

Parenting success : a learning program for parents of families at risk
by Carol Ann Korizek

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:
How active learning occurs in the adult participating in a program for hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk was not known. As a result of societal issues such as addictions, crime, poverty and mental illness, most parents of families at risk develop lower self-esteem and a feeling of failure about their ability to parent. To meet the needs of this important population, an empowering program named Parenting Success was developed for parents of families at risk. Parenting Success is founded on a humanistic philosophical base and employs practices of adult learning principles. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify how adults learn through participation in Parenting Success and to know specifically what factors caused, sustained and contributed to the occurrence of learning and accomplishment in the parents participating in the Parenting Success program.

The qualitative research design chosen to describe how parents of families at risk learn through participation in Parenting Success was the descriptive case study which focuses on not one but many of the variables present within the boundaries of the study. The goal of this qualitative process was to focus on the many emerging variables which describe how and/or why adults learn in the social environment of the Parenting Success program. The research findings generated from observations, class discussions, evaluations, and interviews of participating parents revealed important information which may transform the manner in which crucial parenting skills and information are disseminated for effective adult learning to occur.

Reflecting the high retention and completion rate, parents overwhelmingly responded that they felt comfortable and accepted in the Parenting Success learning group. Participants of Parenting Success voiced responses which were consistently positive regarding their feelings about learner-centered humanistic adult education with many of the parents praising the learning experience that Parenting Success had offered them.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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of a thesis submitted by

Carol Ann Korizek

This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic styles, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

Gary J. Conti — Gary J. Conti — 7-24-97
Chairperson, Graduate Committee — Date

Approved for Department of Education

Gloria A. Gregg — Gloria A. Gregg — 7/25/97
Department Head — Date

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

Robert L. Brown — R L Brown — 8/15/97
Graduate Dean — Date

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Date July 24, 1997

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ABSTRACT

How active learning occurs in the adult participating in a program for hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk was not known. As a result of societal issues such as addictions, crime, poverty and mental illness, most parents of families at risk develop lower self-esteem and a feeling of failure about their ability to parent. To meet the needs of this important population, an empowering program named *Parenting Success* was developed for parents of families at risk. *Parenting Success* is founded on a humanistic philosophical base and employs practices of adult learning principles. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify how adults learn through participation in *Parenting Success* and to know specifically what factors caused, sustained and contributed to the occurrence of learning and accomplishment in the parents participating in the *Parenting Success* program.

The qualitative research design chosen to describe how parents of families at risk learn through participation in *Parenting Success* was the descriptive case study which focuses on not one but many of the variables present within the boundaries of the study. The goal of this qualitative process was to focus on the many emerging variables which describe how and/or why adults learn in the social environment of the *Parenting Success* program. The research findings generated from observations, class discussions, evaluations, and interviews of participating parents revealed important information which may transform the manner in which crucial parenting skills and information are disseminated for effective adult learning to occur.

Reflecting the high retention and completion rate, parents overwhelmingly responded that they felt comfortable and accepted in the *Parenting Success* learning group. Participants of *Parenting Success* voiced responses which were consistently positive regarding their feelings about learner-centered humanistic adult education with many of the parents praising the learning experience that *Parenting Success* had offered them.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Societal challenges for today's American family have escalated drastically over the past four decades. Not only is the well-being of the family continually vulnerable to decline, the strength of the family structure is threatened and weakened. From their work entitled, *Running in Place: How American Families are Faring in a Changing Economy and an Individualistic Society*, Zill and Nord (1994) summarize that the apparent decline of the family is the result of weakened family values, poor parenting, detrimental behavior of parents and young people, and social and economic forces in the larger society that make it difficult for families to maintain functionality.

Family values were mutually established as an important topic of concern for both major parties in the 1996 national election year. During July and August of 1996, the national political conventions of Democrats and Republicans alike

featured numerous speakers, including President and Mrs. Clinton and Senator and Mrs. Dole, who acknowledged and echoed the nation's growing concern for the welfare of American families and children. Although the term *family values* implies that parents are totally the responsible party for the welfare of the family unit, most families are indeed trying to do their best within an ever-changing, larger society that greatly impacts the family externally. Family therapists Napier and Whitaker (1978) offer the following word of caution for helpers who may be treating a family for emotional disturbance:

> A systems approach to treating emotional disturbance cannot stop with the individual family. The family is often merely the scapegoat of a highly stressed, competitive, and finally rather cruel society. We cannot work with the family system without becoming aware of the power of the governmental system, the school system, and the work system in the life of the family; and though most of us see our expertise as being in work with individual families, we know that there is much in this larger family of humanity that must be altered. (pp. 290-291)

In his book, *Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment,* James Garbarino (1995) places responsibility upon the whole society. Through carefully documented research, Garbarino verifies that the mere act of living in

today's society is dangerous to the health and well-being of children and adolescents. The concept of the socially toxic environment is offered as a parallel to the environmental movement's analysis of physical toxicity. Although the awareness and education levels are at conceptual stages, Garbarino offers information and help, while discouraging blame, for society to combat the social toxicity that is slowly destroying our children's development and futures. Garbarino believes that the basic needs of children are jeopardized and that many of the family values-related problems have been created by a society that is deteriorating because of a changing economy and the growing dependence of families on the community.

Problems within the individual family system, however, ultimately remain in the ownership of the parents. Nelson and Oles (1993) have identified determinants of parents and children which are related to the behaviors of families and youth at risk which include parent developmental history, parent maturity, parent mental health, socioeconomic status, sources of stress (parent involvement, marital conflict, and job satisfaction), and child characteristics. Thus, there is need for effective parent education which will enable the

learner to become aware of his or her own parenting style and to develop skills in the following areas which will fortify family functioning: Understanding human needs, coping, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, conflict-resolution, the change process, the paradigm shift of transformed perspectives, achieving independence and hope for the future and developing a sense of self and community.

Parenting Programs

During the past twenty years, numerous programs have been developed which attempt to meet the needs of parents who wish to address external and internal stressors upon the functioning family unit. Most of these parenting programs are based on various personality and learning theories. Three major philosophical foundations are presented below with examples of current authors and their publications on parenting within each theoretical base.

Adlerian psychology is an adaptation or extension of psychoanalytic theory (Corey, 1996). Parenting programs that are based on Adlerian theory hypothesize that children often attempt to meet their needs in a mistaken direction. Their goal is to identify and examine the child's goals of

misbehavior and attempt to redirect the behavior to achieve more positive and satisfying results (Thompson & Rudolph, 1983). Two highly successful and well-known programs which are based on Adlerian psychology are *Systematic Training for Effective Training* (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1982) and *Active Parenting Today* (Popkin, 1993).

Behavioral psychologists see behavior and academic problems as resulting from faulty previous learning (Skinner, 1953). Both parents and children have learned inappropriate ways of behaving, reacting, and responding through reinforcement of poor models. Behaviorists believe that inappropriate patterns of learning can be *extinguished* or unlearned and more appropriate behaviors can be learned to replace the earlier, faulty learning (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996). Three parenting programs which are based on behavioral psychology are *Assertive Discipline for Parents* (Canter, 1988), *SOS Help for Parents* (Clark, 1995) and *1-2-3 Magic* (Phelan, 1996).

Existential or humanistic psychologists reacted against psychoanalysis as a method of effective helping as follows: The humanistic approach, essentially, sees the individual as possessing free will, choice, purpose and, in this sense,

individual capacity for self-determination and self-actualization within a teleological perspective of human nature (Hanson & L'Abate, 1982, p. 6). Thus, humanistic psychology provided the theoretical emergence of placing emphasis upon the individual who possesses both the freedom and the responsibility to meet his or her needs. Of course, one of the most notable humanistic psychologists and developer of the *Human Hierarchy of Needs* was existentialist Abraham Maslow (1954) who professed that people strive for self-actualization. Another humanistic, Carl Rogers (1961), believed that humans are basically trustworthy. Thus, he developed the person-centered approach to counseling, teaching and learning. Examples of parenting programs which are based on the humanistic philosophy are *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* (Clarke, 1978), *Parenting with Love and Logic* (Cline & Fay, 1990), and *Parent Effectiveness Training* (Gordon, 1970).

All of the above-mentioned commercial parenting programs are highly successful with groups of upper and middle-class parents with high cognitive abilities and who are intellectually curious to continue to learn how to be the best parents they can possibly become. For example,

Active Parenting Today (Popkin, 1993) is a very popular and effective program for parents of families who are not at risk.

Families At Risk

Who are the at risk? Families and youth at risk include numerous and varied descriptions and are seen in great and growing numbers in our society. Families at risk broadly include a family member or members with one or more of the following characteristics: An identified, or unidentified medical or mental disorder diagnosis; low socioeconomic status and poorly educated; unemployed; a dropout from a previous educational experience; frequently distrustful of the system; compulsive/addictive behaviors; abusive behaviors; low self-esteem; and, a general feeling of failure or failure-cycled.

The most urgent cases are those children who are being physically, sexually, and emotionally abused and neglected. In Montana and across the United States, social welfare services are barely able to keep up with the reports of abuse. Caseworkers must make decisions through prioritizing the seriousness and danger elements of each case while

answering the calls with the youngest, most vulnerable children first. Foster care for teens is almost non-existent because of the reluctance of families to accept a youngster with longer histories of problems into their homes. Using preventative education to achieve learning, integration, and application of parenting skills may help break the chain of violence, abuse and neglect.

Another very large group of youngsters are afflicted with medical or mental disorders which upset the balance, or homeostasis (Ackerman, 1958; Satir, 1967), in their families. Diagnosed mental disorders in teens are especially difficult for a family to live with because of the acting-out behaviors which often occur as a result of the disorders (Ackerman, 1958; American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Haley, 1963; 1976; L'Abate, 1976; Satir, 1972). Parenting skills can be taught which will specifically lessen the impact of the trauma and imbalance in the family. More importantly, however, is the group support, sharing of information and resources, and problem-solving which occurs in these adult learning groups to heighten the self-esteem of the parents and lessen their sense of failure at parenting.

Parenting Programs for Families At Risk

Unfortunately, there are few parenting programs available on the market for practitioners who are working with the at-risk population. Because of the terrific differences in these diverse categories of adult learners, there is a great need to have a flexible, adaptable program which can be designed to meet the needs of each parenting group. For example, when teaching and facilitating a group of court-ordered parents who have been found guilty of either child abuse or neglect and their small children have been taken away and placed outside their homes into foster care, a sophisticated, highly cognitive, and well-developed Adlerian-based program simply fails to be relevant to their experiences or situations which, in turn, means that this program fails to meet their needs as adult learners. Another problem which arises from the aforementioned parenting programs within court-ordered parenting classes comes with the assumption that these families have their children living with them. When asked to do homework or other family activities, the court-ordered parents feel alienated, ashamed, or out of place.

If the needs of parents of families at risk are unmet by the most popular parenting programs, what are the learning principles of parenting programs that are available? Basically, all of these prescribed programs have good, sound principles in common which are presented to the participants in a variety of ways. Usually, the teaching style for the most popular commercial programs responds to the cognitive learner who does not have emotional encumbrances or extreme family stress. Many programs demand passive learning with reading, writing, and a good deal of attention to the presented material. For many parents, these programs are meaningful, educational, and enjoyable.

There is, however, no commercial program that effectively addresses the needs of the hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parent of families at risk. When the needs of adult learners are not met, those adults either tend to discontinue or not initiate participation in parenting classes. Unfortunately, parents of families at risk are usually the persons with the greatest need for the learning, support, problem solving, and sharing of experiences which result from an excellent parenting program. At the Washington School Counseling Association Conference in 1988,

a workshop there addressed this very dilemma and the unanswered question was asked, "How can we get the parents, who would benefit from parenting classes the most, to attend?" Eight years later, that same question continues to be asked by adult educators of parenting classes.

Who are the hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk? Hard-to-reach adult learners who are underrepresented in continuing education parenting classes may have one or more of the following characteristics: An extreme acting-out child; low socioeconomic status; the handicapped; developmentally-delayed mentally, socially, emotionally, or physically; school dropouts or those having a previous negative school experience; unemployed; being involved with family services, the law, or welfare systems; minimum wage earners; possessing low self esteem and a general feeling of failure (Larson, 1980). Hard-to-reach parents may encounter any number of real or imagined "roadblocks" to continuing education such as transportation, time, money, childcare, poor health, being unaware of the learning opportunities, shyness or embarrassment, restrictive locations, or other "red tape" and rigid requirements (Larson, 1980, pp. 27-38).

In 1996, a parenting program was developed and entitled, *Parents of At Risk Teens*. Although many of the principles or main concepts are similar to many other parenting programs, the approach is different. The program goals are to do as much active communication, participation, and group problem-posing and problem-solving as possible in each and every one of the six sessions. The first *Parents of At Risk Teens* group was sponsored jointly by *The Parent Connection*, a parent resource center of Billings School District # 2, and Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK), a non-profit family advocacy group.

The original core group of *Parents of At Risk Teens* consisted of eight parents and two teachers from Billings School District # 2 who work with at-risk teens. Since *Parents of At Risk Teens* was written to address the needs of a group of parents with at-risk teenagers, the program centered on the needs of the parents. Only by coincidence, every one of the teenagers was a young woman who had the following experiences and characteristics: Living with both parents; identified and diagnosed with a bipolar mental disorder; experienced running away from home; experienced the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs; interacted

with the police; and, excessive truancies from school. Therefore, when parents enrolled in *Parents of At Risk Teens*, they had already tried many interventions with their at-risk children. These adult learners wanted support, resources, help, information, and answers immediately. Each week, the lessons, strategies, and activities were modified to meet the needs of this group of adult learners. This group worked on many of their parenting problems together through problem-posing and sharing of resources, failures, successes, fears, joys, confusion, and feelings. *The Parents of At Risk Teens* group became integrated as a working unit and the attendance was nearly one hundred percent with the exception of complications from parental participation in softball, school open houses, and school music concerts. One couple gave up their weekly choir practice to attend the classes. Every one of the group members felt valued during the parenting program, however, in each of their written evaluations it was unanimously stated that the group interaction and sharing made them feel as though they were really *not* failures as parents. With this feedback, it was decided to change the name of the program to *Parenting Success with Teens* and *Parenting*

Success with Kids to reflect the positive goals of problem solving and success rather than failure. Through a needs-based process, *Parenting Success for Teens* evolved into a humanistic, learner-centered parenting program which accomplished the process of adult learning because it met the needs of this parenting group by supplying peer support, relevant information, and problem-solving opportunities.

Parenting Success applies the humanistic philosophy which has strong roots in psychology (Frankel, 1963; Maslow, 1954; May, 1969; Perls, 1969; Rogers, 1961; Sarte, 1961), adult education (Brookfield, 1986; Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1980; McKenzie, 1978; Rogers, 1969; Tough, 1971), and family therapy (Gordon, 1970; Satir, 1972, 1976). The humanistic foundation of *Parenting Success* is the belief that a healthy individual means a healthier society. Therefore, this democratic philosophy works well with families, when counseling or advising individuals and groups, and in the classroom or meeting room. Humanistic philosophy applies to the learning process, the learner, and the facilitator. Congruency in communication is an important humanistic factor in relationships (Satir, 1972, 1976), through which parents and educators can offer integrity and security to

children. Congruence is functional consistency and is evident when one's actions match one's words which includes all verbal and nonverbal communication (Hansen & L'Abate, 1982).

Humanistic philosophy is dedicated to the development of human beings and involves a process and is not a condition or product (Knowles, 1970, pp. 37-55). The key concepts of humanistic adult education are freedom and autonomy, trust, active cooperation and participation, and self-directed learning (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 10).

Adult Learning

J. R. Kidd (1973, pp. 45-47) advises the teacher of adults to tie learning to experience as a method to engage participants and to create a stimulating environment. Kidd believes in the learner-centered curriculum and upon the development of the individual and the concept of self-appraisal. According to Kidd, the three R's of adult education are relevancy, relationship, and responsibility (1973, pp. 121-122).

Malcolm Knowles (1980) outlined his four major assumptions underlying andragogy as follows:

> a) The importance of a positive self-concept to successful learning by the adult; b) The humanistic belief that all adults are individuals and unique with a lifetime of valuable experiences which can be used as resources for participatory learning; c) Education of the adult needs to be learner-centered because adults learn what is relevant to their developmental stage of life in order to fulfill social roles.; d) Adults desire knowledge that has immediate application and are more effectively met through problem-solving group techniques. (pp. 59-62)

Knowles' outstanding contribution to adult education can be summarized as follows:

> Malcolm Knowles is indeed a humanistic adult educator. For him, the learning process involves the whole person, emotional, psychological, and intellectual. It is the mission of adult educators to assist adults in developing their full potential in becoming self-actualized and mature adults. Andragogy is a methodology for bringing about these humanistic ideals. (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.133)

Adults are self-directed learners and usually do not respond well to competition. Since they want active cooperation in learning situations, the learning climate is very important to the adult learner. Brookfield (1986), Candy (1991), and Tough (1979) did comprehensive work to understand the self-directed learner. Tough (1979) used an extensive series of interviews and research through which he found that people begin new learning projects for pleasure,

self-esteem, and other reasons which come at the end of a chain of events. Brookfield (1986) clarifies the meaning of the independent learner through his statement that follows:

> The key notion here is that of learner responsibility. . . this does not mean that independent learning occurs in an isolated social and intellectual vacuum. . . Independence, therefore, is signaled not by the physical context in which the student is working but by the degree of control exerted over the content and method of learning. (pp. 25-26)

In his book, *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning,* Candy (1991) speaks of constructivism, learners, and learning. The constructivism theory in education is concerned with the learner's interpretation of concepts and how meaning is structured, built, or assembled. This suggests not only a case for active learning but more importantly that the learning must be relevant and have some connection to the learner's experiential background (pp. 270-278).

Since learning for adults may involve reordering or restructuring which effects a change in behavior or the way a concept is perceived (Mezirow, 1991), the *transformative learning* experience can often be unpleasant, painful, or

even cause a temporary decline in the learner's self-concept. Brookfield (1992) concurs:

> Learning we would regard as transformative is often a bittersweet experience with the excitement inspired by sensing that we are on the verge of a redefinition of self-balanced by an awareness of the threat that such a change represents. Hence, while the long-run outcome of many learning episodes can be interpreted (with benefit of hindsight) as being positive, productive, and fulfilling, while people are immersed in them they are often experienced as deeply painful. Significant learning generally involves fluctuating episodes of anxiety-producing self-scrutiny and energy-inducing leaps forward in ability and understanding. (p.12)

A strong proponent of identifying and addressing the needs of the client comes from the originator of the Hierarchy of Human Needs, Abraham Maslow (1954). Maslow, as well as many other humanistic educational psychologists, believe that unless the basic needs of survival and safety are met, then the progressively higher needs of love, affection and belonging, esteem needs, and self-actualization will not be met and the learner can not develop to his or her full potential. Although this theory is not often researched, it remains a basic theory of prominence in the field of educational psychology. *Parenting Success* uses Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to begin

participatory and experiential learning in the very first meeting. By relating their own experiences to the hierarchy, the adult learners are able to immediately begin to build an awareness of how *Parenting Success* is relevant to their own unique situations.

Problem

We do not know how active learning occurs in the adult participating in a program for hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk. Parenting classes are taught across the United States every night of the week. Who attends most of these classes? The population that is mostly attracted to parenting classes is usually the middle or upper-class parent who wants to improve and enhance their parenting skills which may already be adequate. These parents have often not experienced some of the more serious problems that society's parents of families at risk are enduring today such as family involvement with alcohol and other drug abuse, fear for their personal safety, poverty, homelessness, gang or "wannabe" gang involvement, stealing or shoplifting, involvement with the police, probation, and youth court services, running away, mental or medical

disorders, suicide attempts, or a combination of some or all of the above risk factors. As a result of family system behaviors, actions, and reactions, most parents of families at risk develop lower self-esteem and a feeling of failure about their ability to parent. To meet the needs of this important population, an empowering program named *Parenting Success* was developed for parents of families at risk. At the end of six weeks of meetings, no one had dropped the program and the enthusiasm appeared to be present with all of the parents.

What were the factors which caused and sustained the occurrence of learning in these hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents who continued in this adult learning project week after week until the completion? Although an evaluation was done which provided positive feedback, the answer to the above question was not researched. The parenting program was founded on a humanistic philosophical base. The goal of *Parenting Success* was to have involvement from the participants through active communication (Satir, 1976), active learning (Candy, 1991), group problem-solving through shared experiences (Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1980), and awareness of and responsibility for satisfaction of their

own learning needs (Brookfield, 1986) which, in turn, would demonstrate the need for healthy self-esteem (Knowles, 1980; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969). With this trial group, the program worked. Now, the urgency has become even greater to know specifically how learning occurred and what factors contributed to the accomplishment of the adults participating in the *Parenting Success* program.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify how adults learned through participation in *Parenting Success*. *Parenting Success* has been created for parents of families at risk. With the world's rapid entry into the technological information era comes society's equally urgent need for subsistence of the American family's physical, emotional, and social well-being. Through *Parenting Success,* parents are discovering ways to meet the survival, safety, belonging and esteem needs (Maslow, 1954) for themselves and for their troubled families. This study described the learning patterns of the adults who participated in this parenting program.

How does the format of *Parenting Success* encourage or facilitate learning? After reviewing many parenting programs, it was found that the majority come in the form of books, videos, tapes and workbooks. Therefore, with most parenting programs today, the instruction is pre-packaged and the pace is determined by the curriculum and not the adult learner. In *Parenting Success*, humanistic adult learning principles are the foundation for the program, which means a learner-centered approach. Trust, communication, and discussion of experiences play an important role in determining, acknowledging and addressing the needs of the adult learner in *Parenting Success*. The research findings generated from evaluations, class discussions, interviews, field notes, observations, and comments of participating parents will reveal important information which may transform the manner in which crucial parenting skills and information are disseminated for effective adult learning to occur.

Why do the participants of *Parenting Success* return week after week until the program is complete? Adults demand to have their needs met with immediate and useful information or they will not return for more learning

sessions or classes. The research on *Parenting Success* determined how those needs are met and how learning is impacted by meeting those needs.

Significance of the Study

Discovering how learning occurs in the failure-cycled parents enrolled in *Parenting Success* can open a window of opportunity for a very large population of adult learners which previously has not been available but has been greatly needed. As noted earlier, a common frustration of organizations delivering parent education to families at risk has been a difficult task.

Parents with teenagers at high risk have usually tried many community resources and options available to them by the time they arrive for parenting classes. Many of these parents have experienced devastating times with their teens and they want answers immediately. The experience-sharing opportunities that *Parenting Success with Teens* offers is designed to meet the intense needs of these parents of families at risk through support, problem-solving, and hope for the future.

Parents of families at risk that have been ordered by a judge in a court of law to participate in parent education as a condition to regain custody of their children bring many issues and strong emotions to parenting class. Naturally, court-ordered parents feel angry, resentful, and hurt that their children have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care. Usually court-ordered parents carry these negative and hurt emotions with them to parenting classes which have been mandated. Many parent educators find this scenario an extremely difficult arena for the teaching and learning of parenting skills. Finding a learning program that will positively engage and empower the reluctant participant is wanted by parent educators and parents of families at risk. *Parenting Success with Kids* offers general parenting and relationship skills which are delivered in an atmosphere of empathy and mutual respect to create awareness, support, hope for the future, and motivation for positive change.

Research Questions

1. How do parents of families at risk react to a parenting program based on adult learning principles?

2. How does the philosophy of learner-centered humanistic adult education effect active learning when applied to *Parenting Success* learning groups of hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk?
3. What adult teaching and learning methods, techniques, and activities facilitated learning in *Parenting Success*?
4. How does the learning efficacy of the participants in *Parenting Success* compare to how effectively the needs of the participants are met?
5. During the six-week learning groups of *Parenting Success*, how do the participants' attitudes and behaviors change?
6. Why is it possible for a failure-cycled parent to feel more successful as a result of participating in an adult learning class for parents of families at risk?

Assumptions

The researcher made five major assumptions for the purpose of this study. The first assumption, which was made on an empirical basis, is that all parents, including those in families at risk, love their children and want to be successful parents. Each time a parenting learning group is begun, the participant has had to take a risk and make a

personal commitment to enter a new situation with strangers which could possibly be uncomfortable. With parents of at risk families, this task is especially noteworthy because of their lowered self-esteem. Through observation, the intense caring for their children is evident in parents of families at risk as they recount their experiences and express their needs right from the beginning of *Parenting Success* programs.

Another important assumption of this research is that the court-ordered parent is open and willing to learn how to improve the relationship with his or her child or children. This assumption is also founded on an empirical basis. During the sessions of *Parenting Success*, lively discussions and frequent problem-posing and problem-solving situations offer proof of each participant's focus, feelings, beliefs, and intellectual curiosity to become more comfortable with parenting issues. Additionally, Kidd (1973) offers valuable information in his in-depth discussions which differentiate between learning to meet needs and learning because of motivation. Through both observation and use of Kidd's work, the reflective parent educator is able to design

learning to meet the needs and motivations of the parent of families at risk.

A third assumption is that if parenting education is delivered with constructivist and adult learning principles, then the participants' retention rate will be sustained and improved over the duration of the parenting program. Constructivism is deeply rooted in the humanistic philosophy of learning. As Candy (1991) has noted, learning must be relevant and have some connection to the learner's experiential background. Sparks (1994) strongly recommends that the group leader model experiential learning opportunities rather than using common instructional methods such as lecture, telling, or directing. Some researchers (Candy, 1990; Mezirow, 1991) have named teaching and learning a process of negotiation where meanings are construed and constructed.

Assumption number four assumes that through active participation in *Parenting Success*, the learner is able to gain awareness, support, and hope for the future that will effect new thinking, feelings, and behaviors which will lessen the stress of feeling unsuccessful at parenting.

The fifth and final assumption is that parenting skills can be learned which will specifically empower the parent and lessen the impact of the trauma and imbalance in the family. (Ackerman, 1958, 1966; Molineux, 1985; Napier, 1978; Satir, 1972, 1983)

Limitations and Delimitations

Following are limitations which are factors in the availability of learning opportunities for *Parenting Success:* (1) Research on *Parenting Success with Kids* is limited to the court-ordered parents in families at risk; (2) The length of time for the learning groups of *Parenting Success* is six meetings. This is an unrealistic and short time to effect change. Therefore, the goal for *Parenting Success* is to create and instill awareness, support, empowerment, and hope for the future; (3) Transportation to class was a limitation for nearly all of the court-ordered participants during sub-zero January weather. Nearly all of the participants relied on walking, inconvenient bus schedules, or receiving a ride to class from another person for their transportation. (4) The availability of childcare was a limiting factor for the court-ordered parents.

Therefore, after the initial sessions, childcare was provided to the parents that have had their children returned to them by the court. (5) The cost of the parenting classes for court-ordered parents is not a factor because United Way and grant moneys provide scholarship assistance as needed. Without the scholarship assistance, cost of parent education would be limiting factor.

Definition of Terms

Adult learner refers to the adult who is participating in a learning project (i.e., parenting class).

Affective domain refers to the area of our psyche which relates to and influences emotions and feelings.

Children at risk refers to the child who is at risk of not moving through normal developmental stages because of physical, emotional, or social disabilities or trauma.

Cognitive (when referring to parenting programs) means to gain knowledge through observation or information rather than through emotions.

Cognitive domain refers to the area of our psyche which relates to and influences the perception of knowing or acquiring knowledge.

Constructivism has humanistic philosophical roots and theorizes that humans learn new knowledge by associating or connecting it with existing knowledge, experiences and known concepts.

Court-ordered parent refers to the parent who has been ordered by a judge and court of law to follow the conditions of a treatment plan, which usually includes parenting classes, in order to be reunited with his or her child or children.

DFS refers to the former Department of Family Services for the State of Montana or Child Protective Services. Presently, the departments' name is Child and Human Services.

Empowerment refers to the act of giving power to another.

Failure-cycled describes an individual who has experienced multiple failures which continue to perpetuate other failures and the individual actually believes that he or she cannot succeed.

Families at risk refers to a family that is at risk of being unable to function as a unit while human needs of the family members are not being met.

Family values refers to the importance and value one places upon the family as an integral part of child and adolescent development.

Functionality (as it relates to families) refers to each member of the family being able to maintain a strong self-concept under conditions of separateness, equality, freedom, individuality, negotiation of differences, and unconditional love and acceptance.

Hard-to-reach parents refers to those parents who may be difficult to reach with information about opportunities for parent education.

Humanistic philosophy or psychology indicates that the development of self-concept is central to this theory with emphasis placed on freedom, responsibility, and autonomy of the individual.

Learner-centered means that the teaching and learning opportunities are determined by the needs of the learner.

Learning groups is the name given to the collective members of the *Parenting Success* parent education classes which meet six times on a weekly basis.

Learning styles refers to individual methods of learning which are expressed by behaviors which serve as indicators of how a person learns from and expresses himself while adapting to the environment.

Roadblocks are the barriers to learning or barriers to opportunities for learning.

Self-actualization is Maslow's highest level of human needs which means that the individual has a high degree of need satisfaction in all areas of his or her life.

Self-esteem is the need to be respected as a worthwhile individual and to build self-respect and self-confidence.

The system refers to governmental agencies such as the welfare system, the legal system, the Department of Child and Human Services, Child Protective Services, or schools.

Youth or teens at risk refers to pre-adolescent or adolescent individuals who are having much trouble moving through the stages of development necessary to become autonomous individuals while gaining freedom and responsibility.

Summary

The number of families at risk in the United States is growing at a staggering rate of acceleration. Parents of families at risk are overwhelmed by the task that leaves its members grasping for help and hope for the future. To meet the needs of this important population, an empowering program named *Parenting Success* was developed for parents of families at risk. *Parenting Success* was founded on a humanistic philosophical base. The goal of *Parenting Success* is to have involvement from participants through active communication, active learning, group leadership, group problem-posing and problem-solving through shared experiences, and an awareness of the responsibility for meeting their own learning needs which validates the need for a healthy self-esteem. For many of the parents, the group sessions mean support while they work through a loss of the "the ideal family". For others, the meetings give parents new insight and hope for the future. Now, the urgency has become even greater to know specifically how, why, and to what extent learning occurred and what factors

contributed to the accomplishment of the adults participating in the *Parenting Success* program.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A need for effective parenting education in today's society with special emphasis on the importance of providing help for parents of families at risk. In order to accomplish the design of an effective learning program which may prepare the parent of an at-risk family for the possibilities of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991), it is imperative that major conceptual areas be explored at a level of understanding to assure the best possible design for learning. Therefore, the following literature relevant to this investigation is reviewed: (a) Parenting and family issues; (b) learning theory; (c) educational philosophy; (d) adult developmental theory; (e) adult learning theory; (f) available parenting education programs; (g) global

influences affecting adult learning; and (h) external and internal factors influencing adult learning.

Parenting And Family Issues

What does the family of the 21st Century look like? Perhaps another way to answer the above question is to discuss the differences seen in today's family compared to the family of 1960. However, looking back to what was will not define the issues of the American family in the present and future. Countless resources discuss the belief that parenting today is indeed much different and more complex than it was 40 years ago (Elkind, 1994; Fine, 1989; Garbarino, 1995; Pipher, 1994; National Association of School Psychologists, 1990; Thompson & Rudolph, 1996). In their book, *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990's*, noted futurists Naisbett and Aburdene asserted the following weighty predictions which have evolved and will continue to profoundly affect the American family into the next century:

> (1) technological growth will continue; (2) the United States will move further from the Industrial Age into the Information Era; "family" will be redefined to include many types of homes and relationships; (4) as more women enter the work

> force, more mothers of preschoolers and school age children will seek good child care; (5) although the divorce rate has leveled off, over half of all children will live in a single-parent household at some time during their lives; (6) international events will continue to have a strong influence on the United States and the children will need to learn about other cultures in order to live and work with others effectively; (7) concern about substance abuse and addiction will continue to have high priority; and, (8) environmental issues will bring abut changes in living patterns. (Thompson and Rudolph, 1996, p. 5-6)

Although the above predictions in *Megatrends 2000* (1990) have proven accurate, the centrality of human existence is summarized by Naisbett and Aburdene (1990) as follows:

> The most exciting breakthroughs of the 21st century will occur not because of technology but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human (p. xxiii).

With all of the revisions in the child's, parents', and family's world, adjusting to change alone can be an overwhelming, confusing, and stressful task. Carl Rogers (1980), author of *A Way of Being*, offers the following optimistic view of a rapidly changing world in the future:

> The persons of tomorrow are the very ones who are capable of understanding and absorbing that paradigm shift. They will be the ones capable of living in this new world, the outlines of which are still only dimly visible. . .This new world will be more human and humane. It will explore and develop the richness and capacities of the human mind and spirit. It will produce

> individuals who are more integrated and whole. It will be a world that prizes the individual person—the greatest of our resources. (pp. 355-356)

Loss of the extended family in the 1990's is apparent. A young family may consist of a father working long hours, a mother who works during the day and must manage the needs of the family home in the evenings, and two children who require high quality and expensive daycare while their parents are at work. Grandparents and other relatives who might otherwise give the family time and emotional support may live hundreds or thousands of miles away (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996). In another family, a single parent may serve as both mother and father to a child or children while working, attending classes, and managing the home. More and more prevalent, is the family that consists of two grandparents who are raising a grandchild out of the proximity of the child's parent. No matter what the family structure looks like, how a family functions is crucial to the wellness of the parents, children, and family (Zill & Nord, 1994). Family functioning includes the principles of parenting style, manner of communication, and time spent together (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985). Satir (1972) summarizes the impact of families upon society as follows:

> Put together all the current existing families and you have society. It is as simple as that. Whatever kind of training took place in the individual family will be reflected in the kind of society that is created. And institutions such as schools, churches, businesses, and government are, by and large, extensions of family forms to non-family forms. (p. 290)

Parenting Styles

The style in which parenting is done is often professed to have great impact upon the development of the child (Ackerman, 1958; Anderson, 1992; Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1982; Fine, 1989; Gordon, 1970; Haley, 1976; Peck, 1978; Popkin, 1993; Satir, 1972). Fine (1989) reports numerous studies which have yielded consistent findings between particular parenting styles and the development of certain personality characteristics of children.

Among the parenting styles studies cited (Elkind, 1994; Fine,1989), are those of Baumrind (1967, 1971, 1972), which identified three styles of parenting as authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. Authoritarian parents are described as highly controlling, demonstrating less warmth, and being more punitive toward their children. The children of authoritarian parents are compliant but often emotionally unaccepting of the parent, withdrawn, unhappy, and not able

to trust (Elkind, 1994; Fine, 1989; Smith; 1990). Permissive parents are nurturing, warm, overprotective, and supportive while failing to have consistent discipline. Permissive parents tend to produce children who are lacking in self-control, motivation, and independence. Authoritative parents are warm while maturely exercising parental control and using clear communications. The children of authoritative parents are usually the most autonomous, competent, mature, and have greater esteem (Elkind, 1994; Fine, 1989, Litovsky & Dusek, 1985). Because the research is so consistent on this issue, it appears that most authors use parenting styles as an important theoretical principle to be incorporated into their writing on childrearing (Elkind, 1994; Fine, 1989, Peck, 1978; Popkin, 1993). A extensive study involving 4,100 adolescents revealed by Lamborn (1991), also included neglectful families along with authoritarian, indulgent, and authoritative parenting styles. This study yielded the following results: children of authoritarian parents scored high on obedience but low on self-confidence; children of indulgent or permissive parents had strong self-confidence but a high frequency of behavior problems; children of

authoritative parents scored highest on psychosocial competence and had the least behavioral problems; and, the children from neglectful homes scored lowest on psychosocial competence and highest on behavior dysfunction.

