A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE TOUGHLVE ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a qualitative study of the Toughlove organization in general and the Oakland Toughlove group in particular. It begins with the tenets of the organization and is followed by an investigation into the background of its philosophy. A comparison to Adlerian Therapy is explored with resemblances found in the areas of emphasizing logical consequences while working with parents, and differences found in the degree of understanding of causes. Comparisons to codependency theory are investigated revealing close parallels in the enabling facet of that theory. Similarities to self-help groups are looked into with the finding that Toughlove is distinct as a parent support group that is not based on the 12-step programs. Further review of the literature reveals critics who are wary of the organization for its tendency to overreact and not look for causes.

Research was conducted in three ways: 1) a questionnaire was sent to former attendees of the Oakland Toughlove group, 2) a case study was done on four members from this group, 3) telephone interviews were done with various counseling and chemical dependency professionals in the area
who might have knowledge or working contact with the group. Findings in
the first two areas were overwhelmingly favorable towards the local
organization. The professionals, along with those reviewed in the literature,
tended to be critical. It can be concluded that whereas the organization is
not free of problems, some of which could lead to its eventual demise, its
potential for positive impact on individual lives is enormous.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance of the Problem

If one were to picture a utopian society, it would be a simpler, almost agrarian society. Inevitably a sense of cooperativeness and sharing would come to mind. The sharing would include common goals, duties and values. Young and old would work together, eat together, and commune together. Many of these visions emanate either from our actual remembrances or from tales of earlier life in this country.

The industrialization of our society has led to an exodus from small town and farm life with common values to the big city with job specialization and separation of the generations. Families as we knew them are a thing of the past. Not only are single parent families threatening to become the norm, but intact families do not function as they once did. Whether adolescents are relegated to their peers by societal and family structures or whether they choose to give their peers preeminence is moot. The result is a divisiveness in outlook and values between parents and
adolescents. The proliferation of illicit drugs has found fertile ground and can be seen not so much a causative factor as a compounding factor.

Today's families encounter problems in dealing with their youth as a result of the loss of an earlier way of life. This thesis is about one of the solutions they have turned to - the ToughLove organization.

The ToughLove organization is representative of a phenomenon that exemplifies American resourcefulness in dealing with its problems - the self-help group. Self-help groups are patterned after the successes of the fifty-five year old granddaddy of self-help groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, which has the reputation of being enormously successful when fee-based programs often are not.

Statement of the Problem

But what of ToughLove itself? What is its philosophy? How does it compare to similar groups? What are its strengths and weaknesses? More specifically, how has the local (Oakland) Chapter succeeded and how might it function better? The following chapters represent a qualitative description of the organization - its background, its philosophy, and its similarity to other self-help groups. An attempt will be made to determine in what way the organization helps and what might be done to make it more effective.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Toughlove Beliefs

Toughlove is an organization founded in 1978 by Phyllis and David York. The Yorks are both professional psychologists who had tried numerous unsuccessful psychological interventions in dealing with the acting out of their teenagers. Concluding that society's prevailing focus on causes was ineffectual, if not down right distracting, they turned their attention to solutions. The result is the Toughlove organization, which is composed of groups of parents around the country and abroad who meet weekly to discuss solutions for dealing with their recalcitrant children. These children are usually adolescents, but can range in age from eight to 48. They share the common denominator of "an underlying selfishness and similar ways of demonstrating it" (York and Wachtel, 1982, p. 10). Drugs and alcohol may or may not be a factor. The Toughlove organization is founded on ten major beliefs according to the book, Toughlove (York, York, and Wachtel, 1982), which are described in the following pages.
The first of the ten beliefs states that "Family problems have roots and supports in our culture" (p 24). To begin with, our culture sends an ambivalent message regarding drugs and alcohol. Television coverage is pervasive and conveys an acceptance of more liberal sexual practices and drug and alcohol use than was common earlier. Modern technology has produced new kinds of drugs and new birth control methods which have resulted in pronounced generational differences. The emergence of psychology as a way of settling problems has led to a focus on causes of problems, and as a result, the "poor" teenager is considered a victim. Additionally, theories of psychology are rooted in the past and do not reflect the myriad changes in today's society.

The second of the beliefs is "parents are people too." This belief addresses the tendency of parents to strive for perfection and the effect such striving has on them. "Trying to be perfect makes us crazy. Accepting our own imperfections and doing the best that we can under existing circumstances keep us sane (p. 35). Forgiving of oneself is the crux of this belief. Society is full of "shoulds" and "oughts" that plague conscientious parents. Their sense of responsibility far outshadows that of their teenagers - the actual perpetrators.
Third among the beliefs is the premise that "parents' material and emotional resources are limited." Assuming unlimited resources from one's parent encourages destructive behavior in the child and robs him of an opportunity to learn responsibility. For our children to learn to appreciate us, we must appreciate ourselves. The imbalance that has been created in this materialistic society needs to be corrected.

The fourth of the Toughlove beliefs states that "parents and kids are not equal." Enlightened parents have been taught that the principles of fairness and reasonableness are conveyed by examples. "But for the kind of young people we're dealing with, reasonableness is a one-way street in their favor" (p. 50). The Toughlove position states that fairness, trust and reasonableness are not inalienable rights, but must be earned. We must abandon the old double standard which maintains that "adults are responsible for themselves, but children are not" (p. 51).

Fifth among the beliefs is the principle that "blaming keeps parents helpless." Blame is the stance of our culture. It can be creative and fun. Looking for causes keeps parents mired in the illusion that they are doing something productive when in actual fact, it is a "surefire way not to solve the problem" (p. 56). Blame is implicit in most methods of therapy, when instead the test of effective therapy should be solution of the problem. "As
long as parents are accepting the rap for their offsprings' behavior, their children can't change. Whether there are reasons for destructive behavior or not, each young person makes choices and he or she has the power to choose behaviors that will make life go better" (p. 60).

There is an erroneous assumption in the psychiatric community that Toughlove parents have not given their children enough structures or demands. Indictments of this sort perpetuate the destructive Blame Game which consists of a cycle of persecuters, victims and rescuers. Rather than being labeled as irresponsible in the rearing of their children, "irresponsive" would be a more apt title. That is, they have not responded appropriately to their child's behavior.

Number six in the beliefs is "kids' behavior affects parents, and parents' behavior affects kids." Society looks at the child and sees him as a product of his parents' rearing practice. What is seldom considered is the other side of the coin - the child's behavior can have devastating effects on the parents. Before anything can be done, parents "need help in reducing their anxiety about their kids." A third party can often be helpful by telling parents that they do not have to accept their child's behavior. Once they begin to deal with the behavior in an effective way, their own extreme behavior diminishes.
"Taking a stand precipitates a crisis" is the seventh of the Toughlove beliefs. Most often parents of recalcitrant teens have relied on the psychological process. This process, however, depends on a system of openness and cooperativeness which provides manipulative people with the opportunity to continue their destructive behavior while appearing to make changes. Counseling is a solution for dealing with psychological problems. What is needed in the Toughlove community is a cultural solution.

The Toughlove theory advocates not only capitalizing on periods of crises, but taking it a step further to precipitate a crisis. Recognizing the difficulty of this, the support group helps the parent set this in motion. For example, parents are helped to pinpoint increasing tendencies, such as the increasing number of curfew violations in the last month. The group helps them take a stand and stick to it. The essence of this belief lies in the fact that taking a stand to precipitate a crisis gives power to the parents and takes away the power of the child to generate a crisis.

"From controlled crisis comes positive change" is the eighth of the Toughlove beliefs. Key to this concept is the Chinese symbol for the word, crisis, which portrays danger on one side and opportunity on the other. As a rule, parents are only able to see the danger, and it is this fear that "empowers the youth to manipulate" (p. 87). Recognizing that taking a stand
is harder for the parent than the child, the Toughlove parent is encouraged to set a bottom line for behavior, however weak it may be. The idea is to give the child the crisis instead of hanging on to it.

The ninth belief states that "families need to give and get support in their own community in order to change." Change in behavior of the parent is what is necessary, and this can only be sustained with support. For Toughlove, support means more than words of wisdom and a pat on the back. It is selective, knowledgeable, and often confrontive. "Supportive confrontation" is what is necessary. It requires risking not being liked. To appreciate fully the power of support, one need only consider the influence of the teen peer group support.

The tenth and final Toughlove belief is "the essence of family life is cooperation, not togetherness." Lack of cooperation was something never expected by Toughlove parents because "we were not prepared in all our life experiences for the kind of defiance and disdain for others that prevailed in the newly developing youth culture" (p. 103). The Toughlove answer is to withdraw the family resources which have allowed the child to exploit his parents. "We must value ourselves as much as we value our children" (p. 103). The values of these youth are distorted because their interests and values are outside the family. The Toughlove parents must make them aware
of their dependency by withdrawing support, while at the same time, asking more of them.

According to Toughlove philosophy, "cooperation is not based on being or feeling loved, but on a mutual sense of responsibility" (p. 106). The parent must insist on this responsibility by ceasing explanations and commencing with straightforward demands for his cooperation.

After reviewing the theory behind Toughlove, it is instructive to examine the Toughlove process. This process takes into account the fact that "parents who have been entangled in such unhealthy relationships with their children need someone else's explicit directions and hand-holding to help them begin anew" (p. 117). While most parents hate this dependent phase initially, it is important that they recognize it is only a temporary condition and that it takes a strong person to ask for help. The Toughlove people help the parents make a small step and ensure that it is something the parent really wants to do. Small steps can sometimes lead to dramatic results, but ordinarily the process takes longer. These small steps can be viewed as practice because it is realistic to expect failures in the beginning. "The ultimate goal of Toughlove is to encourage the parents to move beyond independence to interdependence: giving and getting" (p. 121).
Once that is accomplished there is a further development phase which is community involvement. Toughlove can be used as a fount of resources by providing ways of getting what is necessary from schools, probation officers, and rehabilitation centers. It can also give out information about drug testing, job training, and the like.

The mechanics of a Toughlove meeting are addressed in the *York (Toughlove)* book. Formation of a new group may be instituted by a professional but it is important that a parent soon take over to run the meetings. The recommended structure of a Toughlove meeting is as follows:

1) small group - checking in and reporting on the week's happenings, 30 minutes; 2) large group - asking for success stories (with appropriate applause) and reviewing information or listening to a guest speaker - 40 minutes; 3) small group - setting a new bottom line and developing support for it - 40 minutes; 4) large group - reporting on new bottom lines and seeking support that might not have been available in the smaller group - 20 minutes. Coordinators and leadership roles should be rotated. Other functions of these groups are to go into the community and to reach the media.

According to Toughlove, the parents with a difficult child must ultimately accept the fact that most acting out kids are abusing, and this
means they will put aside reason and logic. If their reality is not distorted by drugs or alcohol, it is distorted by their peers. Reasoning with them will not help. The parents need to recognize that their doubts and fears are more painful than the reality, and a confrontation is necessary. "Toughlove means loving your child enough to do what has to be done, no matter how hard you find the task" (p. 137).
The Toughlove Parents Manual is, of course, a distillation of the Yorks' Toughlove book. Nevertheless, there are certain key differences in terms of emphasis and format. These differences are highlighted in the following pages. Importantly, since the book is written for a wide audience, it is replete with lists and short descriptions that can be easily grasped. Long descriptive examples found in the "main" book are missing here, and explanation of theory is kept to a minimum.

The first chapter is entitled "Facing the Crisis" and opens with a list of crisis situations that might indicate a need for the Toughlove process, e.g., "feels helpless to deal with your teenage child's behaviors" (p. 2). There is a list of feelings brought about by the crisis, such as worried, in despair, etc. And there is a compilation of likely thoughts such as, "I can't cope; I don't know what to do" (p. 7). It is followed by several lists of possible responses such as blaming, attempts to change things, and the like. The chapter goes on to illustrate what the manual can show, what it cannot do, what questions it answers and how to determine when the crisis is building. Importantly, a complete check list covering the areas of school, home and legal situations is provided to help one assess when a crisis is building. A
certain number of items checked indicates the presence of a crisis and therefore a need for the Toughlove process.

