

A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT THE PROMISES OF THE THREE INFLUENTIAL HUMANISTICALLY ORIENTED PARENTING SYSTEMS OF FREUD, ADLER AND ROGERS VERSES THE AMERICAN FAMILY SYSTEM.

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This paper reviews Freud's, Adler's, and Rogers' criticism of the religiously based American family system and reviews the scientific evidence which indicates that the three humanist based parenting systems, which are based on these three men's psychological beliefs that have been strongly advocated by mental health professionals, are not scientifically validated and in fact go against scientific research findings. The traditional American family system emphasizes religious values, a presiding structure in families and consequences of action. Humanist thinkers criticize the American family system for its lack of scientific validation and argue that humanists' beliefs and belief systems are validated by the scientific method. Three humanistically oriented alternatives to the American family system are presented: Freudian parenting, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), and Parental Effectiveness Training (PET), each based on the ideas of Freud, Adler, and Rogers, respectively. Each argues that religion is based on myth an illusion, that parents should play a lesser role in child-rearing, that families be more democratic and that cognitive change is preferable to rewards and punishments. All three humanistically-oriented parenting systems claim to be scientifically supported. This paper concludes, however, that research has shown that it is the humanistically-oriented parenting styles that lack scientific validation while the more traditional American family systems enjoys scientific support in the research.

Introduction

Since its conception in 1879 when psychology was formed in academic circles and the mental health profession came into being, mental health professionals have publicly taken a hostile attitude regarding the value of religion in psychology (Bergin, 1980; Larson & Larson, 1991). Research indicates that the social sciences have attracted individuals with little, if any, regard for religious practices (e.g. Gorsuch, 1986; Wuthnow, 1985). Presently, mental health practitioners are much less likely to be supportive of religion and religious values than the majority of Americans. (Bergin, 1991; Galanter, Larson, & Rubenstone, 1991; Schfranske & Malony, 1990)

It is important to recognize that the mental health profession has taken this position in a country that was founded on a few important principles of family life, one of which being that religion is a key ingredient in the successful functioning of the American Family System. In his historical review of the role of and value of science and religion in the psychology profession in the U.S., Cortes (1999) points out that prior to the late 1800's, when attitudes in the mental health profession were forming in America (and the rest of the world), science and religion were not only inherently intertwined, but the success of the American family system in general was based on that ideal. Cortes (1999) argues that when Americans supported a scientific project, such as the creation of learned journal or periodical, they were also indirectly supporting ideas crucial to their religious identity and national purpose (Cotkin, 1992). To oppose science on the basis of its dependence on religion was also to criticize a cluster of ideals that enjoyed broad support in the new republic. As it was, the near absence of dissent signals that the union of science and religion symbolically functioned as an intricate part of American democratic life (Bozeman, 1977; Cotkin, 1992; Hooykaas, 1972; Martin, 1961).

Over one hundred years after the establishment of the mental health profession, Americans continue to hold reli-

gion and its values in high regard. A 1994 Gallup pole indicates that 88% of Americans regard religion as “very important” or “fairly important” in their lives. 68% say they are members of a church or synagogue. However, mental health practitioners have grown stronger in their attempts to dissuade society away from their religious beliefs and religious family practices established by the founding fathers and toward humanistic beliefs and family practices. Currently, three of the most popular parenting approaches advocated by mental health practitioners were created by three Humanist thinkers who did not believe in God nor did they believe in the positive value of religion. They claimed that their parenting principles were more effective than traditional, religiously based parenting principles.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the claims made by humanist thinkers that humanist based parenting systems are more effective and more scientifically validated than traditional religiously based parenting systems. To accomplish this we must examine the claims made by humanistic thinkers concerning parenting principles and compare them to scientific research findings.

