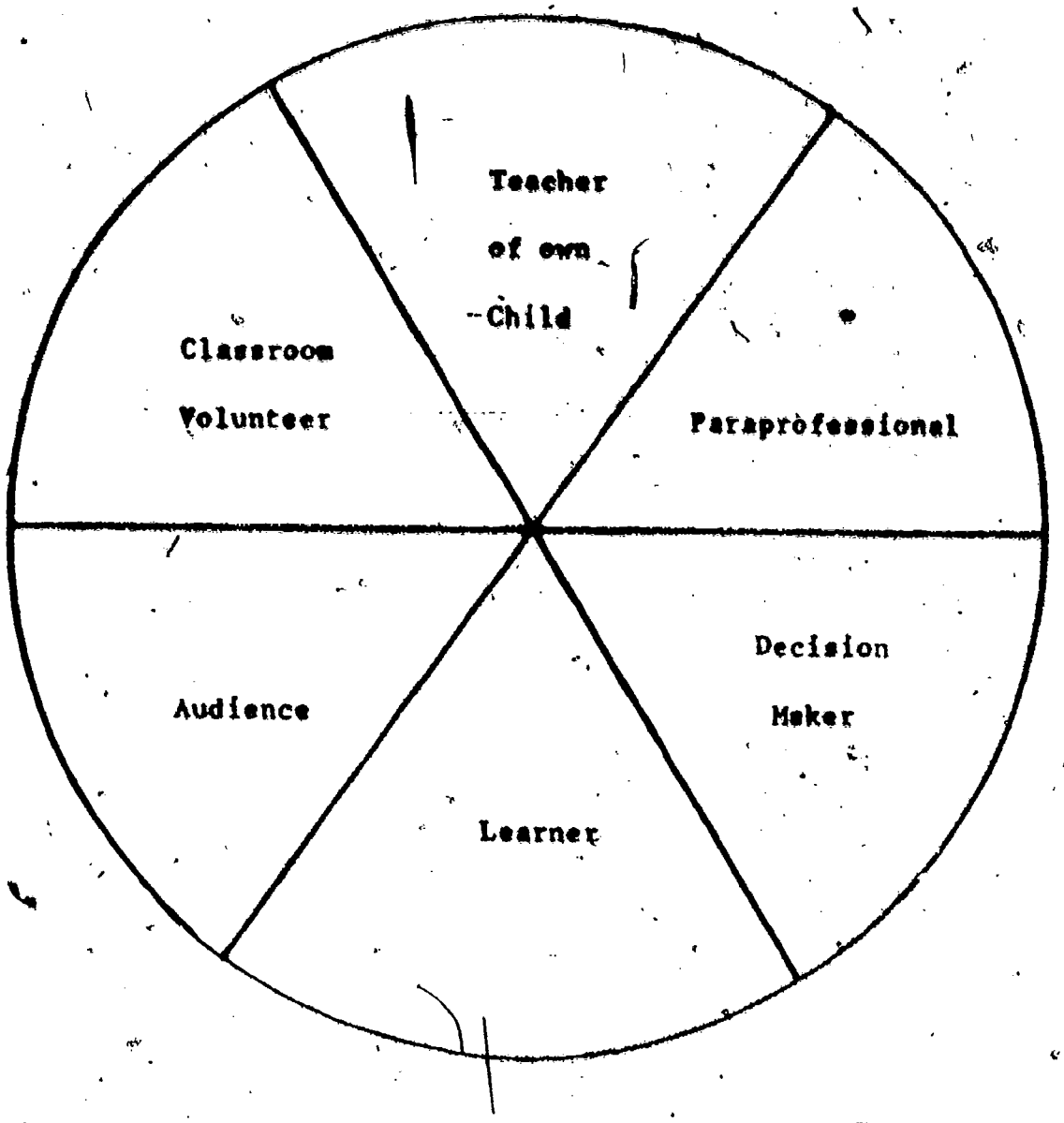
Figure Captions

Figure 1. The system network influencing a child's development.

Figure 2. Parental roles in parent involvement.



Note. From "Macro-Structural Influences on Child Development and the Need for Childhood Social Indicators" by Orville Brim, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1975, 45, 516-524, and "The Experimental Ecology of Education" by Urie Bronfenbrenner, Educational Researcher, 1976, 5(9), 5-15.



Note. From "How Has Follow Through Promoted Parent Involvement?" by I.J. Gordon, P.P. Olmsted, R.I. Rubin, & J.H. True, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Young Children, 1979, 34, 49-53.