The second chapter, "Making Changes" begins by describing the process of change that one encounters in the course of the Toughlove journey. Denial and deep feelings are two expected phases. Parents are cautioned not to avoid getting angry because that is one way of remaining in the denial phase. Acceptance of one's feelings is important as is the sharing of them. This leads to the dependence stage, followed by independence, and then interdependence, "the real goal of the Toughlove support group" (p. 23). A discussion follows of the responsibility of the parents and then of the child. Recognition that a parent has rights that must be respected is emphasized. Also the tactic of the necessity for changing the pattern of response is highlighted.

"Taking a Stand" is the subject of the next chapter, and it consists of more explicit suggestions than were present in the original book. It begins by emphasizing that "taking a stand is the essence of Toughlove, and it is very difficult to do because it goes against what society's experts have been telling us to do" (p. 28). There are suggestions for withdrawing support in the form of money, problem solving abilities, affection, nagging behavior, and the like. Keeping a log of behavior is important in the process of taking
a stand. Examples of "stands" include not paying the child's fines, not fighting with the neighbors over his problems, not tolerating school failure, etc. Brainstorming with the support group is recommended for arriving at a bottom line. Examples of how to follow through with a bottom line are given. Dealing with drugs and alcohol is discussed even though it is acknowledged that "it is impossible to separate out what behaviors are drug related and what behaviors are not" (p.33). Parents are admonished to "give back the crisis" (p. 35) to the teenager so he can accept the consequences for his own behavior. To avoid weakening of resolve, suggestions are given in the form of not responding to the child's ridiculing or yelling, not paying attention to tears and anger, and ignoring one's own feelings of remorse and love. The concepts of bottom line and taking a stand are illustrated over and over with many explanations and examples.

Finding support is the next topic, and there is a list of 17 examples of what support is. In bold print are such statements as "not being able to ask for support is a real sign of weakness" (p. 40) and "But come out of your shell! Only nuts are in shells" (p. 41), or "Come out of your closet. You've been hung-up long enough" (p. 42). All the possible resources available through support group community outreach are listed. Guidelines for running a meeting are given and several "sample" meetings are illustrated.
"Think About This" is the theory section of the manual. Curiously it does not originally follow the theory in the "main" book either in content or format. Adolescence is first discussed, and it is emphasized that "we cannot protect them from making the mistakes we made in our own lives. Our job is to let our kids go" (p. 59). In terms of power, Toughlove favors the ability to control one's own life over the ability to control others and make them what we want. "When you feel powerless you tend to overpower others" (p. 60). Families are mentioned in terms of how changing society has affected them. The subtitle "After all, parents are only people" (p. 62) is illustrated with about 30 examples such as "Sometimes I am nurturing and sometimes I am not" (p. 62).

Cooperation is discussed along with the admonition that seeking togetherness at a time of crisis is a serious mistake. Demanding cooperation is the important idea here, and togetherness may eventually follow.

"Overcoming Obstacles" is the next section, and it is vividly illustrated by examples. First among them is facing one's illusions based on past hopes about one's child. A list of myths is given in one column contrasted by the reality in the adjoining column, e.g., "Parents shape their children" vs. "Children are independent creatures who create their own lives"
(p. 69). A list of examples of fears is given, such as, "If I don't pay these fines he'll go to jail, or worse still, I'll go to jail:" (p. 70). Guilt and excuses are listed followed by the admonition that they keep one soft and powerless. "Shoulds and Oughts" are listed to illustrate how letting them influence us can prevent us from recognizing what is really happening. Blame is discussed at great length with examples of blame and a sample scenario of the Blame Game.

"Meeting the Challenges" is a chapter devoted to obstacles one might expect to encounter. To begin with, the ways the teen will test the stands are enumerated. Expected repercussions from school happenings are forecast. Suggestions for handling these eventualities are given with the vital message being "How your young adult chooses to handle his/her crisis with the school is now completely his/her business" (p. 82). Teenage behavior may actually worsen as a result of all this, but the point is made that the support group must enter in here and handle the dealings with the youth. The parent is warned not to charge to the rescue at this point and destroy all the good gains.

A special chapter is devoted to "Using the Law." The Toughlove message is that the law should be used to the advantage of the troublesome child. Advantage in Toughlove terms, however, means having the child face
the consequence of the law. It is important that the parent not assume a rescuer role in this instance. The concept of emancipation, which means the young adult accepts the legal and financial responsibility for him/herself, is suggested as a possible remedy in some Toughlove situations.

The manual concludes with a summary of the need for Toughlove and the way the process works. It tells the parents how far they have come and ends with stating "Congratulations and welcome to the beginning" (p. 97)!

The manual is an excellent example of a document written for many levels of education. It conveys its message in lucid terms but gives enough entertaining examples that it maintains interest value for the more educated reader.
Philosophical Background

One can only speculate as to the source of the Toughlove philosophy. Books written by the founders do not identify a source as such. Adlerian Therapy, which is intended to be a brief therapy and stresses the inherent compatibility between emotion and reason, seems close enough in philosophy to warrant examining.

Joyce Lohman (198) has done a comparison between Adlerian Therapy and Toughlove and finds more similarities than differences. According to her, Adlerians have been conducting programs to assist parents in child rearing for 50 years and only recently have zeroed in on adolescents. Even so they do not focus on "acting out" teens as opposed to the Toughlove organization, which specializes on teens. Additionally, there is an overall difference in emphasis: while Adlerians emphasize encouragement, child rearing in general, and development of social interest, Toughlove emphasizes educating and supporting parents, and specifically "helping parents cope with disruptive teenage behavior" (p. 225). She sees Toughlove as just an extension of the Adlerian approach but one that is geared to special problems. They are different in terms of "the degree of severity of consequences, the function of community support, the nature of emotional detachment, and the importance of family history" (p. 119). Overlapping
areas are in "ideas about responsibility, cooperation, social interest, staying out of power struggles and the important influence of the total environment on individual behavior" (p. 229).

Lohman does a step-by-step analysis of the beliefs they hold in common and points out where they differ. 1) They both believe in letting children experience the logical consequence of their behavior, but Toughlove differs in terms of the degree of toughness and reasonableness. 2) They both believe in cooperation within the family system, but Adlerians emphasize fun and responsibility, and Toughlove emphasizes cooperation according to ability. 3) They agree that community plays a role in teen problems, but Adlerians stress an almost symbiotic relationship, or give and take, and Toughlove sees the community for its usefulness in terms of limits and supports. 4) Both philosophies maintain that struggles for control should be relegated to control of parental behavior. Power struggles will only lead to defeat. For Toughlove, bottom lines describe parental behavior. 5) Both groups adopt a "no blame" stance. For Adlerians, meaning for an individual emanates from his individual sense of logic or his world view, and a child's life style is a reflection of this. Toughlove agrees, and further maintains that blame results in a perpetuation of the status quo. 6) Emotional non-involvement is key to both systems. Adlerians see this as isolating or
withdrawing from power struggles and angry encounters to prevent escalation or being drawn into the fray. Toughlove sees non-involvement as "letting go" and a crucial element for teens to experience their own consequences. 7) Both groups rely on non-professional leadership. 8) They agree that "Youths decide for themselves how to belong or not belong to their families" (p. 231). According to the Adlerians, the goals of a youth's misbehavior is one or more of the following: attention, power, revenge, or inadequacy. It is therefore incumbent on the parent to alter his behavior so as not to accommodate the behavior or "fulfill the mistaken goal of the child" (p. 231). Toughlove acknowledges the child's discouragement, but focuses on setting limits. It sees their misbehaviors as stemming from a social base but sees the solutions in terms of a different kind of social base. 9) Mutual support is important to both groups. For Adlerians this is largely verbal. For Toughlove this extends into the far reaches of the child's life, e.g., schools, courts, caretaking.

In summary, Lohman sees the crucial difference between the approaches of the two groups in two main areas. The first is in terms of child rearing ideas. Adlerian Therapy is a child-rearing approach with a focus on encouragement, logical consequences, and development of a social interest. Toughlove is basically an approach for dealing with troublesome
teens with a focus of getting parents to set limits so they can cope. Secondly, background has different significance for the two groups. Understanding the family constellation and child's world view is important in the Adlerian philosophy. For Toughlove, understanding behavior takes a decided backseat to change in behavior. In this regard it resembles the 12-step programs' way of dealing with addiction (Lohman, 1986).

Although the two philosophies are parallel to a large degree, without direct confirmation, it is difficult to ascertain the degree of influence Adlerian therapy has had on Toughlove. Often theories or movements develop concurrently as a reflection of the times, and correlation does not imply causation. A more likely influence on the Toughlove philosophy would seem to come from the 12-step programs, which are more similar to the workings of the Toughlove organization. A key concept in the 12-step programs that seems to have the most relevance to the Toughlove thinking is the concept of "codependence." It is a concept that apparently has not yet been embraced by academia, judging from the lack of scholarly information. However, "pop" psychology and recovery literature abound with references to it. Melody Beattie (1987) confirms this phenomenon with her observation that although the word is not in the dictionary and her computer tags it as misspelled, millions of people use the terms. The expression has many uses
and meanings: it can refer to the alcoholic himself, the caretaker of the alcoholic, rescuers, enablers. Beattie maintains that all the definitions are correct: "Some describe the cause, some the effects, some the overall condition, some the symptoms, some the patterns, and some the pain" (p. 31). To her it has a fuzzy definition because it is a fuzzy condition. She defines a codependent person as "...one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior" (p. 31). Another definition illustrates the confusion about the concept because it bears little resemblance to the foregoing one:

An emotional psychological and behavioral condition that develops as a result of an individual's prolonged exposure to, and practice of, a set of oppressive rules - rules which prevent the open expression of feeling as well as the direct discussion of personal and interpersonal problems (Subby, 1988, p. 26).

Since this concept is so broad, it is not surprising that its application would be broad. Donald Brennan (1991) quotes therapist Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse as saying that as many as 96% of Americans could be affected. He takes the concept a step further and attributes the recent war with Iraq as resulting from global codependent qualities. That is, the U.S. operates under a system of denial about the real problems that affect our
society, e.g. poverty, racism, crime, education, etc., and in the war with Iraq, created a hero vs. scapegoat diversionary tactic in the classic codependency vein.

With a concept this vast, it is necessary to winnow out parts of it that bear close resemblance to Toughlove. Angelyn Miller (1988) refines the concept in her study of enabling, a codependent quality. She agrees the existence of enabling is extremely widespread and maintains that it occurs in many situations outside the typical alcoholic family to include all those "...whose principal way of relating to others is to assume their responsibilities" (p.3). She rue the fact that most everything written about the phenomenon relates it to substance abuse, and feels that many not in this category could benefit from the 12 step programs. Although not specifically 12-step, Toughlove would seem to meet that need for adolescent troubles.

In Friel and Subby's (1988) list of 11 characteristics of codependency, only one seems to apply directly to Toughlove philosophy - that of feeling overly responsible for other peoples' behavior. In their list of the unwritten rules of the codependent family, three especially are reminiscent of Toughlove thinking. One, that family members are admonished not to be selfish, when reversed, approximates Toughlove's principle that "parents are people too." Another unwritten rule, that family members should not rock
the boat, resembles the reverse of Toughlove's recommendation that it is
beneficial to precipitate a crisis. A third makes note of the tendency of
family members not to talk about problems. Toughlove's practice of giving
and getting support by talking about problems answers this rule. (Friel and
Subby, 1988).

Beattie's (1987) solution to codependency, detachment, strikes a
chord of familiarity:

Detachment is based on the premises that each person is responsible
for himself...If people have created some disasters for themselves,
we allow them to face their own proverbial music...We give them the
freedom to be responsible and to grow (p. 56).

She quotes a "tidbit" from Al-Anon: "You didn't cause it; you can't control it;
and you can't cure it" (p.72)..."The only person you can now or ever change is
yourself. The only person that it is your business to control is yourself."
(p.75). These tenets bear a very close resemblances to Toughlove philosophy.