Parents in families at risk are often unaware of the destructive relationship interactions which may be contributing to unhealthy parenting patterns from one generation to the next (Beattie, 1987; Bradshaw, 1988; Bowen, 1978; Elkind, 1994). Manuel J. Smith, in *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty* (1975), explains this incognizance as believing that the following choice must be made between parenting styles:

> Either being tyrannical bastards or indulgent jellyfishes with their kids. They see no meaningful middle ground between these two extremes. Faced with such a distasteful choice, they fall back upon the efficient, emotional manipulation taught them by their parents instead of assuming the frank, honest responsibility of taking authority: *"I want you to . . . ."* (p. 21)

Profile of the Strong, Healthy Family

Most family therapy theories hold a belief about what distinguishes a healthy family from an unhealthy or at-risk family. The Family Group Therapy theory of John Bell (1975)

asserts that the healthy family had complementarily aims, various problem solving methods to meet varying individual demands, continual evaluation of consequences of family decisions, and flexibility so that new methods of accommodation might be found. Conversely, Satir (1972, 1976; 1983) stresses the following four most important ingredients for a healthy functioning family: (1) Self-esteem, (2) communication, (3) rules, (4) taking risks. Each of the four parts is interdependent on the other three; if one part such as communication is changed, the other three also change.

Parenting educators also have defined the healthy family. Glenn and Nelson (1989), listed the following predictors for a child's success as being a by product of the healthy family: Having a positive perception of their parent's image of them; family closeness; problem-solving ability; a parenting style labeled, "loving freedom"; the family's link to the community; and rules. Based upon their extensive research of 3,000 families over a decade, Stinnett and DeFrain (1989) found that understanding American families was difficult. The results and conclusions from that research determined that the following six major

qualities of strong families in the Western industrial societies and the more technologically oriented nations of the globe: (a) Commitment, (b) appreciation, (c) communication, (d) time together, (e) spiritual wellness, and (f) the ability to cope with stress and crisis (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1989, p. 56). Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle (1980), found the following three main ingredients to be present in the healthy family: Cohesion which is the force holding the family together but distinguishing that relationship from enmeshment or disengagement; Communication involving open, clear messages; and, Adaptability and the family's ability to be flexible in meeting newly changed circumstances.

Concluding, through comparison of the works among the researchers and practitioners above, one can note the similarities and like conclusions about what constitutes the healthy family. In her 1972 book, *Peoplemaking*, humanist and family therapist Virginia Satir wrote that all families are on a continuum somewhere between very nurturing to very troubled (p. 9). Healthy functioning families would fall somewhere on the nurturing half of the continuum, while families at risk would fall somewhere on the troubled half

of the continuum. It is important to remember that all families have strengths and it is important to not view parents of families at risk as being failures but to recognize and value those strengths (Bouie-Scott, 1990; Krasnow, 1990). Buri (1991) presented an interesting study involving 784 people aged between seventh grade through young adulthood. The importance of parental nurturance proved to be as important with children in early adulthood as it is to adolescents. Continuing parental nurturance into a young adult's life improves self-concept and the ability to cope with and better endure the stresses of change during that important developmental stage.

Families at Risk

Who are the families at risk and what do they look like? Although the term at risk is used frequently, it is important to present a word of caution to professionals about the possible ramifications of using at risk as a label for families and children. Labeling a child or family at risk by societal intervention specialists and educators may actually be problematic for success of the students with this label. When a family is designated as being at risk,

it is possible, if not probable, that their child's academic, social, and behavioral expectations may be lowered from the school's perspectives. Following the school's labeling process and the resultant changed perspectives about the student and his or her family, the family and child will then begin the internalization process of lowered expectations and failure (National Association of School Psychologists, 1990). Thus, labeling a family or its members at risk may facilitate that family's internalization of the failure-cycled process.

When discussing the issues below, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that not all families at risk own all of these issues but that the presence of the issues or problems will usually create families at risk. Every family at risk is not consistently designated by a particular socioeconomic level, ethnicity, or level of education. However, families at risk may be created by the following external or societal issues: Socioeconomic factors such a poverty, homelessness, or minority status; non-completion of high school or unsuccessful experiences in school; teen pregnancy and teen parenting; and community trauma. In *Children at Risk: Poverty, Minority Status, and Other*

Issues in Educational Equity (National Association of School Psychologists, 1990), there are important factors which differentiate today's society from that of yesteryear as follows:

- Eleven million children under the age of 15 live in poverty (one in five children currently live in poverty).
- One-third of these children are non-white. By the year 2000, 40% of all children in the United States under six years of age will be non-white, with half of them speaking a different language.
- Eighteen of the children born in 1986 were born out of wedlock. It is estimated that 21% of today's 14-year-olds will become pregnant teens.
- Children under 15 spend, and will spend, more time watching television than participating in classrooms; television also will consume valuable socialization time.
- Nearly 50 percent of today's children under 18 will be raised by a single parent and experience one or more "family" break-ups.
- Seventy percent of mothers work outside the home with most of them being employed full-time. (p. xiv)

Through a highly diversified geographical study of poor and minority parents, Reeves (1988), stresses that most of them really do care about their children and that successful programs must acknowledge and affirm this. Additionally,

most parents of families at risk care deeply about their children's education but *often do not know how to help*.

Furthermore, the at-risk family may be created by internal issues such as abuse, stress, emotional disturbance, mental illness, physical illness, or trauma. When internal issues contained within the family unit are problematic to the well-being of even one individual of the familial relationship, then the whole family is at risk (Beattie, 1987; Bradshaw, 1988; Satir, 1972). In her important book, *Reviving Ophelia* (1994), therapist Mary Pipher shares the following concerns about the family:

> There are many families in which the adults cannot or do not protect their children. Adults who are struggling with their own problems such as depression, drug or alcohol addiction, or crippling poverty often have no energy to parent. There are families in which parents are abusive or neglectful. Many children are homeless or in foster care or institutions. Still the majority of parents are motivated to do their best for their children. (p. 65)

Societal and Equity Issues

Parenting children once was done within extended families and often in rural communities where there were no strangers. Stinnett and DeFrain (1985) found community and family ties to be one of the characteristics of strong

families. "It takes a village to raise a child," was the theme for Hillary Clinton's (1996) recent book where she wrote the following regarding the impact of the family and its environment upon an individual's development:

> For good or ill, our families and the environments in which we live are the backdrop against which we play out our entire lives. Families shape our futures; our early family experiences heavily influence, and to a degree determine, how we forever after think and behave. At the same time our families are shaped by the forces at work in the larger society—and by the village, whether it is a suburb or ghetto, in which the family lives. That is why it is important for us to try to understand the personal and social forces that formed our own families, and how they shaped—and continue to shape—both our lives and the village around us (p. 28).

Many authors (Krasnow, 1990; NASP, 1990; Ziegler, 1987) concur that successful partnerships between parents of families at risk and their children's schools are not possible without the collaborative efforts of many community agencies and organizations to provide all services that are needed such as parenting education, counseling, health care, and housing. Nationwide, communities appear to be moving to replace extinct extended families through volunteer organizations which are reaching out to assist families at risk such as United Way, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, The

Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the Points of Light Foundation, and Americorps. At the first volunteer summit in Philadelphia on April 27, 1997, President Clinton, retired General Colin Powell, and "the former presidents will stand on the steps of Independence Hall and issue a call to action through service, an effort that organizers hope will improve by the end of 2000 the lives of at least 2 million of America's 15 million poor children" (Billings Gazette, 1997, p. 1).

Before beginning the discussion of minority status of families at risk, it is important to remember that learning about, understanding, and respecting the differences and values of other cultures are an important factor which strengthen any program for parents of families at risk. For example, Native Americans and Hispanics may differ culturally in parenting methods just as Caucasians of Jewish or Catholic backgrounds might differ in their views and values of family interactions. Unfortunately, poor minorities are usually families at risk from other language-speaking cultural backgrounds (NASP, 1990). In 1981, Hakim Rashid stated the following:

> Children from non-European lower socioeconomic status cultural groups are at a disadvantage in the schools because the American educational system has evolved out of a European philosophical, theoretical, and pedagogical context. (p. 201)

Traditionally, the tendency to classify children such as Hispanics or Native Americans as learning-disabled is found frequently in the literature (NASP, 1990). The rights of the child's family have been defined by special education laws which clearly state that parents are to have a major role in the special education labeling process. Again, however, the National Association of School Psychologists (1987) admonishes school personnel to strictly adhere to the rights of all families concerning the special education labeling process of their children.

One of the main reasons for school failure of the impoverished and minorities might be the occurrence of difficult relationships between families at risk and the public schools (NASP, 1990). The highly-structured school setting often does not "fit" with the children of families at risk. Based on past negative experiences of the parents, school may represent feelings of inadequacy, failure, and low self-worth which eventually become the value or belief

system of their children also. Additionally, parents of families at risk are often affected by emotional and logistical barriers which include fear, language, transportation, supplies, child care, and time.

Nationally, it is predicted that 30% of our nation's children face a high risk of educational failure which is contributed to by the following factors:

> (a) developmental immaturity or a lack of preparation for formal learning; (b) undiagnosed learning disabilities, emotional problems, or physical handicaps; (c) language problems or a non-English speaking background; (d) racial or ethnic prejudice; (e) parents who are indifferent to or ill-equipped to handle, their children's emotional and/or educational needs; and (f) schools or instruction of substandard quality. (NASP, 1990, p. 119)

The national dropout rate of minority youth coupled with low achievement in academics is a concern for educators since school failure and dropout has and will continue to have a very serious impact on the economic, social, and political future of the United States. It appears that education may have to undergo massive changes and paradigm shifts to present successful learning opportunities to meet the learning needs of all students (NASP, 1990). The following statements of the Committee of Economic

Development (1987) summarizes the ongoing problems of poverty and teenage pregnancy and how they impact minorities:

> Last year, 74.5% of all Black infants were born to unwed mothers, half of them teenagers. . . Children from poor and single-parent households are more likely than others to be children of teenage parents and to become teenage parents themselves. By age five, the children of teen parents already run a high risk of later unemployability. Not only do teen parents often lack employability skills; they also lack the necessary resources to begin developing their children's future parenting and employability skills. (p. 9)

It is important to remember, however, that poverty does not ensure academic failure. The United States Department of Education (1986) released the statement that, "what parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well-off the family is" (p. 7). In 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education created the famous report, *A Nation at Risk,* which included the following strong message to parents concerning the education of their children:

> You bear a responsibility to participate actively in your child's education. You should encourage more diligent study and discourage satisfaction with mediocrity and the attitude that says "let it slide;" monitor your child's study; encourage good study habits; encourage your child to take more

> demanding rather than less demanding courses; nurture your child's curiosity, creativity, and confidence; and be an active participant in the work of the schools. (p. 35)

Internal Issues of Families at Risk

The issue of *abuse* in families comes in many varieties—physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect—which often become intertwined with the other areas of abuse. "An abusive or neglectful parent may appear to be immature, impulsive, overly critical, overly strict, isolated, a 'loner', apathetic, distrustful, and lacking in self-esteem" (New Jersey Department of Human Services, 1993, p. 11). Garbarino and Gilliam (1980) profess that abuse occurs in families whose lives have gone out of control. These authors believe that the weak link which usually supports families and protects children is caused by social isolation from the community which is subsequently responsible for abuse and neglect:

> We believe that child maltreatment is an indicator of the overall quality of life for families. It is concentrated among people who have the least going for them economically, socially, and psychologically, and who thus comprise high-risk families. The rationale for this view emerges from an ecological approach to the problem, one that systematically deals with the interaction of

> person and environment (p. 20) . . . For the sufficient conditions noted previously to cause maltreatment they must occur in a context that permits the perpetrator-victim dyad to develop and be sustained. (p. 31)

Furthermore, Garbarino and Gilliam (1980) believe the following:

> Approximately twenty-five percent of America's families are in danger of being prone to abusing because of sufficient conditions that include child-rearing ignorance, unrealistic expectations concerning children, propensity toward violence, psychopathology, or presence of a special child. (p. 31)

Several sources are cited which claim that physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children and youth is defined by a cultural belief that children are property and that maltreatment is the misuse of power. The central issue is the well-being of children and whether or not families are working well on behalf of their children. "The problem of child abuse can be understood only as part and parcel of the overall society's commitment to the welfare of children and families." (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980, p. 20)

In a study reported on by Elizabeth Elmer (1967), *Children in Jeopardy: A Study of Abused Minors and Their Families,* the presence of social and psychological characteristics of physically abusive families are compared

to non-abusive families. Elmer found one or more of the following characteristics to be present in physically abusive families: (a) Families with marital difficulty due to inconsistency, lack of family togetherness, alcohol and/or drug use, quarreling, spousal fear, and separation of parents; (b) household disorganization; (c) inconsistent methods of discipline; (d) possessiveness as a form of control over the child or children; (e) negativism of parent towards the child or children; (f) emotional difficulties of the mother; (g) irritability and a low threshold for frustration which indicates a tendency to become angry quickly; and (h) a*nomic* indicating whether an individual distrusts society, is angry and frustrated at their treatment from society, retreats still further into isolation, and feels that society is unconcerned about his or her welfare; and, mother's lack of associations outside the home which indicates isolationism from relatives and community contacts. In Elmer's study, lack of the mother's associations outside the home were non-existent in non-abusive families, and all of the non-abusive mothers appeared to have a support system outside of the family while the mother's in abusive families had none.

As referenced above by Elmer (1967), anger and stress are common factors in abusive families. Garbarino and Gilliam (1980) point out that angry parents often become abusive because they do not know what else to do, reinforcing the belief that "we parent as we were parented" (p. 19) *When Anger Hurts* (McKay, Rogers,& McKay, 1989) is an excellent parent resource which is practical and easily applied for the purpose of understanding and managing anger. Anger covers underlying pain which festers and usually comes out in a destructive manner. The underlying pain and human suffering must be acknowledged and explored through effective communication. Included with other many useful techniques and skills is a chapter on "Problem-Solving Communication," which profoundly states the importance of clear communication to healthy family functioning as follows:

> People who are not able to communicate assertively are usually angry. They're angry because they are not able to ask for what they want or to protect themselves by setting limits. They are angry because they can't motivate others to cooperate or negotiate successfully. They blame instead of listen, they defend instead of problem solve. Your efforts toward becoming assertive will eliminate many anger-generating situations. Now you can begin to acknowledge your needs, ask for changes, set limits, and cope with criticism.

> This work will have an immediate payoff in the quality of your relationships. (p. 205)

According to The Survivors' Task Force of Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (1997), the following information about violence in the family is noted because of its profound impact upon children, families, and society:

- Violence is a tool used purposely by the perpetrator.
- Violence is a choice. It's not a result of provocation.
- Violence is a crime. It's a community problem, not just a family problem.
- Approximately 95% - 98% of the victims of battering are women. Thirty-one percent of female homicide victims are killed by their partners.
- In homes where domestic violence occurs children are abused at a rate of 1,500% higher than the national average.
- 73% of batterers were abused as children.
- 60% of boys who witness violence in the home grow up to abuse their adult mates.

Garbarino and Gilliam (1980) remind the reader that 50% of all child and adolescent abuse victims are also victims of neglect. Neglect, like abuse, is a social problem which can be contradicted by meeting the following minimal standards for the care of children and youth:

> (1) . . .every child and adolescent should have access to basic preventive health care, education, immunizations, clothing appropriate for the

> weather, dental care, adequate nutrition. . .; (2) . . .every child must be provided with adult supervision appropriate to his or her age and level of development. . .; (3) We must insist that every child be involved in an enduring relationship with a responsible, caring adult. This is particularly a problem for institutions that offer substitutes for parental care, such as foster care, schools, and day care. There is growing concern that much institutional treatment is systematically abusive and that much foster care is neglectful. Without a guarantee of permanent placement in a stable and supportive environment, removing children from their homes is itself abusive in most circumstances. If all we can offer is institutionalized neglect, we might better leave all but those children in acute life-threatening circumstances alone. "Above all else, do not harm" is a good motto here as elsewhere. (4) It is important that an environment is responsive to the child. In infancy, this means reacting positively to the social stimuli of smiling and vocalization. Later, it means taking an interest in the child's activities, thus avoiding emotional neglect. (p. 220)

Use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs by women of childbearing age has increased radically over the past fifteen to twenty years (Krutilla, 1993):

> Among the similarities found among substance abusing families include poor parenting skills, unreasonably high expectations for their children, lack of supervision, permissive or coercive disciplinary techniques, social isolation, lack of cohesion, family psychological problems, antisocial behaviors, stress, and conflict. An individual raised in a dysfunctional (alcoholic, substance abusing, abusive) family develops characteristics of rigidity, silence, denial, and isolation. (p. 1-13)

Likewise, many young people deal with stress the same way that their parents do which is mostly by using drugs and alcohol. In fact, substance abuse of youngsters by the sixth grade has tripled since 1975 (Elkind, 1994). Consequently, Elkind reports that there are two million alcoholic teenagers in the United States today who became addicted in a matter of months rather than over a number of years that it may have taken their parents to become addicted to alcohol. (p. 203-204)

In families where someone is abusing drugs or alcohol, the focus is either on the drug or on the person using the drug, but it is not on parenting which often becomes manifested in inconsistent, unpredictable, and often abusive behaviors (Nelson, Intner, & Lott, 1992). Drug and alcohol abuse rob many children of their childhood. Most therapists will not work with families where one of the members is chemically dependent because of their unpredictability (Molineux, 1985). However, with a family in recovery from addiction to alcohol or drugs, parenting skills can be learned which foster independence and interdependence in all family members. Two examples of skills which move families away from dysfunction and codependency are practicing

responsibility and encouragement. These skills are not usually automatic and must be practiced if the parents did not experience healthy functioning in their own families. An awareness of the problem is necessary by the addict and other family members as well as by recognizing that mistakes were made and by taking steps to resolve the problem by working on a solution (Nelson, Intner, & Lott, 1992).

Mental and physical disabilities within the family place a great deal of stress upon all family members. Without help from outside the family, the family with a disabled member may become so deeply enmeshed in feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that they are unable to deal effectively with problems. In order for change to occur, it is usually necessary for the family to mourn the loss caused by the disability and this is often manifested in despair, depression, and tears (Buscaglia, 1983). Although Leo Buscaglia's book, *The Disabled and Their Families* (1983), offers the following guidelines for assisting families with exceptional children, the suggestions could be generalized to any disabled member of the family or extended family:

- To help the parents to see that the special child is a child first and a child with a disability second.
- To assist the parents and child to understand their unique feelings which have been aroused by the advent of a disability.
- To aid the parents and child to accept the disability emotionally and intellectually without devaluating the individual possessing it.
- To help the child and parents in continuing to develop their unique potentials together, and independently, toward their own self-actualization (pp. 260-261).

In April of 1995, our nation experienced a tremendous tragedy when the federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed and 168 men, women, and children lost their lives. This example of community trauma placed thousands of families at risk in Oklahoma City. Wide media coverage of the event and consequential security measures in federal buildings across the United States brought the reality of death and fear of terrorism into millions of families from California to New York. In *The Last Dance, Encountering Death and Dying* (DeSpelder & Strickland, 1987), the authors caution that incomplete mourning which results from traumatic or violent situations that do not allow survivors to fully express their grief may leave persons confused and disoriented:

> As you review the messages conveyed by the literature with which you are familiar, you may find that much of it reflects the belief that death in the twentieth century is so horrendous in its violence and impersonality that it is impossible to truly comprehend. For modern writers, death often elicits less a contemplation of judgment or concern for immortality than a deep anxiety about annihilation and loss of identity. p. 28)

Any loss, crisis, or transition brings with it the need to process the change. Often the process of change is expedited with learning (Aslanian, 1980; Freire, 1973; Merriam & Clark, 1991; Mezirow, 1991; Rogers, 1969; Schlossberg, 1985). Parenting education can be a form of learning that assists parents of families at risk with their transitions.

Overview Of Learning Theory

What is learning and how does learning occur? This is a question which has been pondered for thousands of years dating back to ancient Greece. The process of learning may involve motivation of the learner, participation, reflection and action, potential for or experiencing change, and/or an expression of communication by the learner (Fellenz & Conti, 1992; Kidd, 1973; Lenz, 1982; Rogers, 1969; Tough, 1979).

According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991), learning is a process which usually results in a behavior change as a result of experiences (p. 124-125). The *process* of learning focuses on what is occurring when the learning is taking place and the *product* of learning defines what has been learned. Although there are many definitions of learning as a process, there are even more theories on how learning occurs. As an example, some theorists refer to learning theories as orientations (Houle, 1961; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991), worldviews (Knowles, 1980; Santrock & Bartlett, 1986), or styles of learners (Gardner, 1983; Gregorc, 1982, Kolb, 1984).

How learning occurs has been hypothesized throughout history and each rationale generally falls within three major orientations explaining the process of learning which include behaviorist, cognitivist, and humanist. Social learning theory is often treated as a fourth and separate orientation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) but can also be considered social learning theory under the behaviorist orientation as discussed by developmental psychologists (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). Kramlinger and Huberty (1990), in their article entitled *Behaviorism versus Humanism,*

summarized the three approaches to learning as all having advantages and disadvantages. According to these authors, a teaching cycle that uses all three approaches in relation to individual learning styles may be the most efficient method for optimum learning.

Behaviorist Learning Theory

According to Santrock and Bartlett (1986), there are four principles in the behavioral perspective as follows: (a) The environment influences the shaping of the individual's behavior; (b) behavior is learned from the environment; (c) there is a strong educational or instructional orientation which results in observable overt behavior; and() cognitive processes are viewed as mediators between the environment and behavior rather than being caused by behavior. Furthermore, the important behaviorist principles are *contiguity* and *reinforcement* which determine if learning will occur and if it will be repeated (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

John B. Watson was the founder of the behaviorist learning orientation early in the twentieth century. As with all major learning orientations, there are several

behaviorist theories which are categorized into the major orientation of behaviorism. Watson was responsible for behaviorist theory in the purest sense when his extensive research granted the position that the learner has no mental ownership of the learning which is totally effected by the environment (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

Another psychological behaviorist, Edward L. Thorndike, was a leader in educational theory when he formalized the laws of learning which have had a profound and lasting effect on the understanding of learning today (Kentridge, 1994; Elias & Merriam, 1995). Thorndike's major contribution to understanding was the stimulus-response theory of learning which has come to be called *connectionism* (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Thorndike also inspired the work of Ivan Pavlov in which his famous work with salivating dogs provided research on the process of association called classical conditioning (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). Guthrie's work of learning based on contiguity stated that a learned behavior response to a stimulus would be repeated when the stimulus was re-presented (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Grippen & Peters,1984).

B. F. Skinner is perhaps the best well-known behaviorist. Skinner's profound discovery and work with operant conditioning, or instrumental conditioning, professes that "the individual operates on the environment; that is, the individual does something, and, in turn, something happens to him or her. Another way of saying this is that the individual's behavior is instrumental in causing some effect in the environment" (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986, p. 37). To further explain, behavior is determined by its consequences or how the learner's response is reinforced.

Social learning theory is often placed in one of two of the major learning orientations as either behaviorist or cognitivist. Stuart (1989) reviews social learning theory history and current status and refers to these often divided theorists as *cognitive behaviorists*. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) broadly define social learning theory as "social learning theory posits that people learn from observing other people. . .such observations take place in a social setting—hence the label *observational* or *social* learning" (p. 134).

There has been other research documenting the combination of one or more major theories with social

learning theory to define learning. According to Grusec (1992), Robert Sears and other psychoanalysts combined their orientation with the stimulus-response learning approach to explain human behavior. Albert Bandura researched the cognitive and information-processing capacities that determine social behavior. Bandura's *reciprocal determinism* emphasizes the individual's ownership for behavior as well as the influence on behavior from the environment. Important research of Bandura which is seen in all theoretical orientations is social learning called *imitation, modeling, or vicarious learning* (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). Most recently, these principles have been explored for multicultural(Dunn & Griggs, 1995) and mentoring (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) research.

Robert Gagne is another theorist that uses both behaviorism and cognitive psychology in his curriculum development and, more specifically, instructional designers. Gagne was motivated to apply theory to practice through his research with learner outcomes. Gagne has employed the principles of behaviorist philosophy and the cognitivist theory. Robert Gagne's work has been applied globally to

all age levels, content areas, and learning environments (Cook & Kazlauskas, 1992-93; Fields, 1996).

Cognitivist Learning Theory

The behaviorist orientation of learning theory was ardently challenged by Gestalt psychologists who believed in the importance of looking at the whole individual rather than the parts. The Gestalt view stresses expanding one's awareness, accepting personal responsibility, and unifying the person (Corey, 1982; Perls, 1969). For theorists of the cognitive orientation, the learner has control over his or her learning whereas, for the behaviorist, learning is controlled by the environment (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Skinner, 1971). This shift in locus of control gives the learner the power to problem solve and find solutions. These principles have been labeled cognitivist or information-processing learning theories (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). The information-processing approach focuses on thought processing such as information gathering, memory, recall, and the ability to reason (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986).

A leader in cognitivist learning theory was developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget, who believed that the core of development is thinking and that intelligence develops from the interaction of hereditary and environmental forces (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). Meaningful Verbal Learning was developed by cognitivist, David Ausubel, who has become very well-known for the Advance Organizer Model of teaching (Downing, 1994). Through this method, which is the opposite of rote learning, learners are able to learn large amounts of material which is presented to them hierarchically as they build and connect new concepts to information the learner has already processed. Another cognitivist, Jerome Bruner, stresses the discovery method of learning which involves a process requiring simultaneous acquisition of new information, transformation or manipulation of knowledge, and evaluation to check task completion (Hartman, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Linking these processes together is often referred to as *learning how to learn*. Most recently, Wislock (1993) has recommended that two cognitivist strategies for individualizing instruction are the multisensory and point-of-intervention approaches.

Humanist Learning Theory

Rejecting both behaviorism and Freudian psychoanalysis, the *Third Force* or humanist psychologists discarded the views of man espoused by behaviorists and Freudian psychoanalysts. While the mechanistic world society was moving towards technology and nuclear power, the new learning theory of humanism placed the person at the center with an optimistic vision of faith that each individual can reach his or her potential (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1969; Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). Merriam and Caffarella (1991) describe the key points of humanistic learning theory as follows:

> Human beings can control their own destiny; people are inherently good and will strive for a better world; people are free to act, and behavior is the consequence of human choice; people possess unlimited potential for growth and development . . . From a learning theory perspective, humanism emphasizes a person's perceptions that are centered in experience, as well as the freedom and responsibility to become what one is capable of becoming. (p. 132)

Two leaders in humanistic learning theory are psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Person-centered, humanistic psychology fosters the belief that education will develop self-actualizing persons which will

lead to a better society, as a whole, of fully-functioning, thinking, feeling, active individuals (Maslow, 1954, 1968; Rogers, 1961, 1969, 1980). Carl Rogers (1980), a major contributor to the understanding of the humanist perspective, summed up the characteristics of humanistic psychology and its impact on learning as follows:

> Persons in an environment infused with these attitudes develop more self-understanding, more self-confidence, more ability to choose their behaviors. They learn more significantly, they have more freedom to be and become. (p. 133)

Abraham Maslow (1968) defines humankind's natural drive and dilemma to reach *self-actualization* or one's potential for growth and development as follows:

> That human predicament presented by the gap between human aspirations and human limitations (between what the human being *is*, and what he would *like* to be, and what he *could* be). This is not so far off from the identity problem as it might sound at first. A person is both actuality *and* potentiality. (p. 10)

Humanistic learning theory has had a major impact on the field of adult learning. Following are the characteristics of significant learning as outlined by Rogers (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991):

1. Personal involvement—the affective and cognitive aspects of a person should be involved in the learning event.

2. Self-initiated—a sense of discovery must come from within.
3. Pervasive—the learning makes a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner.
4. Evaluated by the learner—the learner can best determine whether the experience is meeting a need.
5. Essence is meaning—when experiential learning takes place, its meaning to the learner becomes incorporated into the total experience. (pp. 133-134)

Many well-known leaders such as Brookfield (1986, 1995), Freire (1993), Horton (1990), Knowles (1970, 1973, 1980), Mezirow (1991), and Tough (1979) have made important contributions through application of humanistic learning theory to adult education principles.

Concluding, the world continues to rapidly advance and change technologically and scientifically. John Naisbitt (1980), author of *Megatrends*, reminds us that with our ascending "high tech" we must continue to balance it the humanness of "high touch":

> Much has been written about the human potential movement, but to my knowledge no one has connected it with technological change. In reality, each feeds the other—high tech/high touch. Now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, high tech/high touch has truly come of age. Technology and our human potential are the two great challenges and adventures facing humankind today. The great lesson we must learn from the principle of high

> tech/high touch is a modern version of the ancient Greek ideal—balance. (p. 36)

The application of humanistic learning theory allows empowerment of the learner in a fast-paced and ever-changing technological world. As Naisbett (1980) cautions, the key is balance.

Educational Philosophy

Introduction

The important discussion of the history and philosophy of education provides the researcher and the reader with an important overview of the philosophical roots which have shaped the varied purposes, practices, and methods chosen for the delivery of knowledge and learning. Throughout history and everywhere learning occurs today, the role of education, research, the teacher, and the learner can be fiercely debated, ardently discussed, and passionately defended to be congruent with one's own beliefs about how and why superlative learning occurs. In the United States, hopefully, broad diversification of the educational process will continue to be openly tolerated and democratically agreed upon as the world's learners move into the next

millennium. A synopsis of the philosophies of adult education will encompass six educational foundations which include the following: (a) Idealism-Liberal; (b) Behaviorism-Behavioristic; (c) Realism-Analytic; (d) Pragmatism-Progressivm; (e) Existentialism-Humanistic; and, (f) Reconstructionism-Radical. Philosophies of adult education are further defined by Elias and Merriam (1995) describing the following: (a) Roles of the teachers and learners; (b) identifying the purpose, concepts, and key words of each philosophy; (c) explaining the methods and practices characteristic of each school of thought; and, (d) discussing some of the adult learning leaders and their contributions to the foundation of each philosophy.

Idealism

Idealism had its earliest documented beginnings in rhetoric inquiry founded in ancient Greece with Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. Although there were opposing views to their assertions, Plato and Socrates objectified being in a world of "ideal forms" (Donovan, 1990). Thus, idealism was founded. With dialectic as its theoretical foundation, this historical educational tradition emphasizes the study

of broad liberal learning for the student's optimum intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development (Elias and Merriam, 1995). Today, many colleges and universities continue the Harvard tradition of requiring liberal arts study of all students as well as offering a degree for those students desiring to concentrate on the philosophy of this holistic and intellectual education which advocates seeking knowledge above information and the ability to think above acquisition of skills. St. John's Colleges in Maryland, founded in 1784, and New Mexico continue to teach all students in the purest sense of idealism through the requisite study of the philosophies, fine arts, theology, classical Greek, and the Great Books. Work progresses through use of original sources, small discussion classes, written essays, oral final examinations, and individual student examinations (*The College Handbook*, The College Board, 1997, pp. 711-12).

During the late 1800's and early 1900's liberal adult education was conceived when two men, Melvil Dewey and Henry Leipziger, promoted New York City's Free Lectures program (Stubblefield & Rachal, 1992). Thus, the terms idealism and liberal adult education are often used synonymously.

Although he is receiving scrutiny and criticism today, adult educator, Cyril Houle, saw the value of liberal adult education among other philosophies when he classified adult learners into three categories as being goal-oriented, activity-oriented, or learning-oriented in 1961 (Gordon, 1993). Learner-oriented adults who learned for the sake of learning were eager to attend liberal adult education classes.

The authoritarian teacher of idealism and liberal learning clearly directs the educational process as illustrated by Benjamin Franklin in 1749 when he wrote *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania* (Parker, 1993) which prescribed intellectual and academic assignments to further the learning of his constituents. Two hundred seventy years ago, Benjamin Franklin promoted the concept of lifelong learning and adult education when he developed the Junto. The Junto, which eventually became the American Philosophical Society, met for nearly 40 years for the purpose of inquiry, debate, and personal improvement (Graham, 1994). Later in his life, Benjamin Franklin wrote his autobiography where he shared his quest for virtue and moral perfection (Levy, 1991). Franklin believed values

could only be acquired through dedication to learning. Today in Philadelphia, hundreds of landmarks throughout this city pay tribute to the "founder of American adult education," Benjamin Franklin.

The student of the traditional school of idealism desires to become cultured and to acquire conceptual understanding. As evidenced through development of the Lyceum Movement in the early nineteenth century, adults across America demonstrated their desire for learning as they participated in the study groups which introduced them to the works of Emerson, Thoreau, James and others (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 19).

With the emergence of the 20th century, idealism was profoundly influenced by the Christianity-based Chautauqua Movement which was founded by John Vincent. This program prescribed the methodical reading of materials and books which combined a strong religious orientation with liberal learning (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Again the academic judgment and intellectual expertise of the teacher of idealism is portrayed through the belief that "the intellectual powers of adults need direction, assistance, and encouragement" (Vincent, 1959, pp. 72-74).

Idealism has often possessed the reputation as being elitist. However, well-known educator Mark Van Doren believes that all people are deserving of a liberal education and should have equal opportunity for such study (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Other liberal educators, however, believed that idealism is for those who are intelligent and have the academic ability while the other less-than-able individuals who would not profit from a liberal education should receive technical training upon becoming adolescents (Hutchins, 1936).

Concluding, idealism or liberal adult education continues to be found in many institutions of learning. Although idealism or liberal education does not appear to be on the forefront of adult education in general, it remains a vital philosophy for certain learners. In 1961, adult educator Cyril Houle, saw the value of liberal adult education among other philosophies when he classified adult learners into three categories as being goal-oriented, activity-oriented, or learning-oriented. Houle asserted that the learner-oriented adults, who learned for the sake of learning, were eager to attend liberal adult education classes. Liberal educator, Mortimar Adler wrote the

acclaimed *Paideia Proposal* in 1982 in which he recognized that formal schooling is only part of education and that learning is a lifelong process that has no end. The basic values of truth, morals, spirituality, and aesthetics have found intellectual conveyance through the philosophy of idealism (Elias and Merriam, 1995). Perhaps the liberal learning provided by idealism will continue to provide a balance for many individuals.

Behaviorism

The reductionist worldview of behaviorism views psychology and learning as an experimental component of natural science which is centered solely on behavior, how the subject interacts with its environment, and without reference to human consciousness. Behaviorist psychology became established as a true science and Darwin's work with animals and his theory of evolution had a strong impact on behaviorism as a scientific theory. The traditions of materialism, empiricism, determinism, and positivism explained man in mechanistic terms (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). Behaviorism asserts that the learner is the product of shaping by his or her heavily-influencing environment.

