Review of the Literature on Child Welfare Training: Theory, Practice, and Research

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Contents

Introduction

A well-trained workforce is of critical importance to deal with the extraordinary challenges facing families in the child welfare system. Each year substantial federal, state, and local resources are devoted to training activities in public child welfare and their contracted agencies. While the work of child welfare can be highly rewarding it requires addressing numerous social problems (e.g., poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence), is fraught with extensive ambiguity, and is frequently conducted with limited resources. Professional education and training approaches are a part of the solution to prepare agency workers, but it clearly cannot be relied upon as the sole solution to complex problems. Resources, leadership, community support, and state-of-the-art practice strategies are also key elements.

Much good work is occurring in child welfare training, but reports of this work are dispersed across many topic areas and publication outlets. Consequently, the knowledge base lacks cohesion and practitioners face obstacles in accessing it. This literature review seeks to provide a comprehensive summary of what is known in the field of child welfare training. We have two goals. First, we identify this literature to create a resource for the many child welfare and human service training professionals searching for information about existing training knowledge (in theory, practice, and research) to guide their own efforts. Second, we assess the literature to derive conclusions to guide further development of the field.

The term "child welfare training" encompasses several activities the most common of which are:

- Pre-service training directed to new caseworkers—designed to equip them with the basic knowledge, attitude, and skill competencies to enter the field and begin work with children and families.

- In-service and continuing education directed to caseworkers, foster parents, supervisors, and/or administrators—designed to support the implementation of changes in practice or further competencies in particular topic areas or methods (e.g., domestic violence, multi-disciplinary case assessment).

- Professional education (usually BSW/MSW)—designed to provide current or future workers with college/university coursework and field practica to understand the theories governing high-quality social work practice, including sound clinical, programmatic, and administrative decision-making.

Most often, child welfare training refers to workshops or courses provided to the staff of public child welfare agencies, but training audiences may also include staff from agencies that contract with the public child welfare agency and/or participants from related human service organizations, such as mental health, substance abuse, criminal justice, and medical. Trainers are often staff from the child welfare agency's training department, but they may also be individuals from outside the agency with whom the agency contracts for ongoing training programs or occasional sessions. Outside trainers are often subject matter experts on topics (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, adolescents) or on intervention methods (e.g., family conferencing, home-based treatment). Child welfare trainers may utilize a variety of teaching methods, including lecture, discussion, case analysis, role-playing, video and film, panel presentations, guest speakers, and a host of small and large group exercises. Increasingly, training methods involve practice and reinforcement in the work setting, as well.

Agency-based training may be mandatory (e.g., pre-service for new workers) or voluntary (e.g., education related to special client groups such as infants or adolescents). Professional training, obviously, is chosen by the students. In all cases, students and trainees are adults and training principles derived from adult education theory provide the bedrock for effective training approaches.

Our focus in this review is on literature published since 1990, although we do include occasional classic articles from an earlier time. We also limited our review to training conducted in the United States and reported in U.S. journals. We have also included books and book chapters in the theoretical section. Our search strategy involved researching primary social science and social work databases, as well as reviewing the references of the articles we identified. Four leaders in the field of child welfare training reviewed an earlier draft of this review and provided helpful comments on criteria: comprehensiveness, lack of bias, accuracy, and readability. These reviewers also led us to other sources in the literature and, importantly, key non-published resources.

This review of the literature on training is organized into four major sections:

- First, we discuss the primarily theoretical literature on adult learning that underlies most of what is known about training. Since little of this literature is specific to child welfare, we include several sources that discuss training in other fields as well.

- Second, we describe what is known about training practice and delivery approaches.

- Third, we review knowledge related to the development of partnership models between public child welfare agencies and institutions of higher education. These include partnerships aimed at pre-service and in-service training for child welfare workers and professional training in BSW/MSW programs.

- Fourth, we review the evaluation research on child welfare training.

We conclude the literature review with a chapter summarizing core findings and drawing implications for the field of child welfare training.