To Subby (1988), the emerging concept of codependency might provide
the bridge that would allow the different fields such as family therapy,
mental health and chemical dependency to come together. Unfortunately,
however, according to Whitfield (1988), at least 80% of the professionals
are untrained in the concept largely because their professors are not only
untrained, but *untreated* as well. With that in mind, it is only logical that self-help groups would take up the slack. The next few pages show how Toughlove relates to the various self-help groups.
Toughlove and Self-Help Groups

Just as the philosophy of Toughlove arose as a response to current needs, so its format can be seen as an adjustment to a problem that cannot be handled in the traditional ways. A study done in 1983 cites a predicted manpower shortage of 46% in child psychiatry by 1990, more than any other specialty (Galanter, Gleaton, Marcus and McMillen, 1983). This study claims there has been a huge national movement in self-help groups to combat the surge of drug problems in youth. Muldoon and Crowley (1986) list the various types of parent support groups as emphasizing one of the following: 1) mutual support, 2) establishment of clear limits for teens, 3) information and education, and 4) political action.

Yoder (1990), in her Recovery Resource Book, specifically names the groups that can be used as resources for parents. Toughlove is among them and differs from the others because it is not based on the 12-step program. Also listed are Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, and Families Anonymous (FA).

Little is written in these sources about Toughlove specifically. More information can be discerned from examining those groups on which there is some elaboration. For instance Yoder (1990) describes FA as focusing on "self understanding rather than on changing the family member involved in unacceptable behavior" (p. 89). In contrast Toughlove recommends not
dwelling on understanding. Whereas it does agree that focusing on change in
the offending family member is non-productive if not counter-productive, it
does espouse change in parent behavior, e.g. setting limits and bottom lines.
This, if accomplished, can lead to behavioral change in the troublesome
youth. FA is described by Muldoon and Crowley (1986) as a group that
attempts to get parents to reduce their overprotective behavior and their
sense of responsibility for their troublesome adolescents. Their emphasis is
on the concept of detachment, an Al-Anon focus. However, the necessity for
an entity separate from Al-Anon is stressed because they view detachment
as one thing in terms of a spouse, but another in terms of one's child where
the degree of responsibility is quite different. The philosophy sounds
similar to Toughlove's philosophy of "letting go," and it does not seem
Toughlove would disagree with this, yet this difference of responsibility for
one's child is not emphasized in their philosophy. Detachment can be seen as
a way of countering the co-dependent or enabling proclivities of family
members which is in agreement with Toughlove's stance that youth need to
experience the consequence of their actions.

Philip Gifford (1989) expounds at length about the preferability of
Narcotics Anonymous (NA) over AA in the recovery of teens. Since neither of
these groups is for parents, it hardly seems salient in a discussion of
Toughlove. It is reviewed here because it illustrates the range of disparity in the approach of two similar-appearing self-help groups. Although NA emanated from AA, it evolved as a result of the inability of AA to deal effectively with addictions to substances other than alcohol. There are many other substantive differences. AA developed during the Depression years in a vastly different time. NA began in 1953, but did not develop its Basic Text until 1982, and consequently its philosophy reflects the thinking about addiction that came out of the 70’s and early 80’s. Most importantly it incorporates the latest trends in psychotherapy that emphasize the expression of one’s emotions. According to Gifford, AA is intellectually and slogan oriented, whereas NA welcomes the expression of gut-level feelings and urges the avoidance of cliches. This is a crucial distinction for an adolescent whose emotional growth has been stunted because of addiction. Furthermore, since NA focuses more on the concept of addiction, rather than a particular substance, it is more relevant to adolescents who typically change “their mood by any means whatsoever” (p. 271).

Where might Toughlove’s place be among the parent self-help groups? In the book, Childhood and Chemical Abuse: Prevention and Intervention, Toughlove is seen less in the prevention stage as in the intervention stage: “Parents could join one of the local parents groups for the prevention of drug
abuse in their local community. 'Toughlove' strategies developed for adolescents who are already abusing and who are noncompliant can be tried as a last resort" (Griswold-Ezekoye, Kumpfer, Bukoski, 1986, p. 82). Others view it as important resource in the treatment and recovery stage of chemically addicted teens. To Edby Gody and Coar (1984), parent involvement in this stage is vital. Just as NA or AA is crucial to the youth's recovery, "...a similar system is necessary for the recovery of the family. Family participation in programs such as Al-Anon, Toughlove and Families Anonymous should be mandatory while the patient is in treatment and should be encouraged even after the patient leaves the program" (Edby Gody and Coar, 1984, p. 79).

Based on what is known of the parent self-help groups discussed thusfar, it appears that Toughlove is more all-encompassing than the others. For instance, with respect to Muldoon and Crowley's distinctions, it seems to fulfill the third emphasis, establishment of clear limits for teens, more specifically than any of the others. "Mutual support" is most definitely an attribute of the Toughlove organization. Additionally "information and education" is among Toughlove's purposes, although this most often is done on a group-wide basis rather than community wide. Only "political action"
does not describe Toughlove, but neither does it pertain to the other groups specified here.

**Critical Analysis of Toughlove**

What do critics have to say about the Toughlove organization? Lee (1985) offers the following examples of outrageous behavior as evidence of the need for Toughlove solutions: an 11-year old girl who threw her mother through a plate glass window, a 13-year old boy who broke his mother's arm, two teen age boys who held their mother captive. Berman (1983) credits the organization for giving a mother the support needed to get her resistant daughter into rehabilitation. However, she quotes Judith Lang as cautioning that Toughlove could cause parents to act too quickly and too strongly with a result in alienation, and other health care professionals as fearing that bottom lines could result in "prostitution, criminal acts - or worse" (p. 70).

A more recent article in *California* (Waters, 1991) credits Toughlove with having more than 3,700 chapters worldwide and quotes Toughlove advocates who value it for giving parents a shoulder to cry on and a little more spine. Among its detractors, however, is Dr. Mark DeAntonio, director of the adolescent-inpatient unit at UCLA'S Neuropsychiatric Institute and Hospital, who claims the organization is a very "cookbook, simplistic" way to handle problems, and actual damage can result. The article recounts the
story of a girl, who after numerous in- and out-patient rehabilitation attempts, was kidnapped by her parents and sent to a facility in Oklahoma. Eventually she elected to become emancipated from her parents and was able to function well living away from them (Waters, 1991).

Toughlove's involvement was blamed in several ways in this instance. Most importantly Toughlove had a part in the actual kidnapping. Additionally, it is Toughlove's stance that parents do not search for blame because it deflects attention from where they maintain it belongs - in the solution. According to the article, it was that the parents' extreme control issues which accounted for her out-of-control rages and suicide attempts. The parents blamed her use of alcohol, which, as it turned out, was either minimal or not the main cause of her problem behavior. The implication was that since Toughlove does not look for causes, they accepted the parents' analysis of the problem and supported the parents in the wrong actions for the child.

There is another subtle area that is a cause for concern. The current policy of insurance companies to cover drug abuse treatment only in in-patient facilities has led to a proliferation of hospital conversions to rehabilitation facilities. The burgeoning teen drug abuse problem and economic necessity have resulted in competition among these facilities.
Often the facilities providing the treatment also provide the assessment or intervention. Interestingly the Toughlove chapter cited in the above instance was holding adolescent meetings concurrently with their parent meetings. The counselors in the teen meeting were from the adjacent profit-making adolescent drug rehabilitation facility. While they are to be commended for efforts to reach teens as well as the parents, it is possible that the counselors might not be as disinterested as they should be.

A dramatization of the Toughlove process might be instructive in exploring the nature of the topic. The made-for-T.V. movie, Toughlove, (Fries Entertainment, inc., 1985), does a creditable job of dramatizing the basic tenets of the organization. Briefly the story in the movie deals with the efforts of a family to handle their son's out-of-control behavior, their marital and personal difficulties surrounding it, their initial resistance to the Toughlove organization, and their eventual solution of the problem through the Toughlove process.

It has been asserted that Toughlove does damage to some kids through their stringent methods. The roughness on the part of the Toughlove strangers helping after the boy's return from incarceration was reminiscent of the type of strong-arm tactics referred to in the article on Toughlove in California. It did not seem excessive or inappropriate in this context.
However, it raises the question: where does one draw the line? How easy is it for these methods to get out of hand?

Hollihan and Riley (1987) investigated the Toughlove method in terms of the power of rhetoric. They relate it to the “narrative paradigm” of Walter R. Fisher that: “human beings were essentially storytelling creatures and ... the dominant mode of human decision making involved the sharing of these stories. Such stories contained ‘good reasons’ which provided insight into the proper courses of human action” (p. 15). The paradigm presumes the fact that human beings are capable of rationality. Hollihan and Riley assert that the Toughlove method works for the following reasons: 1) “Human communication works by identification...” (p. 23); 2) the Toughlove stories contain “narrative fidelity,” i.e., the stories ring true and resonate with their own feelings, and 3) the stories are compelling because they absolve the members of guilt and provide them with a course of action. Nonetheless they caution that the method is not without risk. They cite the example of John Hinckley’s assassination attempt on then President Reagan. The Hinckley family was following the Toughlove philosophy by ejecting their son from the house just prior to the attempt. They later launched a speaking tour to warn of the dangers of this approach. In the writers’ view, there is a tendency of the organization to see only drugs and bad crowds as
causes for behavior and to overlook emotional or psychological disturbances. Accordingly the same remedy is applied regardless of cause.

What would the Yorks say in defense of some of the Toughlove critics? They are quick to point out that their no-nonsense approach is not recommended as a method for raising children but as problem solving techniques for dealing with troublesome adolescents (Berman, 1983). In their view, "Therapy and counseling are fine for problems that can be solved by talking. But therapy doesn't provide crisis intervention" (p. 69). Therapists want to talk about the adolescent's childhood, but Toughlove is there for the parent 24 hours a day (Lee, 1984).

In addition to the foregoing, various professionals were interviewed regarding opinions about actual workings of the Toughlove organization, and the results of the interviews are contained in the section on Results. Accordingly, the conclusion of this topic is deferred.
Chapter III

DESIGN

Specific Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis was to conduct a qualitative investigation of the Oakland Toughlove organization.

Research Questions to Be Tested

1) What are the ways that Toughlove participants learn about the organization?
2) Some Toughlove participants attend only one or two meetings. What are the reasons for this?
3) What is the average number of meetings most participants attend?
4) Why do most people come to Toughlove?
5) What is the most helpful thing about Toughlove?
6) Were the participants able to form "bottom lines" and apply them?
7) What was the most difficult aspect of forming bottom lines?
8) What was the outcome of the original problem that brought participants to Toughlove?
9) How did participants feel about taking a leadership position in the organization?

10) What was the overall Toughlove experience for participants?

11) What about the experience prompted volunteers to give their time?

12) Did the participants initially feel too much pressure from the Toughlove leaders and other participants?

13) Did those that felt the pressure initially, feel it in retrospect?

14) What did they like most about the Toughlove leaders?

15) What bothered them the most about the Toughlove leaders?

16) What changes would have made Toughlove leaders more effective and/or acceptable to the participants?

17) What did they expect to get from Toughlove?

18) Did they get it?

19) In what ways were they disappointed?

20) Do those who discontinued attending wish they had not, and why?

21) How is their life different as a result of Toughlove?

22) What do they wish Toughlove would do differently?

23) What do they consider its shortcomings to be?

24) What do they especially like about Toughlove?
General Methodology

The Toughlove questionnaire was composed of 10 scaled questions and 14 open-ended questions that were a result of this researcher reading the Toughlove book (York, York, and Wachtel, 1982), the Toughlove Parents Manual (York and York, 1989), and attending meetings. It was mailed along with a covering letter on May 6, 1991, to 52 people selected from the address list of the Oakland Toughlove chapter. The covering letter explained the purpose of the study, promised anonymity, and gave general instructions about returning it. A copy of it is included in the appendix along with a copy of the questionnaire and sample case study questions.

Included in the mailing was a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and a post card indicating the addressee’s name. The addressees were asked to return the card at the same time the questionnaire was returned. The receipt of the postcard was an indication of return of the questionnaire without identifying its author since anonymity had been promised. The post card method was helpful because it was necessary to send questionnaires again around June 6, 1991 when only 40% of them were initially returned. The second round of questionnaires (sent only to those who had not returned post cards) resulted in a total return of 50%, that is, 26 respondents. It was
decided not to send a third round of questionnaires. Another three weeks was allowed for return before analysis.