The learner actively practices new behavior based on feedback received from the teacher-manager who controls and predicts outcomes. The purpose of behaviorist adult education is to bring about behavioral change that will ensure survival of the human species, societies, and individuals (Elias & Merriam, 1995). The very principles that represent behaviorist concept are now dividing the behaviorist camp and behaviorism appears to be emerging into a disunified science (Staats, 1995). Behaviorist concepts include the following terms: (a) Behavior modification; (b) competency-based and mastery learning; (c)computer-assisted learning; (d) stimulus-response (S-R); (e) behavioral objectives; and (f) reinforcement. Consequently, behaviorism is viewed by many curriculum planners as fragmented and rigid (Komoski, 1990). Those curriculum policy makers opposing the reductionist view are advocating for holistic curriculum reform. The reductionist worldview of behaviorism views psychology and learning as an objective experimental component of natural science which is centered solely on behavior and how the subject interacts with its environment (Watson, 1994) and without reference to consciousness.

Three contributing psychologists to the science of behaviorism have become educational and psychological leaders for the experimentation, research, and theory that has resulted from their work. Early in the twentieth century and through his extensive research with stimulus-response associations, Edward L. Thorndike had formalized the laws of learning—the law of effect, the law of exercise, and the law of readiness—which have become a major contribution to learning theory. Thorndike's laws of learning have been researched over time and remain important to the understanding of learning today (Kentridge, 1994; Elias & Merriam, 1995). In his 1914 book, *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology.*, a contemporary of Thorndike, John B. Watson, challenged the current explanation that human behavior was explained entirely by reflexes, associations, and reinforcers with the exception of the desires, motivations, and goals of the learner. Through extensive research with laboratory rats, Watson surmised that all human behavior was totally the result of learning caused by associations, stimuli and responses and he further rejected any mental ownership on the part of the learner. Watson became the founder of the American School

Of Behaviorism (Kentridge, 1994). Behaviorism became most developed as a theory of learning when B. F. Skinner published 'The Behavior of Organisms' in 1938. Skinner developed the basic concept of operant conditioning which he differentiated from stimulus-response learning. The basic association in operant conditioning was between the operant response and the reinforcer. In operant conditioning, the manager reinforces what he wants the individual to repeat while ignoring what he wants the individual to stop doing. Skinner's influence of the mechanistic worldview of behaviorism continued to gain momentum over the next forty years. In 1971, Dr. Skinner published his highly acclaimed book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity,* which focuses on how individuals are controlled by their external environment (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986).

Skinner professed the belief that the purposes of psychology are to understand, predict, and control human behavior. Furthermore, Skinner asserts that humans must give up the mythical idea of personal freedom, dignity and worth while learning to analyze and change the kinds of controls to which they are exposed (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Unlike some of the previous philosophical schools of

thought, Skinner did believe that education should be available to all, and that competition and individual success should be replaced with people who can work together to design an environment for survival of the society. Skinner described the role of the teacher as follows:

> Teaching should take place under favorable conditions, student behavior can and should be controlled through positive rather than negative reinforcement, and individual differences need to be more efficiently dealt with." (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 87)

The behaviorist philosophy of adult education underlies much of the educational practice in the United States. In fact, behaviorism has had and continues to have, a profound and influential effect on the learning and teaching methods of both K-12 public schools as well as adult and higher education.

Realism

Realism, a highly rational philosophy, provides a scientific framework for research, incorporates the perceptions and intentions of participants and advances values such as social justice (House, 1991). Scientific realists, such as Bertrand Russell (Elias and Merriam, 1995), seek to believe, understand, and explain things about

the world through inquiry and scientific investigation (Cherryholmes, 1992). Unlike idealism, scientific realism professes that ideas are discovered by studying real things and that prior assumptions can always be challenged while ideas gained through experience must always be verified. Verification of knowledge, or logical positivism, appears to be the focus of scientific realism. Furthermore, according to the principles of realism, reality exists independently of the human mind. An opposing principle of scientific realism and logical positivism is conceptual analysis. Logical positivism is the development of a language that does not go beyond the reality of experience. Conceptual analysis uses present language and involves reaching understanding through usage of words in accordance with cultural and social practice (Elias and Merriam, 1995). In agreement with Ernest R. House (1992), certainty of knowledge appears to be the focus of scientific realism when compared to pragmatism. To further illustrate, an example presented by Cherryholmes (1994) notes that an association between pragmatism and aesthetics has been considered.

Teaching methods, of course, have developed from the influence of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy (Garrison, 1994).

Realism is often taught through the lecture method where order is desired and the instructor is effective and accountable. Additionally, realism features the teacher-focused model of demonstration which was once considered an integral method of vocational education (Hill, 1994). The real world learner's material is presented systematically with objective criteria which usually includes fundamentals, essentials, practical, and survival information. Included within the educational goals for realism are that the learner will develop rational powers which include assimilation of problem solving and the scientific method.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism, which is often referred to as progressivism, was a direct response of education in a capitalistic society. As America moved into the Age of Industrialization, the progressive movement rapidly increased to meet the ever-expanding need for practical programs in an urbanized society. According to Elias and Merriam (1995) many forms of adult learning were inspired by the ideals of the progressive philosophy such as adult vocational education, adult basic education, extension

education, education of the foreign born and citizenship education, English as a second language, family and parent education, and education for social action. With the emergence of pragmatism as an educational philosophy came new and more practical ways of learning which appeared to challenge the traditional liberal education practices of idealism. Moreover, the philosophy of pragmatism centered more on the needs and interests of the learner as unique and varied settings for learning came into being. Unlike the educational philosophies of idealism, realism, or behaviorism, pragmatism emphasized the importance of learner's experiences, needs, and individuality. Thus, flexibility and resourcefulness of the progressive educator are imperative as learning becomes a change process.

Pragmatism became civil when this educational philosophy espoused to promote social change through transmission of culture and social structure. Two men who greatly influenced the progressive movement in adult education are educator Eduard Lindeman and philosopher John Dewey in their successful efforts to move education away from an authority position to one of cultural liberation (Bullough, 1988). Lindeman began the tradition of

pragmatism in adult education philosophy which focused on a learner-centered, problem-solving approach (Wilson, 1992).

One of most well-known name in education today is John Dewey. Dewey's views impacted many areas of adult education philosophy as he personally grew and changed throughout his career. A cognitivist, Dewey expressed views on the meaning and nature of human developmental psychology. Early in his life, John Dewey was committed to idealistic philosophy, discovered social psychology, and then became interested in education. Dewey believed that psychology could promote human development and social progress (Cahan, 1992). Dewey communicated through his 1916 work, *Democracy and Education*, his belief that education was at the very heart of social reform. Elias and Merriam (1995) cite that, "For Dewey, education would flourish if it took place in a democracy; democracy would develop only if there were true education" (p. 49). Dewey held that because of education, a democracy was able to continually progress and change. Furthermore, Dewey avowed the essence of democracy is community and that all great modern advances have been accomplished through cooperative efforts (Fishman, 1992). An educational leader and an agent of political change, Dewey urged the principle

of participation that linked the individual to his community, inquiry and reflection processes to action, and personal ethical decisions to democracy. Today, equity in education and multicultural issues are being addressed by using the principles of John Dewey (Brick, 1993; Feinberg, 1993; Knupfer, 1993).

Herein, of course, lies the controversy over the philosophy of pragmatism. Proponents of progressive education laud the principles of the pragmatic philosophy such as learner-centeredness, the centrality of experience, equality between the teacher and learner, focus on problem-solving, and lack of discipline and formal subject matter (Holt, 1969). Conversely, the critics of progressive education find fault with those same principles (Conant, 1961).

Existentialism

The principles of existentialism also represent the humanistic adult education philosophy. With roots which date back to ancient Greece, existentialism places the individual at the center of being and learning. Since the individual is always in transition as he or she moves

through the many phases and stages of life, there is a constant need for choice by the individual to successfully take risks and transcend from one developmental task to the other (Sheehy,1995). Existialism philosophy asserts that if the individual has the freedom to make and commit to choices then that person also has the freedom of responsibility. Abraham Maslow (1954) explained motivation as man's desire to fulfill his or her needs in order to move beyond the deficiency needs of survival, safety, and belonging to gain self-esteem, self-understanding, and self-actualization. Existentialism is considered holistic in its belief that the learner can thrive if he or she is involved in life. Jerold Apps (1996) elaborated on this concept even more when he illustrated learning for the whole person, including attending to spiritual, biological, intellectual, and emotional dimensions. Through holistic development of human beings in all areas of their lives, they are able to move toward self-actualization. Since they have been given the choice for learning, the humanistic adult learner is motivated and self-directed in an effort to fulfill unmet needs and to pursuit his or her adult learning project.

The humanistic adult learning teacher is a facilitator or partner in learning who assists the learner but does not direct him or her. An important concept that is rejected by the humanistic adult education philosophy, as well as the progressives and radicals, is the banking theory. This theory views the teacher as the sole source of knowledge who "banks" information into the heads of his or her students (Freire, 1993). Adult educator, Peter Jarvis (1995), has asserted that the way in which teachers interact with learners may be more important than the teaching methods used. In groups with adult learners, there is the possibility of a mutual teaching-learning relationship that occurs between the learners and the teacher. Likewise, the importance of the trusting relationship between the teacher and the learner has been stressed by Carl Rogers (1961) as the most important factor in learning. Coordinated by the trusted facilitator, one of the most important principles of existentialism is the value of experiential learning. Group dynamics are important to the vitality of the group. As members show empathy, mutual respect, openness, cooperation, and trust, learners are free to learn through feelings and the affective domain (Rogers, 1961).

Malcolm Knowles is well-known for his theory of androgogy as it applies to adult learners. According to Knowles, the four following main assumptions underlie the andragogical model

> (1)adults tend to be self-directing; (2)adults have a rich reservoir of experience that can serve as resource for learning; (3)since adults' readiness to learn is frequently affected by their need to know or do something, they tend to have a life-task, or problem-centered orientation to learning as contrasted to a subject-matter orientation; (4)adults are generally motivated to learn due to internal or intrinsic factors as opposed to external or extrinsic forces (1970, p.39).

Also extremely interested by adults and their self-directed learning projects, Alan Tough (1979) has done extensive research and found that most adults participate in voluntary learning projects because of curiosity or interest and gain self-esteem or pleasure from partaking in the learning endeavor.

Today, existentialism or humanistic adult education is often compared to behaviorism. Among others, there are two distinct camps in education which believe their philosophy is right. In his book, *A Way of Being*, Carl Rogers (1980) shares his point of view on choosing the humanistic philosophy:

> My experience in therapy and in groups makes it impossible for me to deny the reality and significance of human choice. To me it is not an illusion that man is to some degree the architect of himself. I have presented evidence that the degree of self-understanding is perhaps the most important factor in predicting the individual's behavior. So for me the humanistic approach is the only possible one. It is for each person, however, to follow the pathway—behavioristic or humanistic—that he finds most congenial. (p.57)

Reconstructionism

Reconstructionism as an educational philosophy is called radical adult education because it is at the far end of the philosophical continuum. According to the principles of reconstructionism, the main purpose of learning is to bring about social, political, and economic changes in society (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Reconstructionism is futuristic since the learners or change agents are always working toward a changed and better tomorrow. Problems are viewed holistically and as part of an integral system. Thus, dialog, discussion groups, and problem-posing are used to deal with the necessary changes in the entire system (Elias & Merriam, 1995).

Two outstanding educators who have led the way in the radical philosophy of adult learning are Myles Horton and

Paulo Freire. Myles Horton founded the famous Highlander Folk School in Tennessee where the oppressed gathered together to make decisions and problem solve in order to achieve social, political, and economic equality in the South (Adams, 1975; Kohl & Kohl, 1990). As a result of a Brazilian literacy program which followed the adult radical concepts of *popular education* under the leadership of Paulo Freire, who works out of a Marxist perspective, *consciousness raising* became a natural outcome of learning to read. Additionally, the poor grew in awareness while critically looking at their situations and moved towards social action to effect change (Freire, 1993).

The reconstructionist teacher acts as a coordinator and maintains an equality with the learner. The coordinator may make suggestions but does not determine the direction for learning. Together, the coordinator and learner work toward *praxis* which is done by combining critical reflection on what has taken place and following that reflection with action (Elias & Merriam, 1995; Freire, 1993). An example of one of the most pronounced historical and social movements in America took place in the South during the 1950's and 1960's under the leadership of Reverend Martin Luther King,

Jr. who believed that the struggle against racism needed to be conducted on the high plane of "dignity and discipline". King led a year-long bus boycott in Alabama after Rosa Parks refused to yield her bus seat to a White passenger and was taken to jail. The theme song of Martin Luther King's protests was *We Shall Overcome*, a song which originated as the theme of Highlander Folk School (Kohl and Kohl, 1990).

Adult Developmental Theory

Introduction

The important link between adult development and adult learning has been emphasized extensively by leaders in the field of adult education (Brookfield, 1986; Erikson, 1978; Havighurst, 1976; Knox,1977; Knowles, 1970; Levinson, 1978; Merriam and Caffarella, 1991; Tennant, 1988). With careful study and thorough knowledge of the affective, cognitive, spiritual, emotional, and psychomotor aspects of adult development, facilitating and teaching while using the principles of adult learning is not only possible but effective and satisfying to all parties of the learning experience. Alan B. Knox authored *Adult Development and Learning* (1977) in which he itemized important uses of

having a basic knowledge of adult development for practitioners who work with adults as follows:

> . . . for a better understanding of the holistic or comprehensive character and coherence of an individual's adult life.
> . . . for a better understanding of inter-relationships among the successive phases of the adult life cycle.
> . . . for a better understanding of developmental processes that typically occur during the months or years in which adults make transitions from one role or pattern of activity to another.
> . . . to enable adults to gain greater insight and perspective on their lives.
> . . .contemplative knowledge comes both from perspective on the experience of others and from introspection regarding one's own experience.
> . . . can help practitioners use organized knowledge about adulthood more effectively as they deal with action decisions in helping adults learn and change. (p.6-7)

Robert Havighurst (1972) named the ideal time of learning as "the teachable moment". Thomas F. Clark (1989), made an important distinction, regarding learning, between the traditional college-age student and the adult learner when he summarized their developmental differences occurring in the following areas: (a) chronology; (2) developmental progression; (3) motivation; (4) learning style; and, (5) intellectual development. Knowing about adult development and the importance of life stages and life transitions makes it possible for the facilitator of learning to offer

confirmation and encourage growth to the developing person moving through a transitory period (Kegan, 1982). Andragogy (Knowles, 1970) has been described as a well-developed link between adult development and adult learning. Andragogy is a set of assumptions theorizing that adults are self-directed with a great accumulation of unique and personal life experiences which they use to facilitate learning with a sense of immediacy for solving their problems. Accordingly, (Knox, 1977; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) the more that is known about adult learners, their life transitions and how those changes interact with learning, the better the practitioner is able to facilitate their development.

Specific Developmental Models

There are three perspectives from which to study the adult's development: (a) age-related characteristics; (b) the process of changes, transitions, and life stages; and, (c) how social and cultural factors influence development (Knox, 1977; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). In this section of the literature review, specific

developmental models will be discussed that are included in one of the three perspectives.

Age-Related and Life Span

In the 1930's, Carl Jung observed four stages of psychological development as follows: (a) Childhood is a period of narcissism; (b) youth is a period of expanding consciousness; (c) middle age is a period of questioning long-held convictions; and, (d) old age is a period of increased introspection and preoccupation with self-evaluation (Naylor, 1984; Santrock & Bartlett, 1986).

Charlotte Buhler defines five developmental stages in a lifetime. The first period from birth to age fifteen years of age is one of physical growth and the beginning of decision-making. The second stage from fifteen to twenty-five years of age is a period of preparatory expansion and experimentation for sexual reproduction and goal setting. The third stage from twenty-five to forty-five years of age is a time of culmination when goals are examined and introspection begins. The fourth stage of development is one of self-assessment and physical decline which ranges from age forty-six to sixty-five years. Buhler's final stage

is after sixty-five years of age when the adult assesses the fulfillment or failure of his or her life. Buhler viewed nearness to death as the motivation for evaluating the success of one's life (Naylor, 1984; Santrock & Bartlett, 1986).

Erik Erikson contributed a powerful theory with eight stages of human development. Each stage of development carries a central theme of personality development. The last four stages of Erikson's theory applies to the adult. As the adolescent moves into adulthood, the young adult's primary characteristic of personality development is intimacy. In young adulthood, the person resolves to establish intimacy rather than becoming isolated. Adulthood presents a time of creating life work, self-direction and concern for others. Erikson believes that late adulthood or maturity is characterized by reflection over each of the previous developmental crises which were either a success or a failure. If the adult has developed a positive outlook in each of the preceding emotional crises, the person will have ego integrity which indicates being satisfied with his or her life.

Two other adult developmental theorists were Gould and Levinson. Roger Gould (1978) developed *Adult Life Stages*, a model represented by myths which the adult progressively abandons by stripping oneself of these false assumptions acquired during childhood. Freedom and a greater level of consciousness is gained with each consecutive confrontation with reality (Naylor, 1984; Tennant, 1988). For theorist Daniel Levinson, middle-age is seen as a crossroads between the past and the present which may effect the person's remaining life. Adulthood presents alternating periods of stability when the life structure is solidified and periods of transition when the structure is reexamined and changed for the future (Drebing & Gooden, 1991; Naylor, 1984; Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). The process of individuation is a hallmark of growth and as it proceeds the person becomes more independent and autonomous (Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

Transitions in Maturation or Life Events

Carl Rogers speaks to human development as a process in his 1961 publication, *On Becoming a Person*. Throughout his life, the actions of Dr. Rogers were congruent with his words and he continued to evolve and live out the process of

adult development that he wrote about in each of his books and publications

Humanist Abraham Maslow (1954) offered his theory of motivation. The physiological and psychological needs are in ascending order and are similar to stage development in that the higher needs are not sought if the lower or deficiency needs are not satisfied. The needs in ascending order are (a) physiological; (b) safety; (c) belongingness, affection, and love; (d) self-esteem; (e) self-actualization; and (f) aesthetic. Although there has not been a large amount of research done on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it continues to be an important point of reference in the study of psychology (Long, 1983). For Maslow, an individual is motivated toward self-actualization and autonomy (Tennant, 1988). Maslow (1968) discusses the adult's constant endeavor to attain higher needs when he wrote:

> This also helps to solve the apparent paradox of contrast between Being and Becoming. It is true that human beings strive perpetually toward ultimate humanness, which itself may be anyway a different kind of Becoming and growing. It's as if we were doomed forever to try to arrive at a state to which we could never attain. . . Being and Becoming are *not* contradictory or mutually exclusive. Approaching and arriving are both in themselves rewarding. (p. 154)

Some researchers have theorized that maturation occurs sequentially when an individual successfully completes one stage and then moves to the next developmental stage. Jane Loevinger's ego development theory defines an ego as the structure one uses to interpret, cope with, and monitor one's interactions, commitments, and choices with a social world (Bradshaw, 1988; Molineaux, 1985; Tennant, 1988). The terms used to describe these stages are impulsive, self-protective, conformist, conscientious-conformist, conscientious, individualistic, autonomous, and integrated (Loevinger, 1976). Lawrence Kohlberg believed that all people develop through stages of moral decision making. Kohlberg's moral development theory has three levels of thinking with two stages within each level (Santrock and Bartlett, 1986). For Kohlberg, the actual process of making a moral decision than the actual decision itself since the individual grows toward self-directed morality (Tennant, 1988). George Vaillant characterized his developmental theory with four levels of maturity which are used to adapt to life changes. Vaillant believes that the majority of males do experience a moderate to severe crisis in mid-life

but that mid-life does not cause the crisis (Vaillant, 1977).

Mark Tennant (1990) has written extensively on the subject of adult development and learning. Tennant (1993) is clear in his well-researched belief that individual development is both social and psychological. Agreeing with Tennant, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) discuss the social and cultural factors which influence adult development. Recently, Tennant (1995) uses the principles of developmental psychology to link experience and learning with adult education and training. Tennant warns us to take care not to pigeon-hole all adults into the "proper" course development and to critically look at applications of psychological theory to adult learning. We must understand the dynamics of change and how people interpret their experiences as they move through life. Tennant (1988) feels that the literature on lifespan development is of great value in any adult learning theory.

Another large contributor to adult development and learning is Alan B. Knox. Knox stresses the importance of using the term, adult development, to cover all aspects of maturation without value judgments. Knox (1977) is careful

to point out that as individuals grow and mature over the lifespan, each one becomes very unique. "For this reason, developmental trends should be charted separately for men and women with varying characteristics such as verbal ability, health, and formal education" (p.10). Additionally, Knox (1977) addresses the differences that occur from generation to generation as significant. This can be seen in developmental theories which have not been updated to include the greater longevity factor. Again, one is reminded of the importance of societal context on human development (1977, p.11). Knox recommends that practitioners working with adults use updated age-related population characteristics but to be mindful of individual developmental trends.

Theories Specific To Adult Learning

Theories of Learning Based on Adult Characteristics

Malcolm Knowles is well-known for his theory of *andragogy* which he redefined as "an emerging technology for adult learning" (Knowles, 1980). Knowles used the work of developmental psychologists Piaget and Erikson to study the

adult learner. He theorized that the life experiences of the adult alter the characteristics of the learner compared to learning characteristics of the child. According to Knowles (1970; 1980), there are four main assumptions which underlie the andragogical model: (a) Adults tend to be self-directing rather than dependent learners; (b) adults accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that can serve as a resource for learning; therefore, experiential learning becomes an effective means for adults to learn; (c) since adults' readiness to learn is frequently affected by their need to know or do something which is increasingly oriented toward the development of their social roles,; (d)adults are generally motivated to learn due to internal or intrinsic factors as opposed to external or extrinsic forces; adults want information and learning that can be applied immediately and they tend to be problem-centered learners.

In his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy,* Malcolm Knowles (1970) posits that the technology of andragogy is a seven step process to be applied by adult educators as follows:

- The establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning.

- The creation of an organizational structure for participative planning.
- The diagnosis of needs for learning.
- The formulation of directions of learning (objectives).
- The development of a design of activities.
- The operation of the activities.
- The rediagnosis of needs for learning(evaluation). (p. 52)

Malcolm Knowles, a humanistic and democratic educator, believed that adult learners were to be prepared for change while fulfilling their individual needs.

K. Patricia Cross developed the Characteristics of Adults as Learners [CAL] model in *Adults as Learners*, (1981) in which adults were compared to children developmentally in the personal characteristics areas of physiological, sociocultural, and psychological. Additionally, situational characteristics were focused upon the individual's unique learning situation. Cross's model researched aging, adult development, participation, learning projects, and motivation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Cross believed that implementing thorough research of adult learners led to the development of the CAL which provided a foundation for discovering not only what but how adults learn. Cross's model has, however, drawn criticism from adult educators for

not being specific to the personal or situational characteristics of adults rather than all age groups. Many believe that although Cross's [CAL] was another step in the development of adult learning theory, it does focus more on the characteristics of adults as learners rather on how adults learn (Merriam & Caffarella, 1977).

Theories of Learning Based on the Adult's Life Situation

The proficiency theory of Alan B. Knox (1986) speaks to the adult's life situation. Proficiency is defined by Knox as being able to perform satisfactorily if given the opportunity. This performance involves attitude, knowledge, and skill which will be used to close the discrepancy between the learner's actual performance and the desired performance. Components of the proficiency theory are for the purpose of enhancing proficiency to improve performance and include the following: the general environment, past and current characteristics, performance, aspiration, self, discrepancies, specific environments, learning activity, and the teacher's role. Although Knox's theory does not necessarily explain how adults learn, it does present a set

of guidelines for helping adults learn with an emphasis on motivation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 255-56).

The theory of margin presented by McClusky (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 253-55).posits that adults constantly seek balance between the amount of energy needed and the amount of energy available as they move through a constantly changing adulthood of growth and integration. The amount of energy remaining after one has expended the necessary required energy is referred to by McClusky as the "margin of life." McCluskey's model mainly addresses when learning occurs rather than how learning occurs.

In his 1987 book, *Adult Learning in the Social Context,* Jarvis developed a theory that is also based on the adult's life situation. He defines his model as the juncture where there is a discrepancy between biography and experience which produces an incident that a person is unprepared to handle (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, pp, 256-257). This "inability to cope with the situation unthinkingly, instinctively, is at the heart of all learning" (p. 35). Jarvis believes that all learning occurs within a social context. The model of learning by Jarvis begins with the person's entry into a social situation in which learning may

occur. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) believe that the strength of the Jarvis model is that it deals with how learning occurs and that it places the learner in an interactive and social context rather than as an isolated occurrence.

Theories of Learning Based on Changes in Consciousness

The theories in this section require cognitive focus on the part of the adult as he or she reflects upon the process of experience and learning. Transformative learning is a constructivist theory of adult education. Transformation theory is grounded in Habermas's (1971) three domains of learning which include the technical (empirical knowledge), the practical (social norms), and the emancipatory (self-knowledge and self-reflection) and provides a comprehensive description of how the adult learner interprets his world, questions the meaning of what he sees, and develops through critical self-reflection. Mezirow associated the emancipatory process of learning to perspective transformation when the learner becomes critically aware of how and why meaning perspectives constrain the way one sees himself and his relationships which is then followed by the

learner's action to reconstitute the meaning structure to allow a more inclusive description of experience and understanding. The purpose of the reconstitution of the prior interpretation is to construe a new interpretation of one's experience, or meaning perspective, to guide future actions. Learners interpretations are determined by meaning schemes which are defined by rules, roles, and expectations that control the way they perceive, feel, think, and act (Cranton, 1994).

Mezirow (1991) believes that the constructivism theory is supported by the following:

> A conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication (p. xiv).

How the learner views or interprets the world is a perception of his experiences. Cranton (1994) asserts that transformative learning is "a process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising these perceptions" (p. 26). The learner's perceptions come from meaning perspectives which are his history—his childhood, his culture, and his knowledge. Old and recurring experiences are filtered through the learner's meaning perspectives for

interpretation which determine his way of knowing, feeling, and believing. Meaning perspectives include prejudices, biases, stereotypes, and lack of complete knowledge. To maintain the status quo of one's meaning perspectives is safe in that it protects the self-esteem and sense of balance. To change one's meaning perspectives, often involves a painful process of learning which may result in lowered self-esteem, frustration, and anxiety for the learner (Brookfield, 1986; Cranton, 1995; Mezirow, 1991).

Learning commences when the learner begins to examine discrepancies between an old "taken for granted" assumption and a new concept or idea. This beginning of the learning process is called reflective learning and involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions. Reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, invalid, or inaccurate (Mezirow, 1991). Hopefully, when the learner is examining a new meaning perspective, he will be able to discuss the possibilities with another person or persons in a process called rational discourse. Mezirow places a great deal of value in rational discourse and encourages safe, open, and functional communication when it is occurring. The

learner's development is characterized by his ability to reflect upon prior learning, act upon the insights obtained, and move toward more inclusive meaning perspectives (Cranton, 1994).

An important component and ultimate goal of adult education and transformative learning is empowerment of the learner (Cranton, 1994; Freire, 1990; Shor, 1992). With empowerment, the learner is able to freely accomplish the following:

> Participate in critical discourse and the resulting action; empowerment requires freedom and equality as well as the ability to assess evidence and to engage in critical reflection. (Cranton, 1994, pp. 72-73)

Empowerment of the learner needs to be supported by his or her teacher, facilitator, or mentor (Cranton, 1994) since the transformation of meaning perspectives may include vulnerability on the part of the learner which encompasses risk, emotion, self-confidence and self-esteem.

Barriers to Transformative Learning

In perspective transformation, barriers to learning are referred to as distorted assumptions or distortions by Mezirow (1991). According to transformative theory, the

distortions stem from three separate areas which include the epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological meaning perspectives. A distortion in the epistemic meaning perspectives are those relating to knowledge and how we use that knowledge. For example, learning styles and thinking preferences would be epistemic meaning perspectives. In addition, Mezirow (1991) posits that distorted examples of epistemic meaning perspectives are limiting factors which could possibly result from the learner's scope of awareness or learning style. Other distortions could result in slowed or delayed cognitive development (Knox, 1977) or the development of reflective judgment (Kitchener and King, 1990). According to Mezirow (1991) the second kind of meaning perspectives are sociolinguistic which define the learner's ability to use or not use language effectively in the culture. Furthermore, sociolinguistic meanings include social and cultural norms which reflect the manner in which the learner is socialized in his environment such as his socioeconomic status and how it relates to power and privilege. A third kind is the psychological meaning perspectives which represent distortions such as poor self-concept, no internal locus of control, or fears still

present which originated from home or school during childhood.

To overcome these distorted meaning perspectives, it is necessary to remove constraints with emancipatory learning which would bring about reintegration, reorientation, and equilibrium. Cranton (1994) refers to emancipatory learning as the most difficult for the learner and most challenging for the educator. However, Cranton declares emancipatory learning as the fundamental goal of education and acknowledges the crucial role that it will play in society. Emancipatory learning takes place through critical self-reflection in all domains of learning which include the instrumental, the communicative, and the emancipatory. Transformative learning appears to provide a complete process of learning. In a practice dedicated to parenting education and learning, having an understanding of transformative learning is of much value.

Parent Education

History

Parenting education in the United States grew in popularity as thousands of parents participated and

literature became available during the 1930's (Croake and Glover, 1977; Fine, 1989). In the 1940's, Lorge (1948), reported that parenting education was one of the main reasons to participate in adult learning projects. Today's interest in parent education has been greatly influenced by nationally subsidized programs such as Head Start (Fine, 1989), and Even Start. Another highly visible influence upon parenting education was the emergence of the Parent Effectiveness Training Program [PET] by Thomas Gordon (Fine, 1989; Gordon, 1970) which has reached hundreds of thousands of parents since it began in 1970. Gordon's approach to parent education has probably had the most influence upon the development and popularity of contemporary, highly visible parenting programs. Conditions placing national focus upon the needs of parents are as follows: (a) Parents were increasingly seen as the most important influence on children's development; (b) schools were not seen as effective in changing children; (c) families were under greater societal stress; (d) there was evidence that many parents were not effective; and (e) new scientific knowledge on childrearing was available (pp. 47-52). These familial conditions have created a greater need for information,

support, and more effective skills to assist today's parents (Fine, 1989).

As noted above, an increasingly important factor effecting the awareness and need for parenting education has resulted from the changing American society's demands and stresses placed upon the family (Elkind, 1995; Fine, 1989; Gárbarino, 1995; Glenn & Nelson, 1989).

Professional Issues in Parent Education

Marvin Fine (1989), author of *The Second Handbook on Parent Education*, does excellent work in describing the focus parent educators place upon program goals and activities. In a replication of Fine's work below, (1989, p. 8), it becomes apparent that parent education programs are focused on one or more of the following four areas: (a) Information input; (b) belief-insight change; (c) skill acquisition; and (d) problem-solving. In Figure 1. below, Fine points out the importance of articulating focus and goals in a parenting program while providing relevant objectives and activities. With this information available, the parent educator is able to emphasize the areas which are

most congruent with considered values and the composition of the parenting group.

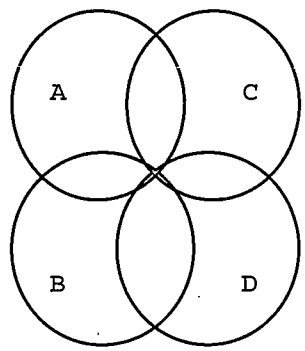
PROCEDURE	CONTENT AREA	PROCEDURE
A. Information Input lecture group discussion reading material parent group		C. Skill Acquisition demonstration practice-feedback reading material discussion
B. Belief-Insight Change group discussion specific individual and group activities self-analysis exercises use of diary or log		D. Problem Solving homework-report-feedback systematic-observation feedback discussion follow-up

Figure 1. Program Emphasis (Fine, 1989, p. 8).

Usually a combination of these areas are part of any given program but in varying degrees of emphasis depending upon the theoretical base of the parenting leader, the goals of the parenting program, and the balance of learning through the affective and cognitive domains. These philosophical beliefs will be illustrated near the end of this section when several of the current parenting programs are discussed.

Group Composition

The composition of the learning group is an important consideration and must be tied to the goals of the parenting program. In making decisions regarding group composition, Fine (1989), recommends that the leader reflect on factors such as age of the children, focus of the problem or problems (i.e., pre-schoolers, the empty nest syndrome, or troubled teens), the socioeconomic status of the parents, and, backgrounds of the participants. If the program focus is wide and the group is not homogeneous, the goals of the program will not be narrow in focus, more conceptual, and less specific for a given age. In his 1981 book, *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*, Gerald Corey speaks to diversification and similarities among the theories, the role of the leader and the client, and group goals which all effect the composition of the group. Also included in this text, Corey (1981) has included chapters on group membership and highly applicable group-leadership skills which would be helpful for any teacher, leader, or facilitator of parenting groups.

Value Issues

Fine (1989) emphasizes the importance of focusing upon and identifying values of a parenting program before it commences. One concern expressed from several sources is that many of the popular commercial programs such as *Active Parenting Today* or *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* appear to be based on white middle-class values. It is important to consider cultural diversification (Fine, 1989; Lynch & Hanson, 1992) in regard to heritage, beliefs, structure, religion, language, interaction, family, authority, harmony, education, virtues, values, and distribution of power.

Additionally, it is imperative to consider socioeconomic cultures and the wide diversification of resultant individual and group social issues. Fine (1989), admonishes the parent educator to exercise caution in thinking that the above-mentioned programs will generalize to the families of cultural and minority diversification. He questions the appropriateness of parenting programs which may cause possible subversion of the heritage of other cultures. Therefore, with sufficient information about group composition and values issues, the potential

participant can critically choose the extent of participation and the kind of parenting applications they are willing to introduce within their families.

Initiating a program for working with parents of families at risk is addressed through the following guidelines, based on successful projects, in the Hispanic Policy Development Project's publication by Nicolau and Ramos (1990), and are useful for most parent populations of families at risk:

- The projects must have total commitment and full support of all involved or the attempt to increase parent involvement will fail.
- Be prepared to be innovative, flexible, and willing to try new techniques, methods, and activities which vary from the status quo or "the way things always have been done."
- Use personal outreach strongly and tenaciously
- Hold the first meeting on neutral turf such as a home or community place rather at a school.
- Have an informal setting to be less intimidating to low-income parents. Make the meeting as participatory as possible.
- A warm, nonjudgmental atmosphere is mandatory.
- Prepare staff with in-service workshops so that everyone understands the community being served. Include everyone; you don't want a less than welcoming secretary to spoil all the work you've done.
- Do not view child care, transportation, interpreters, and meals as frills. Providing them will make a big difference for parents of families at risk.

- Choose different times to schedule events. Do it with consideration for the parents' availability.
- Do not give up if the initial response isn't overwhelming. Under the best circumstances, it takes time.
- It is important to keep up the effort and it will be found that the parents can not be kept away.