The Science-Religion Role in the American Family System

In 1776, the founding fathers of this nation established the United States on basic principles. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights outlined values that provided a basic foundation for the fledgling nation. Many of these same values provided the foundation for the American family system. These values included:

The freedom to practice religion and its value in society, Objective self-determination: the importance of making individual and national decisions based on objective evidence, Consequences of action: the idea that each person was responsible for dealing with any consequences of his or her actions, and Presiding structure in families: parents preside in the family with children apprenticing under the stewardship of their parents until adulthood.

According to constitutional historian David Barton (2002), “The founding fathers understood that Biblical values formed the basis of the republic and that the republic would be destroyed if people’s knowledge of those values should ever be lost” (p. 337). The founders were well aware of history pointing out that the establishment of a state religion frequently led to inappropriate use of power by religious leaders. They openly proclaimed the importance of religion in society and wisely established a country based on religious freedom.

While the founders did not frequently use the word “science,” they understood the importance of making objective decisions (objectivity being a key part of science). They established court systems whose decisions were based on objective evidence. They established the government based on objectivity rather than tradition. As previously mentioned, American society at that time did not see a contradiction between religion and objective science. The idea that science and religion contradict only became popular about the time that the mental health profession first came into being.

The idea that rewards and punishments play an important role in the accountability of individuals and nations for their actions was so strong in the minds of the founders that they referred to the “principle of rewards and punishments.” According to Barton (2002), “The application of this principle was so vital to the establishment of public policy that an acknowledgement of it frequently appeared in early documents” (p. 331).

At that time children did as their parents told them to do. Parents clearly presided over the children in the family and they guided, instructed, punished, and rewarded them until adulthood.

Current humanistic trends in parenting have become hostile to the more traditional religiously based parenting systems. They include:

The idea that religion is based on myth and illusions, The claim the humanism is based on scientific evidence

and validated by the scientific method, An emphasis on cognitive change rather than rewards and punishments, and Individual choice for children where parents play a lesser role in child-rearing and where the family structure is more democratic.

It is now necessary to examine the specific claims made by humanists and any scientific validation that may exist.

Humanist Manifesto – Religion and Science

In 1933, thirty-four self proclaimed progressive thinkers and intellectuals signed and published the Humanist Manifesto, in which they proclaim that they are advocating a belief system about life that was in direct opposition to a belief in religion. In 1973, the Humanist Manifesto II was published, expounding on the points outlined in the first Humanist Manifesto. According to the Humanist Manifest II: “As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer learning God . . . is an unproven and outmoded faith” (p. 13). . . .Any account of nature should pass the test of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religion do not do so” (p. 16). . . .The controlled use of scientific methods...must be extended furthering the solution of human problems” (p. 17). “As non-theists, we begin with humans, not God, nature, not deity” (p. 16). Clearly the humanistic movement proclaims a belief in objective science and professes its hostility toward religion.

Science-Practitioner Split

While many mental health professionals, including humanists, claim to be scientific and use scientifically supported principles, the truth is that they do not. In his book, *House of Cards*, Robyn Dawes (1994) argues that fewer and fewer mental health professionals are incorporating current research in their practice.

“Because the rapid growth and professionalization of my field, psychology, has led it to abandon a commitment is made at the inception of that growth. That commitment was to establish a mental health profession that would be based on research findings, employing as far as possible well-validated techniques and principles. What was never envisioned was that a body of research and established principles would be available to inform practice, but that the practice would ignore that research and those principles. Worse yet, far too much professional practice in psychology has grown and achieved status by espousing principles that are known to be untrue and by employing techniques known to be invalid” (Dawes, p. vii).