The first ten items on the questionnaire were scaled, but in some cases were written in such a way that more than one response could be marked. That is, it was not a weighted or Likert Scale. Also some questions allowed for an "other" response. Accordingly, frequencies or percentages could be calculated, but each response was not necessarily exclusive of another response. Additionally, an individual questionnaire item could amount to more or less than 100%. Responses were taken to indicate general trend. Others could be definitive, such as "number of times attended."

The case studies were done by telephone interview during the week of July 8, 1991. Ideas for interview questions came from the chapter, "Toughlove Solutions" in the Toughlove book (York, York, and Wachtel, 1982). Working from a list of about ten people, it was necessary to contact about six or seven to interview four. The list was supplied again by Jim Forsyth. No attempt was made to get a cross-section of Toughlove experience in terms of favorable or unfavorable outcome because this portion of the research was an attempt to explore ways in which Toughlove had been helpful. The agreement of the subjects to be interviewed constituted informed consent. Although the offer was made to set up an interview at a
convenient time, each of those consenting was able to talk at the time of contact. Each discussion, lasting 20 to 30 minutes, was taped on the answering machine with their consent and later transcribed and analyzed. All except one had also returned the completed questionnaire, and their responses served as validation of the questionnaire.

The phone interviews to professionals were done during the week of March 5, 1991. They were less formal, and notes of the conversation were taken while it was conducted. In several instances, it was necessary to make a telephone appointment. The discussions varied in time as some were more verbal than others, and ranged from about 15 to 40 minutes. Informed consent was implied by their agreeing to answer questions.

Population Sample

The address list for the Oakland Toughlove group was supplied by the leader, Jim Forsyth, for the questionnaire. It was composed of parents from the Oakland general area, ranging from Hayward to Albany and Moraga. In general they were middle-class Caucasians, but there was a significant number of Hispanics, and a lesser number of African-Americans, and Asians, who were experiencing difficulty with their offspring. They were often single parents, and these were most often women. Their children were usually, but not always, adolescents. Most parents seemed to be in their late
30's and early 40's, but some were in their 50's and even 60's. An attempt was made to send questionnaires to a mix of attendees in terms of number of times attended. In other words, "regulars" were included, but also people who attended occasionally or only a few times. This was ascertained by examining the weekly sign-in sheets. Most of those who did not return the questionnaire were those who had attended only a few times.

The case study interviewees were also names supplied by Jim Forsyth. It was necessary for these subjects to have attended regularly because the nature of this portion of the study required extensive experience with Toughlove. Most had attended for four or five months, but some had attended for a year or more. Three out of the four had also answered the questionnaire. None had taken a leadership role in the organization. No attempt was made in the case study to seek a cross section of Toughlove experience or give equal voice to individuals whose experience had been less than optimal. It might not have been difficult to seek out individuals who did not experience success with Toughlove, but it might have been difficult to find subjects who were simply unhappy with the organization regardless of the outcome of the child. Nevertheless, the intent from the beginning was simply to explore the various ways in which the organization could work for people.
In the case of the telephone interviews with professionals, an attempt was made to contact people in the Bay Area who had experience with adolescents and chemical dependency. Individuals in the field known to this writer provided other sources for this portion of the study, and they were able to recommend other names for this portion of the study.

**Instruments Used**

The ideas for the questionnaire came as a result of taking notes from the *Toughlove* book (York and Wachtel, 1982) and the *Toughlove Manual* (York, 1989). Also this researcher attended local meetings on a regular basis as well as attending a special Toughlove seminar and spending time with the Toughlove leaders. The question items identified as important items were supplemented by about one-fourth to one-third by Jim Forsyth, the Oakland Toughlove leader, who had specific concerns about the workings of his group, e.g., why did more people not volunteer to assist in leadership, why did people attend a few times and not return, what could be done to improve the workings of the group, etc. The resultant questionnaire then, was a combined effort and designed to furnish answers for the local group. Validity testing was done by doing case studies of individuals who had completed the questionnaire.
The questions in the case studies were modeled after the chapter section entitled "Toughlove Solutions" from the book *Toughlove* (York and Wachtel, 1982). In many ways these interviews replicated the interviews there. Of course, as with any interview, the course of the interview itself suggests directions for it to take. The questions serve more as a guideline and are especially helpful when the interview seems to be "dead in the water" and prompting is necessary. On the whole, however, the subjects answer the same questions as the questionnaire group, albeit in much more depth which, of course, along with richness of response, was the intent of this portion of the study.

The interview of the counseling and chemical dependency professionals in the Bay Area was much more loosely constructed. It was far from definitive, as the scope of this project did not allow for an extensive study. Rather it was meant as a small sampling of opinion about and experiences with the organization. It was undertaken to supplement the lack of information about the organization from the academic literature. The following questions apply to counseling and chemical dependency professionals in the Bay Area that might have contact with Toughlove or knowledge of it.
1) What are some reasons why professionals in the area would or would not refer people to Toughlove?

2) Where might it be harmful or exceed its limits?

3) What are their opinions of the stability of the organization and the growth potential?

4) Does it have a unique function that cannot be met by another organization?
Chapter IV

RESULTS

Findings of Scaled Questionnaire Items

Twenty-six out of 52 questionnaires were returned. The following results are reported in percentages. They do not always amount to 100% because sometimes respondents checked more than one answer and other times none was checked.

1. What are the ways that Toughlove participants learn about the organization? Thirty-nine percent learned about Toughlove through a friend, 27% through the media, 19% through referral from a psychologist, 15% from the Toughlove book, 15% checked other, and 8% - crisis hot line. Interestingly, two additional sources were written in - the Toughlove book and the crisis hot line.

2. Some Toughlove participants attend only one or two meetings. What are the reasons for this? Twenty-seven percent got what they needed, 15% felt it was inconvenient, 4% did not like confrontation, and 4% reported the problem took care of itself. This question item
was the least heavily marked because most respondents attended many times.

3. **What is the average number of meetings most participants attend?**
   Sixty-five percent of the respondents attended 11 or more times, 15% attended 1 to 3 times, 12% attended 7 to 10 times, and 8% attended 4 to 6 times.

4. **Why do most people come to Toughlove?**
   Eighty-one percent responded child’s defiance, belligerence, uncontrollable behavior, 39% responded child’s drug use, and 35% responded child’s failing grades or other changes in behavior.

5. **What is the most helpful thing about Toughlove?**
   Getting support and seeing I was not alone garnered 85%, followed by 42% for teaching to set limits, 35% for helping to see how my behavior perpetuated my child’s problem, and 23% for making me aware of my child’s drug involvement.

6. **Were the participants able to form “bottom lines” and apply them?**
   Fifty-eight percent responded mostly, 35% responded sometimes, 12% responded never, and 0 responded always.

7. **What was the most difficult aspect of forming bottom lines?**
   Sixty-two% feared their child would explode, 31% reported feelings of guilt,
27% reported too many other things to worry about, 23% reported "other," and 15% reported empty feeling.

8. What was the outcome of the original problem that brought participants to Toughlove? Fifty percent reported considerable improvement with Toughlove, 27% reported somewhat better, 19% stated the problem had cleared up because of Toughlove, and 4% said the problem still exists even with Toughlove intervention.

9. How did participants feel about taking a leadership position in the organization? Thirty-nine percent had no interest in being a group leader, 27% had some interest but were never asked, 27% did participate as a leader, and 0 expressed an interest but were not given an opportunity.

10. What was the overall experience for participants? Seventy-three percent reported a positive experience, 23% reported it somewhat positive, 4% were indifferent, and 0 were negative.
Findings of Closed or Open-Ended Questionnaire Items

Since the following items are not scaled, they will not be reported in numerical terms except in cases of "No Answer" and the like. There are not equal number of responses for each item because some were omitted by respondents. The responses are direct quotations except where alterations were necessary for clarity or correctness. It was decided to dispense with quotation marks since the entire section represents direct quotations. The same holds true for the case study section which follows.

11. **What about the experience prompted volunteers to do so?**
   1) Wanted to give back to others since others gave me so much help when I was needing it so badly. 2) The effort is relatively small; the good done is great. 3) Self-development, gratification and inspiration of seeing people become empowered to make positive changes in their parenting and in general. 4) I believed strongly in it. 5) Feeling useful. 6) I felt that I could bring some important information and feedback to newcomers because of my experience and alumna status.

12. **Did the participants initially feel too much pressure from the Toughlove leaders and other participants?**
   1) Sometimes, but it helped. 2) Experienced the pressure as care, concern, interest, guidance. 3) Provided realistic measure with which to compare my
perceptions of the situation. 4) Sometimes I was hesitant but I knew they were right and it was my own fear that blocked me. 5) They seemed to have a good feel for it. Some pressure, but not oppressive. 6) No. It was very positive and the group all used their thoughts and input to get a better perspective and to think of implications, resolutions and foresee things I may otherwise not have seen. 7) Saw it as encouragement. 8) Somewhat, in the early stages of my coming to meetings. 9) Yes, but I need the push. 10) Yes [with a "no" to Item 13 about retrospect]. 11) No, because by the time I came to Toughlove, I had learned a lot and mostly knew what I should be doing. Toughlove helped me by supporting my decisions. 12) Yes, but not too, too heavily.

13. **Did those that felt the pressure initially, feel it in retrospect?** 1) Towards the end, yes. 2) No, not at all. Different people have different styles, values, etc., and will inevitably conflict and rub each other the wrong way at times.

14. **What did they like most about Toughlove leaders?** 1) Their knowledge and no-nonsense approach which helped me put behavior and my love in perspective. 2) Had good ideas and suggestions. 3) Easy to talk to. Good listeners. 4) Jim Forsyth's humor, openness about himself and
willingness to call us even though we didn't request him to. Because of this and his clear thinking, I feel we can rely on him. 5) Cared about my kid and me. Tried to keep track of what was happening. 6) They are caring, clear, knowledgeable, and supportive. 7) Our particular leader - good background knowledge beyond personal experience. Talent in leading and controlling meetings. Tact. 8) They were very informed about the local agencies and procedures. Extremely willing and caring support shown us. 9) Openness - the sharing was focused on specifics. 10) Listened deeply, accepted and understood me. Offered specific help and were always available. As a single mother I didn't have to feel so alone anymore. 11) Sharing their stories, focus, helping to get to the heart of the problem. 12) The sense of humor and encouragement. 13) Very positive to problems. Informative. 14) Directness. 15) Their experience, detachment and compassion that enabled them to be effective. 16) Desire to help and an interest. 17) They were sympathetic and understanding, yet committed and firm. 18) Clarity and concern. 19) They had information of resources. 20) Honesty, support, willingness to give of themselves. 21) They were strong, effective.
15. **What bothered them the most about Toughlove leaders?**

1) Sometimes we didn't keep track of the topic or time well, so some people talked too long and not to the point. 2) I wish there were more volunteers so we didn't have to do it all ourselves. 3) I attended two groups. One seemed clique-ish ... kids were all acquainted, etc. Their scope of experience did not seem wide enough - discussion centered mostly around grades rather than deeper problems. 3) I think Jim, Diane and Sue were all excellent! 4) Not enough people moved into leadership roles - I think too many saw Jim as so good they could never hope to be on his level. 5) Not setting clear enough time limits and guide lines for crosstalk. 6) Assumption my kid was on drugs - too much time on that - not enough time on my issues. 7) That they were overburdened with leadership responsibilities and I could have helped, but chose to put my energies in other directions. 8) Structures too loose and some meetings last a long time. 9) Some were phony.

16. **What changes would have made Toughlove leaders more effective and/or acceptable to them?**

1) Keep better track of sharing time so we could leave before 10 pm. 2) Apportion time between participants more evenly. 2) Expressions of personal interest - more reaching out.
3) Perhaps, when group is small to allow only a certain time limit for each person to explain problem and then dig into problem solving or brainstorming. 4) Skip the initial "program." Work with people where they're at - with the issues they bring in. Work into your agenda later. 5) It wasn't clear who were the leaders at all times. 6) Tighter structure. 7) More small group leaders to get finished sooner.