Further in this section, nearly thirty parenting programs, resources, and publications are classified into four broad categories which reflect diversified educational philosophy, parenting goals, parenting style, and learning modalities. With informed perusal of parenting education options, the parent is able to find the program or publication which will "fit" his or her values and needs.

Research on the Effectiveness of Parent Education

Typically, the effectiveness of parent education is assessed on how effectively the programs goals are achieved (Fine & Henry, 1989). Therefore, the research which compares programs with contrasting goals is inadequate and nearly nonexistent. In 1980, Fine did report that parents like parent education programs and that they are being helped but noted that more specific information was needed

to determine if parent participation actually impacted the structure of the family. Furthermore, Fine and Henry (1989) report that there is a lack of clarity of findings in the interaction between program type and variables such as age of children involved, the parents' socioeconomic background values, and the pre-existing style of child rearing. Research on what are good or undesirable happenings in parenting and family life is missing. Although there is literature which substantiates the effectiveness of remedying specific problems of children through skills learned in parenting class, the question of how overall family functioning is impacted by parenting education appears to be missing.

Parent Education versus Therapy

The answers to the question of separating parent education and therapy is as diversified as learning theory, the domains of learning, the philosophies of adult development and education, psychological theories, and counseling theories. Additionally, the importance of goals, focus, and values of the parenting group can not be ignored when making this determination. Behaviorists often refer to

educational endeavors as training rather than learning or education with change occurring with new or more effective behavioral patterns. Psychoanalysts view therapy as a means to change the client's personality (Fine, 1989; Corey, 1981). Adlerian psychologists view therapy as the client's accepting responsibility to change after recognizing their chosen life-styles. Existentialists and humanistic therapists believe in the importance of self-awareness, freedom of choice, accepting responsibility for those choices. Person-centered therapists provide a safe climate to explore feelings and encourage risk-taking and greater self-confidence (Corey, 1981).

In actual practice, Fine (1989) points out that the separation between parent education and therapy dissolves. This is especially apparent in parenting education which is experiential-based and process-oriented. When participants are speaking and sharing portions and problems of their personal lives, the parenting program appears to become group therapy (Fine & Jennings, 1985). Fine and Henry (1989) admonish the parenting education leader to be increasingly aware of this transition (1989).

A very useful resource for effective group participation skills and handling problem behaviors in parenting class is found in Corey's chapter entitled, *Group Membership* (Corey, 1981). According to Corey, effective group participation skills include active listening and responding, empathy, genuineness, respect, concreteness, self-disclosure, and confrontation. Problem behaviors that may arise in the parenting group are discussed and include resistance and communication blocks, avoidance, nonparticipation, monopolizing, storytelling, dependency, hostility and aggression, superiority, seductive behavior, and scapegoating. Although parenting groups are not usually as intense as therapy groups, it would be helpful for the parenting educator to have a working knowledge of group dynamics.

Leader Responsibilities, Training, and Qualifications

Regarding parenting education, it is important that the leader, facilitator, trainer, or teacher in a learning program for parents reflect upon the importance and responsibility of his or her role. The amount of training required for different programs varies as widely as the

parenting program goals (Fine, 1989). The Adlerian-based parenting programs train parents to become leaders and the length of involvement in formal training is usually is none (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976), or one to two days (Popkin, 1993). Leaders of the Parent Effectiveness Program (Gordon, 1970) are also not required to have professional backgrounds in psychology, social work, or teaching but do participate in a training program for instructors (Fine, 1989). There appears to be a trend toward more formalized education for parenting educators. With the growth of marital and family therapy as an important branch of psychotherapy (Fine, 1989), and the development of a complex society with multiple sociological problems (Dobson,1983; Elkind, 1994; Garbarino, 1995; Glenn & Nelson, 1989), the need for qualified and well-trained parent educators is imperative.

Specific Parent Education Programs and Resources

This section will describe many parenting programs, books, workshops, videos, and publications such as magazines or booklets which may be of use to the learner searching for effective parenting educational assistance. These parent resources will be described according to the following five

thematic factors: (a) predominant educational philosophy; (b) parenting program goals or functions; (c) role of the leader, facilitator or trainer; and (d) role of the learner; and, (e) recommended role of the parent. From a close study of the above factors, the parent education resources were classified into the four broad areas as follows: (a) Adlerian; (b) humanistic; (c)behavioristic; (d) behaviorist with Christianity-based discipline. Each area or category will be discussed and will include the names of the resources which have similar characteristics. It is important to note that the philosophy, beliefs, values and leadership style of the adult parent educator must also be aligned with most of the factors in one or more of the four areas to be congruent in his or her participation in the teaching-learning process.

During the past twenty-seven years, numerous programs and resources have been developed which attempt to meet the needs of parents who wish to address external and internal stressors upon the functioning family unit. Most of these parenting programs are based on various personality and learning theories. Three major philosophical foundations are presented below with examples of current authors and

their publications on parenting within each theoretical base.

Adlerian psychology is an adaptation or extension of psychoanalytic theory (Corey, 1982). Parenting programs that are based on Adlerian theory hypothesize that children often attempt to meet their needs in a mistaken direction. Their goal is to identify and examine the child's *goals of misbehavior* and attempt to redirect the behavior to achieve more positive and satisfying results (Thompson & Rudolph, 1983). Two highly successful and well-known programs which are based on Adlerian psychology are *Systematic Training for Effective Training* (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1982) and *Active Parenting Today* (Popkin, 1993). Information input, skill acquisition, and problem solving (Figure 1, p. 3) appear to be the main functions or goals emphasized with the Adlerian-based parent education programs. In each of these programs, the leadership involves didactic and directive teaching or training which is highly cognitive and behavioristic. Program goals encourage responsibility, self-esteem, courage, and cooperation within the child. The recommended parent's role is authoritarian. Parents are mildly interactive within the bounds of a highly-structured

curriculum and are asked to practice the new skills each week at home and complete reading assignments.

Behavioral psychologists see behavior and academic problems as resulting from faulty previous learning (Skinner, 1953, 1971). Both parents and children have learned inappropriate ways of behaving, reacting, and responding through reinforcement of poor models. Behaviorists believe that inappropriate patterns of learning can be extinguished or unlearned and more appropriate behaviors can be learned to replace the earlier, faulty learning (Thompson & Rudolph, 1983). Several parenting programs and resources which are based on behavioral psychology include *Assertive Discipline for Parents* (Canter, 1988), *SOS Help for Parents* (Clark, 1995) and *1-2-3 Magic* (Phelan, 1996), *How to Parent* (Dodson, 1970) and *Pick Up Your Socks* (Crary, 1990). Skill acquisition, problem solving, and information input (Figure 1, p. 3) are generally the main goals or functions of these approaches to parent education. The leader is a trainer with expertise in behavior modification and speaks of "managing the child's behavior". It is recommended that the parent assume an authoritarian role and is clearly "in control" or "the

boss". As with the Adlerian parenting groups, the participants are expected to practice outside of class. Two other important parenting resources, *Dare to Discipline* (1983), and *Hide or Seek* (1979), by James Dobson are founded on Christianity-based behaviorism and social learning theory. Nationally, Dobson has done many radio, TV, and video programs on his style of highly cognitive parent education over the last twenty years.

Existential or humanistic psychologists reacted against psychoanalysis as a method of effective helping. According to Hanson & L'Abate (1982), humanistic psychology is the theoretical emergence of placing emphasis upon the individual who possesses both the freedom and the responsibility to meet his or her needs.

> The humanistic approach, essentially, sees the individual as possessing free will, choice, purpose and, in this sense, individual capacity for self-determination and self-actualization within a teleological perspective of human nature. (p. 6)

Of course, one of the most notable humanistic psychologists and developer of the *Human Hierarchy of Needs* was existentialist Abraham Maslow (1954) who professed that people strive for self-actualization. Humanistic Carl

Rogers (1961), developer of the person-centered approach to counseling, teaching and learning advocated that humans are basically trustworthy. As was mentioned earlier, Thomas Gordon was the leader of contemporary parent education. The concepts and principles which were first found in Gordon's *Parent Effectiveness Training* (1970) have been the basis for the Adlerian-based programs and most of the humanistic parenting resources that are discussed in this section of the literature review. Other examples of parenting programs and resources which are based on the humanistic philosophy are *Nurturing Program* (Bavolek & Comstock,1983), *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* (Clarke, 1978), *Parenting with Love and Logic* (Cline & Fay, 1990), *Kids Are Worth It!* (Coloroso, 1994), *Parenting Your Teenager in the 90's* (Elkind, 1993), *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk* (Faber & Mazlish, 1980), and *Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World* (Glenn & Nelson, 1989). Belief-insight change, information input, and skill acquisition (Figure 1, p. 3) are the general functions and goals emphasized by the parenting education resources based upon humanistic theory. The humanistic parenting group leader is a facilitator who leads his class in the concepts of self-

esteem, trust, communication and active listening, choices and responsibility, empathy, flexibility and negotiation, clear limits, and the problem-solving process. It is recommended that the parent attending a humanistic presentation or class reflect the style of the democratic or authoritarian parent.

There is, however, a great deal of variety among the resources in each philosophical area. For example, the *Nurturing Program* (1983) is highly structured, cognitive, and activity-based while assuming that the enrolled parents have a broad knowledge base. Therefore, the goals of the *Nurturing Program* are humanistic but the structure of the program is more behavioristic. The same could be said about the Adlerian-based parenting programs, *Systematic Training for Effective Training* (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1982) and *Active Parenting Today* (Popkin, 1993). Dodson's *How to Parent* (1970) features one hundred twenty pages of excellent advice on toys, books, music, pets, and parental resources presented according to ages and developmental stages of the child. Summarizing, it is important for the parent educator to critically analyze all factors of a potential program before it is chosen for a group of learners.

One group of resources which offer advice on parenting is not included in the three sections above because the information is targeted to particular problems, situations, or needs. It would be helpful for the reader to note the following publications as excellent sources for assistance with parenting issues: *The National PTA Talks to Parents* (Cutright, 1989); *Child* published by Gruner & Jahr USA Publishing, 110 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011; *Parents Magazine*, P.O Box 3055, Harlan, IA 51593-2119; A series of booklets for parents with topics such as *Parents Can Motivate Children, Parents Can Build Responsibility in Children*, and *Parents Can Build Children's Self-Esteem* (1991), published by The Parent Institute, PO Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474; *A Parent's Guide To Prevention, Growing Up Drug Free* (1992), U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC. Another important resource for parenting information is the world wide web which can easily be accessed by Internet search engines such as *Yahoo* and *Alta Vista*. After locating a site that deals with parenting issues parents often have the opportunity to go on-line with their immediate and urgent questions about child-rearing problems.

All of the above-mentioned commercial parenting programs are highly successful with groups of upper and middle-class parents with high cognitive abilities and who are intellectually curious to continue to learn how to be the best parents they can possibly become. For example, *Active Parenting Today* (Popkin, 1993) is a very popular and effective program for parents of families who are not at risk. However, one humanistic program, *Teach the Parent, Reach the Child*, was discovered which has been in existence in Denver, Colorado for over twenty years at Emily Griffith Opportunity School. The program is geared to low-income or impoverished parents and offers a variety of classes in parenting, food preparation, sewing, and skills for survival and work. The authors, Brink and Chandler (1993), cite the reasons for this program's success as follows:

> Neighborhood classes taught near the concentrated areas of at-risk families; Free on-site child care; Relevant curriculum; Community collaboration; Teachers from the neighborhoods; No-cost classes; Flexible classes with open entry; Staff training; Self-esteem building; and, Support in their roles as parents. (p.26-27)

Two other books that are excellent resources to educate and assist the educator working with parents of families at risk are *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence* (Lynch & Hanson,

1992), and *Children at Risk*, National Association of School Psychologists, edited by Barona and Garcia (1990). Although the literature reviewing successful programs of parent education for families at risk is not plentiful, the need continues to become greater as each day passes

Global Influences Affecting Adult Learning

Introduction

The literature on adult education in the last few years has been challenging former well-accepted concepts and principles. Stephen Brookfield, a leader in the field of adult education, is an artist at critical reflection which is evidenced by his work and his articles which invite all adult educators to stop, think, and reflect critically upon all adult learning principles before accepting them at face value from another leader in the field of adult education. From this perspective, this document will list and describe many of the principles which are touted as being influential to the adult learner. In the interest of following Brookfield's lead of practicing the art and science of critical reflection, it is recommended that the reader critically think about the credibility of the adult learning

principles presented below. The general influences which will be discussed in this portion of the document are as follows: (a) Motivation to participate in adult learning; (b) experience and learning; (c) change and life transitions; (d) domains of learning and the triune brain; (e) learning styles; (f) learning in the social environment; (g) self-initiated learning; (h) participatory research; (i) learning by critical reflection; and (j) assumptions about learning.

Motivation to Participate in Adult Learning

Fifty years ago, Irving Lorge (1947) defined the *Incentives for Adult Learning* which are referred to in much of the literature today when discussing the motivation involved in the beginning of an adult learning project. Still timely in this decade, Lorge listed forty reasons why adults begin learning projects and these reasons fall into the following four main categories: (1) People want to gain (i.e., health, time, money, self-confidence); (2) they want to be (i.e., good parents, social, hospitable, up to date); (3) they want to do (i.e. express their personalities, resist domination by others, satisfy their curiosity); and, (4) they want to save (time, money, work). Another theory

that was presented about the same time was Abraham Maslow's (1968, p. 21) *Theory on Motivation*. This theory is based upon the fulfillment of human needs including the deficiency needs of survival, safety, and belongingness with the higher order needs being self-esteem and self-actualization. Maslow admonishes that the deficiency needs must be fulfilled in order for the individual to maintain a state of wellness with good mental and physical health. Seeking adult education to assist with the fulfillment of Maslow's list of human needs could take place at any of the levels. In 1979, Alan Tough wrote *The Adult's Learning Projects* (p. 41) following extensive research in Canada in which he echoed the wide variety of learning projects and motivations for learning them as presented by Lorge (1947). Tough cautions the judgmental reader to keep an open mind about the huge variety of projects and asserted that all projects are worthwhile since they most likely brought the learner pleasure or self-esteem. Three other authors who have contributed much to the subject of motivation are Wlodkowski (1986) who provided numerous motivational strategies, Knox (1986) who provided a how-to guide for program development, and Brookfield (1986) who critically proposed comprehensive

and creative program information. *In Cognition and the Adult Learner* (1988, p. 11) William McKeachie stresses the important influence of a student's perception of whether he will succeed or fail in a required course. A reluctant learner is often thought of as unmotivated but, in reality, McKeachie believes that the student may be exhibiting fear or anxiety. On the flip-side of McKeachie's thoughts, Robert Hagivhurst (1952) titled the optimum time when a learner would be motivated to participate and learn as "the teachable moment."

Experience and Adult Learning

Experience and its influence upon the adult learning process continues to be an important part of adult education literature. Every adult entering a new learning situation has experiences which may be related to his or her future learning. Malcolm Knowles' (1970, 1973, 1980) theory of andragogy states the importance of using the large accumulation of the learner's experience as a valuable resource for learning. Knowles' deep belief in the value of shared experiences to learning is acknowledged heavily in the literature by Brookfield (1986), Dewey (1963), Draves

(1984), Fellenz and Conti (1990), Freire (1990), Horton (1990), Kidd (1973), Mezirow (1991), Kolb (1984), Rogers (1980), and, Tennant (1988).

Change and Life Transitions

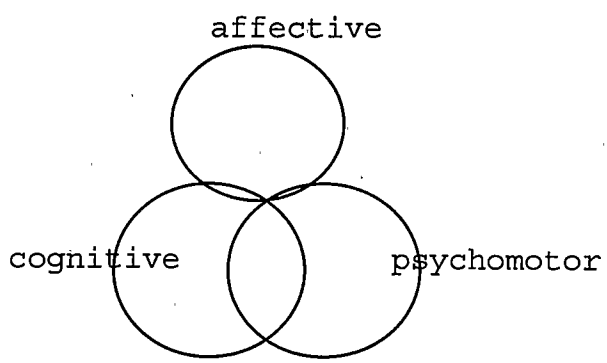
Life transitions and changes in adulthood often produce a desire or an opportunity for a new learning experience. The changes in one's life are part of the adult lifespan according to Gail Sheehy (1995) in her book, *New Passages, Mapping Your Life Across Time*, which includes both positive changes, such as the birth of a baby, promotion, or new home, and traumatic changes, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, or the loss of a job or home. Concurring that adults usually learn to adapt and cope with life events, changes, or transitions by engaging in learning activities is acknowledged by Aslanian (1980), Brookfield (1986), Cranton (1994), Gould (1978), Knox (1977), Merriam & Clark (1991) and Rogers (1980).

Domains of Learning and the Triune Brain

The effective leader in adult learning has a working knowledge of learning theory, philosophy, the domains of

learning, and learning styles. The triune human brain controls physical activity, emotion, and cognition (Ferro, 1993). These three domains of learning theory centers on the learner and how he or she communicates with the social environment or context. Focusing upon the learner's domains of learning facilitates an understanding of his or her culture (Achilles, 1992). Without knowledge of our learner's culture, the educator becomes disabled in his or her opportunity to effect the process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

The three domains of learning consist of the affective domain, the cognitive domain, and the psychomotor domain and are often illustrated as seen below:



Historically, the affective domain of learning is addressed by many developmental psychologists who theorized the importance of personality development (Erikson, 1963),

moral development (Kohlberg, 1984), successful transition through developmental crises of the ego (Loevinger, 1976), and satisfaction of human needs (Maslow, 1954). Abraham Maslow, who has had a profound effect on the educational philosophy of existentialism and has been called the "father of humanistic learning", asserted the importance the affective domain plays in learning. Carl Rogers (1961), a humanistic psychologist and educator, theorized and profoundly practiced that learning is a continual process which takes place in the affective domain. Other adult educators who have addressed the importance of domains of learning are Kidd (1973), Knox (1977), and Tennant (1988).

As part of the triune brain, the affective domain of learning is simply defined as "the feeling domain". This is the area of the brain where emotions, spirit, soul, passion, experiences, relationships, attitudes, interests, needs, and motivation are piloted. Kidd (1973, p. 95) asserts that while the affective domain is recognized, learning is often thought and spoken of as if it were entirely an intellectual or cognitive process. Furthermore, the goals of learning and emotional development are parallel and can both be identified as self-realization or self-mastery. The

importance of the "self" can not be minimized when writing about the affective domain. Any of the "self" terms such as self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-worth are essential elements of learning for a child of eight or an older adult of eighty. Trust, acceptance and having a positive view of one's self is an integral part of the affective domain which enhances the ability to learn (Ferro, 1993). The cognitivist view on the importance of one's experience is challenged with research by Gazzaniga (1992) who suggests that our brain has an interpreter function which is located in the left hemisphere. Sylwester (1995), states that the brain's interpreter creates reasonable explanations and rationalizations for events which emerge from our personal experiences which may differ from the experiences of others. The function of the interpreter is central to one's belief system and self-concept which influences religion, politics, fears, arguments, and much more.

An important part of each adult's life is planning, placement, and transition. Much attention has been given to "midlife crisis" as a time when the adult male or female are in transition and notice is given to how successfully or

unsuccessfully that period is negotiated. Research, however, dispels a certain period of time in one's life which causes a crisis but rather crisis and transition throughout life is part of being human. Whatever the theory, the transitions a person makes during adulthood are greatly influenced by the affective domain.

The cognitive domain is the "thinking center" of the brain. Important functions such as thought, perception, intelligence, information-processing, language development, problem-solving, memory, organization, and analysis are engineered from this location of the brain. The importance of the cognitive domain to learning is particularly focused upon by behaviorist and cognitivist theorists. The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle had many views about cognition. In the field of psychology, the study of memory began with the discipline itself. The cognitive developmental theory of Jean Piaget dominated much of this century when it was often believed that learning and intellectual development end with adulthood. In 1986, Santrock and Bartlett wrote the following viewpoint which expresses cognitivist theory:

> Cognitive theorists stress that it is not so much what we experience in our life that accounts for an understanding of our development, but how we use our cognitive activities to modify and understand such experiences. (p.15)

In adulthood, one becomes increasingly aware, and perhaps anxious or fearful, that the learning process will decline or cease to operate. Throughout the last two decades, important research has been done with the triune brain and specifically the cognitive domain. Important information-processing principles or concepts which are being theorized are as follows: automatic versus controlled processing; left-brain and right-brain theory; chunking; constructivist learning; attention; memory; metamemory; and, the importance of schemata in comprehension and drawing inferences. Robert Sylwester (1995, p.54) wrote a new book on brain research and its implications for educators where he commented that the human is most comfortable in the cognitive center of the brain where things are neither too simple or complex.

The third part of the triune brain is the psychomotor domain which involves a profound network of cells, neurons, and chemicals that guide all the processes of the human body. The psychomotor domain is "the doing area"

navigating non-voluntary, complex systems which include digestive, circulatory, respiratory, neural tubes, and muscular. The psychomotor processes which interact with the environment are the sensory and motor—including communication—systems. Although psychomotor functions are extremely important to sustaining life, only a small percentage of our neurons are actually involved with the psychomotor domain. Most of our brain is devoted to the function of analyzing and solving problems (Sylwester, 1995). In the next portion of this response, the important topic of learning styles will be addressed. Although each individual interacts within the social context in his or her own unique way, there are broadly generalized similarities or styles among learners which enable them to confront personal and environmental challenges.

Learning Styles

Claxton and Murrell, (1988) stated that learning style can be examined at the following four contrasting levels: (a) personality, (b) information processing, (c) social interaction, and (d) instructional methods. The National Association of Secondary School Principals defined learning

styles as the composite of cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that indicate how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment (Keefe, 1979). Thus, from knowledge of the triune brain and the domains of learning has evolved varied and plentiful research on the important topic of learning styles. This section will provide a brief history and overview of learning styles.

John Dewey (1938) broke tradition from behaviorist learning theory and tradition when he recommended that we educate the whole child. Dewey's voluminous writing on his philosophy of education advocated the interconnectedness of the social, scientific, moral, and aesthetic aspects of education. Fifteen years before, Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1917) published his personality type theory which posited that there were personality preference scales and personality types which explain a person's behavior based upon his or her preferred attitudes and mental functions. Katharine and Isabel Briggs Myers built upon this important work of Carl Jung, expanded it, and gave it practical application as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) in

the 1940's. It was Isabel Briggs Myers who determined that there are sixteen personality types and everyone fits into one of those types (Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 1995).

The main objective in discovering one's Type is to find what best motivates and energizes us as individuals so that we can seek these elements in our personal or professional life. The four dimensions of personality type which combine in a variety of ways to make the sixteen personality types are as follows: (a) Extraversion and introversion (concepts introduced by Carl Jung) explain how we interact with the world and where we direct our energy; (b) sensing and intuition describes the kind of information we naturally notice; (c) thinking and feeling which determines how we make decisions; and (d) judging and perceiving which tells whether we prefer to live in a more structured way or in a more spontaneous way (Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 1995, pp. 10-12). Combining these four preferences produces one of the sixteen personality types, such as ENFP or ISTJ. The MBTI® continues to be used today as an important tool for assessing learning styles, career guidance, interpersonal skills development, self-awareness, communication,

parenting, team building, management, curriculum reform, and human resource development. In 1984, David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates published *Please Understand Me* which further builds on Type theory to describe their theory of the four temperaments and sixteen combinations with examples for understanding interpersonal relationships in learning, parenting, mating, and leading.

Anthony F. Gregorc (1982), a leader in the phenomenological research on learning styles, describes learning style as consisting of distinctive behaviors which serve as indicators of how a person learns from and adapts to his environment. Through extensive study, Gregorc found that single items from the following pairs of elements were preferred by different learning styles: concrete or abstract; sequential or non-sequential; deduction or induction; and, alone or with a group. However, throughout the study, it was found that all learners used a variety of learning styles but appeared to prefer one style above the rest. According to Gregorc, learning style appears to be acquired genetically, environmentally, and culturally. A study conducted at Montana State University (Herbster, 1987)

with 66 student teachers revealed findings that there is a relationship between critical thinking and learning styles.

The theory of multiple intelligences was proposed by Howard Gardner (1983) who defined intelligence as the capacity to solve problems and to create product valued in one or more cultural setting. Gardner's list of the seven multiple intelligences include the following: logical-mathematical; linguistic; musical; spatial; bodily-kinesthetic; interpersonal; and, intrapersonal. In December of 1995, a learning project study using Gardner's multiple intelligences was done with 35 voluntary staff members at Billings Senior High School. From the results, the participants learned that most of them had taken on a new learning project when reaching a life crisis or transition. The respondents of the inventory were people of all disciplines and occupations with several of the participants being support staff. The group's cumulative three highest areas of intelligence used for solving problems and being creative (in descending order) were 1) bodily-kinesthetic; 2) musical; and, 3) intrapersonal. The three lowest areas of intelligence used (in ascending order) were 1) logical-mathematical; 2) interpersonal; and, 3)

linguistic. After the study, results were given to the participants at a reception in the school library where each learner was able to choose how he or she would receive the feedback. An interesting outcome from this study about learning styles was that, even for educators, the participants chose to learn with non-academic projects and methods. After learning the results of the inventory, many of the teachers began using music and hands-on projects in their classrooms in the realization that many of their students probably also preferred the use of their non-academic intelligences for learning.

An experience-based theory of human learning which involves testing ideas in actual experience was authored by David Kolb (1984). Kolb's experiential learning theory is formed from the belief that thought and action, as well as learning and personal development, are concurrent processes. The major assumptions of Kolb's model stress that (a) learning is a continual process; (b) learning is grounded in personal experience; (c) learning requires the resolution of conflicts between modes of personal adaptation; and (d) learning involves transactions between the individual and the environment whereby experiences is transformed into

knowledge and resultant actions. Prior to creating the *Experiential Learning Theory*, David Kolb (1977) designed *The Learning Style Inventory* to measure a learner's strengths and weaknesses. The four learning styles are *converger, diverger, assimilator* and *accomodator*. The strength of the learner is determined by how closely that individual disposes all four learning abilities. Usually the learner tends to emphasize one or two styles of learning Kolb believes that with application of *The Learning Style Inventory*, the learner will be better able to understand that there are different styles of learning, he or she will begin to better understand his or her own learning style, and the process of each person learning from their own experience will have begun.

Yale's Robert Sternberg (1997) looks at styles of learning in a slightly different way when he recommends that an individual use successful intelligence which involves thinking in the three following ways: 1) Analytical thinking is the ability to solve problems and judge ideas; 2) Creative thinking is the ability to formulate new or clever solutions to problems; 3) Practical thinking is the ability to use your ideas and implement them effectively.

Sternberg recommends balancing the three types of thinking to become most effective at successful intelligence. Sternberg believes that successfully intelligent people are motivated, controlled, persevering and independent because they have learned how to make the most of their strengths and are able to work around their limitations. (pp. 1-2)

In a discussion of learning styles, it is important to recognize the work done recently by researchers working within the pluralistic society. A recent work which was published after thirty years of research, *Multiculturalism and Learning Style,* was written by Dunn and Griggs (1995). Although the text is written primarily for the purpose of teaching and counseling adolescent learners, there is valuable information about cultural learning preferences and hundreds of activities from which many could be adapted to the adult level of learning. A more specific study was conducted by Fellenz and Conti (1990) on the Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Montana which identified learning styles associated with resultant learning by Native American students.

Freeman and Whitson (1992) reviewed learning and thinking styles and recommended guidelines for the reader:

> 1) Style preferences are not unchangeable; 2) Style refers to learner actions not ability; 3) The learning experience should be considered much broader than cognitive achievement; and, 4) teachers may need to adapt their teaching style bilaterally to influence student actions. (pp. 11-12)

Information about one's learning style can be especially helpful to the learner for personal and professional development, learning about learning, metacognition, and perspective transformation.

Learning in the Social Environment

Fellenz and Conti (1990) reported on learning in the social environment with their powerful associates, Myles Horton and Janine Pease-Windy Boy. The word "powerful" indicates the emotion felt empathizing with the goals and dreams of these adult educators in their quest toward honor, dignity, and democracy for the many oppressed with whom they worked and learned. Retelling the words of Myles Horton describes the role of both the teacher and the learner in this unique learning situation:

> Horton confessed that when he first started the Highlander Center he had to "go back to school with the people and learn from them." Schooling had given him many answers to problems that people didn't have but no answers to problems

> they did have. "So we started learning how people react; we learned from them, how they learned (p. v)."

Fellenz and Conti (1989) further clarify learning in the social environment as follows:

> Learning in the social environment assumes a participatory mode. Learners are expected to be aware of the elements in their environment and to analyze them critically (p. 13).

In other words, through active participation, awareness, and critical thinking, the learner begins to take shared ownership of the learning program which means not only helping to decide the content but maintaining its longevity.

A leader in adult learning that developed a literacy program in the impoverished social environments of Brazil, Paulo Freire (1993), used the term, praxis, because, "Human activity consists of action and reflection: It is praxis; it is transformation of the world" (p. 106). It is important to emphasize, that praxis involves the second crucial step beyond reflection and that is taking action. Likewise, Mezirow (1991) uses the term praxis to indicate that learning has occurred which in his definition is transformed meanings or perspectives. Both adult education leaders

indicate that a transformation or change takes place with praxis.

A learning transformation used by high tech business is action learning where individuals learn by doing but it is more than learning a single skill or technique. Williams (1992), describes the process as learners increasing their self-awareness while developing new knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills for making changes and redefining their roles within new contexts. With action learning, learning and change are the desired outcomes instead of problem solving.

Self-Directed Learning

One of the assumptions underlying Knowles' andragogical model asserts that adult learners are self-directed (1970, 1980, 1990). Although there was discussion of disagreement with Knowles' concept of self-directed learning on this topic by adult educators such as Brookfield (1992, 1995) and Mezirow (1985), Cross (1981) asserted that her research indicated seventy percent of adults are self-directed. Tough (1979) declared that ninety percent of all adults conduct at least one self-directed learning project per

year. Knowles (1990) provided a clarification of his meaning of self-directed learning as follows:

> In its broadest sense, "self-directed learning" describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in (1) diagnosing their own needs for learning, formulating their own learning objectives, identifying effective human and material resources for accomplishing their objectives, choosing and implementing effective strategies for using these resources, and (5) evaluating the extent to which they have accomplished their objectives. Of course, self- direction in learning does not mean learning alone or in isolation; it usually takes place in association with various kinds of helpers, such as teachers, tutors, mentors, resource people, and peers. (pp. 134-35)

In 1990, Tough contributed to a book where he expanded his study on self-planned learning to children, adolescents, and adults. Tough (1990) continues to assert that ninety percent of all adults conduct at least one learning project in any given year and that self-directed projects are not done exclusively by adults, as follows:

> Planning and managing of one's own learning projects is a common occurrence in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood in every population in every country that has been included in sixty different studies (pp. 290-291).

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research is usually an example of when people are sharing or taking part, analyzing their situation as a group, and being involved in a process that will improve their lives (Fellenz and Conti, 1989; McTaggart, 1991). McTaggart, defines the process by identifying the following nine principles of participatory action research:

> (a) Identification of the individual and collective project; (b) changing and studying discourse, practice, and social organization; (c) the distribution of power; (d) changing the culture of working groups, (e) institutions, and society; action and reflection; (f) unifying the intellectual and practical project (where the social action becomes *praxis* through which people may consistently live their social values); (f) knowledge production (this focus is achieved by focusing energies on improvements from the workers' perspective); (g) engaging the politics of research action (participatory action research is a political process because it involves people in making changes together that will also affect others. . . it sometimes creates resistance to change, both in the participants themselves and in others); (h) methodological resources (participatory action researchers draw on the research methods of phenomenology, ethnography, and case study in order to seek an understanding of the circumstances within which they are working); and (i) creating the theory of work (to show what they have done to create a developed, tested, and critically-examined rationale for what they are doing). (pp. 168-179)

Well-known for his work with participatory action research is Myles Horton (1990). When the poor from fifty Appalachian communities took collective social action to produce major governmental changes. Moreover, Fellenz and Conti (1992) provide a plentiful list of examples of participatory action research used around the world from places representing the Third World countries to urban environments.

Learning by Critical Reflection

In *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Brookfield (1995) advocates constantly researching in the teaching-learning situation to examine the assumptions under which one is operating. Brookfield warns that many hegemonic assumptions may be undermining the teacher's ability to do excellent or rewarding teaching. He gave examples of some of these hegemonic assumptions such as student journaling is good, chairs should be arranged in a circle, or group work is good. Brookfield does qualify his comments by admitting that for some adult teachers the assumptions are fine and the important thing to remember is that teachers should

always and consistently reflect critically on their practice.

Donald Schon's (1988) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* states that when reflecting in action, the practitioner has the freedom to establish his or her own theory to fit the unique situation. Prior to the reflecting phase, the practitioner experiences knowing-in-action while he is teaching and there may be an unexpected surprise. With reflection upon what has transpired, the teacher is able to identify the theories or ideas about the practice that he would like to change. Cervero (1989) agrees with Brookfield and Schon that the essential quality of adult education practice is maintained with reflection-in-action. All of the above educators believe that the accepted beliefs of adult education practices and should be reflected upon when used to identify assumptions which may be either faulty or sound.

Assumptions About Learning

In Smith's (1990) book, Candy surmises, "The question of when and how people learn about learning is partly a matter of aptitude and partly a matter of personal

experience" (p. 31). Candy cautions that "learning how to learn" has become a phrase of many meanings as have metacognition and self-direction but the main features of the concept of learning to learn are summarized by Candy as follows:

> The development of learning competence is a lifelong process which is the responsibility of all educators in both formal and informal contexts to develop; in adult learning, it is the perspective of the learner that matters; one of the greatest challenges confronting those with an interest in learning to learn is to transcend self-imposed limitations and to take a stance where they can view their own respective worlds; learning to learn is an urgent need because it enables the adult to make wise choices from the vast amount of material available. (pp. 56-57)

The constructivism theory in adult education is concerned with the learner's interpretation of concepts (construe) and how meaning is structured, built, or assembled (construct). This, of course, presents a case for active learning but more importantly, learning must be relevant and have some connection to the learner's experiential background (Candy, 1991). Constructivists have named teaching and learning a process of negotiation whereby meanings are construed and constructed which reaffirms that it is critical for teachers to model and provide activities

rather than methods using lecturing or directing. It is recommended that teachers use reflective practices and action research about the assumptions that guide their practice (Sparks, 1994).

External and Internal Factors Influencing Adult Learning

Adult learning is influenced by many external and internal factors which may either enhance the learner's efforts for participation and success or contribute to the learner's inability to complete his or her learning project. In this section, the following factors will be discussed as influencing the adult learner: (a) learning environment; (b) teacher, facilitator, or instructor; (c) situational barriers to learning; (d)timing of learning; (e) teaching method; (f) affective factors; (g) cognitive factors; (h) physiological factors; (i) and, social and cultural factors (Fellenz and Conti, 1991; Knowles,1970,1973,1980; Knox, 1986; Larson, 1980; Reichman-Hruska, 1989).