This trend is as true in parenting theories as any other. In their research review, Taylor and Biglan (1998) have come to a similar conclusion as Dawes. They report a serious problem in the mental health profession where society is being encouraged to use scientifically unsupported parenting approaches and procedures instead of those that have empirical support. Clearly a problem exists where professionals fail to use refer to scientific evidence in their practice. Moreover, Stark (1984) has argued that the anti-religious sentiments among most social scientists (and humanists) led many to simply ignore research in support of religious parenting. Their anti-religious sentiments, he argues, has led social scientists to believe that religion was an unimportant and disappearing factor in human affairs (as cited in Lewy, 1996). A few years earlier, Donald Campbell, the president of the American Psychological Association, expressed a similar sentiment. In his 1975 presidential address he declared that present-day psychology is “more hostile to the inhibitory message of traditional religious moralizing than is scientifically justified.” (p. 36, as cited in Lewy, 1996). Lewy points out that in light of these attitudes, it is not surprising that research which supports religion has been ignored by social scientists

Humanist Theorists, Theories and Systems

Humanist Mental Health Professionals

The humanist philosophy, to a large extent, is based on the ideas of three prominent psychologists: Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, and Carl Rogers. All three developed humanistic ideals with regard to parenting. They believed that religion was based on myth and illusions and that Humanist principles should be (or are to be) based on science. All three believed that punishment was an ineffective behavioral change technique and potentially very harmful. Although none of them would have used the word permissive to describe their theory, they also believed in permissive families and permissive parenting, – parenting which allows children more discretion and less parental supervision

Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud was the first to proclaim that religion and its premises are based on myths and illusions, evidence of which is clear from his writings. In his paper entitled “The Psychopathology of Everyday Life” written in 1904, Freud described religion as nothing more than psychological processes projected into the world outside oneself. He later described religious practices as obsessive, neurotic acts and equated religious acceptance with intellectual weakness. In 1927, Freud described religion in his book, *The Future of an Illusion*, as being based on myth and illusions and claimed that religion was antithetical to science. He “prophesied” that civilized societies would eventually abandon religion because of scientific advancements.

Freud also criticized the use of punishment to correct behavior. According to Freudian theory, people are not really responsible for their actions, which result from personal conflict between unconscious, instinctual drives. This belief effectively removes the personal responsibility of the action from the actor. Torrey (1992) points out that if an individual is not responsible for his or her criminal behavior, then it is illogical to punish that person. In Freud’s view, a prison’s purpose should not be to punish criminals for their misbehavior. Prisons should exist, he would argue, to provide therapy to disturbed “criminals” who are only victims of their internal conflicts (Torrey, 1992). This might be referred to as a “cognitive change” approach in place of more conventional punishment approaches to behavior change. Freud’s view is that cognitive change would always be the better alternative to punishment in changing behavior.

Freud argued that punishment causes sexual pervasiveness and a disturbed personality. Due to the emphasis Freud placed on the primacy of early childhood experiences, he viewed punishment of children as potentially dangerous (Torrey, 1992). For example, with regard to spanking, Freud believed, “Physical punishment of children was generally discouraged as unnecessary, especially spanking, which Freud had said would lead to sexual pervasiveness (libido might well be forced into collateral roads) since one’s hind side was viewed as an erogenous zone” (Torrey, p. 137).

Freud viewed women as intellectually inferior beings who suffer from penis envy. According to Fisher and Greenberg, “Freud theorized that the female never fully accepts her lack of a penis. He consequently portrayed her as unable to shake a chronic sense of body inferiority, envious of those who do possess a penis, and motivated to find substitutes” (as cited in Torrey, 1992, p. 250). According to Freud, women were intellectually inferior beings: “For Freud, women were not merely handmaidens for men, but anatomically and intellectually inferior beings; as he once put it, women ‘have come into the world for something better than to become wise’” (Torrey, p. 250).

Freud also believed all neurosis to result from excessive masturbation and too many nocturnal emissions. This idea can be found in some of Freud’s earlier writings, around 1935, where he stated:

All that I am asserting is that symptoms of these patients (neurotic) are not mentally determined or removable by analysis, but that they all must be regarded as direct toxic consequences of disturbed sexual chemical processes, [specifically from] excessive masturbation and too numerous nocturnal emissions (as cited in Torrey, 1974, p. 14-15)

Freud thought a great deal of himself and “prophesied” that he would be scientifically known among the Darwins and Copernicus’ of the world. Freud’s parenting ideas were adopted and advocated by Margaret Mead and Benjamin Spock, who later wrote a great deal on Freudian based parenting principles.