17. **What did they expect to get from Toughlove?**

18. **Did they get it?** These two questions are answered together as the second one depends on the first one. 1) Guidance. Yes!! 2) Advice. Yes. 3) Strength to deal with problem teenager; courage to make changes and accept that I couldn't or shouldn't blame myself for her misbehavior. Yes. 4) Support and strength to make our environment a better place to be. Yes. 5) Chance to be honest and open. Yes. 6) Some way to take care of my children. Instead I found a way to take care of myself. Support. Yes! 7) A quick fix. No. 8) Support and guidance. In a sense, yes. My "child" is over 21 so there is a limit to what I/Toughlove could do. 9) How to react positively to my son's problem and not be a co-dependent. I believe I did. 10) Support and advice. Yes. 11) Support. Help. No. 12) Support and information on how to deal with my daughter. Yes. 13) Ideas, support and problem

19. In what way were they disappointed? 1) Not at all. 2) Mainly at myself. 3) Sometimes the crosstalk got too judgmental to me. 4) Too much data - not enough support. Did not feel helped, only more depressed. 5) Meetings at a very inconvenient time. 6) Got to learn that it's all a process.

20. Do those who discontinued attending wish they had not, and why? 1) Yes, I do want to attend again when my work schedule changes. 2) No, things are improved, and we have much better communication - both she and I are in family counseling. 3) I wonder if my son would be
doing even better than he is. 4) I most likely will return now and then. 5) I attended for several years. My kids are no longer in crisis. 6) I tried to go back and found I had moved on from needing that type of meeting. I was dealing with ongoing issues in children's behavior that I had made move out of my home. 7) Yes, to give support to others. 8) No, but I miss the other parents. 9) Yes, but my wife is under the care of a physician and would attend only one meeting. 10) Not to this one - I wish there was one in Berkeley or Albany. I wish my experience had been like my friend's in Walnut Creek. 11) Yes - I wish she had come home so I could continue working on our family together. It was too hard to keep coming since I didn't have her at home. Nothing to work on. If she comes home, I will probably come back to meetings. 12) I think I took as much from it as I was able to incorporate into my life and my personality. More was offered, but it was beyond me - so my departure was just right for that time. 13) Yes, could have used more help but I did not have the time. 14) Yes, I liked checking in and learning from the other participants. 15) I feel a sense of completion about my involvement. 16) Check back periodically as encouragement to others.
21. **How is their life different as a result of Toughlove?**

1) More able to set limits and lay-out expectations and enforce. 2) I’m a wee bit stronger. Shed some co-dependency (though it does recur). 3) I have backing for the house rules and standards. Going to Toughlove regularly keeps me firmer and more consistent. 4) Not much. 5) I’m more in charge of my home and family and more in control of my life. 6) I feel back in control - not isolated and ashamed of our problems. 7) Members of my family have learned to respect me more and I have learned how to respect myself. 8) Probably would never have handled the problem. 9) Very different - I am aware, pay attention, accept and then take action to problems and issues. 10) I tried lots of different approaches to our problem, and explored many, many options. 11) My life at home is calmer and more controlled. There is more respect and caring is evident. 12) I will not police my child. 13) Have more clarity about boundaries. 14) I don’t worry about my son. 16) I feel stronger and better about the tough steps I took in response to my son’s addiction. 17) I realize more clearly what went wrong when my son was a teenager and what I could have done about it then. I also understand why I didn’t at the time. 18) I feel less alone and a failure. 19) Secure in the method of Toughlove. 20) I am able to take
care of my needs. My kids are not all doing O.K., but I continue therapy and Al-anon to deal with my feelings around these things. 21) Kids grown - not in crisis. 22) I'm more in control and consistent. 23) We're in counseling - I've learned how to set limits and stick to them - to be more consistent. I'm not always successful, but it sure is an improvement from the way it was. 24) Child seems to take us a little more seriously. 25) Our child has changed in the following ways: 1- cut hair which was shaggy and half way down his back, 2- no more heavy metal dress; listens to music other than only heavy metal, 3- pleasant; seldom calls me names; no more or very little anger, 4- no more police involvement (guns, etc.) 5 - markedly less drug involvement, 6- improved grades, 7- changed many of his friends. Violence seems gone. 8- has a puppy look now. 9) Father able to set limits which means mom doesn't have to be the bitch. Mom respects Dad and feels much more comfortable.

22. What do they wish Toughlove would do differently? 1) I wish the meetings could finish earlier so parents could talk together. 2) Meet on any other evening rather than the Jewish sabbath; also have a parallel kids’ group. 3) Empower participants at an earlier stage to move into leadership roles. 4) Provide more informational material.
Resource material, etc. 5) Undecided. 6) Nothing - so far. I think each person should take from Toughlove what feels proper to them and let the rest roll off. Not to feel pressured to fit a mold. 7) No changes needed. 8) Nothing. 9) Have more educational events and teen groups. 10) Get word out more effectively that it exists. 11) No opinion. 12) Have time limits on problem solving time. It went too late. 13) More group meetings near where I live. Work with people where they're at! 14) No!

23. What do they consider its shortcomings to be? 1) Not enough meetings! 2) Not enough people come consistently and help out. 3) Too drug-related. Too “fascist” (my husband’s word) - he hated it! 4) It sometimes seemed adversarial in relationships toward children. 5) I can’t think of anything. 6) In my time, check-in got too long, and we didn’t have enough time for problem-solving. But I would not have enjoyed the rigid structure suggested by Toughlove Inc.. Something between the two is probably best. 7) Introductory session a bit hokey and a turn off that needs to be overcome in first meeting or two. 8) Time management. 9) None, but we feel we were in an exceptional group with excellent leaders. 10) Some parents are phony - not honest. 11) It’s lack of connection within the counseling community.
12) None. 13) I haven't found any yet. 14) Zero in the Oakland group. 15) May need some work on its public image. One TV movie was objectionable to some. 16) Best program I have found in the Bay Area for support and help. 17) Suggesting solutions that don't take into account the whole situation - the family's psychological and emotional patterns and history, their limitations. 18) Too much time was spent with certain individuals. 19) Co-leaders don't have the personality and clarity that Jim Forsythe has. Nonetheless, they are good.

24. **What do they especially like about Toughlove?**
1) I believe Toughlove saved our child’s life, improved our marriage, has brought more cohesiveness to the family. We still have a way to go but now, after about 10 months of using Toughlove, things are dramatically improved. 2) I felt welcome. I felt listened to. I got some good ideas. 3) It is a non-judgmental, nurturing place for parents with specific remedies for changing behavior. 4) The sense of community. 5) Support I get and 'companions in distress' feeling I get from others. Chance to discuss my offspring problems. 5) That there are knowledgeable people who are concerned and not afraid to step in and help when needed. 6) Love ... acceptance - understanding. 7) Sharing and
support to confront difficult situations. 8) Meeting with people who are not judgmental but are willing to help. 9) The feeling I got from other parents that I wasn't the only one with problematic children. The group support was extremely helpful. 10) The strength and support, and knowledge. 11) Chance to be open and direct. 12) Support to know you are not alone or unique. 13) The sharing, support and knowing that we were not the only ones going through it. It helped us look at our problem from a different perspective. 14) Supportiveness. 15) Leaders knew subject and were very supportive. 16) Volunteer nature, variety of people, warmth and concern of those participating, and the saving sense of humor that graced many meetings. I never anticipated I would laugh so much! 17) People seeking help and my participating in answers I would supply to help which would help me see problems clearer. 18) It helped to break isolation. 18) The "bottom line" approach. Consequences - when to use them. 19) Feeling I'm not alone. The support and friendships made. 20) All the people - how we really listened to each other. Also felt good to help the new folks - lend support. 21) Support for parents in all ways. 22) Good support.
Following the questions was the opportunity for this additional statement: **If extra space is needed for answers, you may write here. Thank you for your cooperation.** Some of the responses are as follows: 1) Thanks for asking me! Toughlove, Thunder Road, and Al-anon have given me a new person to focus on - me. And as a result my kids are changing. We are breaking the generational patterns of our family. 2) Thank you so much. My life is happier because of you all. 3) I really like being with parents - nice people - who have/are experiencing problems similar to ours. It helps me know I'm nice, too, regardless of my kids' poor choices. 4) I felt that questions #5 & 7 could have been answered with all choices about evenly. Also that an "other" category is usually needed. Doing this type of surveying myself so I do understand the problem with an "other" category. Some of the answers also didn't encompass responses for a parent of an adult who is limited in what they can do - or to a single parent when the other parent effectively dismantles what you are trying to accomplish. Not the fault of Toughlove.
Interpretations of Questionnaire Items

Following is a summary of some of the findings above. Based on these findings it can be maintained that most of the attendees came to Toughlove by hearing about it from a friend rather than other sources, although the media figured heavily also. The most prevalent reason that past affiliates did not continue coming was because they got what they needed, and most respondents attended at least eleven or more times. The nature of the problem that brought them to Toughlove was most usually their child's defiance, belligerence and uncontrollable behavior, but this was closely followed by their child's drug use, failing grades and change in behavior. Getting support was far and away the most helpful aspect of Toughlove. Teaching members to set limits was accomplished by the organization the majority of the time, and it was revealed that the most difficult thing about this was fearing the child's explosive anger. In half of the cases there was considerable improvement with Toughlove, and a large majority reported it as a positive experience. Most respondents had no interest in volunteering as a leader, but a significant number felt they might help if asked. Of those who did volunteer, their reasons mostly centered around reciprocity. Most felt that pressure from the group was not excessive or that it was commensurate with what was required. Evaluation of the Toughlove leaders,
most especially, Jim Forsyth, tended to such plaudits as knowledgeable, caring, sympathetic, direct, open, humorous, and the like. Criticism was minimal, and that and suggestions for improvement were mostly centered around time management issues. Most answers to the question about what was expected from Toughlove were congruent with the earlier question on the most helpful aspect of Toughlove: support. Other responses to this question included ideas, problem solving techniques, etc., and almost all reported that they got what they wanted. The few that reported disappointment focused it on such issues as too much information, too little information, too judgmental, and inconvenient meeting time. When asked if they wished they had continued meeting, most answered that it was no longer applicable, but some missed the opportunity to relate. As to whether their life is different as a result of Toughlove, most responses centered around an ability to set limits and being more in control. In terms of what Toughlove should do differently, and what are its shortcomings, there were few responses, and they largely centered around structural items such as more meetings at different times with better time management. When asked what they especially liked about Toughlove, most respondents answered "support" in one form or another, such as love, acceptance, sense of community, feeling welcome and listened to, etc.
Case Studies

The names have been changed in the following case studies to protect anonymity.

Karen

Interviewer: What kind of problems caused you to seek Toughlove out?

Karen: Two problems - my husband and I could never agree on any kind of boundaries or expectations for our kid, and we could never come to any kind of resolution. He was lenient and I was strict. Also my child had 15 days of suspension, alcohol and drug use, school problems, terrible grades. It goes on and on. We needed to get some help. I'd been to Toughlove previously to support a friend. My husband and son did not think the psychologist we saw was effective. She suggested we go to Toughlove. She said this kid's gonna lose it, end in jail or worse, and you're not finding any resolution. So my husband finally went with me.

Interviewer: Do you think you were helped by the therapy?

Karen: I do. Now 2 years after, my husband might agree. Maybe it prepared him for this. Now we're in therapy, and therapy originally helped get him into Toughlove, and Toughlove helped get him to therapy again. I credit Jim Forsyth [the Toughlove leader]. That's the reason it's been successful for Ray. The man is phenomenal. He's helped Ray see things about himself and
understand how important it is to work on boundaries, which is not easy for
us to this day. It's so hard that we literally have to write them down and
sign them so that we know we both have said the same thing. That's how
tough it is.

Interviewer: How long did you attend Toughlove?

Karen: Two or three months a year ago. Things settled down, and then he
was expelled for using pot on the campus last May. He was doing very well
at the private school. He was going to get a scholarship. They were very
pleased with him, and he was excited about it. Then he got expelled. He
couldn't handle success. We hadn't had one incident with him from October
through May. We were just heartbroken. He blossomed academically there.
He later finished at Las Lomas where his grades were in the basement again.
We just said if you get expelled here you'll have to take initiative. All that
is left is Continuation, Adult Ed, or GED. But I have supreme confidence that
somehow these kids are gonna make it.

Interviewer: So you returned to Toughlove?