Learning Environment

Research on the environments for learning is finding that where the learner learns is increasingly important

(Knowles, 1973). Psychologists specializing in ecological and institutional environments are gaining insights and making recommendations about learning environments. Knowles is more specific on a planned learning environment. The human and interpersonal climate includes the quality of the relationship between the learner and the facilitator. Humanistic psychologists recommend a climate that is safe, caring, accepting, collaborative, non-competitive, encourages group loyalty, trusting, supportive, encourages interactive participation, respectful, and understanding to be the most effective. According to Knowles, other environments that are important include organizational climate, physical, ecological climate, and accessibility to resources. Organizational climate involves the structure of the organization such as the policies, procedures, and "spirit of the institution in which learning takes place" (Knowles, 1973, pp. 102). The physical climate provides for the comfort of the learner through consideration of factors such heat, light, ventilation, access to refreshments and restrooms, comfortable chairs, and good acoustics. Features of the ecological climate include the room's size and layout as well as choice of colors in the

environment which affect the learner's mood. Vosko (1991) elaborated on four general areas which affect learning situations as territoriality, seating arrangements, sightlines, and equipment. Knowles (1973) encourages a wide range of resource materials also be available to the adult learner such as books, handouts, journals, and videos.

Teacher, Facilitator, or Instructor

Much of the literature emphasizes the importance of the teacher, facilitator, or instructor as a key factor in retention of the student (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1970; Long, 1983; Rogers, 1969). For many adults embarking upon a formal learning project, the return to school can be not only threatening but often fearful. Approachability of the teacher and how welcome the student feels can be helped by displaying the characteristics listed as respectful, caring, empowering, open, flexible, learner-centered, listener, trustworthy, accepting, and understanding (Knowles, 1973). It is not only important but imperative that the whole staff be accepting and respectful of all adult learners (Brink and Chandler, 1993).

Barriers to Learning

There are many different kinds of barriers to learning for the adult (Darkenwald & Larson, 1980). These barriers usually fall into one of four categories which include informational, attitudinal, situational, and institutional. Darkenwald and Larson emphasize the following:

> In order for adults to participate in continuing education, they must be aware of the existence of the program, must be motivated to participate, and must be willing to surmount problems caused by their environment or created by the provider institution which militate against participation. (pp. 88-89)

Wlodknowski (1986) advises targeting the program to those best served by it, following up inactive students with phone calls, identify and track students for retention.

Social disapproval can be overcome by emphasizing the social aspects of the program such as making new friends and feeling welcome in a friendly atmosphere. Situational barriers which sometimes interfere with attendance are transportation, cost, childcare, work responsibilities, family responsibilities, scheduling, and learning location issues. Negative attitudes toward learning or adult programs can be overcome with peer counseling or support networks. Having a successful student who can empathize

with the students' position may be helpful also. Negative attitudes toward new learning projects may have their roots in previous or preparatory educational programs which were not a good experience. Therefore, programs need to relevant to the learner's situation. Each meeting should produce something for the learner to take home for immediate use (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1970).

Timing of Learning

Developmental psychologist, Robert Havighurst (1952), aptly phrased the "teachable moment" as the brief, period of time when an adult's developmental task becomes imperative, motivation becomes powerful, and learning is extremely effective (Long, 1983). Havighurst used the example of expecting the birth of a baby as a teachable moment for the anticipative parents. Havighurst and many others have done extensive research on motivation and the timing of learning (Lewin, 1953; Maslow, 1954; McKeachie, 1988; Rogers, 1969; Skinner, 1971; Tough, 1979).

Teaching Method

There is much in the literature about teaching the adult. This short summary highlights some of the most

common and proven methods for teaching adult learners. Zemke and Zemke (1981), provide direct answers about the best teaching methods for the adult learner by advising the educator to respond to problem-centered learning needs and personal growth needs, integration of information into the curriculum, accountability for learning style differences, transfer strategies, and relevant exercises. Cognitivist Robert Wendell (1988) offers the following six functions which can be followed as steps in the instruction of adults:

> (1) review of previous learning and skills; (2) initial presentation of material through an overview; (3) guided practice; (4) corrective feedback from the instructor; (5) independent work by the students; and (6) frequent review of material. (p 29-30)

Affective Factors

Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence about learning is an important factor in adult learners who have had poor previous school experiences or who did not finish high school (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1970). Long (1983) hastens to caution the reader, however, that this is not the only cause for low self-esteem in an adult learner.

Mental health concerns often increase with advancing age as older people experience stress, crisis, and loss. Losses include self-efficacy when the older adult experiences identity problems, poor health, deaths of friends and family, reduced status and income, and negative labeling by members of the older adult's family and community. Older adult learners often have difficulty with learning because they think they can't accomplish a task due to feeling inadequate or incapable. This vicious cycle of aging has been labeled the Social Breakdown Syndrom (SBS) by Kuypers and Bengtson (1973). Additionally, Knox (1977) reports that if an older adult has had a long history of poor adjustment, then maladjustment in old age is almost certain. Although an individual of any age may have adequate intelligence for learning, the presence of mental disabilities often removes the learner's self-efficacy and self-confidence making them unable to achieve at learning.

Cognitive Factors

Adult Learners often hesitate to embark on academic learning projects if they have not done so for some time. This may prevent or delay some adults from learning until

they receive more information to assist them in managing a developmental task (Knowles, 1970; Havighurst, 1952; Long, 1983). Another group of learners that may be reluctant or fearful about adult education are the special-needs learners. Learners with in this category would include people with a large variety of needs such as cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, non-verbal and non-linguistic learning styles, and sensory disabilities. Unfortunately, many of these adults had undiagnosed or misunderstood special needs and were not able to meet success in their previous school experiences (Darkenwald & Larson, 1980; NASP, 1990).

Physiological Factors

Although it appears to be basic knowledge, Maslow (1954), felt physiological needs were important enough to put on the foundation level of his hierarchy of human needs. Without the fulfillment of food, water, sleep, and warmth needs, the adult learner will not be able to attend to learning. Through ample interaction with the learner, the instructor can determine if these basic biological needs have been met. J. R. Kidd (1973) asserted the following:

> The child who is undernourished in body and understimulated makes slow and shambling progress as a learner. Unfortunately, environments that deter learning in children seem also to have a serious effect upon adults. (p. 35)

Social and Cultural Factors Affecting Learning

Unfortunately, in a country with phenomenal resources and variety, there tends to be a great deal of intolerance towards persons based on their social or cultural diversity. One group of Americans which generally feels an attitude of negativism towards them is that of the older person. Because of lowered self-efficacy and an increasing external locus of control, older adults actually begin to feel inadequate with a lowered self-esteem (Myers, 1991). Another group of Americans that feel inadequate to learn are the impoverished. Kidd (1973) stresses this repetitive syndrome of society as follows:

> A man or a woman who has learned to accept or live with a detrimental environment is not a person who will readily undertake another learning experience. He foresees only one more painful step on the long trail of failure and shame. (p. 35)

Adult learners of minority cultures are often thought of as not having the ability to be successful in undergraduate or terminal degree programs. Conti and Fellenz (1991) worked

extensively with the Blackfoot Tribal College in Montana and suggested the importance of addressing the needs of the adult learners by noting their learning styles, characteristics as adult learners, relevance of material presented, and learning in the social context. This important body of research has applicability for adult learning in all cultures and all socioeconomic levels of our society. Merriam (1993) encourages discussion in adult education learning environments that address issues of power that are inherent in cultural diversity and whether diversity is based on nationality, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability or some other factor.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

"A research design is similar to an architectural blueprint. . .The selection of a particular design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and by the type of end product desired" (Merriam, (1988, p. 6). This study, is based on naturalistic inquiry and uses the descriptive case study. To provide an open forum with the reader of this research (Constas, 1992), the principles and characteristics of naturalistic inquiry and the descriptive case study will be briefly discussed below.

Naturalistic Inquiry

Naturalistic inquiry, often referred to as qualitative research, offers an alternative from rationalistic or conventional inquiry for the researcher of *Parenting Success* which is grounded in humanistic learning theory and

philosophy. According to Guba (1978), naturalistic inquiry is philosophically based on phenomenology and the source of theory is either grounded or will be generated as a result of the study. The purpose of this research inquiry is for the discovery of how learning occurs in the *Parenting Success* program and is done through investigative journalism or ethnography. Unlike rationalistic inquiry which attempts to verify a proposed hypothesis through reduction, naturalistic inquiry expands the implied knowledge types within a pluralistic value structure and holistic scope.

The design of qualitative research emerges as inquiry progresses with the researcher interacting and participating with the parents in this study. Naturalistic methodology takes place in the context of the *Parenting Success* social environment with variable treatment and invited interference which naturally occurs in this type of uncontrolled setting. The applications of naturalistic inquiry work well with social and behavioral phenomenon such as those occurring within the *Parenting Success* context. The quality of this study, on how learning occurs in the participants of *Parenting Success*, depends upon the relevance of the study which is key to effectively changed perspectives among the

participants. The literature review in a naturalistic study is not designed to direct or limit the researcher but rather to give depth of understanding and perspective of the social context in the naturalistic setting.

Naturalistic inquiry uses data collection as part of the research process in making discoveries. Participating parents willing to voluntarily participate were chosen for an individual or focus group follow-up session and interviewing became a learning experience for both the inquirer and the respondent. The researcher found that using a tape recorder during the interview was an important tool for capturing the findings that emerged. Glaser (1967), in work with grounded theory, advises the qualitative researcher to be aware of patterns and categories, and when a category is saturated it is enough. The outcomes of naturalistic inquiry summarize and validate the discovery research with quotes from real people situated in the transitory and social context of life. Outcomes of the naturalistic study are richly descriptive and provide the researcher with complex, multivariant, and representative findings from which he or she can grow and learn personally and professionally. The outcomes of

qualitative research do not generalize to the comprehensive population but rather provide information that can be applicable to select populations such as the participants of *Parenting Success*.

Descriptive Case Study

The qualitative research design chosen to describe how parents of families at risk learn through participation in *Parenting Success* is the descriptive case study. Since the focus of this research was particularistic and took place contextually within the social environment of this program, the bounded system (Merriam, 1988) was chosen to specifically study or examine learning of the participants in the innovative *Parenting Success* program. "The decision to focus on qualitative case studies stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). Since it was impossible to identify all of the important variables prior to this study, the descriptive case study focuses on not one but many of the variables present within the boundaries of the study. Merriam (1988) is quick to point

out that a survey or questionnaire may be used to gather information and data for a descriptive case study which, of course, is different from survey research used to gather information on pre-determined, specific variables.

The goal of this qualitative process was to focus on the many emerging variables which describe how and/or why adults learn in the *Parenting Success* program for parents of families at risk. Through the heuristic nature of the descriptive case study (Merriam, 1988), the researcher and the reader should be able to explain why *Parenting Success* worked or did not work. Furthermore, a discussion of alternative methods, techniques, skills, and information not chosen or integrated into the parenting program can be pondered, reconsidered, evaluated, and recommended for future use.

Population

To date, 72 adult learners have participated at differing levels of involvement in the *Parenting Success with Kids* and the *Parenting Success with Teens* programs. These classes for parents of families at risk meet at The Parent Connection which is a community-parent resource

center sponsored by Billings School District # 2. The population for this study was a group of participants who were parents of families at risk under the agency of the Department of Child and Family Services for the State of Montana. They had been ordered by a court of law to take a series of parenting classes of their choice. Parenting classes are part of the mandated treatment plans which outline the necessary steps which "neglectful" or "abusive" parents must take to regain custody of their children who have been removed from their parents' care and are currently in foster care. The ages of the children removed range from birth to 15 years with the newborn children being removed immediately following childbirth from a mother abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Parents who have been ordered by the court to include parenting education in their treatment plans are the group with the greatest participation in *Parenting Success with Kids* for the following two reasons: (1) The Yellowstone County Department of Child and Human Services specifically encourage their clientele to participate in *Parenting Success* because they believe that this program addresses the needs of parents of families at risk more adequately;

(2) the parents participating in *Parenting Success* have a relatively high course completion rate when comparing it to other available parenting classes.

More specifically, the number of court-ordered parents participating in *Parenting Success with Kids* for this portion of the study is 56. This group of parents can be defined with the statistics and demographics below. Of the 20 men and 36 women participating in *Parenting Success with Kids*, 46% of the participants were either married or co-habitating and were attending as parenting couples; 41% percent of the participants were single mothers; 13% percent of the participants were single fathers. The cultural diversity of the court-ordered parents is greater than that of the general population of Yellowstone County with racial minority participants comprising a total 34% ratio of Native American, Hispanic, African American, and Japanese parents. Accordingly, 66% of the court-ordered participants were Caucasian. Of the participants present because either one or both of the parents were abusively involved with alcohol and other drugs, the total is 71%; 7% of the participants had lost their children because of mental illness occurring in one of the parents; 7% of the participants were in

parenting classes because they had been charged with domestic and physical abuse of the children or spouse; and, 3% of the participants were involved with an entangling custody case. Thirty-nine parents (70%) of the participants completed the *Parenting Success* program; Seven parents (13%) of the participants completed two, three, or four classes of a six-week session and have registered to complete the course beginning on June 18, 1997; Six parents (10%) of the participants completed two classes and then dropped out; Of the remaining four participants (7%), two parents became homeless and had to return to the reservation at Lame Deer, Montana, and two parents allegedly committed crimes and had to return to the Yellowstone County Detention Center.

A second group of adult learners not focused in this study are parents of at-risk families who are volunteer participants in the community-sponsored parenting classes, *Parenting Success with Teens*. This group of parents have at-risk teenagers who are having difficulty meeting the expectations of their homes, parents, schools, and society.

Research Procedures

The researcher observed, actively listened, and noted emerging variables that explain or describe how adults learn through participation in the *Parenting Success* program. Non-verbal and verbal expressions and learner's attitudes toward the content, instructor, and other participants are noted in the anecdotal process. The researcher recorded evidence of emerging variables about the adult learning process from the following information about what occurred contextually in the *Parenting Success* learning groups: (a) The learning environment; (b) feelings, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and groups which were present during the learning groups; (c) methods, techniques, and activities which the participants believed were especially useful to their learning; (d) teaching strategies that facilitated the learning process (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989); (e) the learner's impression of the facilitators' attitudes and behaviors; (f) information or concepts learned in *Parenting Success* which they have been able to implement, or plan to use, in their own relationships and with their own children; and (g) changed perspectives about relationships and parenting which they would be interested in implementing

into their personal change process. This feedback was gained from the participants in *Parenting Success* through the following processes: (a) Class discussion and observation; (b) use of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1970) to identify at-risk adult learners' needs while they are participating in the learning process; (c) questionnaires, open-ended questions, and a final evaluation; (d) follow-up and feedback opportunities at the beginning and end of the weekly meetings; (e) follow-up summaries after parenting class by the researcher and her co-facilitator; (f) a survey questionnaire was given to each individual completing at least five sessions of *Parenting Success*; (g) A final individual interview with participants who were able or willing to volunteer for this human research; or, (h) Dyad focus group interviews with couples or two participants attending *Parenting Success*. The information questionnaires and evaluation forms are found in Appendix C. The Consent for Participation in Human Research, demographics questionnaire, interview questions, and demographics of the interviewees are located in Appendix D.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Overview

The findings are reported throughout this chapter in a consistent manner by briefly describing the emerging variables and followed by supporting quotations from the participants of *Parenting Success*. The short answers from meeting anecdotal notes and the final evaluations are anonymous but the answers from the interviews are identified with the name or gender and age of the interviewee based on the information taken from their *Consent Form for Participation in Human Research* (Appendix D). The reader is encouraged to note the impressive similarities among the respondents which verify the importance of having a thorough understanding of adult learners and adult learning before embarking upon the exhilarating journey to affect change

through learning, critical reflection, action, and transformed perspectives.

Active Research

Through the process of active research, it has been determined that the learner is very complex. The learners participating in *Parenting Success* are a representative community of many of the current social issues in Montana and the United States today as follows: Economics and poverty, drug abuse and addiction, mental and physical illness, inequality in a pluralistic and multicultural society, power and politics, education, the family, gun control, and deviance. Court-ordered to "parenting classes", these individuals displayed characteristics of institutional behavior, pessimism, anger, and disenchanted learners when they arrived at *Parenting Success* for their first learning group. It was a challenge and a goal to assist the new learners in their acquisition of more positive attitudes during the first two-hour learning group. However, changing the initial reaction and preconceived ideas of *Parenting Success* can be accomplished with the majority of participants using the humanistic philosophy and

adult learning principles. Humanistic philosophical practices and adult learning principles practiced early in *Parenting Success* include the following: Trust and rapport; empathy; acknowledgment of their crisis, transition, and losses; interaction and openness; shared responsibility for facilitation (learner as equal); sharing of experiences; and, empowerment and freedom. As cooperation and group cohesiveness evolved, it had been a natural progression for the majority of participants to "advance" to dialogue about their social conditions and changes, enhanced self-esteem, increased responsibility, assumption of a leadership role in the learning group, problem-posing and group problem-solving, and resourcefulness.

Demographics of Interviewees

From a total of 56 adult learners completing *Parenting Success with Kids*, 13 were interviewed. Nearly everyone of the 56 court-ordered parents volunteered to be interviewed on their final evaluation form (Appendix C) of *Parenting Success*. The 13 parents interviewed were chosen based on their availability and because their course completion date was fairly close to the time of the interview. Five other

participants missed their interview appointment but were not rescheduled because the first 13 interviews revealed very similar emerging patterns and themes. In this chapter, the reader will find results from all 13 interviews plus short answer information taken from all of the final evaluations. No evaluations were taken out of the results but some of the evaluation forms had blank spaces where a short answer was requested. When reading about the Demographics of the Interviewees, the reader is encouraged to refer to (Appendix D) which contains a table with detailed information about each individual interviewed. The description below will be a general sketch of the average parent interviewed for this study.

The average age of the interviewee was 32.3 years and there were 10 women and 3 men interviewed. The average grade in school completed by the interviewees, including 3 with a graduate equivalency degree [GED], was 12.3 grade equivalent. Of the 13 interviewees, 5 of them were married, 3 additional women were married but separated, including 1 common law marriage, and in the process of getting a divorce. One woman was divorced and there were 4 single people included among the interviewees. There were a

total of 8 single parents with one of them being a male. From the families of the interviewees, there were a total of 37 children involved who were currently in foster care or who had recently returned home from foster care. Thirty-one percent of the interviewees were members of a minority race. Nine of the interviewees were employed either full-time or part-time, 3 parents were unemployed, and one parent was a college student. Six of the 13 parents interviewed were on public assistance.

Results of the Interviews

The questions used in the interviews were derived from the six research questions. Upon examination of the interview responses, there emerged numerous patterns of the adult learning process. Many of the response patterns or themes came forth across the spectrum of research questions which made it somewhat difficult to categorize the patterns into one clearly-defined and specific area. However, for purposes of analysis clarification, each pattern or cluster of patterns is explained under a specific heading theme. The emerging themes were as follows: Effects of adult learning principles, effects of humanistic philosophy,

methods, techniques, and activities which facilitated learning, effects of self-esteem and confidence upon learning, effects of participation upon feeling successful, attitudinal and behavioral changes, personal changes, and plans for the future of the interviewees. This section will also elaborate upon how *Parenting Success*, which is based on humanistic adult learning philosophy, differs from other parenting programs in which some of our learning group members had previously been enrolled.

Reactions to Adult Learning Principles

Adult Learning Principles

Adult Education (Verner, 1964), summarizes the important principles of adult learning below:

> Some of the principles of learning particularly relevant to adult education can be summarized as follows:
> (a) Learning is an active process and adults prefer to participate actively. . . ;
> (b) Group learning is more effective than individual learning;
> (c) Learning that is applied immediately is retained longer and is more subject to immediate use than that which is not;. . .
> (d) Learning must be reinforced;. .
> (e) Learning new material is facilitated when it is related to what is already known; . . .
> (f) The existence of periodic plateaus in the rate of learning necessitates frequent

> changes in the nature of the learning task to insure continuous progress;. . .
>
> (g) Learning is facilitated when the learner is aware of his progress; . . . the design and management of a learning situation is enhanced when planning for learning takes into account an analysis of the particular techniques appropriate to each task, and an understanding of the characteristics of the learner in the social situation established for learning. The more careful the planning, the more the learning that will be achieved (pp. 89-90).

With the above input from Verner (1964) and from Knowles' (1970, 1980) *Theory of Andragogy*, the development of *Parenting Success* began to evolve as a learning program that would effectively meet the adult learning needs of parents of families at risk.

Effects of Adult Learning Principles

Adult learning principles provide the framework for the learning process in *Parenting Success*. Two areas addressed are the following: (a) initial reactions, preconceived ideas, and expectations of parents of families at risk upon entering the mandated parenting program, *Parenting Success*, and (b) reactions to a parenting program based on adult learning principles upon the completion of *Parenting Success*.

Parents Initial Reactions. When asked about how they felt about being court-ordered through their treatment plan to participate in parenting education, the feelings generally expressed by the participants are those of anger, resentment, resistance, defensiveness, apprehension, humiliation, fear, and negativity. Many of the parents reported that they attempted to enter with a positive attitude toward parenting while feeling the emotions listed above before the first class.

> Very offended. To me, it violates my sense of honor and my family's dignity. I am not a child abuser. Why order me to take classes that I don't need. I am not a drug abuser and I am told to go to drug rehab to dry out. (Eric, Age 26)

> When I first came to that class [*Parenting Success*], I really didn't look forward to it. I felt indifferent. Like they were telling me I'm not good enough. . .to be a parent. Scared because I really didn't want to go because I had to. I knew I had to get my kids back. I'm one of those that if I'm forced into it, I'm stubborn about it. I thought, I'll go but I'm not going to say nothing.(Tammy, Age 28)

> I think there was a large range of emotions. The person [social worker] in that position led us through a whole gamut. . .resistance and resentment at being forced to do something. There is apprehension. There is a feeling of, "who else is going to be there? How are they going to see me?" There is a self-esteem protection that promotes being defensive. However, I chose to

look at it as, since I had to be there I may as well participate in a positive manner. I wanted to try to get what I could from it since I had no other choice than to be there. So I approached it with some feelings of temerity but also with an openness. (Female, Age 31)

Personally, I thought that any parenting could help. It had been so long and things had changed so much—even diapering a baby. I looked forward to this. I think every parent can use more parenting. . .[some of the parents felt angry] because they had to be somewhere at a certain time because this is the way someone told them to do but me, I didn't care about that because I wanted to learn about parenting—what new things were out . . .I think change is good. (Kristi, Age 38)

The initial reaction is why do I have to do this? There is initial rebellion, but yet at the same time there is a need to learn because I know I have been doing things wrong and so there is also a need to learn to do something right for my children to be a better parent. Being ordered is probably what—is the reason I did. I mean, if I hadn't been ordered I probably wouldn't have. It's just a sticky situation, it's like okay, it's good that I'm here but I hate it that I'm here. I think it was kind of anger that somebody said, "Well, you have to do this." You have no say in your life, so there is always an anger and there is—I would say mostly anger. (Jenny, Age 29)

At first, I didn't want to go because I felt that my parenting skills were fine. Once I started going, I enjoyed it. You asked me how I felt? Angry. (Denise, Age 31)

I felt like—open to going, but I guess there was a certain part of me that felt like the humiliation part, you know. (Pam, Age 37)

> I was angry. Because I mean I—like Jim is 22, and I said, 22 years later and they want me to go to parenting classes? And—but I like to keep a positive attitude when I'm asked to do something. I go in with an open mind and positive attitude, I maybe have some hard feelings but I'll do what I have to do to, you know, protect myself and my children. (Rita, Age 41)

> There was a little bit of resentment there for a minute but once I was at the class I found that there was things I could use, discovered things that I could use. Yeah. I didn't care for it at first because it was court-ordered. A block comes up automatically but once I was in the class, I made sure that I read over everything and tried to use what was there. It became a lot easier. (Debbie, Age 38)

There were also many preconceived ideas about the mandated parenting class. Again, the parental responses regarding taking a risk with an unknown entity, such as the learning program *Parenting Success*, which was determined through a court of law and was not expected to be positive. Collectively, the interviewees recounted their feelings of fear, uncertainty and anxiety about this parent education class which they expected to be boring and based upon "book learning" and lectures from a facilitator who was part of a government agency. Most respondents did not expect the class to be homogeneous in the sense that each of the participants had had some involvement with Child and Family

Services which is often referred to as DFS. The parents from families at risk were concerned that they would feel uncomfortable or not fit in with the other parents who had not had their children removed at birth, at school, or from their homes.

> I was nervous, that's all that I know. (Bob, Age 41)

> Yeah, lectures with book learning. I—when I got into your class, this is cool these people are dealing with reality here, I mean. It's—this is reality. (Jenny, Age 29)

> I felt fear, I guess. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

> I really wasn't sure what to expect. I was out in the blue. I figured they would give Do's and Don'ts— how you do this and you do that. (Debbie, Age 38)

> I thought it would be a lot less open. I thought it would be a lot more teaching and a lot more boring, it just wasn't boring. (Pam, Age 38)

> When we first came in, we figured somebody was going to preaching the entire time and saying, "You're wrong, you're wrong. This is the way you're supposed to do it." When others come to the class, I'm sure they are going to expect what we did. And then what you find. . .it's like a breath of fresh air. (Diana, Age 27)

> We expected to be treated rude. Whoever runs these classes, "We see this every G__ d___ day. I don't want to hear it. Just sit down and shut up." I didn't know that it was independent of the social workers. They [social workers] would really stick it to you. (Eric, Age 26)

Co-facilitator Andi Sutton was interviewed about our first class with *Parenting Success with Kids* for court-ordered parents. Her anecdote below recalls the initial reaction of Susan [name is an alias], one of the learning group members:

> I remember Susan walking into the room. Her body language was showing how angry she was at being there. It almost scared me. She walked into the room. Almost accusatory, "Who are you? Who are you? Are you with DFS?" It scared me. She was very tense and the message that I was getting was that she did not want to be there and did not want anything to do with us. She was scribbling and doodling with a lot of intensity. When she broke out of the small groups, she was very, very angry.

Parents reaction upon completion. After completing the six sessions of *Parenting Success*, participants were asked if their reactions to this adult learning experience had changed. Most of the clientele had done a complete turnaround and were feeling surprised, welcomed, camaraderie, supported, positive self-esteem, enjoyment, respected, trustworthy, and encouraged. As Pat (Male, Age 18) explained, "I was pretty much scared to go in there and didn't want to be there and I came back for another one. I totally did a 180 from what I thought it would be." Many of

the parents praised the learning experience that *Parenting Success* had given them. In the first quotation below, Andi Sutton talked about how Susan's behavior changed over the next few weeks in *Parenting Success*:

> When it was explained that *Parenting Success* had no connection with DFS, you could see her begin to change and relax. Yet, she had to believe. Her voice was softer and her body language was not so defensive. As the classes went on, she became a leader with wonderful things to offer. I found out that she was really a very assertive person who really recognized some irrational things that were happening to her and she was not willing to accept it and getting into trouble [with DFS] for that attitude. She began to use the class as a resource.
>
> It was really amazing that there were people there that opened up and told everything. There were some people there that had gone before and they opened up and told their stories. That helped everybody else open up. What helped me open up was to hear their story. Pretty soon, I thought, "I'm not traveling down this path alone, there is other people beside me." It really opened my eyes to see that I wasn't the only one. It helped comfort me to know that I wasn't the only one. (Tammy, Age 28)
>
> Yes. I was made to feel welcome. My self-esteem was reinforced and not battered. I was treated with respect and dignity and in the position that I was in—and I got the impression that many of the other people there felt the same way—was that our dignity had been very badly assaulted and so there was a feeling of camaraderie, support, and positive self-esteem, and restoration of human dignity. (Female, Age 31)

The parenting class was a surprise. I thought it would be all tight, like a teaching situation and a teacher. We got a real break. That really enlightened me and boosted me up a lot. Then I started talking to some of these people. Hey, they know a lot of things and they are in the same situation. I was in the beginning of my treatment plan and they knew the things that I needed to get done and things that I could look forward to or that would brighten up. It was like a light at the end of the tunnel. They're telling, "It does happen and it has happened to me, it's not that great but you gotta do what you gotta do." There were things that you didn't understand or that you wanted to understand and you could bring them up like I kept doing. Just like in this book [text]. It was, "Pat, do you have any suggestions." Anything goes. You pretty much put into it what you want to get out of it. I was surprised. Everybody in my class did [become less angry]. I know they did. Some of them enjoyed it. Like, come and let's eat, like cards night or something. When we were on our break, how's your life and your life. And sometimes, we would talk in class about our kids and what they are doing and everybody's stories to share and pictures and things. I think they [class participants] really enjoyed it in my class. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

As time went on. There were some things that were said that I didn't know how to get across with my kids. Like, I'm real adamant about *not* doing some of the things my parents did. When your child comes to you and asked you something. You don't jump down their throat with "Why, why, why, why, why?" Bring the feeling out first. I said, "All right!" Not that I have been able to use it yet but I can say, "If Karen was here, she would do that and I would do this." I do it in my mind now. You get a lot of spectrum on how everybody else does things and how much people really are the same. My feeling coming here is a little different than what we planned. (Diana, Age 27)

Then when you get past the point of anger you are happy that you have a chance to ignore them. I think I did learn a lot in there. Yeah, it did [change]. I really enjoyed being there. (Jenny, Age 29)

Oh, yeah. You know, the class itself, that was a learning experience, and it wasn't humiliating at all. It was just being told that you had to, you know. (Pam, Age 37)

I didn't really feel I would benefit from it because of the issues, you know, my daughter ran away, they heard her side of the story, and it was like—I just didn't feel it would meet my needs. *Wrong!* [It did meet my needs] Well, yeah, because of my feelings that I was pretty angry, and I still feel betrayed and—but with going to parenting classes and being able to speak out and, you know, hear the other parents talk and just working with some of the material that was given to me, I started to let go. I feel better about the situation that my daughter's in, and I'm just going to go on with my life. (Rita, Age 41)

Yes, it made it. . . For me it was a way. . .I always found solutions to things that were happening. It seemed that they were right on to cue. For me anyway, I don't know about anyone else. Whatever happened during the week, that seemed to be what was going on. I was lucky. (Debbie, Age 38)

Oh yeah, it changed fairly quick. I wanted to get involved in it and I was feeling very grateful for where I was at compared to some of the other people in the program. They were hanging on to their anger and so they were getting nowhere. So I was feeling grateful. (Denise, Age 31)

I started picking up some things. I was enjoying going. I like to learn. (Bob, Age 41)

Effects of Adult Learning
Humanistic Philosophy

Humanistic philosophy is the foundation for *Parenting Success*. Humanistic adult learning philosophy sees the learner as an equal in terms of leadership, power, and control in a learning environment which encourages the learner to share his or her experiences (Knowles, 1970, 1980). The facilitator or coordinator arranges the learning milieu and promotes opportunities for group participation (Verner, 1964) and self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1992). Concepts of awareness, hope for the future, peer support, critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995), learning about learning (Smith, 1990), empowerment, decision-making and problem-solving; the transition process (Schlossberg, 1985); and encouragement of lifelong learning are important as the learner reaches for his or her highest potential and engages in the process of transformed perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). The facilitator can assist with this process by building a relationship with the learner that consists of mutual respect, trust, and empathy (Rogers, 1969). These beliefs belong to a humanistic adult educator.

Throughout the interview process, the following patterns emerged as humanistic philosophical components affecting the learning process in *Parenting Success*: (a) climate in the learning environment; (b) shared experiences; (c) homogeneous grouping; (d) problem posing and solving; (e) active participation (f) group discussion, open communication, and support.

Climate in the learning environment. Knowles (1970, 1980) and Darkenwald (1980) have written about the importance of climate in the learning environment. One factor which appeared to have a definite impact upon a positive learning environment or climate was the behavior of the facilitator.

> You guys were really open, even on the first day. Like explaining the situation between you and the services (DFS), and what you get out of it and what you put into it and stuff like that . Right there that told me a lot until I got to know the people. That helped out a lot. You were really good with names. I was very impressed with you two. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

> You encouraged it [participation] so much and with so much enthusiasm that everybody was willing to do it. I think you guys are real good teachers. (Tammy, Age 28)

> You and Andi did certain things to make people feel comfortable and you were not afraid to tell

> about your own experiences. That made for a better class. (Diana, Age 27)
>
> I think that parenting class and when I was in with you guys was real respectful and trustworthy. You didn't feel you're going to hear on the street what you just said [in parenting class]. You hear only positive things. I've heard nothing but positive things." (Kristi, Age 38)
>
> You and Andi really helped to broaden the horizons for the class. You covered a lot of things. And I think I felt when you guys talked to us, you didn't talk down to us, you talked to us like we were on the same level with you, even though every one in the group is being ordered by a state function to be there because we have lost our children. You didn't treat us like that we are less than dirt. (Jenny, Age 29)
>
> I think you guys are really good about that, helping everybody that they are capable as everyone else, and they are important and their feedback is important. (Pam, Age 38)

When members of the *Parenting Success* learning groups were asked how important they felt it was to have food at the *Parenting Success* meetings, their responses described the learning climate. This question may initially appear to have little or no relationship to learning. However, the interviewees were unanimous in their responses that food in the meeting place actually gives the meeting room atmosphere a warm and relaxed feeling. It was important for the facilitators to provide healthy food and also demonstrate

the basic needs that are fulfilled when a family eats a meal together. Although the "healthiness" of the food had not been discussed, one astute observer recognized this objective in the first interview quotation below:

> It was important for me because it was held at dinner time and I had to commute. It was important to me physically and, of course, we are back at those needs again [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs]. As well, it was a very subtle but effective demonstration of appropriate, healthy snacks for many people that are not consciously aware that there are alternatives out there to potato chips and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups® (Female, Age 31)

> I did. Some people won't talk. But if you get a few snacks going around, you get back into the mode of it. You think better. Maybe it will help you to open up better. More like a homey setting. Everybody here is not just here because they have to be here but we are enjoying this little bit of time. (Bob, Age 41)

> You open up better when you share a meal with somebody. (Denise, Age 31)

> The food was nice. The food part was great, it sort of personalizes it. (Diana, Age 27)

> It breaks the ice and most people are more likely to visit when they are getting their snack. You have to "meet at the punchbowl". For thousands of years cultures have done that and have had parties, and food, and peace. (Eric, Age 26)

> I thought it was nice. It was a nice gesture. It was like a warm feeling. (Kristi, Age 38)

> I think it was real important 'cause at school here, I've got a lunch ticket. You can't think about too much else when you don't have a full stomach. I liked how we could get up during class and get something or a cup of coffee. Sharing things and sharing coffee. . .that helps out quite a bit. I'm not sure how it worked but it did. Lots of times, people came without eating dinner. You know, if you've got meetings kids, work, school. Sometimes it would take an hour to get there and then have a two-hour block. That would tie you over until later. I never ate before I went. Thank you. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

> It kind of broke up the monotony of the classroom. Tension—it kind of broke it up. You feel more relaxed to sit and drink at their own leisure. I think it relaxed people more. I noticed that between the end of our group and the start, people were more relaxed. (Debbie, Age 38)

Safe Environment, Trust, and Mutual Respect. If a person feels all right about participating in a learning activity like *Parenting Success*, he or she usually feels that certain needs are being met. Participants were asked if *Parenting Success* was an all right experience for them. Resoundingly, court-ordered parents and their significant others have shown positive enthusiasm about *Parenting Success* as a learning program. Words used by the learners to describe this program most often written and said were *positive, excellent, comfortable, not feeling angry, great experience, fun, educational,* and *supportive*. One

respondent summarized the reasons why the experience was acceptable for her as follows:

> *Parenting Success* was not only okay, it was positive. It was positive because it was a safe place, a place of understanding, a place of sharing, a place of learning, a place to refresh things that I already knew, a place to share experiences, emotions, and learning experiences. Yes it was very positive, not only okay but very positive. (Female, Age 31)

Providing a safe environment where there is trust and mutual respect are important components of humanistic philosophy (Rogers, 1961; Satir, 1972). These three factors are important considerations for the clientele of *Parenting Success* and are crucial to the program.