Spock’s Freudian Based Parenting

Benjamin Spock adopted Freudian based parenting principles and wrote a substantial amount on the subject. Among the Freudian notions that Spock advocated was the idea that childhood experiences (punishment) are important determinants of an adult’s personality. Similar to Freud’s theory, this idea removes the responsibility of actions from the actor. Spock’s Freudian parenting principles included the ideas that boys sexually desire their mothers, that women suffer from penis envy, that all neurosis is due to excessive masturbation and too many nocturnal emissions and an emphasis on cognitive change rather than consequences of action. In 1946, Spock incorporated Freud’s parenting ideas in his book *Baby and Child Care*. The book sold over 40 million copies, greatly spreading the influence of Freud’s parenting ideas in America

Alfred Adler

Alfred Alder was born near Vienna on February 7, 1870. From 1902 to 1911 Freud and Alder were colleagues until Freud forced Adler to withdraw from Freud’s psychological society. Like Freud, Adler emphasized cognitive change rather than rewards and punishments. He believed discouragement was the cause of all misbehavior in children. According to Adler, each of us strives to succeed as a member of the societal order into which we are born. We are stimulated to bigger and better things by the successes we experience. When we fail to succeed, we become discouraged, and discouragement is what stimulates us to misbehave, to go against the wishes of other members of society.

Adler was also impressed by the concept of democracy and had been touched by the idea of a democratic style of family proposed by Jean-Jacque Rousseau in his book *Emile* (1763). Adler felt that organizing a family with the parents in charge would have the effect of instilling a desire in children to try to be superior to other people. Adler believed the same thing would result in schools if the teacher tried to preside over the children. In his book, *Understanding Human Nature* (1927), Adler stated:

Education in the home therefore commits the gravest of psychological errors in inoculating children with the false idea that they must be superior to everyone else and consider themselves better than all other human beings. Any organization of the family, which is based upon the idea of the leadership of the father, cannot be separated from this thought (p. 219).

Adler clearly emphasized a democratic style of family, which emphasizes the equality of all its members.

Adler’s Humanistic theories formed the basis for a systematized parenting theory, *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* (STEP).

STEP

While Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay initially authored *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* (STEP) in 1973, the development of this parenting technique had its beginnings back at the turn of the century with the ideas of Alfred Adler.

True to the humanist tradition, STEP is firmly against parents using rewards and punishments in the home. According to STEP, rewards and punishments are contrived consequences that are artificial, not natural or logically related to the actions and may result in unhealthy development in children.

Instead, STEP encourages the use of natural and logical consequences to guide a child's actions. A natural consequence is defined as that which happens as a result of one's behavior. If a child is burned when putting her hand on a hot stove, the hand getting burned is a natural consequence of that act. STEP believes that Mother Nature teaches many things to us through natural consequences. STEP's belief in natural consequences actually comes from the writings of philosopher-educator Herbert Spencer who, in 1890, wrote:

It is not manifest that as "ministers and interpreters of Nature" it is the function of parents to see that their children habitually experience the true consequences of their conduct-the natural reactions: neither warding them off, not intensifying them, nor putting artificial consequences in place of them (p. 178).

Alfred Adler's belief that children misbehave because they are discouraged is the basis for STEP's emphasis on encouragement. STEP believes that when children focus on failures, it produces discouragement, so helping children focus on their positive dimensions should keep those children from being discouraged and, therefore, from misbehaving.

STEP also emphasizes the use of reflective listening and I-messages in communication. An I-message is a way of verbally prompting your misbehaving child to change his ways. If David doesn't pay attention to his mother, his mother may say: "David, I get upset when you don't pay attention to me while I talk to you because then I have to explain things to you again"

Finally, STEP argues that healthy psychosocial development in children results when children have good self-esteem. They claim that the abstaining from the use of punishment results in an environment that is more conducive to healthy psychosocial development. Punishment, STEP argues, hurts a child's self-esteem, and, therefore, his psychosocial development. STEP claims that measures of a child's self-esteem correlate with healthy development.

