

## Introduction

- Parent support for their child’s education has been shown to be important for academic, behavior, and social success in school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).
  - Family process variables within the home have been shown to correlate with a child’s educational success (Epstein, 1995; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993).
  - One process variable, the nature and tone of parental statements, can have a significant impact on their child’s perceptions, attitudes, and subsequent success in school (Bempechat, 1998).
  - An important goal of school professionals is to assist parents to improve their parenting skills (*Goals 2000: Educate American Act*, 1994). However, there is little research to date that demonstrates how schools can assist in helping parents develop patterns of positive communication with their children, particularly involving school-related issues.
- ## Conjoint Behavioral Consultation
- *Conjoint behavioral consultation* (CBC; Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan, 1996) is an indirect, structured model of service-delivery whereby parents, teachers, and support staff are joined to work together to address the academic, social, or behavioral needs of an individual child for whom all parties share some responsibility.
  - CBC is a consultation model emphasizing home-school partnerships and parental involvement (Sheridan et al., 1996). CBC is particularly effective in including the parents as equal members of the consultative model because it attempts to meet the parents at their frame of reference (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).
  - There are several process goals inherent within CBC, including improving relationships between home and school, as well as between a parent and their child (Sheridan et al., 1996).
  - To date, there have been several process related research studies conducted in the area of CBC (Erchul et al., 1999; Sheridan, Meegan, & Eagle, 2002). However, the process variable of improving relationships between a parent and child has not been studied.

## Purpose of Study

- The purpose of this poster presentation is to present the results of an exploratory study which investigated how a parent’s verbal affective statements may change during the CBC process.
- Of particular interest was the amount of critical comments and positive evaluations made by parents (about their child) throughout CBC; and the manner in which they described concerns about their child (i.e., in terms of discrete behaviors or general personal traits).

## Methods

### Participants

- Three CBC case studies involving two 15-year-old, Caucasian males and one 7-year-old, Caucasian female. Consultees were parents and classroom teachers. All referrals concerned non-compliant behavior.

### Instrumentation

- *Consultation Analysis Record* (Bergan & Tombari, 1975)

- The original CAR measures both the content and process variables within consultation interactions. The CAR was revised to include an additional category - critical comment.

### Procedures

- CBC was conducted in the school setting with parents, teacher, and consultant present.
- Forty-minute segments from the Problem Identification (PII), Problem Analysis (PAI) and Treatment Evaluation Interviews (TEI) were transcribed from audiotapes.
- Three trained UNL students coded a total of 3,241 segments across nine interviews. Students coded four randomly assigned transcribed interviews. One of the four interviews was used to evaluate inter-rater agreement.
- Variables coded included (a) critical comments, (b) behavior, (c) individual characteristics, and (d) positive evaluations.
- Descriptive statistics were computed across each case study.

## Results

- There was a decrease in the overall frequency of critical comments made by parents in all three cases that occurred over the course of CBC (See Table 1).
- There was an increase in statements coded as positive evaluation across all three CBC cases.
- The focus of parental statements shifted away from individual characteristics in the PII interviews and increased to behavior-focused statements throughout the PAI and TEI interviews for cases 1 and 3.

Table 1

| % of Total Parent Verbal Statements Case 1 |       |       |      |
|--|-------|-------|------|
| Codes                                      | PII   | PAI   | TEI  |
| Critical Comment Behavior                  | 15.8  | 12.00 | 0.02 |
| Individual Charac.                         | 33.10 | 11.00 | 30.0 |
| Positive Evaluations                       | 30.70 | 4.00  | 0.03 |
|  | 5.50  | 4.00  | 7.00 |

| % of Total Parent Verbal Statements Case 2 |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|
| Codes                                      | PII  | PAI  | TEI  |
| Critical Comment Behavior                  | 12.5 | 7.9  | 6.9  |
| Individual Charac.                         | 30.9 | 24.4 | 33.9 |
| Positive Evaluations                       | 5.3  | 3.2  | 6.9  |
|  | 2.0  | 7.1  | 3.9  |

| % of Total Parent Verbal Statements Case 3 |      |      |  |
|--|------|------|--|
| Codes                                      | PII  | TEI  |  |
| Critical Comment Behavior                  | 15.4 | 4.1  |  |
| Individual Charac.                         | 17.3 | 34.3 |  |
| Positive Evaluations                       | 5.4  | 1.4  |  |
|  | 0    | 16.4 |  |

## Discussion

- CBC has been conceptualized as “a framework for working with families and schools that promotes strengths and capacity building within individuals and systems, rather than focusing on the resolution of problems or remediation of deficiencies” (Sheridan et al., 2004). This strength based focus may assist parents to begin to view their children, as well as their ability to address their children’s needs, in a more positive light.
- One possible explanation for the change in parent affective statements is that CBC may be a tool to help the child’s family develop a “new definition” for the “the problem” by finding effective solutions within a collaborative, team approach.
- This process research is the first study to analyze the affective nature of verbal statements throughout entire CBC cases. This study extends the literature in the area of interpersonal research which has been identified as a high priority to maximize outcomes in consultation (Erchul et al., 1999).

## Limitations and Future Research

- This study was exploratory in that it represents an initial analysis of parental affective statements in CBC interviews.
- The findings are based on a limited sample size. Increasing the sample size would allow for further analysis of the results, including generalizability of the data.
- Parent affective statements were assessed using only audio-taped data. The use of videotapes to correlate coding of a negative, critical comment with nonverbal behavior would improve the assessment of the meaning of the message sent.
- Future research including the use of semi-structured interview formats are necessary to assess perceptions of CBC services by parents involved in the process.