> Both. It helped you feel better in the group. After about the third group, everybody was really into it, like John, but it made everybody feel more comfortable I think, more personal. (Debbie, Age 38)
>
> Very informative—I felt very safe with all in our group. (Anonymous)
>
> I was really scared the first day but I have to come to trust people a little bit more. I also find it easy to talk to people a little better. (Anonymous)
>
> People need to feel comfortable, safe, and reassured. That will mentally open them up if they are not worried about somebody, "Is this going to screw me here. You've got to feel comfortable with your surroundings if you are going to open up. It seems like it is designed to

> interact with people and break the ice. It's spontaneous, too. (Eric, Age 26)
>
> Well, there were some nights I needed to feel safe and I felt safe there. [Did you feel like you belonged or were accepted?] I did, I did. (Rita, Age 41)

The participants of *Parenting Success* were unified in their responses when they affirmed the primary importance of trust to successful learning. More than once, having trust was compared to having the primary need of safety met (Maslow, 1954). Kristi (Age 38) succinctly said, "You're not going to learn anything if you don't trust somebody." Female (Age 31) gave the following explanation:

> Because it was a participatory or group situation, you can not transmit, share, or receive information because you are feeling defensive so there has to be that trust among the group in order for that transmission of information to take place. . . . Being an educator and a parent, it is of the utmost importance that there is trust. The needs are not met—and one of the primary needs is safety—then we spend all of our energy, time—physical energy, physical time, emotional energy, emotional time—protecting that person emotionally and physically. Until that time that trust is established, you can not learn because your defenses are too high. (Female, Age 31)
>
> I think it is very important because if you don't trust nobody then you can't figure anything out especially about your family and your children. And you have to trust that confidentiality, too, it's a big part. And sharing, especially when you are having big problems like when your kids are

taken away. A lot of people have a heavy burden or a lot on their mind, too. They can trust and say, "Hey, I've got this on my mind." Maybe they want to sit for awhile or maybe you want to share that problem. If you can't trust, then you can't help at all. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

Really important. It's—for one thing if your child is trying to grow up and learn as a child, and he comes to you and says, Mommy, I need your help, I need to trust you with something. And say they talk to you about—if you can't trust somebody to talk to and bring out your feelings without it crossing 20,000 fences and get spread to 20,000 things then you start to close down. (Jenny, Age 29)

Totally. Confidentiality is a big issue in anything you are discussing, you can't have that apprehension that possibly it's going to somewhere else, especially to the government. (Pam, Age 38).

That plays a big part. If I don't feel—my trust level is low, there is not too many people I trust and, but I did. I felt like, you know, what I said in there I trusted you, Andi, and the group members, and I was able to speak from the gut. Yeah, because for one I didn't know anybody, so it was like who are they? You know. I guess that was it—I mean, I was scared at first. I thought, God, who am I going to know there, and I—once I knew that I didn't know anybody I felt more comfortable. (Rita, Age 41)

Trust is a big thing. I was raised on trust. I guess for our situation, I have a hard time dealing with this. I don't want to be naïve about how the real world is but I come from professional people to be straight and honest instead of going behind your back and then you find out later. Speak up if you've got something to say. The truth never killed anybody. Tell me to my face. Honesty and trust is a big thing. (Eric, Age 26)

> In our class, we needed all [trust] we could get because a lot of people there felt like they couldn't trust anybody going through the system—DFS—I mean everybody had their guards up and you needed that trust within the group to make it work or it wouldn't work. [RE: learning] Sure, it made them feel more comfortable to talk or discuss what they needed to talk about. Besides, if they didn't trust anybody, no matter how bad they wanted to get a solution if they didn't trust somebody then they are not going to say anything for fear it's going to go somewhere. (Debbie, Age 38)

> I think right away to clarify and I believe you did. A lot of people—dealing with DFS, being a drug addict—you don't trust anybody. You don't say anything that is going to incriminate you. You don't talk. You don't trust. So it's good to make everybody clear about it, like you did, to say right up front. [about confidentiality] (Denise, Age 31)

Pam (Age 38) spoke of the facilitators' responsibility and role with regards to mutual respect, "I think you guys are really good about that, helping everybody feel that they are capable as everyone else, and they are important and their feedback is important." The importance of mutual respect must be felt from the other *Parenting Success* members as well. Rita (Age 41) described the dynamic of mutual respect among the participants, "I never got negative feedback or nobody told me, "Well that's not the way to

think," or, you know, it was what I said too. Everybody listened but there was no negative feedback."

> It is important because if you don't respect the person that is teaching you, you are not going to learn. If you don't give any respect back, that person is not going to want to teach you. In the class, if you are not respecting anybody around you, you are building up walls and not really participating. (Diana, Age 27)

> Because it was a participatory or group situation, you cannot transmit, share, or receive information because you are feeling defensive so there has to be that trust among the group in order for that transmission of information to take place. (Female, Age 31)

> To me, if you don't respect somebody and you don't have respect back, you're going to get angry and then go, "Hey, if you don't respect my territory and you mess my space up then I'm going to mess your space up and it's just a big circle of crap." So, yeah, you have to have respect and I think that parenting class and when I was in with you guys was real respectful and trustworthy. You didn't feel you're going to hear on the street what you just said [in parenting class]. You hear only positive things. I've heard nothing but positive things." (Kristi, Age 38)

> For the most part from everybody there. For the most part, I think everyone got along really, really well. [From the facilitators]. . .Yes, very much so. You were open and shared. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

> You and Andi really helped to broaden the horizons for the class. You covered a lot of things. And I think I felt when you guys talked to us, you didn't talk down to us, you talked to us like we were on the same level with you, even though every

> one in the group is being ordered by a state function to be there because we have lost our children. You didn't treat us like we are less than dirt. I think when we have speakers in these classes and that they need to be on the same—try to take themselves on to the same level. And you can't talk down to people, it's like a child. (Jenny, Age 29)

> That was therapy in the start, I think that's always really important. [Do you think learning would have been as effective without it?] Nu-huh, I don't think so. And I don't think that anybody would have opened up like that, because everybody—I think you guys are really good about that, helping everybody that they are capable as everyone else, and they are important and their feedback is important. (Pam, Age 38)

> Yeah. Our group was real good with that. That ties in with the trust and all [for learning]. Without that, you're not going to pay attention to anything anybody is saying. (Debbie, Age 38)

> I think you should respect everybody and what they say because they have something to say too. You want the respect back. (Bob, Age 41)

Shared Experiences. Congruent with humanistic adult learning philosophy (Knowles, 1970, 1980), *Parenting Success* centers on the parent's experience. The value of sharing experiences during the learning process was explored by asking the learning group members if it was important or helpful to their learning to hear from others or tell about their own experiences? From the participants of *Parenting*

Success, there was an overwhelmingly positive response about the usefulness of sharing and learning from experiences. Pat (Male, Age 18) was the youngest member of the 58 participants. Pat (Age 18), a single father of a two-year old, was always open and anxious to learn parenting skills which might help him with raising his son as heard in the statement below:

> So, that helped me out and just hearing other peoples stories and things like that about the other ages [of children] so I got some ideas and things to look out for. And then, in the middle, to hear about some of the things that are pretty comical that kids have done.

Pam (Age 38) also summed up the benefits of experiential-based learning, "And through sharing and stuff, it not only helps you to cope but it helps you to learn and became wiser with your experiences."

> Basically I would say yes and no, but one thing about this type of class, you get a lot of information with sharing your own experiences. We had—there was talk about how they had to deal with their children doing things with their kids and their kids doing things, so you learn actually how everybody deals with it, and which way would be the best way for certain situations, so I do better for group sharing but at the same time, lectures are needed. (Jenny, Age 29)

> I liked the group talking because everybody could discuss things and issues of their own and nine times out of ten, there were five or six people

who had the same thing going on. We would all get together and say "This worked for me," and "This worked for that person," and you can try other people's methods and maybe they'll work for you too. That's what helped me. The feedback from the group. It's a lot better that reading a book and saying, "Well, this is the way it's supposed to be. (Debbie, Age 38)

When you heard everybody tell their story, you could pull out a little bit of each one and say, "Their story is like mine." I felt comforted to know that. (Tammy, Age 28)

Yes, for several reasons. First of all, from listening to other peoples' experiences on a logical, intellectual, cognitive level, you can see what they have gone through and see what you might sort through and logically work for you in solving your own problems. On the emotional side, it inspired me to count what blessings I have. In sharing my experiences, it's just the inverse of that. Possibly someone could take from my experiences and learn from that. It also would help me emotionally to release that. (Female, Age 31)

It was good to hear other's experiences and also to share my own because it reminded me of the dysfunction we lived with as a family and a lot of the experiences were dysfunctional. The children told "war stories", we call them, the first month and they still do it. Remember when we got them back, it was, "Do you remember when, do you remember when. . . I was drinking. There was violence. So sharing that in the group brought it back. So we can look at it now and say, "OK, what is different?" (Denise, Age 31)

Sure it is, then you learn from other people. What they did right. What they did wrong. (Bob, Age 41)

> Oh yeah, it was real helpful. Just like, [hearing about] Irma Jean lying on the floor at the grocery store—you know, that's an experience you might have to try, it sure worked for her. Yeah, I think that you learn from anybody if you just sit and listen to them. (Kristi, Age 38)

Homogeneous Grouping. After years of unsuccessfully mixing the voluntary parents and court-ordered parents together in the same parenting classes, The Parent Connection agreed to try a group of strictly all court-ordered learners in the same session of *Parenting Success*. The results from the participants promptly indicated the importance of keeping mandated parenting class participants together for purposes of trust, active participation, and support.

> Everybody was in the same boat [and had had their children removed from the home]. I knew some of the people in there. I thought, "All right, this is going to work." I felt comfortable that nobody was saying, "OK, this is you because you have been being a bad girl." I felt equal with everybody. (Kristi, Age 38)

> I think on the whole everybody shared their experience and everybody knew they were in the same sort of boat. (Pam, Age 38)

> [Do think it's a good idea or did it feel better or would you recommend that we have all court-ordered people in the same class?] I think they would be more comfortable. Like when we first started, some of them were afraid to talk about

> things thinking you [the facilitators] were in touch with DFS and a lot of people don't get to the root of their problems if they don't talk about that. It made a lot of difference. (Debbie, Age 38)

Problem Posing and Problem Solving. Another practical area which the interviewees felt to be important was group problem-posing, problem-solving, and feedback which this humanistic approach to learning yielded. Rita (Age 41) summarized the affective processes when she said, "We all dealt with our feelings pretty much on the same level. Just listening to some of the other people and thinking, 'Wow, we can all do it. It can be done.'"

> It was much more informative knowing you aren't the only one with the problems and other people were able to help problem solve. (Anonymous)

> It was comfortable to be so that when things were said you were able to absorb them. Discussing things that are going on with other parents that are in the same situation helps you get some feedback on things. (Diana, Age 27)

> I liked that real good because some of them understand. Like ___, her children aren't little perfect angels either. She had a problem and it was good to find out, "How would she handle it?" (Tammy, Age 31)

> I think it was very helpful in learning the same problem and how to handle it. (Anonymous)

> Yeah. Very much so. Having that knowledge in that way—that's how I catch on [sharing

> experiences]. That's how I learn best. Things that I can see and hear and use numbers and things. Like talking about my son throwing tantrums and things. He's just a little kid, so like what are you going to do? Can't really spank him or throw him in a chair or nothing. That's not right. I can't just let him be on the floor either. Sit down with him and hold him and not really sure when he screams even more. So, that helped me out and just hearing other peoples stories and things like that about the other ages [of children] so I got some ideas and things to look out for. And then in the middle to hear about some of the things that are pretty comical that kids have done. It's good when you can joke around a little bit, too. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

Active Participation. The participants of *Parenting Success* consistently responded positively regarding their feelings about learner-centered active participation. *Parenting Success* attempts to have the participants be involved with teaching, learning, and problem-solving rather than being passive receptors of information. When asked how they liked this approach to learning or why was it helpful to learning, the most common response echoed was that when participants are learning, they can learn best by doing, moving, and communicating. Debbie (Age 38) illustrated the active participation when she gave the following example:

> I liked the group talking because everybody could discuss things and issues of their own and nine times out of ten, there were five or six people

who had the same thing going on. We would all get together and say "This worked for me," and "This worked for that person," and "You can try other people's methods and maybe they'll work for you too." That's what helped me. The feedback from the group. It's a lot better that reading a book and saying, "Well, this is the way it's supposed to be."

There is no other approach to learning. In order to truly learn something, it is my personal belief that you must participate in it and buy into it and there are a variety of learning styles which go along with a variety of people. When people are learning, we can learn by doing. You can watch somebody ride a bike but until you actually attempt to ride a bike it's all really just theory. So, by using a cooperative learning, a participatory-type learning, it promoted safety by learning to take risks which is done in parenting all the time. We have to learn to be choosing what kinds of risks we take. When I say risks, I mean taking risks with who we are inside. (Female, Age 31)

I like that approach to learning because if you can get somebody to talk and open up the more they are going to learn about themselves. I think that is the proper approach to anything, if you can get the people to talk. I'm a shy guy in a group and it takes me a while to open up. (Bob, Age 41)

I think it gets people involved. You know, if somebody is sitting there and they don't want to be here and you interact with them, then they almost don't have any choice, they almost have to interact, they have to add something. There are some people that are afraid to speak up because they think they might be ridiculed. They need that because if they don't, they are not going to pick up. (Eric, Age 26)

> I learn by watching, doing. I learn better by interaction. If I can watch people do it, then I can do it myself. I learn better by participating in something than by observing. I think that's why the class helped so much because it really encouraged everybody to participate. (Tammy, Age 28)

> I think it's a lot better, it's like doing. I learn more by doing than I do by talking or, you know, just to get in there and do it. (Kristi, Age 38)
> I think it was good because you, instead of sitting and learning by what you are seeing or what you are hearing. I think that makes a big difference because those are the things that you hold on to, believe, rather than the things that you had to process at in your mind, rather than just sit and look at and then, too, by open communication. It's a lot better learning experience. (Pam, Age 37)

Group Discussion, Open Communication, and Support.

Discussion of experiences, information, resources, opinions, feelings, and concerns was an important method or technique in *Parenting Success* to develop group openness and cohesiveness. Through group discussion, participants were able to work together posing and solving relationship problems. An important benefit from large and small discussion groups has been that of support which was one of the main goals of *Parenting Success* (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989). Learner-centered humanistic philosophy can often be

implemented through large and small group discussions (Corey, 1981). Participants were asked their opinion of the emphasis *Parenting Success* placed on group discussion and support rather than the dissemination of more information with less opportunity to discuss topics of concern. Thirty-one parents responded to this inquisition with amazingly similar remarks. Those answers which were most plentiful stressed the importance of feeling support from the group and additionally rated high the factors of communication, safe environment, comfort level, and opportunities for problem-solving. One respondent stated, "Discussion and support is an important part of learning, feeling, and communication. This is a group—not a classroom—we can all help and teach each other." Another said, "I believe a person absorbs more through discussion and personal participation than from looking at something and putting it away."

> It lets you vent to somebody that is going through the same scenario. Then you can get their input on something that will help you. (Diana, Age 27)

> Even when Frank [alias] and Betty [alias] showed up. I don't even know their real names. I know him, the black man, from whenever. Even that, it was still positive. I couldn't believe it. Looking into that situation, too. I couldn't

> believe it. There is hope for everybody. And I think that as the racial thing came out, too. It's just reality. And to know that other people understand that really helped a lot. I know Frank talked to me and said, "Hey, this class is all right." And coming from him. . .I think it helped [talking about the racial issue in Billings] especially with the [Native Americans] and black people and I think that's what made him [Frank] feel comfortable. (Kristi, Age 38)

When the participants were asked how or why learning took place in the small group setting, the replies were similar. Pam (Age 38) commented in her interview as follows:

> When it's a small group, that's when you have to get that thinking process going again, that's mental. So in that case, you've got to learn something, I think it is good for a small group. [You had to focus more?] Yeah, you had to think harder. And with the open group I think because it's—but you still do learn a lot—but you can just listen and you can speak and this and that.

Other reasons for the small group being beneficial to learning included the following: shared feelings talking one on one; listening; more involvement; and, openness. One parent wrote, "Because it enables us to get to know each other more personally, therefore, we connect mentally and emotionally." Another clearly stated the relevance of the small group to his learning, "There is not so many people to talk to all at once. I can comprehend things easier."

I think that the small group when I first came in was like, you know, Pat and I had each other. I think that was good. I know that I have a tendency to be shy. To just sit back and just look at the situation. He [Pat] was nice and I was nice to him and I felt he was being shy and uncomfortable too, then after we just started talking then I said, "OK, now I know somebody in this group." and you don't feel as shy or nervous. Then when the whole group gets together then everybody pitches in and participates. If anything feels uncomfortable, then you can always go back to that one person. I did that a couple of times[with Pat]. I don't remember what the situation was but you always have someone right there. (Kristi, Age 38)

I think two or three people in a group is helpful. It's more like one-on-one. It is good because it helps someone shy to open up. In a large group, you are not going to want to have so many people wanting to say things for fear of being ridiculed or embarrassed. People thinking, "There are enough other people here, I will just sit back and listen." (Diana, Age 27)

Helped me to understand things I didn't know. (Anonymous)

In the small group, everyone who wants to participate gets to more, therefore, more learning is involved. (Anonymous)

Everyone had a chance to speak at all six classes. (Anonymous)

Shared feelings, input from others. (Anonymous)

Because it was small enough that people got comfortable with the others. (Anonymous)

Because we are all able to talk to one on one. (Anonymous)

> Communication and support are very important—sometimes this group was all the support I had. (Anonymous)
>
> I think for this type of class with parents in their situations it was imperative to have a group with such open communication and support. (Anonymous)
>
> Group interaction and support are crucial to the healing of hurting people. (Anonymous)
>
> With this group, we all need support. (Anonymous)
>
> I think it was better to talk about things so that the class felt comfortable with each other. (Anonymous)
>
> I feel discussion of everyone's life helped me relate to my life. Good support. (Anonymous)
>
> I feel that group discussion was and is a lot easier than straight handouts. (Anonymous)
>
> Discussion and support is an important part of learning, feeling, and communication. This is a group—not a classroom—we can all help and teach each other. (Anonymous)

Methods, Techniques, and Activities Which Facilitate Learning. *Parenting Success* participants were asked if they found any of the visual aids, including the television, PowerPoint presentations, transparencies, and diagrams, useful to their learning. For the visual learner, which encompasses between 50% and 80% of all learners, teaching with visual aids was not only helpful but crucial to their

learning success. *Parenting Success* teaches to all learning styles and, thus, relies heavily upon the use of all senses in the learning process as stated by an anonymous female respondent (Age 31), "I think that anytime you can appeal to more than one sense at a time, you have more venues for transmitting information." Another respondent, Debbie (Age 38), considered the importance of visual aids to learning when describing the process as follows:

> Yeah, some of them were helpful. When you're talking or reading, sometimes you can't visualize things. It kind of broke it up, you know, like the awareness, I see you've got it up. Yeah, it does help to kind of see things. (Debbie, Age 38)

The use of PowerPoint presentations accompanies each weekly lesson to focus the attention of the learners and it is easily integrated with discussion. Additionally, a chart of Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (1954) is posted weekly in the meeting room and is also in each participants handbook. This focal point was spoken about repeatedly in the inquiry findings such as this statement from Kristi (Age 38) as follows:

> I think that was good because sometimes, especially if your child is taken away, then all you are doing is worrying about where your child is at and then the next week you come in [and you review the material] and you say, "OK, I remember

> that", and it puts your mind back into the focus point of parenting. It did for me anyway. When you take the child, you are so freaked out but when you look up there at the five basic needs (Maslow, 1954) then you say, "OK, I remember that.

Another visual which parents spoke of repeatedly as assisting them with learning is a large chart with thirteen personalities as parenting characters. This is especially meaningful since all participants can find at least one, if not all, of the characters with which to identify as part of their own parenting style. Again, this visual is also found in their handbooks, however, participants appear to like looking at large visuals in a presentation format.

> Diagram of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954). I think that was good because sometimes, especially if your child is taken away, then all you are doing is worrying about where your child is at and then the next week you come in [and you review the material] and you say, "OK, I remember that", and it puts your mind back into the focus point of parenting. It did for me anyway. When you take the child, you are so freaked out but when you look up there at the five basic needs (Maslow, 1954) then you say, "OK, I remember that." (Kristi, Age 38)

> Basically, the pyramid. . .what am I trying to say. . .[Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs] that was good. When related to parenting, I never even thought of it like that. How are you going to give this to your child or how's he going to feel right now. Can he grow up like another dysfunction or something. And how you can use it everyday. There were things in there that I have

said when just joking around [RE: zingers, zappers]. I never realized what an affect it would have on a kid. Couple of other things but I can't find the words right now. Yes, like the positives and stuff. It's not that hard when you think about it. Speaking with the I's [messages], that's kind of hard sometimes. Especially when your kid can't talk back. But with my parents, it's doing pretty good. "I feel I need" and we've had some discussions and things. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

That broke it down [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs]. That was a good idea for me anyway. (Debbie, Age 38)

When you said every week, "Where are you on the chart?", you would sit back and look at yourself and say, "OK, where am I today?" Normally, you deal with all of these other things. I would never sit back and look [at where I am at with having my needs met]. I'm somewhere. I think that was really good to ask, "Where are you on this chart? How do you feel today?" I feel that it was really good for me. (Kristi, Age 38)

I thought it was really interesting that I never realized how I felt at the bottom of the pyramid after my stress with DFS. I saw myself rising on the pyramid in time. (Pam, Age 38)

Visual Aid on Parenting Characters. Well, one of them was, what I liked was the visual of the parenting, different types of parenting. I liked that because I put a lot of thought into that, you know, it was—I have never seen this before or I—you some or different types of parenting, but you guys have quite a few. You know, it was I could really look at myself in different situations. (Rita, Age 41)

Information Dissemination The information was not very new to me and the techniques in

communication were not new to me. However, a lot of times we file that away and forget that we have those skills and it needs to be refreshed so that it was a very good refresher for me. My self-esteem came from, and therefore many of my learning needs, camaraderie and expression and knowing that I wasn't alone were more of the needs that were met for me personally than the actual information. However, I think there were many people in our class that were not aware of some of the techniques even though many of the people had received some form of formal counseling or some form of formal assistance. The presentation was very user-friendly, commonsense, in layman's terms given with examples of how to use it and examples that we could relate to as people. It was not culturally, or educationally, or sexually biased. It was very well-designed. (Female, Age 31)

Oh yeah. What pops into mind real quick is time out. You know, for me, I probably would have just stuck them in a corner in time out and walked away and forget. I never realized that one minute per year [in time out]. You know, things like that. You know, I've always felt the basics, you've got to get back to the basics, just the basic things like safety and love is primary. (Kristi, Age 38)

Role Playing. [From our very first *Parenting Success with Kids* class for court-ordered parents] One evening Sarah [alias name] jumped up and said, "Let's role play this." Through the role play, she gave advice to the class on the necessary steps they should take to get their children back home. She acted as an interviewer. It was a spontaneous activity and the same thing happened in another class about three months later.

Family Sculpture (Satir, 1972). I thought the family sculpture was interesting with that younger kid. His mom was here and his sister there, and then you moved them back and forth. Very interesting. That's how things [families] work

> out. That's like real life. In a way, I think it [family sculpture] kind of hurt him [about his family] but he probably thought, that's the way it is. (Tammy, Age 31)

Effects of Self-Esteem and Confidence upon Learning

Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence about learning is an important factor in adult learners who have had poor previous school experiences or who did not finish high school (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1970). Long (1983) hastens to caution the reader, however, that this is not the only cause for low self-esteem in an adult learner. Mental health concerns often increase with advancing age as people experience stress, crisis, and loss. Losses include removal of a child from the home, homelessness, deaths of friends and family, reduced or no income, poor health, identity problems, and negative labeling by members of one's family and community. Often learners have difficulty with learning because they think they can't accomplish a task due to feeling inadequate or incapable. Although an individual of any age may have adequate intelligence for learning, the presence of mental disabilities often removes the learner's self-efficacy and

self-confidence making them unable to achieve at learning (Knox, 1977).

The respondents to this examination were again unanimous in their belief that a healthy self-esteem is directly related to successful learning.

> Once again, believing in self and being safe with self which is what self-esteem really is and to lower protective, defensive mechanisms in order to receive input. So without a self-esteem, a belief in self, a self-safety, there can actually be no learning. . .it can be input but it can not be assimilated. (Female, Age 31)

> It's number one because if you are in a classroom and you're shy and you're not comfortable and you don't trust and you don't do any of that and your self-esteem is low then you're not going to learn. You're just going to sit in the corner and being paranoid [thinking], "Everybody is looking at just me." You're not going to try. You're not going to get out there and do your full potential. I think self-esteem is very, very important. I think that it is not instilled enough in us as children. (Kristi, Age 38)

> I think that we're all learning that we are only human and that we are okay. (Anonymous)

> Very good way to have group discussion. It makes you just as important as the [other] person[s]. (Anonymous)

> Self esteem [is greater with this method]. We're not alone in most problems. (Anonymous)

> Once again, believing in self and being safe with self which is what self-esteem really is and to lower protective, defensive mechanisms in order to

receive input. So without a self-esteem, a belief in self, a self-safety, there can actually be no learning. . .it can be input but it can not be assimilated. (Female, Age 31)

I think it's actually really pretty important. I myself have a low self-esteem. Self-respect is extremely important with developing your learning techniques, because you can't learn and you can't teach without a decent self-respect. [Did you feel it was a safe environment?] I think so because for one thing everybody there had animosity towards DFS. I don't think anybody is going to run to DFS and—so I think I was safe. [Did you feel like you belonged?] Yes and no. I'm one of those I don't know where I belong. I have been that way all my life. I don't like large groups but I don't like to be alone.(Jenny, Age 29)

Oh yeah. It brought back a lot for me and self-esteem issues is something I try to work on. And the boundary issue, I think is a really good one to work on a lot because I think that's where a lot of parents have problems, especially in this day and age. (Pam, Age 38)

Best thing from this class—I learned my parenting instincts are good and it gave me some badly needed confidence to hear so from instructors. (Female, Age 35)

You know, it did help me look at things. I got input and said, "I understand this." Then when I'd listen to you [I'd think],"Now, I really understand it." I thought I was right and you just confirmed it. (Kristi, Age 38)

Effects of Participation upon Feeling Successful.

Parents interviewed were asked if it is possible for a parent to feel more successful as a result of participating in an adult learning class for parents of families at risk. Furthermore, they were encouraged to discuss what, how, or why if it is possible to feel more successful. The responses from those interviewed echoed each other as feeling more successful as parents upon completion of this program. Looking more closely at *why* the participants felt more successful revealed some interesting information. Collectively, the parents interviewed appeared to gain in confidence and self-esteem. Naturally, with increased confidence and self-esteem comes the belief in oneself to take risks and to make changes (Corey, 1981; Elkind, 1994; Garbarino, 1995; Knowles, 1980; Rogers, 1980; Satir, 1972). Encouraged and centered with new knowledge about parenting and resources, many of the parents talked about hope, resolve, and a "can do" attitude. Some excerpts from the interviews are included below:

> Yes, it gave me more self-esteem that, "Hey, I can do this." I'm all right. I believe that I can give my child just as much as the adoptive parent

can. I can get a job. We (the participants in the parenting group) are just as good as everybody else. (Kristi, Age 38)

Best thing from this class—I learned my parenting instincts are good and it gave me some badly needed confidence to hear so from instructors. (Female, Age 35)

I think so. I think I can [handle parenting situations more successfully]—now I can learn how to better assess myself rather than give up. (Jenny, Age 29)

Yes, I think so. You can hear and think back to your remarks and say, "Yeah, I did that." That's positive, you know. Just some little situation like that. If you've got something that you do positive. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

I think so. I do because I have something to work with when a problem comes up. I go back and look in my book and say, "What do I do?" Also, more confidence. When you think you had it handled all of those years, I didn't know what you were missing as how much stress I could have saved myself. (Debbie, Age 38)

Best thing from this class—I learned my parenting instincts are good and it gave me some badly needed confidence to hear so from instructors. (Female, Age 35)

I think so. I think I can [handle parenting situations more successfully]—now I can learn how to better assess myself rather than give up. (Jenny, Age 29)

Totally. Partially because everything that they said was good feedback. There wasn't anything in that room that was negative or could leave you feeling that way. I think that there was a lot of hope gained, you know, a lot of—a lot of hope as

far as this could be resolved and it will be resolved. (Pam, Age 38)

Yes, I think so. You can hear and think back to your remarks and say, "Yeah, I did that." That's positive, you know. Just some little situation like that. If you've got something that you do positive. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

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You know, it did help me look at things. I got input and said, "I understand this." Then when I'd listen to you [I'd think], "Now, I really understand it." I thought I was right and you just confirmed it. (Kristi, Age 38)

Attitudinal And Behavioral Changes

Readiness for Perspective Transformation. The first group of parents participating in *Parenting Success* overwhelmingly demonstrated their acceptance of the program founded on the principles of andragogy.(Knowles, 1970, 1980). However, a need for the "next step" was evident. Not only had most of the parents evolved in their desire to learn and be active participants in the *Parenting Success* program but they were changing their perspectives about

parenting and relationships and were making attitudinal and behavior changes. This readiness for perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) resulted from examination and critical reflection of their past and present family and relationship experiences and the exploration of alternatives to change some of those relationship patterns which were not functional. Throughout many of the interviews and the follow-up phone calls that have been received from the participants of *Parenting Success*, it has been energizing to hear how many of them are finding courage and satisfaction from experiencing new and successful ways of relating.

Weeks after *Parenting Success* had convened, the participants were asked if they recalled if their behavior or attitude about the *Parenting Success* meetings had changed. Once again, the interviewees recounted not only how their own behaviors had changed in parenting and in their other relationships but also how their attitudes about this learning experience had become positive. Many of the participants were telling other parents and agencies about the class. One parent, Kristi (Age 38), has plans to assist other parents in the same situation and is empowered to become involved with social action concerns. Below are some

excerpts from the interviews which reflect positive change and learning:

> I think that everybody who has their kids taken away better take the class. I don't agree a lot with what DFS makes you do but taking this class will help you get the resources and the knowledge to go on with the other stuff. I think it is very, very important. (Kristi, Age 38)

> It should be taught in the schools or something. There's a lot more people that could use it. It's a good relating experience and it would help a lot of people. It gives a lot of support and everything. It's a good program. It would be a good program for foster parents to go to. If they are going to watch their own kids plus someone else's kids, then they need to have an idea of what is going on. Rules and things like that. For time-out, one minute per age and if you just put them in a room, it's like child abuse. Coming to class usually put me into a more positive attitude. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

> I would say it is a very worthwhile class because it does teach people how to deal with reality and to still teach people not to deal just with children but teaches how to deal with other people. (Jenny, Age 29)

> It helped me a lot. How to control when I get overwhelmed. In my case, boy, the boundaries, that really helped me. For twelve years of using, my kids knew how to work the boundaries. I find myself giving into them and I have to cut myself off. I stopped myself in the middle and say, "Wait a minute, I have to re-think this." And that's a habit that I've had so long that I can't get mad at them because it's my fault that they have got that pattern. What's past is past and we're starting fresh and this is the way it's going to be and it's real hard. It's been tough

> to have to say that and following through but I have to. (Debbie, Age 38)

The changes above are the result of transformed perspectives. Those perspectives are changing because of some ideas that the parents gleaned from *Parenting Success* which they would like to try out with their own children and in their own relationships. Four concepts which are foundational for *Parenting Success* are self-esteem needs, responsibility, the power of being positive, and active listening and communication. These concepts have surfaced in multiples throughout the interview process as making an impact and being adapted and implemented by the parents of families at risk. The concepts are not new but actually applying them to the parent's own experience appears to be working.

> [Bob, spoke about his observations of some of the class members who were not yet ready to make a change in their own lives.] Some of the people there had an acceptance problem. They need to accept, "We have a drug problem and it is affecting my children in the way we parent so we need to listen and we need to talk about it." (Bob, Age 41)

> I got my kids back [once before] and started drinking again within the week because I did everything I had to do just to get my kids back. This time I listened and I was really concerned about what kind of a parent I am. What kind of a

> parent I want to be. What can we do as parents. If I don't feel good about being a parent and I'm always in conflict, what's my escape? So I was very open-minded. When I get my kids back, what kind of a parent do I want to be? (Denise, Age 31)
>
> It did. It did [attitude and behavior change]. I said I learned a lot, I said, even though you know, I have 23 years of parenting, I learned some new things. (Rita, Age 41)
>
> I used what I have learned daily and it does help a lot! It has got me motivated more so than before. (Anonymous)
>
> Yes, to be more responsible. [RE: A parenting character]. (Anonymous)
>
> Yes, with the two children I babysit after work. [I encourage] self-esteem [by] praising them with their homework. (Anonymous)
>
> Yes, with my children and my boyfriend. (Anonymous)

On the subject of being empowered to help others and to move into social action, Kristi, Age 38, also commented as follows:

> Yeah, and getting back to. . . .if enough people. . people always say, "I can't because there is just me," but hey, if just you and just you and just you get in a group I think that we have got to take back, we have to start just doing it. Instead of having the government take care of our children, we've got to take care of them. If we all take care of our children, then they say, "We don't have anything else to do. We better start listening to these people again." The people (court-ordered parents) need support. I had my family and many of them don't have anybody. I

> don't know if I could help anybody but I would sure be willing to try. Just sitting and listening to them can make a world of difference in their self-esteem.