Karen: Yes. We hoped to get help in setting limits and helping us work
together. and we got that. Such good support

Interviewer: What was the hardest thing to accept about Toughlove?

Karen: For me nothing was hard to accept. It was all right on. I think
intellectually Ray could accept it too, and it's because of the way it was presented, a lot of humor, a lot of men talking to men, that he could accept it. And men telling him, "Look, I was just like you are." Emotionally it's real hard for him to set limits. It's like almost impossible, and I think Toughlove is helping him do that. He's made incredible changes. He's the one who's changing more than Carl and me. I want to scream at him because he won't initiate discipline too much; it's like pulling teeth. Carl knows I'm the initiator and Carl needs to know that he and his father can't side against me. The therapist says that he needs to initiate as much as I do. And I think Toughlove helps enforce all this. The therapist said for this week he needs to work on initiating some discipline.

**Interviewer:** What risks have you taken?

**Karen:** For me there was no risk because I already thought my kid was dead. It was not a risk. And was well on the way to being injured or being dead, and Ray needed to know that. And it took him a while to figure that out. But Jim [Forsyth] said to him, "Well, your kid's life is on the line." I thought, I'm so glad someone's telling him that. The first therapist said "Carl you look like you're ready for jail." My husband didn't like that because it was like she was setting it up to happen. I said, "I think she's calling it like it is, Ray." He couldn't hear me or her. Carl was expelled for helping to sell a gun,
for god's sake, and the kid was so at risk for his life! To me, I was ready to give my own life, so there was no risk at all.

**Interviewer:** So the support you got...

**Karen:** It was incredible. In fact I don’t think Jim Forsyth has any sense of how I truly feel that because that man is the leader that my kid’s life was saved. I go to sleep now knowing that Carl has a lot of problems, that Ray and I have a lot of problems, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. There are some solutions that we can work on. But our kid is not going to die. He’s not going to be dead tomorrow. I’m not going to have to go down into the morgue and identify him.

**Interviewer:** This is quite an endorsement.

**Karen:** I can’t say enough positive things about that particular branch of Toughlove. We just took another couple and it was the typical scenario where the wife had to be the bitch and the husband was real passive. Absent emotionally or physically. We took them and she’s real excited. I teach school so I’ve been in the position to recommend Toughlove to any number of people. I think it’s great.

**Interviewer:** There’s something healing about going to Toughlove and seeing that other people have the same problem.

**Karen:** Other good people. They’re not a bunch of uncaring people. They’ve
given their all. There was a new woman there last week who has been in recovery for two years, and when she started recovery her older child was sent to jail for second degree murder. I think this group's gonna help her a lot. She can go in there and know, hey, she really is a good person. Jim [the leader] also gives people information about other support groups and 12-step programs that are out there.
Ann

Interviewer: What kinds of problems were you having that brought you to Toughlove?

Ann: I was having problems with my teenage daughters, and it was just after my oldest one graduated that I went to Toughlove. She was out of the home and she just would not accept my authority as a parent. She was having some substance abuse problems around her life although I wasn’t sure whether she was directly involved in using. She had friends who were using definitely, and I had to deal with their phone calls and harassment at all hours of the night. She didn’t observe the rules or do what was expected of her in the home, and she verbally and physically was violent with me. And I just needed some support and advice. I think I looked up Toughlove in the phone book.

Interviewer: How did you know to look it up?

Ann: I got a Toughlove book as a gift from my husband. I didn’t know any parents who were going. I was going to a counselor before Toughlove, though the decision to go was mine, not one of her suggestions.

Interviewer: Your husband must have known about it.

Ann: He just saw the book at the bookstore, and I think he thought of it as a joke. I don’t think he was taking it seriously.
Interviewer: How long were you with the organization?

Ann: Probably about 4 months regularly.

Interviewer: Are you still with it?

Ann: No.

Interviewer: What did you hope to get from it?

Ann: I guess I wanted contact from other people who were having problems with their kids. I wanted to hear possibilities of things I could do to re-establish myself as a parent.

Interviewer: Did you get out of it what you needed?

Ann: Yes.

Interviewer: How about bottom lines and that sort of things? Did they help with that or was that not something that you needed?

Ann: Yes it did. They were very helpful because of some of the things that I did after going to the meetings. I don't think I would have had the nerve to do things like calling the police which I did on several occasions.

Interviewer: The backing does help. It sort of gives you spine.

Ann: And spunk. [Laughs]. There is a sense of humor about it. I just left feeling some comfort, some encouragement. I was able to do those things, like call the police, and my boundaries have not been pushed to the same extent that they were before.
Interviewer: So it really did work for you then?

Ann: It did.

Interviewer: What was the hardest thing to accept about Toughlove?

Ann: I've always been taught that if you're not self-reliant, then there's something weak about you. You're kind of a failure. So I carried that with me. I think that the admission that there could be some really serious things wrong in the family was hard, and acknowledging that in public was really hard. I think I broke down crying when I first talked about what had happened to me.

Interviewer: Sounds like it was pretty much a positive experience for you.

Ann: Yes it was. It was enlightening, and I felt like I wasn't bad, or crazy or it wasn't my fault. I was able to relieve some of that guilt that really inhibited my mode of action.

Interviewer: Did you have to take any risks to go through the Toughlove program?

Ann: I had to take a risk of going through a disapproval from my extended family members. They tend to stay in denial over the behavior problems. They don't want to talk about them. They just want to go on and not really resolve these behaviors so that disapproval was a risk for me.

Interviewer: And of course calling the police on your child?
Ann: Of course I have the risk of a recurrence. It was life threatening, the kind of violence she was doing to me. She didn’t get out a knife or anything, but she went through such a rage. It was totally out of control.

Interviewer: And the things that you did through Toughlove helped you deal with her? It turned her around?

Ann: I think it helped with me. I developed a kind of inner strength.

Interviewer: That’s really their goal, I think.

Ann: And groundedness. I think she knew she couldn’t mess with me. You really don’t know the effects you have on someone’s behavior. I think I was more aware of what it did to me. I just know in relating with my husband and with my daughters that when I respect myself, they’re more respectful too. So her behavior has changed a lot. We’re actually friends right now so it’s pretty amazing. One thing I really liked was the closing like they do at the Al-Anon meetings about the hopelessness that is there no longer: “I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do before.” It generated a strength. I’m still going to Al-Anon meetings for the self-care which I need to continue to do and I don’t do automatically. Even people who aren’t living in active alcoholic situations continue to go just because it’s so centering.

Interviewer: It seems to me that Toughlove borrows a lot from Al-Anon’s
concepts.

Ann: It does, it does. You get the whole package in Al-Anon, but you get the boundaries part in Toughlove. That's why I thought I didn't need to go anymore once I'd learned how to set boundaries. I really got what I needed and I just needed to believe in myself which is what you get in Al-Anon.
FAY

Interviewer: What kind of problems got you to Toughlove?

Fay: Our oldest child was exhibiting..., I mean now I know it's drug related behavior, but at the time I thought it was just obnoxious behavior. And rebellious behavior, sneaky, dishonest. He was obviously unhappy. He'd sneak out of the house and lie, those kind of things. More than just a typical teenager.

Interviewer: How did you hear about Toughlove?

Fay: I don't really know. Probably I saw it on T.V. or something, maybe the movie, somehow I just knew about it. I didn't have a friend that had a child there. It was just sort of in the back of my mind, you know, from the media, or something.

Interviewer: Did you try anything prior to Toughlove?

Fay: We talked with the youth pastor at our church. No formal counseling. I'm not sure which we did first. I remember making phone calls one day feeling so desperate.

Interviewer: How long did you stay with it?

Fay: I think maybe about six or eight months and then we took a break for a
while and then came back. Maybe two or two and a half years in all. We loved Jim. I just thought he was terrific. He really is good. A gentle, firm man - both qualities you need.

**Interviewer:** So are you still with it?

**Fay:** No, our son went into treatment at Thunder Road [adolescent drug rehabilitation], and we still had two nights a week so it was a little much. When he finished with that, he was 18 and we had to cut the cord, and now he's in the Marines. When we went to Toughlove we weren't the typical overindulgent type parents. We were more too strict, too harsh, too controlling, and I guess we still "co'd" to a certain extent. It was almost to an unloving extent. You can't blame yourself, I know that, but still I think it doesn't hurt to look back and see what you might have done differently.

**Interviewer:** What did you want to get out of Toughlove, and did you get it?

**Fay:** Well, I think help. I felt so desperate and sad and confused. It was just a matter of wanting some direction and just not knowing what to do about this. It was particularly helpful having other men there to talk with my husband in terms of telling him not to be so tough because he's already too tough. He thinks I'm too lenient. They were reinforcing when we were tough. I don't know if that's ever going to get resolved. There have been times where I need to be tougher, but Jim could see where we were a little
extreme. And Jim could see when it was going too far, and that was helpful hearing it from another man, and it helped me. I mean just the two of us trying out our problems didn't work, and we needed other people to bounce it off of either to diffuse my view point or his view point so we could come together better. That is the key - to be united. Everybody tells you to be united, but we're not. It would get me so uptight when we'd have to be united. I'd be so anxious and sad that we weren't. Finally I thought, well, there's nothing we can do about it. We're not. Sometimes I think I felt a little coerced into agreeing when my heart wasn't totally there so what I do now, I hold out and I seem real stubborn now, and if I can't agree I say I can't agree to that. My husband is saying our son can't be in the house even after making it through Marine boot camp. Certainly he can't have any drugs or alcohol or come home inebrieted. But it's sad that he won't forgive him and keeps thinking of all the bad things he did.

Interviewer: So in other words you weren't having any trouble with bottom lines and setting limits?

Fay: Not really, although we got some good ideas like taking the door off. I think we did that once. We would just ground him a lot. That's all we ever did. So I think we got really helpful ideas.
Interviewer: What was the hardest thing to accept about Toughlove?

Fay: I don't know if there was really anything hard. I sort of saw it as almost a godsend and it just kinda' helped us get together. Now I have a different perspective being away from it awhile. I was kind of caught up in this harsh disciplinary tactic. I mean it was necessary because he was doing drugs. We couldn't let him get a license or anything like that. Maybe I didn't realize. I don't think it was hard.

Interviewer: Some people have a hard time with the bottom lines.

Fay: We already wanted to do that, and it just fit into our whole program so it wasn't that hard for us.

Interviewer: Were there any rewards that you got from the experience other than what you've already said?

Fay: Sort of the feeling that you're not alone and that people aren't judging you and are really there to help, even. Especially with Jim being there; he obviously cared.

Interviewer: Did you have to take any risks to go through the program or follow their method?

Fay: Not extreme. When I told him he couldn't live at home and he had no where to go. Probably Toughlove helped even though we weren't going any more. Just having it in the background helped. I had to let go and do that.
where to go. Probably Toughlove helped even though we weren't going any more. Just having it in the background helped. I had to let go and do that. That is a risk.

**Interviewer:** Anything else?

**Fay:** One other benefit - a good friend of mine four days ago had to ask her son to leave home, and having seen the Toughlove movie, I told her to check the movie out. She had a couple of men from her church sitting there. So it was a backing that she needed modeled after the movie. I also told her to give him some numbers he could call because I remembered that from the movie. It wasn't quite that way from our Toughlove group. It's not as close a group.

**Interviewer:** No, they never did get into the deal where you can send your kids to other families. They didn't go that far. But Jim sure is always there for you, isn't he?

**Fay:** He is. And I certainly never begrudged it, but I just noticed that in the movie they physically backed each other.

**Interviewer:** Your friend might benefit from Toughlove?

**Fay:** She went a few times and I think she had a hard time with the tough part. She had other issues such as her brother had been in prison for a few years and she felt she had to cover up for him. It was totally screwy
thinking, but I think she couldn't see that in the long run she was doing a disservice. Now she does, and so it's good.
Interviewer: How did you hear about Toughlove?

Val: I have a mutual friend who had problems with her son, and she told me about it. My daughter is now 16.

Interviewer: What was the nature of the problems?

