
Inaccuracy in STEP Research Reporting

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In the Canadian Journal of Counselling/Revue Canadienne de Counseling Volume 23:2, Ratzlaff, Friesen, Neufeld and Paddock wrote a research article entitled: "The Impact of the Creative Parenting Program." In their search of the literature — page 167 — the authors state the following:

"A number of other researchers have evaluated the effectiveness of S.T.E.P., an Adlerian based skill training program. Findings from studies by Steed (1971), Berrett (1975), Kierans (1976) and Nordal (1976) reported no evidence of significant change in parental attitudes concerning the parent-child relationship using the S.T.E.P. program."

This statement is *incorrect* and a disservice to the reader. We wish to state the record concerning STEP research, accurately.

STEP — an acronym for *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* (by Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay) — was first published in 1976. The Steed and Berrett studies *predate* the release of STEP! It's not just the dates that are in question for this could simply be a typographical error. Ratzlaff, et. al. reported the dates accurately. These studies have *nothing to do with STEP*.

Steed studied the impact of Adlerian counselling on altering the family's interactional processes. Berrett researched the effects of Adlerian parent training on mother's attitudes, child rearing practices and children's behaviour. The material used was Dreikurs' *Children the Challenge* and Soltz's *Study Group Leader's Manual*: again, this research *did not* involve STEP.

A third study cited by Ratzlaff, et. al. was Nordal's "The Effects of Adlerian Parent Training and Child Counseling on Learner Self-Concept and Behavior of Preschool Children." Though published in the same year as STEP, Nordal's abstract of the study does not mention STEP. The study simply states:

"Parent training for the mothers in the experimental groups was of a five-week duration with one two-hour session weekly. The training groups were both didactic and discussion-oriented, and focused on the understanding of children's behavior from an Adlerian viewpoint (based on Dreikurs' interpretation)." (p. 1469-A)

To date, we have not been able to obtain the Kierans (1976) study which was done for the Ministry of Health, Province of British Columbia.

There is a large body of research on the effectiveness of STEP on various dimensions. Regarding changes in parents' attitudes, the following studies indicated positive, significant changes on a variety of attitudinal factors:

Kozlowski (1979) used the *Parent Attitude Survey* and the *Rokeach Dogmatism Scale, Form E* to study STEP's impact on parental attitudes. The researcher says:

"The research indicated that certain parent attitudes do change in a favorable direction as a result of participation in STEP; they become more aware of the causation of their child's behavior, more trustful of their child, more understanding, and have greater confidence in the parent role. It also was suggested that among parents who volunteer for parent education groups, dogmatic parents may increase more on trust than low dogmatic parents and decrease more on acceptance." (p. 39)

Moline (1979) studied the effects of STEP on abusive parents' attitudes. The researcher found: "Parents' attitudes toward the freedom of their children were found to change significantly from autocratic to more democratic attitudes at the .01 level, as measured by the ATFCS" (p. 40).

Cronauer (1981) found positive changes beyond the .05 level as measured by the *Short-Form Parent Attitude Research Instrument*.

Hammet, Omizo and Loffredo (1981) reported that parents who took part in STEP training scored significantly higher on the *Parent Attitude Survey* in the areas of acceptance and trust than the control group.

Summerlin and Ward (1981) report: "The present study warrants one conclusion: The parents who participated in a STEP program showed differences in attitudes as measured by the PAS, from parents who had not yet participated in a STEP discussion group (control group)" (p. 135). (It is interesting to note that on page 166, Ratzlaff, et. al. discuss this study in relation to "Parent education programs like PET (*Parent Effectiveness Training*) . . .," when it was actually on STEP!)

Nystul (1982) found that mothers who attended a STEP group ". . . were more democratic in their child rearing attitudes, had significantly higher tendency to encourage verbalization, and had a significantly lower tendency to be strict with their children (as compared to the control group)" (p. 66). Nystul used the *Attitude Toward the Freedom of Children Scale* and the revised *Parent Attitude Research Instrument*.

Grosvenor and Steele (1984) stated that parents involved in STEP showed a moderate to large overall improvement in their attitudes when compared to the control group.

SUMMARY

Accuracy in research reporting is important in helping readers evaluate the effectiveness of various approaches. Inaccurate reports create false impressions. The STEP parent education programme is effective, research substantiates this, and the reader should be informed of these facts.

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Inaccuracy in STEP Research Reporting: A Reply

H. C. Ratzlaff, J. D. Friesen, G. Neufeld, G. M. Paddack

Dinkmeyer, McKay and Dinkmeyer (1990) are correct in challenging the accuracy of the quoted paragraph (Ratzlaff, et al, 1989). The lead author, in summarizing the work of Paddack (1987), did misrepresent the review of literature as reported by Paddack. This non-deliberate error was not discovered by any of the co-authors or reviewers of the article. Our sincere apology to the readers of the *Canadian Journal of Counselling* and, in particular, Dinkmeyer, McKay and Dinkmeyer.

Dinkmeyer, et al, are correct in their observation that the S.T.E.P. programme was first published in 1976. Hence, the four references referred to (Steed, 1971; Berrett, 1975; Kierans, 1976; Nordal, 1976) are not studies evaluating the S.T.E.P. programme but rather studies evaluating the effectiveness of Adlerian principles for child rearing.

Secondly, the four researchers cited in that paragraph present a mixed response in terms of parental attitude change when exposed to principles of Adlerian psychology for child-rearing. Two (Berrett; Nordal) found positive attitude change within parents.

We not only apologize for the inaccuracy but commend Dinkmeyer, McKay and Dinkmeyer for adding to our report by themselves reporting on other research that has supported the effectiveness of the S.T.E.P. programme (Kozlowski, 1979; Moline, 1979; Cronauer, 1981; Hammet, Omizo & Loffredo, 1981; Summerlin and Ward, 1981; Nystul, 1982; Grosvenor and Steele, 1984).