Learning Group Frustrations. *Parenting Success* interviewees were asked if any of the shared information, skills, or problem-solving activities in our *Parenting Success* meetings from the leaders or the participants caused them to feel frustrated, angry, or uncomfortable? The answers to this question generally fell into the two following areas: (1) The anger, frustration, and despair of helplessness felt by the parents of families at risk; and, (2) The ongoing anger directed at the system or DFS. Although it was important for the clientele to express their feelings, it was also important to assist the participant's move from the problematic stage to a solution-based stage. Dwelling on angry feelings by some of the parents toward the system from week to week was an irritation to some parents and a concern of the facilitators. Below are two examples of parents who were moving toward transformed perspectives and solutions while experiencing some frustration with those in the learning group who were unwilling to move toward positive change:

> When they [group participants] would talk about their feelings toward DFS as to why they were in the class, we were all angry as to why we were here, but there is a point as to when, hey, I have got to quit being angry and do what I have to do. I mean, there is just—the counselor—my counselor already—and the DFS worker asked me why I wasn't as angry all the time, and I said, Well, it doesn't do me any good to be angry. (Jenny, Age 29)

> When we would be talking about DFS and certain situations. But then, we are looking at only one side and don't have all the facts. DFS doesn't have them either. Otherwise, pretty good. A few of the other people's opinions, I didn't always feel and they have their own opinions and choice, I guess. That's gonna be the way it is. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

Personal Changes and Plans for the Future. In gaining hope for the future, many of the participants have made plans which include some of the following goals: Getting a new job; returning to school for re-training; becoming a responsible, more positive, and better parent; getting their children returned to them; getting off public assistance; breaking an addictive relationship; and, being empowered for social action involvement.

> I'm very slowly putting my life back together piece by piece. I'm on a journey of discovery, reflection, and I'm trying to gather the good things about my person and my past that I know I believe in and that I'm validated in. I'm trying my creative inner child. I'm trying to maintain a

belief in honesty and a belief in mankind. I'm going back to teaching. It's who I am. It's what I do. That is my identity. With that I am trying to look back at the last six months and trying to glean positive experiences. I'm trying to grieve the losses and be able to go on. (Female, Age 31)

To raise my daughter in a very positive way and to try to help other people so that the people can get back the power. The government has a hell of enough power and the only way we can do that is to take care of our own kids and not be wishy-washy about it but just do it. (Kristi, Age 38)

Just taking a lot of responsibility. Getting a vehicle. Getting a job lined up so that I can get benefits. Getting off Medicaid. Just looking forward to being with my son and getting him into some basketball, football, whatever kind of ball, just be there or in sports. See what he'd like to do. Just to be there for him. I'll be graduating here. See if there is something I want to do this year or next year. Just find a place to live and take care of my son. Those are my goals. (Pat, Male, Age 18)

Right now I'm basically going to continue what I have to do to get my kids to come home and continue learning to be a better parent. I get a lot of suggestions on how to deal with situations. Like right now today. Let my kids know if I had my way, they would be home now, but I'm doing the best I can and also let them know this is not my choice. I'm also trying to let them know that it's not their fault. That's the biggest thing with small children when they do get removed from the home, they wondered what they have done. Right now I'm just going to keep on the way I'm doing and try to learn how to deal with things that I have been. (Jenny, Age 29)

I don't make big plans because as I have learned just go ahead and make plans. Of course, get them

back, and I want to get them back before school so that I can, and I want to play with them forever. (Pam, Age 38)

I have three more classes then I graduate [from college]. Yes. Yes. At this point I'm not sure if I want my daughter back home. The longer I'm alone, the more I like it and it's like I'm getting set in my ways and I'm tired of games. And I figure she has threatened me one too many times. She made her bed and I hope it's comfy. (Rita, Age 41)

I'm working at Marriott Food Service and I'm subbing at the schools. I'm hoping to be at ____School when school starts (Debbie, Age 38). Within a year, I'd like to be off Aid For Dependent Children (AFDC). (Debbie, Age 38)

I'm learning that validation comes from within, verification comes from within but you have that self-validation and self-verification without being selfish. You don't have to trust anyone on the outside. I don't mean that in a negative way. It just means that you don't have that need when you choose to trust someone or not or that you have them earn your trust and that's been a very painful, intensely painful, but a huge revelation for me. I will have my son back. I will have my son back. This has made me a stronger person but no one should have to pay that kind of price. (Female, Age 31)

Right now, I'm just concentrating on getting Alexis's weight up in case she has heart surgery. So just taking care of Alexis is all I'm doing right now. (Kristi, Age 38)

Real close future only thing I'm really thinking of is when they [children] come home if they get to come home at the end of June like I am wishing, they will—I'm going to take two months off of work and spend the rest of the summer with my children

> as a mother, and then when they go back to school I might go back to work. I will still have one [child] not going to school and one going to school half a day, and then the other three will be in school all day; but I really just—after not having them for five months I just wanted to spend sometime with them, and if I get fired over it or if I have to quit so be it. My husband and I were talking about it and when my youngest child gets back in school then I'm going to go back and finish up my nurse's degree. I had tried before and I had health problems. (Jenny, Age 29)
>
> After I finish with school, I would like to find me a good man—no. I can't put myself on hold for that. So that's one of the changes I would like to make is find me a good man and get ready to retire. (Rita, Age 41)
>
> One day at a time. (Pam, Age 38).
>
> To keep my head on my shoulders. Watch where I'm going. Watch what I'm getting into. Trying to stay positive.(Pat, Male, Age 18)
>
> I need to get out of the relationship that I have been in for a long time if I am going to stay clean. (Debbie, Age 38)

How Is *Parenting Success* Different from Other Parenting Programs?

Success begets success. From the moment the participants walked into the meeting room, they were made to feel welcome. When the first introductory activity commenced, the time of affirmation and being positive had begun. Failure-cycled individuals had not experienced these

feelings for a long time, especially if their child or children had been removed from their care and these families were now under the direction of the court system. Members of *Parenting Success* were told the first meeting that they would share the leadership role with the facilitators because "There are no wrong answers here" and "There are no experts here". The importance of learning was stressed the first night—from each other, from our own experiences, from the information shared, and through participation. The atmosphere of the meeting was one of warmth where friendliness, casualness, and being positive was encouraged. The meeting becomes relaxed when members were encouraged to help themselves to coffee, juice, and food at anytime throughout the evening. Suggestions to try new ideas, activities or materials were always welcome. The attitude of the facilitators was encouraging, non-judgmental, and respectful. Finally, integration of the humanistic principles of adult education validated the worth of the learner.

In response to the question, "How is *Parenting Success* different from other classes on parenting?", the overwhelming affective response was a matter of parents

feeling comfortable and accepted in *Parenting Success*. The greatest reasons for that response appeared to be two-fold as follows: (1) All of the parents were "in the same boat" which was a phrase the subjects of this study cited over and over during the past year in *Parenting Success* because they were in a homogeneous group of all court-ordered clientele; (2) The facilitators were trustworthy, respectful and non-judgmental while willing to share the leadership with the members of the parenting group. Responses at the cognitive level praised the program for not advocating that children be raised by the book of rules. One mother described the program as follows: ". . .one of the things with *Parenting Success* is that they dealt with how to deal with things through emotions and through your thought process." And, "It shows you how to develop along with your children and shows them how to develop, too."

> No. I attended *Active Parenting*. I didn't get too much out of it. I took the *Parenting Success with Teens* one also. *Active Parenting* was different for me because my children were not at home. All the other parents had their children at home. They sent us home with activities every time and my kids were not at home. I felt like I didn't fit in. I liked yours so much [*Parenting Success with Teens*] and all the other people were in the same situation as me. (Tammy, Age 31)

[I don't remember the name of the class, it was in Red Lodge.] Oh yeah, a lot of differences—one of the things that with *Parenting Success* they dealt with how to deal with things through emotions and through your thought process. But through most of general parenting classes that I have seen is what books say. Well, there is no way to raise children by the book. I have five—three boys, two girls—so that the book doesn't work because every one of them is different. They each have their own emotions; they each have their own thought; they each have their own style. To teach somebody out of a book, hey, this is how you raise your children, it doesn't work. And I took a high school child development course out of—I was pregnant with my first child, and I tried learning with that stuff, and I tried when she was born to go by the book. And for one thing the book goes by development series also. Zero to three months you should be doing this, four to six months you should be doing this and on up, and up to the teenage years. That's one of the things I like about *Parenting Success* , didn't say you have to learn by the book, and you have to raise your children by the book. It shows you how to develop along with your children and shows them how to develop, too. (Jenny, Age 29)

I took some way back. I'm trying to remember, must have been about maybe ten years ago, they had it at the Friendship House. [*Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, STEP*] Yeah, but I don't know why I went there was a reason or I just went, but I know I never completed it so I think it was something I just kind of did on my own. I felt more comfortable at this one than the last one. (Rita, Age 41)

No, there was *The Parent Connection* and we did *Active Parenting*. I didn't complete it. At the time that I took it, the kids were in foster care. A lot of the activities, you had to have the children in the home. Most of the people that

were taking it were for other reasons other than that their children were removed, you know, court-ordered. There was none of that and you just felt very uncomfortable. There was good things in it but it was just too hard to do the activities compared to people who had their kids everyday. I'd say, "Well, I've got to wait for the weekend," or 'til a visit comes up and then you got to hope it works out. (Debbie, Age 38)

I went to the Lincoln Center for *Active Parenting*. I didn't complete that. The difference was that I wanted to be in this one. (Denise, Age 31)

If I'm comfortable with the people I'm around, it makes it easier [to talk in a group]. But it was good for me. I was real comfortable in [*Parenting Success*] group from the very first time. Like we all seemed to go together. We all seemed to kind of fit together that first group. It's the same boat, same things going on. That first one [parenting meeting] will keep them coming back instead of skipping around. Like, for instance, when I took the other parenting class [*Active Parenting*], I didn't feel comfortable in that class. If I wasn't getting something out of the class, then I just wouldn't go. It didn't fit. (Debbie, Age 38)

I have enjoyed all my learning and discussions. The best parenting [class] I have attended. (Anonymous)

Yeah, lectures with book learning. I—when I got into your class, this is cool these people are dealing with reality here, I mean. It's—this is reality. (Jenny, Age 29)

The other one I attended, the *Active Parenting*, they had a video, they had the movies and it would an example of how it could happen and then another example of how it should be and it was really tedious. It was boring. We all know what

"normal" is. We all know how it should be but how you get from how it is to how it should be is what we have to get at. (Denise, Age 31)

Well, at the other class [*Active Parenting*], they showed videos how things should be. I thought, now wait a minute, these people are up there acting. Life, families don't go like that. This kid wants this, that one wants that. In videos, they are just acting out a part. Like out of a rule book. It doesn't work like that. I think that is one thing that really got me. With that class [*Active Parenting*], it just did not relate to life. How many families in America do you actually see act like that? Maybe a handful. We watched series after series of those. I let my mom read it, she says, "Where are they getting these rules." Life doesn't work like that. And in the situation that I was in, boy, that was way off. You have to deal with what is going on now. It's a long step between where I'm at and where the video says you should be. There's a lot of work in there. I'm seeing things in the girls I never seen before when I was using for so many years. I don't know what normal is, we're finding out. Everything is new. You think differently. I have more patience. I have a lot of conversations with myself going back to classes. I think and sometimes I think for a long time, probably sometimes too long. I do that all the time. (Debbie, Age 38)

Participant Suggestions to Improve *Parenting Success* Program

Female (Age 31), was enthusiastic about enhancing the practical application of *Parenting Success* principles

throughout the program and during her interview. Below, is one of her valuable suggestions:

> It would be nice if those persons that were in the class would actually have time—real time, not fake visitation time—in order to practice some of the things that were learned. It's like anything else, it's fine in theory but until you actually test the waters you don't know if your ship is going to sail. Maybe a situation would be to have classes where you would actually have your children there in a supervised, safe environment. Read it, learn it, try it in your class and then actually try it with your children in a working environment. Once a month in a four-hour session where you can bring your kids and everybody can practice successful play time or communication time and possibly be separated by age groups of children. Maybe the money would be better spent by restructuring and rebinding the family unit instead of concentrating their financial efforts on separation of families. (Female, Age 31)

Janette (Age 28) suggested an activity to help parents deal with their anger towards the Department of Child and Human Services [DFS] as follows:

> Anger Activity. At the first class of *Parenting Success*, have the parents write down as many feeling words as they can think of about DFS. Then have them tear of the papers and throw them into the trash can. Tell them that they have just gotten rid of some of their anger about DFS and it's time to talk about parenting.
>
> Support Group. I think that when they [DFS] the kids away, they should put you into a group—not just the parenting but a support group. This was my support group. I didn't feel so alone then. I was really lost for a couple of months. With a

support group, maybe I would have gotten my kids back sooner. (Tammy, Age 28)

Denise (Age 31) and Bob (Age 41) had some valuable suggestions, many of which have already been implemented into the *Parenting Success* program. Some of their suggestions are written below:

Community Resource Activity. Divide into small groups and brainstorm to put as many community resources down on paper as possible—especially the resources that have been most helpful to you. If possible, put the phone number beside each resource. [The facilitators then gathered all of the information, compiled it, typed it up, made copies, and then handed out the completed list of useful community resources the next week.

Sharing Pictures of the Kids Activity. Instead of passing around the pictures with everyone's kids, have them place them on a back table, have a longer break, and let everyone look at the pictures then. This will save valuable class time.

Facilitators Choose the Small Groups. Try having the facilitators choose the small groups instead of having people just move together. Take a couple of weeks and look for the leaders and then have the small groups. That way, you won't get paired up with someone who just wants to sit and not do the activity.

On Role Playing. . .Denise: "I liked the role playing." Bob: " I didn't."

Findings indicated that different methods, techniques, and activities worked for different people so it's a good idea to have a variety.

> Special Parent Meeting. Have a meeting to prepare parents for the time when their children will come back [home]. It's very difficult, and especially, it's hard to be consistent but it is so important.
>
> Recognize the Need for Help. Ask if anyone would like to share, "Why are you here?" or "What got you here?" to get them past believing that DFS is responsible for them [the court-ordered parents] being in parenting education classes. What really is going on? When drugs and alcohol do come up because for some, they just stopped and for others, it is still going on. Ask, "Why are we here?, there's a reason we don't have our children. Talk about the effects drinking and drugs had on the children, not on us. (Denise, Age 31)
>
> When the above subjects come up, turn the negative into a positive, "When my kids were taken away, it made me realize that I needed to change and get some help." Go with it. Turn it into a good thing. (Bob, Age 41)

Probably, about 95% of the children taken away by DFS are due to drugs and alcohol. Talk about the major effects it has on parenting. The parenting skills are totally gone. (Denise, Age 31)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Study

How active learning occurs in the adult participating in a program for hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk is not known. Parenting classes are taught across the United States every night of the week. Who attends most of these classes? The population that is mostly attracted to parenting classes is usually the middle or upper-class parent who wants to improve and enhance their parenting skills which may already be adequate. These parents have often not experienced some of the more serious problems that society's parents of families at risk are enduring today such as family involvement with alcohol and other drug abuse, fear for their personal safety, poverty, homelessness, gang or "wannabe" gang involvement, stealing or shoplifting, involvement with the police, probation, and

youth court services, running away, mental or medical disorders, suicide attempts, or a combination of some or all of the above risk factors. As a result of family system behaviors, actions, and reactions, most parents of families at risk develop lower self-esteem and a feeling of failure about their ability to parent. To meet the needs of this important population, an empowering program named *Parenting Success* was developed for parents of families at risk. At the end of six weeks of meetings, no one had dropped the program and the enthusiasm appeared to be present with all of the parents.

What were the factors which caused and sustained the occurrence of learning in these hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents who continued in this adult learning project week after week until the completion? Although an evaluation was done which provided positive feedback, the answer to the above question was not researched. The parenting program was founded on a humanistic philosophical base. The goal of *Parenting Success* was to have involvement from the participants through active communication (Satir, 1976), active learning (Candy, 1991), group problem-solving through shared experiences (Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1980), and

awareness of and responsibility for satisfaction of their own learning needs (Brookfield, 1986) which, in turn, would demonstrate the need for healthy self-esteem (Knowles, 1980; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969). With this trial group, the program worked. Now, the urgency has become even greater to know specifically how learning occurred and what factors contributed to the accomplishment of the adults participating in the *Parenting Success* program.

With the world's rapid entry into the technological information era comes society's equally urgent need for subsistence of the American family's physical, emotional, and social well-being. Through *Parenting Success,* parents are discovering ways to meet the survival, safety, belonging and esteem needs (Maslow, 1954) for themselves and for their troubled families. This study described the learning patterns of the adults who participate in this parenting program.

How did the format of *Parenting Success* encourage or facilitate learning? After reviewing many parenting programs, it was found that the majority of them come in the form of books, videos, tapes, and workbooks. Therefore, with most parenting programs today, the instruction is pre-

packaged and the pace is determined by the curriculum and not the adult learner. In *Parenting Success*, humanistic adult learning principles are the foundation for the program, which means a learner-centered approach (Rogers, 1969). Trust, communication, and discussion of experiences play an important role in determining, acknowledging, and addressing the needs of the adult learner in *Parenting Success* (Horton, 1990; Verner, 1964). Adults demand to have their needs met with immediate and useful information or they will not return for more learning sessions or classes (Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1970). The research on *Parenting Success* determined how those needs were met and how learning was impacted by meeting those needs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify how adults learned through participation in *Parenting Success*.

Methodology

The qualitative research design chosen to describe how parents of families at risk learned through participation in *Parenting Success* was the descriptive case study. The bounded system (Merriam, 1988) was chosen to specifically study or examine learning of the participants in the

innovative *Parenting Success* program. Since it was impossible to identify all of the important variables prior to this study, the descriptive case study focuses on not one but many of the variables present within the boundaries of the study. The goal of this qualitative process was to focus on the many emerging variables which described how and/or why adults learn in the *Parenting Success* program for parents of families at risk.

The population of this study consisted of parents of families at risk who were under the agency of the Department of Child and Family Services for the State of Montana and have been ordered by a court of law to take a series of parenting classes of their choice. The number of court-ordered parents participating in *Parenting Success with Kids* for this portion of the study was 56. Court-ordered parents usually choose to participate in *Parenting Success* for the following two reasons: (1) The Yellowstone County Department of Child and Human Services specifically encourage their clientele to participate in *Parenting Success* because they believe that this program addresses the needs of parents of families at risk more adequately than other parenting programs available in the community; and

(2) the parents participating in *Parenting Success* have a relatively high course completion rate of seventy-two percent when comparing it to other available parenting classes.

The researcher observed, actively listened, and noted emerging variables that explained or described how adults learn through participation in the *Parenting Success* program. Non-verbal and verbal expressions and learner's attitudes toward the content, environment, instructor, and other participants were noted in the anecdotal process. The researcher recorded evidence of emerging variables about the adult learning process from information about what occurred contextually in the *Parenting Success* learning groups. This feedback was gained from the participants in *Parenting Success* through the following processes: (1) Class discussion and observation; (2)questionnaires, open-ended questions, and a final evaluation; (4) follow-up and feedback opportunities at the beginning and end of the weekly meetings; (5) follow-up summaries after parenting class by the researcher and her co-facilitator; (6) a survey questionnaire was given to each individual completing at least five sessions of *Parenting Success*; (7) a final

individual or dyad interview with participants who were able or willing to volunteer.

Summary of Major Findings

The patterns that emerged from this research produced many variables. The themes of the findings from this study developed into eight broad categories and are summarized in this section of the chapter. Following are the eight broad categories: (a) effects of adult learning principles; (b) effects of humanistic philosophical practices; (c) how *Parenting Success* differs from other available parenting programs; (d) climate in the learning environment; (e) methods, techniques, and activities which facilitate learning; (f) self-esteem and learning; (g) attitudinal, behavioral, and perspective changes; (h) personal changes and plans for the future.

The effects of adult learning principles was the first important theme since these principles provided the framework for the *Parenting Success* program. Initially, before the parents began their mandated program, they expressed feelings of anger, resentment, resistance, defensiveness, apprehension, humiliation, fear and

negativity about being court-ordered through their treatment plan to participate in parenting education. Additionally, the parents relayed having negative preconceived ideas about a boring and punitive parenting class that would be taught strictly with lecture and books. A major concern of the court-ordered parents was that they would feel out of place and not fit in with the voluntary parents. However, after completing *Parenting Success*, most participants had done a complete turnaround and were feeling more confident, welcomed, camaraderie, supported, positive self-esteem, enjoyment, respected, trustworthy, and encouraged.

Humanistic philosophy is the foundation for *Parenting Success*. The humanistic adult learning philosophy sees the learner as an equal in terms of leadership, power, and control in a learning environment which encouraged the learner to share his or her experiences, problem-solve, make choices and decisions, actively participate, openly communicate, develop self and family awareness, become empowered, cope with the transition process, give and receive support from the learning group, and develop an interest in lifelong learning.

Parents previously enrolled in a program other than *Parenting Success* were asked how their experience in *Parenting Success* differed from what they experienced in the other parenting programs. The overwhelming response was a matter of the parents feeling comfortable and accepted in *Parenting Success*. A *Parenting Success* message for parents that was heard stressed that "parenting is a relationship in process," which appeared to give the court-ordered parents support and hope for the future.

The climate in the learning environment has been explored in other research (Knowles, 1980; Darkenwald, 1980). Factors which surfaced as vital humanistic components in the adult learning climate for the failure-cycled parent were as follows: (a) the positive influence made by the learner-centered behavior of the facilitators; (b) the impact of a warm and relaxed atmosphere made by serving food in the meeting room; (c) the importance of a safe environment where trust and mutual respect were present; (d) the support gained from shared experiences, open communication, discussion, and homogeneous grouping.

In the final evaluations, there were numerous methods, techniques, and activities which the parents felt

facilitated their learning. However, the visual aids and the small group activities appeared to be the most memorable for the facilitation of the adult learning process. The parents felt that in *Parenting Success*, they were learning by doing, moving, and communicating rather than by being passive receptors of information.

Low self-esteem and lack self-confidence about learning are often present in adult learners who have had a previous negative school experience or are failure-cycled (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1970). Long (1983) adds that the transitions of adult life which are the source of stress, crisis, and loss contribute much to the mental health condition of the adult learner. The findings from this study reflected the respondents' unanimous belief that a healthy self-esteem and self-confidence were directly related to successful learning. Through participation in the empowering *Parenting Success* program, the parents interviewed appeared to have gained in confidence and self-esteem which, in turn, presented the belief in themselves to take risks, make changes, and feel more successful.

Many of the parents in this study evolved in their desire to learn and be active participants in the *Parenting*

Success program. As these adult learners were making attitudinal and behavioral changes, they also began changing their perspectives about parenting and relationships. Follow-up conversations have revealed that many of the participants have found courage and satisfaction from experiencing new and successful ways of relating. It is important to note, however, that not all parents were making decisions and changes at the same rate. When these differences began to emerge within the learning group, it caused some frustration on the part of the learner changing his or her perspectives. Another area of frustration developed for some class members who appeared to move through the grief and loss cycle faster than others and were ready to find solutions to their problems rather than hold onto the anger they felt towards the system. Many of those solutions included personal changes and plans for the future such as work, education, sobriety, ending an unhealthy relationship, and striving to develop healthy family patterns.

Conclusions

Overview

Conclusions are the inferences, results, and outcomes determined from the case study research findings in Chapter 4. In this section, each conclusion is indented and single-spaced in quotation format and either stands alone or is clustered with similar conclusions resulting from the findings. Following each conclusion or cluster of conclusions is an explanatory statement to further clarify the outcomes to the findings generated by the research questions which are as follows: (1) How do parents of families at risk react to a parenting program based on adult learning principles? (2) How does the philosophy of learner-centered Humanistic adult education effect active learning when applied to *Parenting Success* learning groups of hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk? (3) What adult teaching and learning methods, techniques, and activities facilitated learning in *Parenting Success*? How does the learning efficacy of the participants in *Parenting Success* compare to how effectively the needs of the participants are met? (5) During the six-week learning

groups of *Parenting Success*, how do the participants' attitudes and behaviors change? (6) Why is it possible for a failure-cycled parent to feel more successful as a result of participating in an adult learning class for parents of families at risk?

Adult Learning Principles

> *Parenting Success* is an effective parenting experience grounded in adult learning principles and humanistic philosophy.

Upon completion of the program, the adults enrolled in *Parenting Success* revealed an extremely positive reaction to their learning experience. When comparing this adult learning experience to other similar in content but unsuccessfully completed parenting programs, it was apparent that the differences were the result of the adult learning principles and humanistic philosophy used in the learning process of *Parenting Success*. Those specific principles are included in the conclusions below.

> Learning by Shared Experiences. Sharing and hearing experiences is an effective means for learning in an adult learning group.

By sharing experiences (Knowles, 1970; Verner, 1964), the participants in this study found commonalties which were important to give them hope for the future and feel that they were not alone. Many of the parents left encouraged by hearing what information others could share with them. Other parents felt validated in the importance of sharing their own experiences

> Active Participatory Learning. Active participation, grounded in humanistic adult learning philosophy, is an effective means of learning for parents of families at risk partaking in an adult learning group.

Parenting Success involves an active participation process. The learners were involved and participation was a key factor. If participation was not maximized prior to integration of the whole group during the first three meetings, the facilitator adapted the size of the groupings so that a comfort level was reached and participation reached a functional level. It was phenomenal to observe what occurred participants were moved from a learning group of fifteen or twenty to a group of three or five parents where they felt free to participate and became fully functioning. Group learning was believed to be more

effective by both Verner (1964) and Knowles (1970, 1980), although this belief has had some dispute from Brookfield (1983). Learning groups, however, in *Parenting Success* were notably useful to the learning process and well-received by the participants. Through active participation, the leadership was shared, the adult learners became involved, their opinions were validated, and the parents learned from each other.

The Value of Small Group Work. Small group work facilitates learning in an adult learning group of parents of families at risk.

Small group work and the accompanying activities followed the presentation of a new parenting or relationship concept. After involvement in small group work, parents repeatedly expressed how beneficial it was for them to all get a chance to talk, a chance to listen, an opportunity to share leadership [Freire, 1993; Horton, 1990], a chance to get to work together as a family, and to have a safe place to work. Small group work facilitated learning because through an activity of *doing*, people are participating, learning, and possibly changing their perspectives [Mezirow, 1991].

Group Support. Experiencing group support facilitates learning in an adult learning group of parents from families at risk.

Group support is a cornerstone of *Parenting Success* because it is powerful and effective (Corey, 1981). Group support was a main building block in retention of the class membership for which the court-ordered parents returned week after week because they received emotional support from the other parents. *Parenting Success* encourages relationship work and emotional support was one of the strongest factors in this working relationship. Attendance at *Parenting Success* included being part of that relationship. According to Kidd (1973), relationship, relevancy, and responsibility are the three factors which set adult learning principles apart from other learning principles.

Humanistic Adult Learning Philosophy

Problem-posing and discussion are effective methods to brainstorm and solve problems in an adult learning group.

The use of problem-posing and discussion [Freire, 1993; Horton, 1990] proved to be effective methods in facilitating groups for parents of at risk families. Problem-solving methods were taught, practiced and used

throughout the six week period of the learning groups. Because *Parenting Success* meetings were a safe place, parents felt more comfortable in taking a risk and presenting problems for group discussion about topics which included step-parenting, parenting and drug use, discipline problems, incarceration, the terrible pain they were experiencing with the removal of their children from their homes, and the humiliation they felt from society for not measuring up to the important job of parenting. With this foundation, parents became comfortable in problem-posing, problem-solving, and discussion.

It was found to be important in both the small or large group that the participants felt free to check their own progress through problem-posing and problem-solving (Bell, 1975; Glenn & Nelsen, 1989). It was voiced repeatedly in the research findings that the participants found the problem-solving activities to be remarkably beneficial. Each evening following the learning group, the participants were able to walk away from *Parenting Success* with ideas to use in their own relationships.

Communication and opportunities for problem solving facilitate learning in an adult learning

group based upon humanistic adult learning principles.

Active listening and communication were taught, practiced, and modeled in *Parenting Success*. It was hoped that with these new skills, parents would communicate and problem-solve within their families after they were reunited. Communication (Satir, 1972) and problem-solving opportunities (Bell, 1975) are necessary ingredients for the functioning family (Stinnett & Defrain, 1989). Conclusively, through the research process, this information was confirmed as being helpful to families moving forward in their processes.

Open communication and feedback are effective methods to establish commonalties and provide support, hope for the future, and resolve in an adult learning group.

After taking part in humanistically-oriented adult learning program for parents of families at risk, the participants are able to apply new parenting and relationship concepts.

Since open communication occurs in a functional group (Corey, 1981; Satir, 1972), *Parenting Success* encouraged the participants to express their concerns and problems. Feedback was encouraged to be returned in a non-judgmental way (Rogers, 1961). These skills do not come naturally but

with participant risk-taking, practice, and trust, these practices were helpful in parenting and other relationships (Beattie, 1987; Bradshaw, 1988; Elkind, 1994).

> Trust and mutual respect among group members and the facilitators are essential and primary components for learning to occur in an adult learning group of parents of families at risk.

Not enough can be said about the importance of trust and mutual respect when working with a group of at-risk parents. If these two vital components of humanistic adult education were not present, the group could not have functioned adequately (Rogers, 1961; Satir, 1972; Corey, 1981). In order for the group to learn and in order for the group to change their perspectives, it was imperative that trust and mutual respect were present to enable them to be receptive to new ideas, biases, feelings, opinions, concepts, and information (Rogers, 1969).

> Feeling comfortable in a safe environment facilitates learning in an adult learning group of parents of families at risk.

The safe environment (Rogers, 1980) is encouraged through the group rules which are called *ROPES* and call for respect, openness, participation, experiencing, and a safe environment in the meeting room. The underlying rule and

expectation is confidentiality. It was important for court-ordered parents to know that this was a safe place to talk about their frustration, loss, anger, and their resolve. Confidentiality assured the participants that what was said in the meeting room would stay in the meeting room. Each participant and facilitator was urged to accept the responsibility of confidentiality. According to the interviews and evaluation forms, *Parenting Success* was viewed as a safe place.

> Facilitator behavior impacts the success of an adult learning group by encouraging a positive learning climate.

Facilitator behavior was notably important to the *Parenting Success* program. The behaviors of the facilitators modeled good teaching, counseling, and parenting characteristics. The facilitators used mutual respect, unconditional acceptance, trustworthiness, empowerment, and shared the leadership role (Rogers, 1969). Friendliness was imperative during the first two classes to assure that the court-ordered parents felt welcome. Two equally important qualities of the facilitator were possessing a sincere attitude throughout each session and passionately believing in the value of parenting education.

The facilitator had to have a working knowledge of group processes to assist and promote fully-functioning learning by focusing the group, empowering the group, and knowing when to change the size of the group (Corey, 1981). The same attitudes and skills were used with the court-ordered parents that are expected of them to use with their own children when their families are reunited.

> The availability of food in the meeting place enhances a positive learning climate in an adult learning group of parents of families at risk.

According to Knowles (1980) and Rogers (1969) climate of the environment is important to adult learning. Darkenwald (1980) stresses the importance of meeting the needs of the hard-to-reach adult learner. It has been the belief of the facilitators that food is an important factor in the meeting place for the at-risk population and, thus, became part of this research. The interviewees provided important input on this issue which gave the program direction and conclusive research for other adult learning programs. Food added warmth to the meeting room, provided a relaxed atmosphere, and actually enhanced communication. Essentially, food filled a basic need (Maslow, 1954) for the busy parents that did not have time to have dinner before

they came to class because they had work and a twelve-step meeting to attend first. Facilitator Andi Sutton, who had done much research in health and nutrition, insisted that the parents have healthy snacks modeled at the *Parenting Success* meetings so that they would be aware of alternatives to junk food. Through Andi's diligence, food was an important part of the program based on feedback from the participants of this study. Pat (Male, Age 18) summed it up when he said, "You can't think about too much else when you don't have a full stomach."

Attitudinal and Behavioral Changes

> Prior to entering *Parenting Success*, an adult learning group for parents of families at risk, the participants experience fear, uncertainty, and anxiety.
>
> Prior to entering an adult learning group, the participants usually have preconceived ideas and expectations about what will occur.
>
> The majority of participants involved in an adult learning program such as *Parenting Success* can change the way they view the learning process. Prior to the class, most court-ordered parents may experience anger, resentment, and resistance. After the class is complete, most parents can leave feeling encouraged, supported, and hopeful.
>
> Through participation in an adult learning program for parents of families at risk such as *Parenting*

Success, the individuals can experience positive behavior and attitude changes.

The results from the interviews were unanimous in this area. Before the court-ordered parent entered *Parenting Success*, they felt angry, anxious, uncertain, fearful, resentful, and resistant (Corey, 1981; Darkenwald, 1980; McKeachie, 1988). It was not difficult to understand the parents' feelings when a court of law had told them that they must attend mandated parenting classes which implied, "You don't know enough about parenting," "Your parenting skills are not adequate," and, "You don't care enough as parents about your children." Since the mandate to attend parenting classes was part of a treatment plan, it was represented as punitive and consequential. Therefore, the feelings of anger, resentment and resistance were apparent when the first session of *Parenting Success* convened.

During the first meeting, it was the goal of *Parenting Success* to assist the parent in changing the extremely negative feelings and attitudes they were experiencing to more positive feelings and attitudes about being enrolled in parenting classes (Corey, 1981). After that first meeting night, the goal of *Parenting Success* was that the parents

would walk out of the door at nine PM feeling encouraged, supported, hopeful, and interested in new parenting information which may be useful to them. This barricade was addressed in the first meeting through the following techniques and methods: (1) Acknowledgment of the negative feelings of the parents; (2) acknowledgment that the parents are in a transitional process of loss and crisis and explaining the grieving process to them (DeSpelder & Strickland, 1987); (3) encouraging the parents to move out of problem-centered anger and onto an action plan of looking for solutions to assist them in their process; (4) discuss issues which surround the Department of Child and Human Services [DFS]. It is a preconceived idea that the facilitators are employed and paid by DFS and it is important to qualify this belief and to let the parents know that there is no connection other than from referrals for *Parenting Success*. It is important to acknowledge the parents' anger, blame, interactions, and frustrations with the Department of Child and Human Services. However, after the acknowledgment, it is important to move onto a solution-based plan and not dwell on this problem weekly.

Visual Aids Facilitate Learning

> Visual aids, such as use of the overhead projector and PowerPoint presentations, diagrams, and charts, facilitate learning in an adult learning group.

The use of visual aids in *Parenting Success* proved to be important because they provided a focal point and actually facilitated learning. Three large charts were used in *Parenting Success* as follows: Goals of the *Parenting Success* Program; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954); and, Thirteen Parenting Characters. Parents repeatedly spoke about the helpfulness of the last two charts. Each week, parents looked at Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs Chart (see Appendix A) and considered at which level their needs were being met and how they were feeling that evening. As one parent commented, "I never took time to do that before." When parents looked at the parenting characters, they were asked to think about which of the characters they have been. Naturally, each person experienced several of the parenting characters. This visual provides each participant with an example to which an experience may be attached. Additionally, movie clips were used to illustrate parenting characters to help build awareness and application. As

mentioned earlier, PowerPoint presentations were used to introduce the weekly concepts. Overall, the use of visual aid materials was an important component of teaching to all learning styles (Gardiner, 1983; Gregorc, 1982; Kolb, 1977).

Self-Esteem and Successful Learning

> Self-esteem is directly related to successful learning and successful learning may enhance self-esteem in an adult learning group such as *Parenting Success*.
>
> Through participation in an adult learning group grounded in humanistic adult learning principles such as *Parenting Success*, parents can meet their needs for learning, increase their confidence and self-esteem with the belief in oneself to take risks and make changes, and communicate more effectively with partners, friends and family.
>
> Through participation in an adult learning program such as *Parenting Success*, transformed perspectives can empower the participant with an ability to cope with stressful situations and the overwhelming feelings of anger, frustration, and despair which the parents have towards the child welfare and legal systems.