Val: Well, it was rebelliousness, not following any rules at all, talking back a lot, acting outrageously in terms of swearing at me and throwing things around, having temper tantrums, not coming home when she was supposed to, abusing phone privileges constantly, grades going downhill. The friends she was running around with were O.K., but she was instigating a lot of outrageous behavior with them, and I didn't like it. And I was out of control too! The family dynamics were really dysfunctional at that time, and that's how I got started. I haven't been for about a year.

Interviewer: Did you try anything prior to Toughlove?

Val: No, we didn't have any counseling, and Toughlove spurred on a whole realm of different kinds of things such as family therapy, individual therapy, all kinds of things.

Interviewer: How long were you in the organization?

Val: Really active for about two years.
Interviewer: What kinds of things did you hope to get from it and did you get it?

Val: Well, I did get it. What I wanted to get was some real basic, fundamental ideas on how to deal with specific problems, and that wasn't all that I really wanted. What I wanted was a functioning family, and because of my daughter's rebelliousness, it made the family take in more counseling. It just made life a lot harder in some respects, but it forced us to face reality among ourselves as individuals and as a family. Because of that things are so much better now.

Interviewer: Usually people come to Toughlove after counseling, and it's the reverse here.

Val: It was the reverse. It was my daughter's rebelliousness that made my husband and I face reality that our marriage was on the rocks, that we weren't dealing with problems as we should be, that our daughter was basically the scapegoat in the family - all kinds of things. So it just spurred on all sorts of good things. It was very difficult at first, very hard, but it's so much better now.

Interviewer: What was the hardest thing to accept about Toughlove?

Val: The hardest thing is that one of the basic principles of Toughlove is confrontation and putting your emotions aside, and dealing with the problems
as they come up, and sticking by your conviction of not allowing the kids to run your life. Plus the criticism. You're in a group of people and you're getting ideas, and it makes you feel like, I really haven't been doing the job that I should have been doing, and for me, it was constructive criticism. I didn't leave each meeting feeling badly. I left it feeling that I had hope. It's brainstorming, and they give you ideas. You try to see the problems as they are, and then face them and do something about them, and then stick by your convictions. It really is a life change altogether.

Interviewer: I know that is one of their goals to get the parents to change their behavior.

Val: Oh, absolutely. If the parents start changing their behavior, then the kids will just follow suit. And no matter what anybody says, it is the most difficult thing to do - to really change your behavior.

Interviewer: So you were working on your behavior rather than on hers?

Val: I started working on my behavior, and my husband worked on his. And it was difficult for our daughter because she was so used to having her way, and without realizing it, controlling the family. And that's not the case today.

Interviewer: So, there has been substantial improvement?
Val: Substantial. It's been a slow process, but it's downhill now.

Interviewer: What rewards did you get from the experience?

Val: The rewards? Seeing our daughter changing, positively, her self esteem seems to be going upwards, the family can talk without yelling, the family can actually have limits and boundaries, the reward of having peace. And there is a lot of serenity now. There have been many rewards for everybody.

Interviewer: Did you feel that you had to take any risks anywhere along the line?

Val: What comes to mind is when my daughter threatened to run away, for instance. That was the risk I had to take that she would do it, and she did. But there were consequences when she came back. I had to call the police to come pick her up and take her to Perry Place. She didn't like it. It was kind of a routine for a while. She ran away from Perry Place. She was gone for several days. The more this happened, the stronger I became. But there were risks, and the last time she ran away, she was 15. I told her that she couldn't come back without a contract, and I meant it. And then she did not come home again one night, and I told her she couldn't stay in my home and that she had to leave for a week. I think reality really struck her at that point because I told her that I love her very much, but I'm not going to live this kind of life, period. And if she wants to follow the rules she can live
this kind of life, period. And if she wants to follow the rules she can live here, but if not, she can't live here anymore. That's all there is to it.

**Interviewer:** Did Toughlove give you the ideas, or the resolve to do these things?

**Val:** The support and the camaraderie among the parents. Feeling that I was doing the right things. And the book was very helpful. It gave me strength and strength to read more and to seek help. And I didn't feel I was alone.

**Interviewer:** So then you did get support. How did you learn about Perry Place, etc.?

**Val:** I learned almost everything from ToughLove, and because of that I was able to find out through Perry Place what to do next, how to talk to juvenile officers and get the police involved. So it helped me to set up a network of support for every situation that would arise. Toughlove was the real instigator there. Especially some of the Toughlove members that had been around for several years.

**Interviewer:** Anything else that you'd like to say about the organization?

**Val:** Just that I wish there were more of these groups around. There aren't as many as there really ought to be to get into the school system so the parents of high school students know about Toughlove. Maybe even have some Toughlove people talk to the counselors at the schools so that the parents
will know that there are support groups out there, that they don't have to have lives being controlled and run by these outrageously rebellious kids, and to do something about changing their own lifestyle too - I mean that's the bottom line, I think.

**Interviewer:** I agree that they need to spread the word more. Poor Jim Forsyth has to do it all.

**Val:** He's very dedicated. I'm so grateful that I found Toughlove and that it helped me because I was really ready and willing and open to get help. I just couldn't live this way any longer.

**Interviewer:** There are a lot of people who go who just can't go through with it.

**Val:** That's right. It's extremely difficult. It's confrontation. It involves a lot of change in behavior, change in pattern, sometimes even a change in your marital situation which happened to me. Which is fine, because our daughter now has rules that she lives by with her father and rules here at home. There are lots of consequences and there are rewards too. When a drug test comes back clean as last time, there were rewards, and she was the one that brought it up. They come back dirty from light marijuana sometimes. I don't think she needs to use drugs and alcohol so much anymore because I think her
life is changing. She's not using it to mask her pain. She's in therapy and counseling.

Interviewer: It sounds like a success story and everything's on the mend.

Val: It is on the mend. I'm on the mend. My life is my life now; that's the beauty of it. I have a life. I want to keep my name on the list because we are considered oldtimers, and we can help people, and that's really important. So I may go and show up sometime for an hour or so to say that I'm available for anyone that wants to talk.
Interpretation of Case Study Findings

When asked what problems took them to Toughlove, the interviewees all reported the usual out-of-control behavior, some with known drug use, and some not. There were differences in terms of emphasis, however. One subject reported that agreement with her husband was lacking. Another reported that agreement came as a result of the Toughlove affiliation, but it was not what caused her to seek it out. One child was physically abusing her mother, another was running away, another was beginning to have trouble with the law, and another was involved with drugs. Two subjects learned about Toughlove through friends, one through the media, and another through the book.

Although it has been assumed that many have tried therapy first, only one had in this study, and that therapist recommended she try Toughlove. Interestingly, therapy was the result of Toughlove here, that is, it exposed issues that led to therapy. At least judged on the results here, the notion that Toughlove and therapy are somewhat incompatible is not sustained.

When asked what they hoped to get from Toughlove, answers included support, help, ideas for problem solving, contact with others with similar problems, and more spine. Two hoped for more agreement as a couple although in one instance the husband needed more limit setting support, and
in the other instance, the couple seemed a rare exception in Toughlove where the "love" needed more bolstering than the "tough."

In both of the aforementioned couples, both husbands were able to benefit from hearing suggestions from other men. As to other rewards from the experience, one reported incredible changes in her husband in terms of standing firm. Another reported substantial changes in her daughter's behavior - more self-esteem, less yelling - and peace in the household. One woman reported positive changes within herself: more inner strength, more groundedness, respect for herself and from her family, and a loss of guilt. Another responded that the rewards included the backing she needed, the feeling of not being alone, and not being judged.

Was anything about the experience difficult to accept? In one instance, it was difficult for the respondent's husband to toughen up. Another admitted that confrontation was difficult in addition to sticking with convictions and changing behavior. Another felt that she had always been taught to be self-reliant, and seeking help from others was an admission of helplessness at first.

Were there risks involved in adhering to the Toughlove process? To one, there were none because in her mind, her son was already dead. To another calling the police was a risk. She did not clarify whether the risk
was in further alienation from her daughter or jeopardizing her daughter's standing with the law. Another mentioned calling the police too, as well as risking disapproval from the extended family.

Although the questions in the case studies were similar to those in the questionnaire, the method, not surprisingly, seemed to elicit a much larger variety of response. The method was an attempt to investigate not only how Toughlove had helped, but the degree to which it helped.
Phone Interviews with Professionals

Because of the dearth of written information on the subject of Toughlove, it was decided to speak with various professionals around the Bay Area who would likely have affiliation with it. Again the names are changed to protect anonymity. The directors of adolescent recovery centers in Marin, Contra Costa and Alameda Counties were interviewed for their opinions. Two directors, Jane, from Thunder Road in Oakland (personal communication, March 7, 1991), and Tanya from the A.R.C. at Marin General Hospital (personal communication, March 8, 1991), work very closely with Toughlove. They frequently refer families to the organization and vice versa. The third, Rebecca, from John Muir Adolescent Treatment Center in Contra Costa County (personal communication, March 7, 1991), seemed neutral or cool to the organization.

Jane, at Thunder Road, has worked in many adolescent drug treatment facilities and has always worked closely with Toughlove. She values it for being a real strength to families, helping them to set limits, taking the emotions out of situations, and helping them to stop giving mixed messages. When asked where it might be harmful or exceed its limits, she replied that some think it is too militant or too rigid. It can be damaging when some people go too far in their interpretation and are so angry and bitter that they
use it as a weapon. It is necessary that they remain loving and caring. It also does not work well when there is mainly a psychological problem that is presenting. She likes to recommend it to people when intervention is what is required in terms of fixing things, dealing with change, serving as a hot line. She likes to recommend Al-Anon if support is needed for co-dependency because it focuses more on the individual, more on the feelings and how people can feel better about themselves. Of course it is not mutually exclusive from Toughlove, but she would never recommend both at once.

Tanya at A.R.C. says that they have a parenting program at the hospital that meets some of the needs that Toughlove might, but she refers it to her out-patient parents. She feels that the local Toughlove branch has a history of closing down and opening up again because of lack of attendance, referrals, marketing, etc. Also the local schools provide some of the same things that Toughlove might. She thinks they have trouble in being internally consistent just as any self-help group. She feels the organization works best when all the authority figures in the family work together in the organization; and the codependents have the most trouble with the organization and seem to need it the most.

Scott, a therapist with a large adolescent clientele (personal communication, March 8, 1991), has good things to say about the Toughlove
organization, but feels that on occasion they can do damage. In one particular example he felt there was a misdiagnosis. The issue was one of gender identity unbeknownst to the parents or Toughlove. The drug involvement was minimal, of an experimental nature, and not unlike the amount tried by many adolescents. The parents overreacted. The resultant feelings of abandonment were the last thing the child needed, and a great deal of therapy was required to undo the damage.

Dr. Don, adolescent therapist in Contra Costa County (personal communication, March 9, 1991), likewise agrees that Toughlove can be beneficial in terms of getting parents to follow through and be consistent. He claims that parents have gotten such a "bad rap" over the past 50 years that some of the Toughlove ideas are welcomed. Therapy has simply not worked for them. He does not usually refer clients to the organization, however, because of the fluctuating quality of the individual groups - a feature that bothers other professionals also. He feels the lack of leadership training undoubtedly contributes to this. He also thinks many professionals, even today, view Toughlove, along with other Self-help groups such as AA, as amateurish and somewhat of a threat.

Claire is an instructor in chemical dependency at California State University at Hayward and the executive director for a recovery center
(personal communication, March 8, 1991). While she thinks Toughlove can be very helpful for those who have little structure and little qualitative control in terms of impact on adolescents' boundaries, she feels it is like other self-help groups in that it is helpful for some and not for others. She feels the concepts can be difficult and can complicate issues. She also thinks it is important that parents not see it as a cure-all. It is basically a Band-Aid therapy that needs to be more flexible, less dogmatic, less inclined to a knee-jerk response. She feels that other therapies utilize the basic message better, and she much prefers to recommend Al-Anon because it is more specific to most people's needs. She also feels that while it was very big seven or eight years ago, it has not continued to grow and she thinks it will not be around in another two or three years. She thinks the human services movement has gone way beyond it, while it has stayed narrow.