Carl Rogers

Carl Rogers was born on January 8, 1902 in Oak Park, Illinois, to an upper class, religiously-oriented family. In college, Rogers became consumed with the idea of religion. In April of 1922, Rogers attended the World Student Christian Federation's Conference in Peking, China. The Carl Rogers who came back was considerably different from the one who left. Rogers was strongly touched by the Zen tradition of insisting that the individual find answers within himself. Rogers soon removed himself from formal religion. During this time, Rogers became increasingly dissatisfied with traditional therapeutic approaches and began developing an approach where therapists, teachers, and parents were told to use neither consequences nor parental authority on children. Instead, parents should provide a setting where the child feels good about herself. This type of setting would then stimulate the child to act properly. This approach encourages a permissive climate where parental authority is surrendered and children are encouraged to decide for themselves.

In essence, Rogers' approach would visualize the growth and development of an individual like that of a seed. The seed has the natural inclination within itself to grow and develop properly. And what that seed basically needs is a supportive environment of sunlight, nutrients and the light upon which it can draw. The supportive environment does not guide the development of the seed, for the seed has within itself the guidance necessary. The seed needs a supporting environment, not a directing environment. Obviously, punishing a child is antithetical to this approach.

Rogers' ideas formed the basis for Parent Effectiveness Training (PET)

PET

Thomas Gordon based the PET system on the ideas of Carl Rogers. The first and foremost principle underlying PET is that parents should learn to show unconditional acceptance and caring for their children. Parents should drop the age-old philosophy of guiding and directing children, and become a supportive system, which allows children to decide how they will act and what they will do.

According to both Rogers and Gordon, rewards and punishments serve no useful purpose in raising children and it may result in unhealthy development. PET claims that the use of punishment leads children to rebel because they undermine the natural rational tendencies inside every child. PET also encourages parents to give up their power and authority.

PET pushes other Rogerian ideas as well. PET emphasizes development and elaboration of listening skills. While PET frowns on using consequences to modify misbehavior, it proposes the use of I-messages. It encourages being a good model, because when parents are good models, children will change to be like them. If a parent does not like the values of his child, PET advocates a re-examining of the parents' own values to see if he or she is not the one at fault. Finally, PET encourages parents to accept what they cannot change about their children. Like the other Humanist parenting approaches, PET advocates a more "hands-off" parenting approach.

Myth and Illusion

In light of the Humanist criticism that the American family system and its parenting styles are nothing more than myth and illusion, it seems appropriate at this point to define myth and illusion. Webster's dictionary defines a myth as an unproven or false collective belief. An illusion is defined as something that deceives by producing a false or misleading impression of reality.

Humanist Claims are Scientifically Unsupported

Humanist Theorists Did Little Substantive Research

While Freud, Adler, and Rogers wrote a substantial amount, none of them performed substantive research to support their claims and most of their ideas were drawn from theoretical speculation. All three based their views of human nature on case studies and drew drastically different conclusions. The practice of drawing conclusions from case studies becomes even more questionable when we realize that Freud and Adler used many of the same case studies from which to develop their opposing views.

Freud and Spock's Freudian Parenting is Scientifically Unsupported

In 1992, psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey, a well-respected psychological researcher, reported on the findings of his search to identify the scientific evidence upon which Freud's very influential psychological theory was based. He discovered that many before him had set the same goal, beginning with MacFarlane in 1916 and including Murphy, Murphy, & Newcomb (1937), Orlansky (1949), Kline (1972), Eysenck & Wilson (1973), and Eysenck (1985).

The conclusions of all these reviews can aptly be summed up by referring to conclusions drawn by Hilgard's group (1952) and Torrey (1992). Hilgard, Hubie, & Pumpian-Midlin (1952) concluded that psychoanalysis, as a science, is mostly very bad science and that the bulk of the articles in its journals cannot be defended as research publications. Torrey (1992) wrote, "People who have invested hundreds of hours and thousands of dol-

lars in therapies arising from Freudian theory are not pleased to learn that the theory is devoid of any scientific merit” (p. xv).