Parenting Success believes that in order for learning to occur, the learner must feel okay about the learning situation. One of the main topics of discussion previously discussed was to make the meeting place a safe environment where basic survival needs were also met with food and beverages. *Parenting Success* was also a place where the

parents felt accepted and a sense of belonging. With these first three levels of needs met (Maslow, 1954), the participants move toward self-esteem needs where they received empowerment, responsibility, affirmation, emotional support, leadership, and choices (Maslow, 1954). When these factors were achieved, self-esteem and confidence improved and the learning needs of the adult were met (Knowles, 1980; Rogers, 1969).

Homogeneous Grouping

> Homogeneous grouping of court-ordered parents is an effective means for retention and course completion.

Throughout the research interviews and findings, the focused parents reiterated how important it was that everyone in the class was "in the same boat." In the same boat was a term or expression that came up over and over again from one group of learners to another. Feeling comfortable, feeling that one belongs, and feeling that each participant had something in common with the other members of the group that understood their situation and where they were coming from made a huge impact. The principles of *Parenting Success* offer awareness (Perls, 1969), support

(Corey, 1981), and hope for the future (Rogers, 1980; Satir, 1972). Homogeneous grouping with court-ordered parents allowed them to reach their awareness levels together in a safe environment. They were able to support each other because the parents were all in the same boat. Parents offered hope for the future to other class members through their varied experiences with the system. It is believed that homogeneous grouping can be beneficial for other groups which have inquired about adapting the *Parenting Success* curriculum for their support groups.

Recommendations

Seven recommendations have resulted from the preceeding sixteen conclusion clusters. Below, the reader will find the seven recommendations for action to be taken based upon the conclusions. An explanation of each recommendation will complete each of the seven sections. Additionally, a section at the end of this chapter will provide recommendations for potential uses of *Parenting Success* and recommendations for future research.

> Recommendation: When designing a program such as *Parenting Success*, use practices of the humanistic philosophy and adult learning principles which

include the following: Experiential learning; active participation; opportunities for problem-solving and problem-posing; open communication, discussion, and feedback; practice and application of concepts; trust and mutual respect; group work and group support.

Humanistic family therapist, Virginia Satir (1972, 1976, 1983), has been an inspiration and teacher to therapists and educators for twenty-five years. It is recommended that the learning groups of *Parenting Success*. parallel the philosophy and psychology of Satir's work with families and their functioning. Additionally, the work of adult educators, Brookfield (1995), Freire (1993), Horton (1990), Kidd (1973), Knowles (1970, 1980), and Mezirow (1991) have provided an adult learning framework of principles from which effective adult learning programs can be planned, designed, adapted, and delivered.

Recommendation: To provide a safe environment for self-disclosure, open discussion and communication without the fear of confidentiality being breached.

For learning to occur in a program such as *Parenting Success*, it is essential that a safe environment is available to the parents. A safe environment indicates that confidentiality is honored by all participants and facilitators. Also, a safe environment is a meeting place

where trust, mutual respect, openness, acceptance, and belonging are experienced by all adult learners (Maslow, 1954). A safe environment is an atmosphere that is tolerant and non-judgmental with other members and their opinions (Rogers, 1961). The meeting place of *Parenting Success*, or any adult learning program, should model the environment of a healthy, functioning family (Bradshaw, 1988; Corey, 1981; Satir, 1972).

> Recommendation: To carefully select and inservice facilitators for the *Parenting Success* program who profess the humanistic philosophy of adult learning, have knowledge of group processes, believe in the mission of parenting education, and have an empathic attitude.

Carl Rogers (1969) contributed widely to the field of humanistic adult learning. Rogers (1961) placed responsibility upon the facilitator as the one who should be empathic, non-judgmental, open, trustworthy, and expressing warm, personal regard for his client. Rogers also professed that education should be learner-centered. Through his work, Carl Rogers provided these guidelines for facilitator behavior in *Parenting Success*.

Another therapist, Gerald Corey, offers guidelines for groupwork in his textbook, *Theory and Practice of Group*

Counseling (1981). The size of the learning groups in *Parenting Success* are usually from twelve to twenty people. Because one of the learning principles of *Parenting Success* focuses on the participants' experiences (Knowles, 1970, 1980; Verner, 1964), there is a "danger" that the group will naturally move to a therapeutic mode (Fine, 1989). If the facilitator has a working knowledge of group processes, the direction of the group can be focused more easily if it tends to go off on a tangent. The writer does not believe that moving to the therapeutic mode is a danger because open communication does lend opportunities for problem-solving within the group.

> Recommendation: To be aware of, exhibit acceptance, carefully plan, be empathic, and acknowledge the fears, doubts, anxiousness, and negativity of the failure-cycled parents who will be in attendance for their first session of *Parenting Success*.

This recommendation is based upon the experience of the facilitators. At the very first session of court-ordered parents in the Fall of 1996, it became apparent that the facilitators were not communicating the kind of information necessary to alleviate the fears, anxiety, doubts, and negativity presented by the attending parents. Since that

first group of participants, there have been six additional groups who have experienced a first session that alleviated many of their fears and doubts about *Parenting Success*.

> Recommendation: To integrate the use of visual aids in adult learning programs which also include the auditory and kinesthetic modes of learning in order to reach learners with a variety of learning styles.

The use of visual aids has been facilitative to the learning process in *Parenting Success* because it offers additional mediums. Through the research process, visual aids are the medium that came up as being most recalled and remembered with specific examples. These specific examples should be continued and possibly used with other concepts and material presented. However, it is also recommended that many forms of learning opportunities continue to be made available during each session to reach and teach to all learning styles (Gardner, 1983; Gregorc, 1982; Kolb, 1982; Sternberg, 1997).

> Recommendation: When planning curriculum for an adult learning program for parents such as *Parenting Success*, teach and encourage accepting the following traits of a healthy family which are central to family functioning and self-esteem: Open communication, meeting one's needs, taking risks, being flexible and making changes, link to the community, resiliency, belonging, and emotional support.

Throughout the interviews, the concepts of healthy family traits were furnished repeatedly (Bell, 1975; Elkind, 1994; Garbarino, 1995; Glenn & Nelsen, 1989; Satir, 1972, 1983; Stinnett & Defrain, 1989). Throughout the six sessions of *Parenting Success*, these traits were presented, practiced, problem-solved and discussed in large and small groups. Upon returning for their interviews, many parents referenced the healthy family material that they had begun to use in their personal and family relationships. Without a doubt, many of the parents took parenting tools and skills with them when they left *Parenting Success*. Most important, however, was that many of the parents were using what they learned and were making positive changes. Having experienced success in using resources and making positive changes, self-esteem was enhanced, risk-taking became easier, and resiliency was enhanced to help one cope with the stresses of parenting and relationships (Elkind, 1994; Garbarino, 1995; Glenn & Nelsen, 1989; Molineux, 1985; Satir, 1972).

> Recommendation: To place adult learners in a homogeneous group if they are at-risk or are sharing a commonality that will require focus and attention in addition to the adult education program.

Without any reservation, it was strongly recommended to have homogeneous parenting classes for parents of families at risk. The parents interviewed for this research have all completed *Parenting Success*. Many of them had attempted other parenting classes and none of them had completed those classes which included some court-ordered parents grouped with mostly voluntary parents who had their children living with them. Another factor in the high retention and completion rate of *Parenting Success* was, of course, the use of humanistic philosophy and adult learning principles. However, through the use of homogeneous grouping, readiness for learning was accomplished because the court-ordered parents felt that they were safe and that they belonged (Maslow, 1954).

Potential Use and Future Research

As a learning program for parents of at risk families, *Parenting Success* was a successful method for the delivery of adult learning. Although the population of parents of families at risk is very large (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980) with countless needs and possibilities for adult learning,

the definition of the population in this study limits the possibilities of the *Parenting Success* program. Therefore, potential uses and recommendations for future research in three areas of learning for the *Parenting Success* program will be discussed under the categories of preventive, informative, and supportive. Following the section on potential uses of *Parenting Success*, social action issues which have evolved for the participants and facilitators through involvement with *Parenting Success* will be presented and recommendations for future research will be addressed.

Parenting Success as Informative Adult Learning.

Recommendation: To research the usefulness of *Parenting Success* with a voluntary adult population interested in learning new information and skills regarding family relationships and parenting.

The largest population of parents appropriate for *Parenting Success* are the self-directed learners. This population voluntarily enrolls in adult learning experiences for the sake of learning and expanding their current information and skill areas relative to parenting and family relationships. Although this research was conducted on the limiting population of parents of families at risk, the

adult learning principles and humanistic philosophy has proven to be highly successful with adult learners in general (Brookfield, 1986; Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1970, 1980; Verner, 1964).

Parenting Success as Supportive Adult Learning.

Recommendations for Future Research with *Parenting Success.* To fully explore the potential for the development of perspective transformation in the at-risk participants of *Parenting Success*, a longevity study could be employed to study the following contingencies: Retention of relationship and parenting concepts and practice; modified behavior and attitude changes; continued adult learning by participants; ability to cope with problems; and, parenting issues relating to sobriety and recovery.

There have been numerous inquiries about the use of *Parenting Success* for parents with identified children in the following special needs programs: (1) The Title One program which is a federally-funded opportunity for children who do not qualify for special education but are in need of remedial learning in the areas of math, reading, and English; (2) Gifted and talented; (3) Special education with special emphasis on learning disabilities; (4) Asperberger's Syndrome which is a mild form of autism; and (5) attention deficit disorder (ADD).

Parenting Success as a Preventive Program.

Recommendation: To research the usefulness of *Parenting Success* with the secondary or post-secondary school population required or interested in learning new information and skills regarding family relationships and parenting.

Although high school students are not considered adult learners, *Parenting Success* is a program that uses good teaching and learning methods such as empowerment, validation of experience, visual aids, participation, relevant information, and addresses a variety of learning styles. Therefore, *Parenting Success* has been suggested as an effective learning program for high school students by the youngest *Parenting Success* participants.

Social Action Issues

Recommendation: To do a comparison study of the Montana Department of Child and Human Services to determine the following: Consistency among cases, workers, departments within the state; legislation and case management differences among Montana and the other states.

Recommendation: To research the importance of providing immediate support to all members of a family that has experienced the removal of the child or children.

Recommendation: To research the legality and long-term effects of removing a child from a mother with mental illness rather than assisting

that identified patient with treatment of the illness.

Recommendation: To research the legality and long-term effects of permanently adopting a child away from his or her natural parents within a term of approximately six months.

Five areas have evolved as arenas of special concern for the participants and facilitators of *Parenting Success* as follows: (a) Society continues to segregate, delegate, and reprimand members of minorities and poverty; (b) Montana appears to have unclear and inconsistent guidelines with regards to child protection cases when compared to the legislation of other states; (c) support services for any of the members of the dismantled families is not immediately available following the removal of the child or children; (d) in Montana, there appears to be a movement to permanently adopt children removed from their parents within a short period of time; (e) there are a large number of children being removed from the care of their mothers if that parent has been diagnosed with a mental illness; (f) there appears to be much inconsistency in the manner in which child protection cases are handled among workers, departments, and states.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENTING SUCCESS WITH KIDS™ CURRICULUM

Parenting Success with Kids Curriculum



Part One Parenting Success:
Welcome to Parenthood . . . . . page 1
From the beginning. . .The Process of Loss and Grief
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
(Meeting survival, safety, belonging, and esteem needs)
"To thine own self be true."
"Go Ask Alice": 5 Positives

~~~~~~

Objectives of Week One: "To thine own self be true."
Goals and Objectives for this session:

- To begin developing group involvement and rapport through an introductory activity
- To do a needs assessment of the parenting group using a variety of *learning styles* activities
- To begin building awareness surrounding the importance of the parent's self esteem
- To begin building awareness of the concepts of acceptance, love, courage, empowerment, compassion
- To begin building awareness of self-respect and mutual respect between parent and child
- To leave the attending parent with a sense of hope, support, encouragement, and involvement
- To provide activities which develop awareness of parenting principals/patterns
- To provide activities which begin integration of the group
- To provide a final activity for the parent to "take home" or "to the visitation"

~~~~~~

"Welcome to Parenthood. . ."

Introduction of co-facilitators
Housekeeping Information
Do first PowerPoint Slide or overhead transparency to set tone of cooperation :*"There Are No Experts Here" & "Hindsight Is 20/20"*

- Address the Process of Grief and Loss with transparency or illustration on board.
- Begin process of feelings of participants about being in *Parenting Success* and generally about their family situations.
- Acknowledge, acknowledge, acknowledge their feelings of sadness, loss, anger, etc., then,
- Explain the importance of working towards relationship solutions in *Parenting Success* which can effect future positive changes rather than dwelling upon the present problems with Child Protective Services.

Do Group Rules *ROPES* : Stressing *confidentiality*
(use PowerPoint presentation or overhead transparency)

Introductions Activity (a self esteem activity will begin each session)

(Optional) Read: *I Taught Them All* by Naomi White and published in Progressive Education in November, 1943

Needs Assessment Activities:

Note: This is an important first step for empowerment of the parent in taking ownership of the program and becoming involved.

Introduction to Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs. . .

- Stress that these are adult needs as well as children's needs
- Emphasize the importance of the parent meeting his or her needs in order to maximize meeting the needs of the child
- Use pictograph and outline

Assessment Activity: *"Where Are You Now?"*(this week/ tonight)

Follow-up Activity: *"To Thine Ownself Be True"*



Part Two Parenting Success:
"Mirror, mirror on the wall" . . . . . page 15
Guilt, the gift that keeps on giving.
Choices and Responsibility Parenting©

~~~~~~

Goals and Objectives of Week Two: *"Mirror, mirror on the wall. . ."*

- To continue to build awareness surrounding the importance of the parent's self esteem
- To discuss the developmental patterns of the child and teen
- To build awareness of mutual respect between the parent and the child
- To develop awareness of the change process as related to our "old tapes" of parenting concepts (includes awareness of "guilt")
- To leave the attending parent with a sense of hope, support and encouragement
- To discuss different styles of parenting with an emphasis on *Choices & Responsibility Parenting*
- To clarify the balance between *Choices and responsibility, Democracy and Letting Go*
- To discuss the importance of providing one's child/teen with *Choices* (self esteem development and empowerment)
- To clarify *Problem Ownership*
- To provide activities which begin integration of the group
- To provide a *Let's Try This* relationship activity for the parent

~~~~~~

"Mirror, mirror on the wall. . ." (Use transparencies of the following)

first. . .

- High Self Esteem Is Based On Four Core Beliefs
- Acceptance (*"Mirror, mirror on the wall. . ."*)

then. . .

Mirror Cartoon

-- and --

Poem: *"Just go to the mirror and look at yourself…"*

last. . .

Mirror, Mirror Activity (see handout)

Looking into the mirror and accepting what we see. . .
in ourselves. . .in our children. . .in our parents

- Children's Traits That We See in Ourselves
- Are We - As Parents - Our Own Parent(s)?
- *"Do as I do not do as I say."* -- An Unusual Twist?

"Guilt. . .the gift that keeps on giving."
Old Tapes Play Again and Again

The Necessary Ingredients of Change:

- Being Aware of What We Want To Change
- Wanting To Make That Change

Unconditional Love:

- Acceptance Without Conditions
- Accepting Our Child as a Separate Individual
- Finding the Positive

Introduction to *Choices and Responsibility Parenting*™
(this will be revisited again in later sessions)

Democracy: Balance between *Choices and Responsibility*
Trust and Letting Go: a developmental issue

Choices & Responsibility Parenting:
Three ways to achieve the developmental goals

1. Self Esteem and Empowerment
- Whether 2, 10 or 16 years of age - Give 'em Choices
- Choices: Must be *Safe and Sane*
- Provide *Room for Errors and Mistakes without Criticism*

2. Decision-Making Ability
- A Parent's Guide to being helpful (O. H. series)
- Let the child own responsibility of both the *Triumphs & Disappointments*

Note: This is within limits of safety for all involved.

3. Problem Ownership
- Ask: "Whose Problem Is It? (Put list on chalkboard)
- Who wants something but effort is not successful
- Who is bothered or effected because of failed or dubious effort
- Does the resulting behavior interfere with anyone else?
- If the behavior does interfere with anyone else, then the problem becomes the person's with whom it interferes
Ask for examples of Problem Ownership with discussion

Activity: Problem Ownership Place cards with problems on the right pile (piles are labeled "No Problem", "Child" or "Teen", and "Parent")

Balancing Choices and Responsibility
(PowerPoint or overhead transparency + p. 20 in text)

The boundary patterns of 3 types of parents: (slide + p. 21)
- Very Rigid and/or Very Protective
- Very Permissive
- Choices and Responsibility Parenting™

Discuss: *"Doubts are more cruel than the worst of truths."*
By Moliere and how it relates to permissive parenting.

Activity: *Let's Try This: Yes, you are. . .Yes, you can!*
Directions: This activity is designed to go home at the end of a session as a "refrigerator reminder". When the parent feels or hears irrational, negative self-talk, then he or she is to replace it with rational, positive self-talk or thoughts.



Part Three Parenting Success:
"What's For Dinner?" . . . . . page 22
Who's in charge here? (Parenting Characters)
Active Listening & Communication
Same Song. . .Second Verse: "The Cat's in the Cradle"
(The Change Process)

~~~~~~

Goals and Objectives of Week Three: *"What's for Dinner?"*

- To build an awareness of the importance of peaceful and positive family dining experiences
- To encourage parents to have at least one meal per day with their child
- To begin teaching the skill of *active listening*
- To demonstrate and discuss communication facilitators
- To demonstrate and discuss communication blocks
- To provide an activity(ies) for practice of communication skills
- To provide activities which continue integration of the group
- To provide a beginning activity for the development of the parent's self esteem
- To provide a final activity for the parent to "take home" with him or her

~~~~~~

Activity: What's for Dinner?

- First. . .Do Guided Success Fantasy Activity
- When finished with that discussion. . .
- Ask & Discuss: *Is there a time when your family eats a meal together?*

- Then. . .*Describe what those dining times are like at your dinner table.*

  Negatives? -- Results
  Positives? -- Results?

- Brainstorm in pairs or small groups for ideas to make positive meal experiences. . .

> Important: Mealtime can actually fulfill the first four levels of the Human Needs including. . .
>
> - Self-Esteem Needs
> - Love, Affection & Belonging Needs
> - Safety Needs
> - Survival Needs

Who's In Charge Here? -- Or -
When the kid "Rules the Roost"

Parent's Developmental Goals for Kids (slide or overhead transparency)

Chart and/or Overhead: Parenting Styles

Parenting Styles: On a Continuum (Activity)

Parenting Style Video Clips:
(i.e. *Deceived* with Goldy Hawn)
Note: During break rewind *Deceived* to the clip on active listening then use this as an opener for the next part

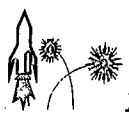
Powerpoint Presentation:

- Active Listening & Communication
- Communication Blocks
- Optional: Active Problem Solving (may be homework)

Activity with song:
Same Song. . .Second Verse: "The Cat's in the Cradle"

Activity: *Nothing Succeeds Like Success* (p. 34)

Let's Try This Activity: *Recipe for Change (homework) (p.35)*



Part Four Parenting Success:
"Houston, we have a problem." . . . . . .page 36
Where Are the Boundaries?
From a Parent's Point of View
Who Is the Maytag Man Besides Being Boring, Predictable, and Consistent

~~~~~~

Goals and Objectives of Week Four: *"Houston, we have a problem."*

- To provide consistency with Re-entry Activity: *How did the week go?*
- To clarify any topics or concepts covered thus far
- To revisit the important topic of self-esteem and the family
- To begin building awareness about boundary issues, *"Where are the boundaries?"*
- To continue to clarify the connection between self-esteem and mutual respect through the activity, *"From a parent's point of view"*
- To develop awareness and understanding of the need for *consistency* in parenting
- To have a dialogue in small groups on the *ideal feeling* of home through the opening statement, *"Who is the Maytag Man?"*
- To provide a *Let's Try This* activity for the parent to "take home"

~~~~~~

Introduction to boundary issues (p. 39 in text)

- The Serenity Prayer
- (Facilitator's notes on boundary issues are on page following this outline)

- Activity: *From A Parent's Point of View* – Self Esteem and Mutual Respect in the family --

3 objectives. . .

1. To help parents begin to Stop - Think - Act
2. To develop awareness and pinpoint their own feelings and sources of inadequacy and success
3. To begin working with parents on boundaries and empowerment - they can make choices and set limits concerning their own well-being and happiness

See pp. 40-41 in text (this may be done privately or in small groups)

- When We Feel "Put Down"
- Things Which Make Us Feel Good

Discuss: Is there anything we can do to control how we feel?

How To Be Boring, Predictable and Consistent

- The Basic Human Need for Safety and Security
- The Maytag Man
- Seeing is Believing
- The Over-Used "Threat"
- Follow Through

Activity: Discuss the *ideal feeling* of home in small groups to reinforce the Maytag Man concept.

Let's Try This Activity: Stress Reduction

Directions: The class will brainstorm for a few ways to reduce stress. During the week, the participants will put some of the stress reduction techniques in action. Next week, we will discuss the source of stresses and what helped reduce the emotional and physical reactions to stress.



Assertiveness vs. Aggression
Conflict Resolution
"Win-Win" or Negotiation Skills
Use, Abuse, and Dependency Cycle

~~~~~~

Goals and Objectives of Week Five: *Help! My Kid Crosses the Line!*

- To provide consistency with Re-Entry Activity: *How did the week go?*
- To clarify *Problem Ownership, Decision Making Model,* and any other questions about topics covered thus far
- To help develop the use of the *"I Statement"* or *"I" Message* (through activity)
- To allow the child/teen to receive "safe and sane" and *Natural Consequences*
- To discuss and practice *Logical Consequences* (through activity)
- To review, demonstrate, practice and discuss *Assertive and Aggressive* behaviors
- To develop opportunities for practice of *Conflict Resolution*
- To develop and practice *The Art Of "Win - Win"* (the power of negotiation)
- To discuss the powerfulness of "win - win" and "success" within the family
- To increase parents' awareness and understanding of the child/teen's use, abuse and addiction to alcohol and other drugs
- To increase parents' awareness of medical research on marijuana in the 90's
- To provide activities which continue integration of the group
- To provide a *Let's Try This* activity for the parent to "take home"



Part Six Parenting Success:
Would the real Donna Reed please stand up? . . . . .page 57
Michelle's Story (Sexuality, Peer Pressure, and Self-Esteem)
~~~~~~

Watching From a Goldfish Bowl (Family Power Structures)
Where do we go from here?
A thousand keys and one keyhole. . .
Yes! We Can!! Resources & Networking

~~~~~~

Goals and Objectives of Week Six: *Where Do We Go From Here?*

- To develop awareness and understanding of the importance of *trust* for the development of confidence
- To provide discussion opportunities on what makes up the "normal family" concluding that there is no "normal" only individual
- To provide discussion opportunities on what parenting techniques usually work for the "normal teen" concluding that they are all individuals and if one thing does not work then we must problem solve and try something else
- To develop awareness, understanding and integration of the importance of *networking* among parents
- To provide an opportunity for the development of the "I can do it" attitude for the parents of at risk teens
- To leave the parents with a list of ongoing resources from which they might draw support in the future
- To provide a beginning activity for the development of the parent's self esteem
- To provide activities which continue integration of the group
- To provide a final activity for the parent to "take home" with him or her

~~~~~~

Michelle's Story (text, p. 59 + video tape of interview)

Would the real Donna Reed please stand up?

- Discussion: What is a "normal family"?
- Discuss and Compare:
  - What is a healthy family?
  - What is an unhealthy family?

Family Power Structures: "Watching from the goldfish bowl"

- When playing the relationship game, which player are you?

- Victim
- Persecutor
- Rescuer

A Thousand Keys and One Keyhole

- There Are Thousands of Personalities - No two people (or teens) are alike
- Help! This parenting skill is *not* working!
- Problem Solving: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

Rebuilding Trust. . . and Confidence

- Brick by Brick
- Respect. . . It's Still Mutual
- Beware: The Grudge is Always Waiting

Networking

- Meet Your Teen's Friends
- Meet the Friend's Parents
- . . .A Phone Call Away
- Encourage Having Your Teen's Friends Visit
- Get Involved

Yes! You Can!!

- Review: Communication Skills
- Review: Choices & Consequences
- The Miracle of *Unconditional Love*

Resources and Future Support

- Parent Connection
- Parents, Let's Unite for Kids
- Resource List

Closing Activity: Poem, Reading, Sharing

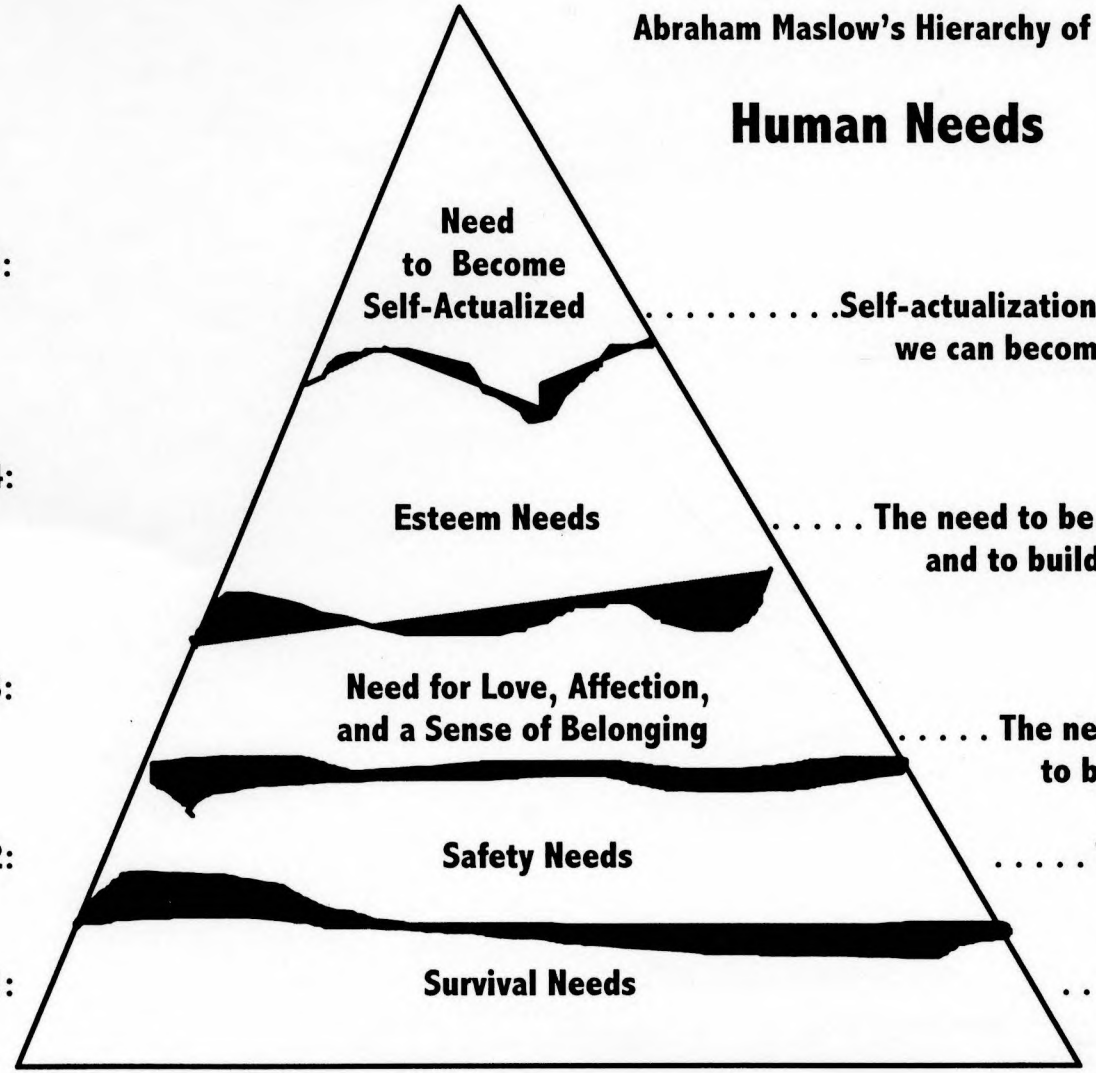
Note: It is important to reach closure with the group at the end of this final meeting.

APPENDIX B

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of

Human Needs



APPENDIX C

INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRES

EVALUATION FORMS

Parenting Success™ Evaluation Form

Please take a few minutes and fill out this form. Your input is valuable and will assist us in the presentation of the group beginning in two weeks. Thank you very much for your help and participation in this community resource. As parents. . .thanks for going the extra *miles* with this program for the sake of your kids. Best wishes to you.

1. How did you like *Parenting Success*?

---

2. Listed below are some of the key points that we covered in class. Please circle the concepts which you feel should be included in this material.

Self Esteem Activities	Interactive Activities
Handouts	Film Clips
Active Listening	
"I" Messages	Communication Blocks
(homework assignments)	*Let's Try This*. . .
Problem Ownership	Group Problem Solving
Logical Consequences	
Self-Esteem and Acceptance	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Family Dynamics	Conflict Resolution

"Group Rules" (stressing confidentiality)

3. Please evaluate the items below using this scale:
Poor = 1 Below Average = 2 Average = 3
Above Average = 4 Excellent = 5

- the value of the information to you in parenting
  1 2 3 4 5
- the value of the *group support*
  1 2 3 4 5
- the value of the group discussion
  1 2 3 4 5
- feeling of safety concerning confidential information
  1 2 3 4 5
- the value of information from our outside speakers
  1 2 3 4 5
- the overall value of our parenting group/class
  1 2 3 4 5

4. What additional information would have been helpful to you?

_____

_____

5. Emphasis was placed on group discussion and support. What was your opinion of this approach rather than the dissemination of more information with less opportunity to discuss topics of concern?

_____

_____

6. Would you recommend *Parenting Success™* for other parents?
(Please feel free to comment either positively or negatively below)

_____

7. Would you consider doing an interview about this parenting program for research purposes?_____

Name_____Address_____Phone_____

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

CONSENT FORM

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

DEMOGRAPHICS of INTERVIEWEES

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE TO IDENTIFY POPULATION OF STUDY OF *PARENTING SUCCESS*™ PARTICIPANTS

Age of participant:

Ethnic/Cultural Heritage of Family:

Mother:

Father:

Grade of School Completed:

Marital Status:

Number of Children in Family:

Number of Children in Family Home:

Number of Children in Foster Care:

Source of Income:

Community Resources in Use by the Family:

Public:

Private:

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH
PARENTING SUCCESS™
BILLINGS, MONTANA

Research Instrument: Qualitative research interview to determine *how, why,* and *what* occurred during the learning process of the *Parenting Success* program. This interview may be done either with individuals or with focus groups.
Principal Investigator: Carol A. Korizek

- You are being asked to participate in a study to determine *how, why,* and *what* occurred during the learning process of the *Parenting Success* program.

- The goals of this study are as follows:

  - To determine if the participants attained *awareness, support,* and *hope for the future* which are goals of the *Parenting Success* program.

  - To discuss the learning process which occurred during *Parenting Success*.

  - To determine which activities and methods were most helpful to the learning process.

  - To discuss any changes which may have occurred during or after *Parenting Success* was completed in the areas of *feeling, thinking, and doing*.

  - To gain insight and information which may assist with the revision process of future *Parenting Success* editions.

As a participant in this phase of the study, you will be asked to take part in a recorded interview. When parts about learning are transcribed which are pertinent to the study, your last name will not be included nor will your first name unless you request that it be used in the study. If your first name is not used, an alternate name or a first initial will be chosen by you as follows: first name( ) first initial ( ) alternate name ( )

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the nature of the project and my participation in it. I,_____, agree to participate in the research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate or that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed_____ Date_____

Investigator_____Date_____

Interview Questions

Before asking questions on the interview.. .

1) Explain research about learning

2) Explain qualitative method in laymen's terms

3) Explain extensive use of terms -

Learning

Parenting Success (*PS*)

How Questions

Why Questions—awkward because *WHY* is a conversation blocker

4) Feelings: Many theorists believe that we learn through thinking rather than feeling (cognitive), while other theorists believe as strongly that we learn mainly through our feelings and emotions (affective), and the third group believe that we learn through a combination of these (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains).

How do court-ordered parents react to a parenting program based on adult learning principles?

1) Is *PS* the first parenting class you have attended?

2) If yes, move to (5) below.

3) If no—in which parenting program did you participate before?

4) If no—how is *PS* different from other classes on parenting?

5) How did you feel about being ordered through your treatment plan to participate in parenting education?

6) During the six weeks of *Parenting Success*, did your first reaction change about parent education.

How does the philosophy of learner-centered humanistic adult education effect active learning when applied to *Parenting Success* learning groups of hard-to-reach, failure-cycled parents of families at risk?

1) *Parenting Success* attempts to have the participants be involved with both teaching, learning, and problem-solving rather than be passive receptors of information. How did you like this approach to learning? Why was it helpful to learning?

2) *Parenting Success* centers on the parent's experience. Was it important or helpful to your learning to hear from others or tell about your own experiences?

3) How important to the learning process is it to feel *trust* in the *Parenting Success* meetings? Why?

4) How important to the learning process is it to feel *mutual respect* in the *Parenting Success* meetings? Why?

What adult teaching and learning methods, techniques, and activities facilitated learning in *Parenting Success*?

Discussion—large or small groups Activities Books

Visual Aids—TV PowerPoint, overhead, diagrams

Food

How does the learning efficacy of the participants in *Parenting Success* compare to how effectively the needs of the participants are met?

1) A strong or healthy self-esteem is important to mental health and learning. What did you learn about self-esteem needs through *Parenting Success?*

2) If a person feels OK about participating in a learning activity like *Parenting Success*, he or she usually feels that certain needs are being met. Were some of your needs met through *Parenting Success*?

3) Was your participation in *PS* an OK experience? Can you tell how or why you felt OK about this learning experience?

During the six week learning groups of *PS*, how do the participants attitudes and behavior change?

1) Before you began *Parenting Success*, you did not know what to expect? Can you recall how you felt before the first meeting of *Parenting Success*?
2) Do you recall if your behavior or attitude about *Parenting Success* meetings changed?
3) What is your attitude toward *Parenting Success* now? Why or How has learning in *Parenting Success* affected that?

Why is it possible for a failure-cycled parent to feel more successful as a result of participating in an adult learning class for parents of families at risk?

1) Is possible for a parent to feel more successful as a result of participating in an adult learning class for parents of families at risk?
   What, How, Why is that possible?
2) Did any of the shared information, skills, or problem-solving activities in our *Parenting Success* meetings—from the leaders or participants—cause you to feel frustrated, angry, or uncomfortable?
   Do you recall why you felt that way?

How do you feel about that situation now?

In concluding our interview, can you tell me what your plans are for the future?

Are there any personal changes that you believe might take place in the future?

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