Finally, an individual close to the formation of the organization, Tom, was interviewed (personal communication, March 9, 1991). He prefaces his comments by stating that he has not been intimately involved with the organization in six or seven years so his remarks may be dated. Like Claire, with whom he has worked in the past, he feels that the promise of Toughlove has not been sustained. The initial enthusiasm has peaked. The number of groups is not as great as had been hoped for, and the number has been
exaggerated to the press. It is much more prevalent in California than in the East where it began and has been supplanted by other organizations. He claims the Yorks (the main founders) have had differences with the Board of Directors. He also says that the organization has not been as altruistic as some of the other self-help groups such as AA and NA. There began to be a change around 1984 when there was an effort to charge more money for the Toughlove book and have each chapter pay more money to the national headquarters. He said there was a lot of resentment over this, and it has inhibited the growth of the movement. Ann Landers gave it a big plug in her column thinking it was under the auspices of the Community Services Organization. She became upset about the burgeoning resentments and phoned this individual who reassured her. It must be concluded that his reassurances were successful. The July 3, 1991 Ann Landers column contains a referral to either Toughlove or Families Anonymous in response to a mother whose family has been destroyed by her 28-year-old son's long-standing drug problem (Landers, 1991).

Tom goes on to claim that Toughlove is still technically a non-profit organization. He wishes it resembled NA and AA more because they are stringent in avoiding monetary complications. It is not possible to donate money to these organizations; there is no accumulation of wealth. In this
writer's opinion, certainly the $1.00 per meeting voluntary contribution could not be considered excessive, especially since it must cover tea, cookies, mailings and other expenses. It could be that the policy on this has changed in the last seven or eight years.

Additionally he claims there is no place where power can develop; it is almost like an anarchy. The potential for Toughlove has been compromised because it can be somewhat commercialized, and he wishes that more guidance had been built into the philosophy. Nonetheless he defends Toughlove against many of its critics. In its heyday some scary accusations were made against the organization, but he feels that mistakes can happen when people are in the position of making their own decision. Importantly he feels that the mistakes that have been made by the organization have been no more harmful than those that are made every day by incompetent therapists.

Judging from the book, *Toughlove Solutions* (York, York and Wachtel, 1985) the intent was to avoid the type of problem alluded to above. According to it, the structure of Toughlove is organized so as to decentralize authority and avoid a hierarchy. The book maintains there is no such thing as a Toughlove chapter, group charter, or dues structure. A group cannot name itself with the registered trademark. Only quarterly Toughlove notes are put out, and a group can use the manuals, tapes, etc. as it wishes, or it can run
without any Toughlove affiliation at all. According to the book, "guidance" was built into the philosophy, at least in terms of its looseness.

Interestingly, the mighty AA itself is not free from criticism similar to that mentioned above. AA has filed a trademark suit against certain AA members for manufacturing artifacts such as medallions and key chains using the AA symbol. These members criticize AA for using members' dues to prevent them from providing merchandise that they claim other members want. They aver that "...AA has become a 'top-heavy' organization where decision-making starts at the top...in direct violation of AA's own tradition" (Hulac, 1991, p.1).
Interpretations of Phone Interviews with Professionals

Although firm conclusions cannot be drawn from the preceding personal communications there are some emerging themes and areas for further investigation. Almost all of the references agree that Toughlove has merit as an aid for parents who have trouble setting limits. Some of the recovery centers work closely with it in getting and giving referrals. However, many accuse Toughlove of narrowness and rigidity. And some accuse it of misdiagnosis with resulting damage. Although most parents go to Toughlove after trying therapy first, one wonders whether the misdiagnosis occurs in instances where the participants have not yet gone through therapy. Overreacting, with the suggestion of strong-arm tactics, is another cause for concern. In other words, is an organization of this nature more at risk for tactics verging on the unethical? Of course, even counseling professionals, who are subject to more stringent regulations, are sometimes tempted to overstep their boundaries in the interest of eventual outcome.

If one is to judge from the preceding professional interviews, it would seem that Toughlove is on the wane. Several factors emerged as possible reasons for this:

1. there is less need for it because of more recovery- and school-supported parent groups;
2. there is a problem with individual group weakness, possibly because of lack of leadership training;

3. there is mutual distrust with the psychiatric community resulting in divergence from common goals instead of convergence;

4. Narrowness and rigidity have stifled growth; and

5. There has been a subtle inclination toward commercialism which has resulted in disaffection of key supporters.

The focus of this phase of the investigation has been on the state of the Toughlove organization. Attention has been geared to questions such as, how well regarded is this institution, and what are some of its shortcomings. Accordingly the preponderance of the information is negative in nature, and the merits of the organization have been proportionately neglected. Questionnaires and case studies have been examined and go a long way toward correcting the imbalance of this section. Further consideration of these issues is undertaken in the concluding chapter.
Chapter V

SUMMARY

Conclusions

The following is a recapitulation of the litany of criticisms cast at the Toughlove organization: too militant and rigid; too dogmatic, inflexible, and narrow; too commercialized; prone to misdiagnosis; not good for psychological problems; trouble with internal consistency; lack of leadership training; tendency to see only drugs and bad crowds as causes for bad behavior; Band-Aid therapy; cook book, simplistic way of handling problems, etc. The nature of criticism is such that the benefits are often overshadowed. Though almost all critics conceded that Toughlove has value in helping people set limits and absolving themselves from guilt, their concession is tantamount to "damning with faint praise."

It seems the closer look at the local Toughlove chapter is more beneficial in terms of pinpointing the value of Toughlove and showing the enormity of its impact on the lives of individuals. Twenty-six out of 52 questionnaires were completed and returned. Of these only one was negative in nature. Most were enthusiastic and glowing in praise of the organization.
Often there were changes in the child in question, but almost always there were substantial changes in parents' outlook as well as their behavior. The effect of the organization is reminiscent of the paraphrasing done by the author, William Styron, of D.H. Lawrence's view of literature as a moral force: "it is impossible for a single book or writer to alter the course of human events, to have much effect on society, but a writer and a single book can have an enormous effect on an individual" (Hertsgaard, 1991). The Toughlove organization amounts to much more than a "single writer" or a "single book," and it has positively and dramatically impacted many individuals - even taking only the local chapter into account. It would seem that despite its shortcomings, it is an organization to be valued, to be corrected if necessary, and certainly worthy of preservation.

Limitations of the Study

This study has been hampered by several factors. For instance references in academic literature are scant, in fact almost non-existent. Furthermore non-random sampling, such as was conducted here of necessity, contains flaws. Were questionnaires returned only by people favorable to the organization? Also, it is impossible to know if the the 50% of the outstanding questionnaires were not returned because of the nature of the would-be respondent, indifference, or downright antipathy. Needless to say,
a controlled study could not be in this type of research. A pre- and post-test attitude survey might have been done, but even that would be difficult given the "drop-in, sometime thing" structure of the organization.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

A more thorough study might be conducted by extending the questionnaires to various groups all over the country. Indeed visits for the purpose of comparisons of various groups in the area would reveal much of interest about differences in the local chapters. In the same vein, questionnaires similar to the ones sent to Toughlove members could be sent to professionals in the area or across the country.

Additionally, the genesis of the Toughlove philosophy was never definitively determined. It might be a simple matter to establish contact with the organization's founders for such questions. A study of a much larger degree would almost mandate such a move if only for fairness in answer to criticism.
REFERENCES


Fries Entertainment, Inc. (1985), *Toughlove*.


Sample Cover Letter for Questionnaire

Patricia Fitzpatrick
Street Address
City and State
Phone Number
May 6, 1991

Dear Toughlove Member or Former Attendee,

Enclosed is a questionnaire regarding the Toughlove program. As a one-time or current member of Toughlove, your answers will assist in a qualitative study of the Toughlove program. This questionnaire will be used in two ways: 1) it will provide information for a research project as part of my master's thesis which is partial fulfillment of my masters degree in Educational Psychology at California State University at Hayward, and 2) it will assist the Toughlove leader, Jim Forsyth, in assessing and improving the effectiveness of the local chapter.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Returning the questionnaire indicates your consent to be a part of the study. Please do not sign the questionnaire. Your anonymity will be protected. Your decision as to whether to participate or not will have no effect on any benefits you now receive or may wish to receive in the future from any agency. For answers to questions pertaining to the research you may contact me directly at 451-5164, or Jim Forsyth at 836-0757.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope. Also enclosed is a postcard with your name. Return of the postcard indicates who has responded so that I may follow-up those who have not. We ask that it be returned separately from the questionnaire because it identifies who has
responded without identifying the returned questionnaire. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Needless to say, your prompt response will be very helpful.

Cordially yours,

Patricia Fitzpatrick

Jim Forsyth, Oakland Toughlove
Questionnaire Regarding the Toughlove Program

1. How did you hear about Toughlove?

   ___ 1) Psychologist ___ 3) Media
   ___ 2) Friend ___ 4) Other

2. If you only attended a few times, why did you not return? (Check all appropriate items.)

   ___ 1) Got what I needed
   ___ 2) Inconvenient
   ___ 3) Don't like confrontive group type of situations
   ___ 4) Problem took care of itself
   ___ 5) Didn't like the leaders.

3. How many times did you attend?

   ___ 1) 1-3 ___ 3) 7-10
   ___ 2) 4-6 ___ 4) 11 or more

4. What was the nature of the problem that brought you to Toughlove?

   ___ 1) Child's drug use, either suspected or confirmed.
   ___ 2) Child's defiance, belligerence, uncontrollable behavior
   ___ 3) Child's falling grades or other changes in behavior
   ___ 4) Other

5. What was the most helpful aspect of Toughlove?

   ___ 1) Teaching me to set limits
   ___ 2) Making me aware of my child's drug involvement.
   ___ 3) Helping me to see how my behavior perpetuated my child's problem.
   ___ 4) Getting support and seeing I was not alone.
   ___ 5) Other; explain:

6. Could you formulate effective "bottom lines" for your child and apply them?
7. What was the most difficult thing about imposing a "bottom line?"

___ 1) Brought up feelings of guilt.
___ 2) Gave me an empty feeling.
___ 3) Feared my child would explode.
___ 4) Too many other things to worry about.
___ 5) Other; explain:

8. What was the outcome of your original problem?

___ 1) Problem still exists - no intervention taken.
___ 2) Problem still exists even with Toughlove intervention.
___ 3) Somewhat better because of Toughlove.
___ 4) Considerable improvement with Toughlove.
___ 5) Cleared up because of Toughlove.

9. Toughlove exists because of volunteer efforts. What was your attitude toward participating in the program as a volunteer group leader?

___ 1) Never had an interest.
___ 2) Had some interest, but was never asked.
___ 3) Expressed an interest, but was never given the opportunity.
___ 4) Did participate as a group leader.

10. Overall, what was your Toughlove experience?

___ 1) Negative. ___ 3) Somewhat positive
___ 2) Indifferent. ___ 4) Positive

Following are some open-ended questions which you may address if you wish.

11. If you participated as a volunteer, what about the activity prompted you to devote the necessary effort?
12. While attending Toughlove did you feel the Toughlove leaders and/or other participants pressured you too heavily to adopt stronger measures with your teenager?

13. If you answered "yes" to #12, do you in retrospect still believe the pressure was excessive?

14. What did you like most about Toughlove leaders?

15. What bothered you the most about Toughlove leaders?

16. What changes would have made Toughlove leaders more effective and/or acceptable to you?

17. What did you expect to get from Toughlove?

18. Did you get it?

19. If you were disappointed, describe in what way?

20. Do you sometimes wish you had continued attending and why?
21. How is your life different as a result of Toughlove?

22. What do you wish Toughlove would do differently?

23. What are its shortcomings?

24. What do you especially like about Toughlove?

If extra space is needed for answers, you may write here. Thank you for your cooperation.
Toughlove Case Study Interview Format

The following questions are intended to be used as a guide. Many of them are open-ended, and answers to them will obviate the succeeding questions. Undoubtedly tangents will be taken in the course of the interview that will bring up new questions.

1) Why did you seek out the Toughlove organization?
2) (and/or) What kind of problems were you having?
3) How did you hear about Toughlove?
4) What did you try prior to Toughlove?
5) How long were you with Toughlove?
6) Why are you still with it?
7) What did you hope to get from it?
8) Did you get it?
9) What was the hardest thing to accept about Toughlove?
10) What rewards did you get from the experience?
11) What risks have you taken?
12) What kind of support did you get?