Freud’s psychological beliefs and theories were based on personal experiences and theoretical speculation rather than empirical research findings. He did not believe his psychological ideas had to be scientifically tested. Once in Freud’s later years, a psychologist wrote Freud to tell him that he had scientific support for Freud’s theory. In reply, Freud testily quipped that his theory needed no validation (Torrey, 1992).

The lack of scientific validation for Freud’s work is illustrated by a chapter on Freudian research that was published over three decades after Freud’s death in 1971, in *The Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavioral Change*. Being the most widely used textbook in the 1970’s to train clinical psychologists, the book had chapters on research supporting the most popular psychoanalytic approaches of the day. Two well-known psychoanalysts wrote the chapter on psychoanalytic research and began the chapter with the following statement: “Rare is the therapist who knows of even two quantitative studies in this (psychoanalytic) area, and still rarer (if any exist at all) is the therapist whose practice has resulted in changed as a result” (Luborsky & Spence, 1971, p. 208).

Eysenck (1985) summarized it best when he stated “His place is not, as he claimed, with Copernicus and Darwin but with Hans Christian Anderson and the Brothers Grimm, tellers of fairy tales” (p. 208)

In addition, Spock’s Freudian based parenting principles are also scientifically unsupported. In 1959, Spock attempted to prove the validity of Freud’s theory. With a \$30,000 foundation grant, he recruited 21 families who were expecting their first child. Each family was given Freudian based counsel at least twice a month with for six years by one of eleven eminent faculty members of the departments of psychiatry and pediatrics at the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, where Spock was working at the time. The general idea was that with such skilled counselors consulting with each family a full hour every other week, they could prevent difficulties, especially in the areas of “breast feeding, thumb-sucking, toilet training, and sibling rivalry” (Torrey, 1992, p. 134). The children were then followed up for at least thirteen years.

To Spock’s disappointment, the results yielded no support whatsoever for Freud’s theory and, not surprisingly, little of the data was ever published (Torrey, 1992). In fact, Torrey points out that “Dr. Spock’s study of 21 mothers in Cleveland was the most complete study done along such lines and it found that mothers with more knowledge of Freudian theory had more difficulties, not fewer difficulties, in raising their children” (p. 222) and “The study, probably the most ambitious ever undertaken to prove that child rearing based on Freudian theory can ameliorate developmental problems had completely negative results” (p. 135).

Despite the lack of empirical support, Spock initially continued to push his Freudian theories. However, eventually even Spock admitted in 1989 “It’s professional people – like me – who have gotten the parents afraid of their children’s hostility, and I don’t know if I can undo it. Pandora’s box has been opened” (as cited in Torrey, 1992, p.142) and in 1968 he admitted that parental problems with child rearing “occur mainly in families with college background or with a definite interest in child psychology,” the same parents who were reading both Freud and Spock (as cited in Torrey, 1992, p. 142). If Freud’s parenting theories are flawed to begin with, it only seems logical that parenting ideas based on his theories would be flawed themselves.

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting is Scientifically Unsupported

Like Spock’s Freudian based parenting system, the Adlerian based Systematic Training for Effective Parenting also lacks empirical support. Most importantly, STEP provides no empirical evidence to support its claims. STEP’s criticism that the use of punishment is detrimental in child-rearing has been effective in swaying people’s attitudes against punishment, although it provided no evidence to support this claim. It also provides no research evidence that natural and logical consequences are more effective than rewards or punishments.

However, evidence exists which suggests that natural and logical consequences are ineffective. Weber et al's 1983 report on the empirical support for natural and logical consequences states there is no empirical evidence to support the idea that natural and logical consequences are effective. In addition, their review reported substantial scientific evidence that rewards and punishment are effective.

Evidence also does not support STEP's claim that it results in healthy psychosocial development. In STEP research, the main measure used to define "healthy psychosocial development" has been a change in children's self-esteem. Using measures of child self-esteem, research has not yet determined if STEP produces healthy psychosocial development in children. Dembo, Sweitzer, and Lauritzen (1985) found one research study showing STEP to be effective in improving children's self-esteem (Hinkle et al., 1980), but Jackson (1982), de Sherbinin (1981), Jackson and Brown (1986), and Ester and Levant (1983) all found evidence showing parental use of STEP does not increase children's self-esteem.

Although some individuals, like Hinkle (1980), have suggested STEP is effective in altering children's self-esteem, self-esteem measures provide a relatively weak attempt at capturing the lofty concept of healthy psychosocial development. In most cases, the ability of administered self-esteem measures to truly "measure" the abstract concept of self-esteem has not yet been substantiated.

Two reviews of parenting systems found little evidence to suggest STEP is effective in positively changing children's behavior (Dembo, Sweitzer, & Lauritzen, 1985; Mooney, 1995). Additionally, several studies have shown STEP and Adlerian parent training do not affect children's behavior (Jackson & Brown, 1986; de Shirbinin, 1981; Campbell & Sutton, 1983; Jackson 1982; Hinkle et al., 1980; McDonough, 1976).

In response to the many behavioral changing techniques advocated by innovative parenting systems like STEP, the Education Testing Services commissioned a task force (Weber, Crawford, Roff, and Robinson, 1983) to rate the specific alternate discipline procedures and techniques for use on children. In their review of 62 strategies employed to manage children, they found no empirical support for behavior changing parenting techniques advocated by STEP. Currently, no substantial body of evidence exists that shows STEP training positively changes children's behavior. However, there is substantial research showing the opposite. Taylor and Biglan (1998) reported, "STEP was disseminated widely before it was evaluated" and is a "popular-press program which has spread widely without empirical support" (p. 52). Clearly, in light of the empirical evidence, those humanists who advocate the STEP parenting system need to re-evaluate their support for its effectiveness.

Parent Effectiveness Training is Scientifically Unsupported

Like STEP, PET itself fails to provide scientific support for its ideas. Gordon argues that his Rogerian ideas are based on new, scientifically proven parenting principles to replace rewards and punishments in parenting which science had proven ineffective. However, as with many of his claims, Gordon did not provide nor cited any specific research findings to support any of his claims.

In contrast, research has provided empirical support that PET is scientifically unsupported. In 1977, Rinn and Markle reviewed all the PET related research up until that time and reported that the research results "do not support the assumption that Parent Effectiveness Training is effective" (p. 106). Rinn and Markle's claim that PET research is poorly done and lacking in scientific rigor mirrors the criticism Carl Rogers and his research received in the 1950's and 1960's. Dembo, Sweitzer, and Lauritzen (1985) reviewed PET research and stated there was "...little evidence that children's behavior is affected consistently by their parents' participation in PET ...[furthermore] none of the researchers using children's self-esteem measures reported any significant changes as a result of their parents' PET participation" (p. 177).

The same psychological task force as cited above commissioned by Educational Testing Service to rate alternative discipline systems and techniques for use on children (Weber, Roff, Crawford, & Robinson, 1983) do not

report any techniques (e.g. active listening, unconditional acceptance, I-messages) advocated by PET as having empirical evidence showing them to be effective. In reference to PET's methods, Weber et al (1983) point out that while unconditional acceptance is a widely accepted strategy, an examination of the literature yields little empirical support for its effectiveness.

In 1977, with regard to the effectiveness of unconditional acceptance, Albert Bandura, a renowned researcher on modeling, makes the following statements about PET type child-rearing practices:

Some child rearing authorities have popularized the view that healthy personality development is built on 'unconditional love.' If this principle were, in fact, unfailingly applied, parents would respond affectionately regardless of how their children behaved whether or not they mistreated others, stole whatever they wanted, disregarded the wishes and rights of theirs, or demanded instant gratification. Unconditional love, were it possible, would make children directionless and quite unlovable (p. 102).

Since Dembo et al.'s (1985) review of the research on PET, no in depth review has come up with conclusions that differ from Dembo's group's review. PET as a complete parenting system has not been scientifically supported as a complete parenting system.

Research Continues to Support Traditional Family Systems as Effective

The Humanist Criticism of Punishment is Scientifically Unwarranted

Humanist parenting systems argue that punishment is detrimental to the psychosocial development in children. However, studies conducted over the past few decades indicate that it is parental permissiveness, a strategy advocated by humanist parenting systems, and not punishment, that leads to delinquency, poor development and anti-social behavior. McCord and McCord (1959) published a study that showed that 1) non-punitive based counseling approaches were ineffective in reducing childhood delinquency, 2) parental use of punishment was not a predictor of juvenile delinquency and 3) permissive parenting and inconsistent use of punishment were predictors of juvenile delinquency. Glueck and Glueck (1950) performed a similar study with the same results: permissive parenting rather than punitive parenting is a stronger predictor of juvenile delinquency. These findings are inconsistent with the humanist claim that punishment leads to delinquency.

While Sears, Maccoby and Levin (1957) are frequently cited as showing that punishment is a predictor of juvenile delinquency, a closer look at their findings indicate that parental permissiveness, rather than punishment, was the strongest predictor of childhood aggression. Schuck (1974) reanalyzed Sears et al.'s (1957) findings and replicated their study and found that permissive parenting, rather than punitive parenting, was more strongly related to childhood aggression. Sears, in 1961, retested his original 1957 subjects and re-reported his findings, saying that parental permissiveness, not punishment was correlated with childhood aggression. All of these studies point to the fact that it is permissiveness, rather than parental use of punishment, that leads to delinquency and anti-social behavior.

Contrary to the humanist position, research also shows that punishment is not detrimental to development. Walters and Grusec (1977) reviewed all punishment research and they conclude, "There is no reason to believe, on the basis of existing experimental evidence, that punishment is necessarily accompanied by undesirable emotional disturbances" (p. 165). In 1983 Axelrod and Apsche reviewed punishment research in their book, *The Effects of Punishment on Human Behavior*. They report, "the relationship between the child and the adult who administers punishment does not deteriorate, but in fact improves, as long as the adult is the source of positive experiences as well as punishment. (Bucher & Lovaas, 1968; Merbaum, 1973; Simmons & Lovaas, 1969)" (p. 290). Finally, in their 1983 report on punishment, Axelrod and Apsche conclude:

The undesirable side effects reviewed here come from a relatively small proportion of all the studies on the therapeutic use of punishment. Even when allowance is made for the probable underreporting of negative side effects due to editorial sanctions, it is interesting to note how few studies in the literature contain observations that would suggest clinical or ethical problems. . . . Most of the undesirable side effects described lasted only for a few minutes or days, were quickly responsive to treatment if they did not disappear spontaneously, and constituted a relatively small and justified price to pay in return for the elimination of much more detrimental behaviors. (p. 300-1)

Research Supports Punishment as Effective in Producing Behavioral Change

Finally, it is important to point out that research, by and large, has supported punishment as effective in producing behavioral change (Glueck and Glueck, 1957; McCord and McCord, 1959; Rinn and Markle, 1977; Weber et al., 1983; Dembo et al., 1985). Moreover, a brief review of college learning texts will show that they continually report reinforcement and punishment to be effective in learning.

Conclusion

Early humanist thinkers argue that any account of nature should pass the test of scientific validation. They also criticize religion as being based on myth and illusion for its lack of scientific support. They were correct in their assertion that humanism and its parenting systems are only viable if based on scientific evidence. However, research and empirical evidence have suggested that humanistic parenting systems do not adhere to their own criterion. Ironically, it seems that while humanists claim that religious parenting styles are based on myth and illusion, their parenting approaches are guilty of being based on myth and illusion themselves.

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