One lesson from the literature (to be discussed later in depth) is that training does not occur in isolation and that contextual factors greatly impact the delivery and outcomes of training. Similarly, the field of child welfare training does not operate independently but is connected to other developments in social service delivery. There is, furthermore, historical development within the field. Brittain (2004) described some notable achievements in child welfare training over the last 25 years. These include, "a calculated approach to training development focusing on competencies, multi-layered training evaluation, and inclusion of transfer activities to enhance integration and skill development" (p. 2). She sees these efforts as having laid a solid foundation for the next generation

of training. The topics identified by Brittain include competencies, transfer of training, use of technology, integration of an ethics focus, partnerships, performance improvement, multi-level training evaluation, and the federal Children and Family Services Reviews. Each of these topics presents challenges and opportunities for the child welfare training field; many are highlighted in this review.

In an effort to limit the parameters of this review, we chose not to address the following issues at length: Child Welfare Workforce: Recruitment and Retention; Children and Family Services Reviews; Development of Professional Training Infrastructure; and Linking Training to Performance. But we note their importance to understanding the present and future of child welfare training. These are macro issues that serve as a backdrop to child welfare training and are likely to propel the field into a more comprehensive and outcome-oriented approach to training and evaluation in the coming years. We outline here some of these major areas to provide context to the more detailed findings of the literature review.

1) Child Welfare Workforce: Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention of high-quality staff in public child welfare agencies has long been a challenge (Alwon & Reitz, 2000; Gibelman & Schervish, 1996; Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999). Earlier research focused on correlates of job satisfaction and turnover (Fryer, Miyoshi, & Thomas, 1989; Rycraft, 1994) and models of stress and burnout (Drake & Yadama, 1996). More recent research has examined the organizational contexts of child welfare practice (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Landsman, 2001; Vinokur-Kaplan, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1994).

Significant turnover is a problem for several reasons: less experienced workers (presumably) cannot help families address the challenges they face as well as more experienced workers; employee vacancies may spread the existing staff efforts too thin, resulting in inadequate coverage of cases; and turnover among workers leads to lack of continuity with families, thereby undermining the relationships needed to accomplish case goals. Balfour and Neff (1993) note that the problems associated with employee turnover are particularly serious in organizations "where the productive capacity is concentrated in *human capital*" (p. 474, italics original). This human capital represents the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of employees and cannot be easily transferred to new people. "The result of high turnover in such organizations is likely to be a significant depletion of productive capacity and reduced organizational effectiveness" (p. 474).

Excessive turnover results in inefficiency. Training is an investment and organizations need to be concerned that the costs spent training workers are appropriate to their level of productivity and output. Employees leaving too soon after training results in organizational inefficiency (Graef & Hill, 2000). Additionally, when agency personnel are stretched thin, this can result in the inability of remaining staff to attend training (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2007).

Recently, child welfare workforce recruitment and retention issues have been at the forefront of attention. In 2004, the Children's Bureau funded eight 5-year projects focused on effective models of training to improve recruitment and retention. At the same time, a number of recent reports have called attention to the need for more focus on workforce issues (IASWR, 2005). Training is thought to be one factor that may facilitate greater retention of qualified and effective staff within child welfare agencies, although numerous other factors are also critical to retention issues (Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2006).

Balfour and Neff (1993) explicitly examined the role of an agency training program (along with several other variables) in predicting turnover among child protective services workers. The training was specifically targeted at reducing caseworker turnover by helping workers increase their skills and confidence in handling difficult cases. However, Balfour and Neff explain that at the time of the study, the training was aimed primarily at those most likely to stay (more experienced and more attached to the organization), rather than those most likely to leave. In a multivariate logistic regression model, the training program was not found to be significant. More explicit career development opportunities within child welfare have also been suggested as a retention strategy. In a longitudinal study, Curry, McCarragher, and Dellmann-Jenkins (2005) provide some evidence that training and career development interventions do promote staff retention in child welfare.

2) Children and Family Services Reviews

In 2000, the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) began the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) process to address: 1) federal requirements related to states' capacity to administer and deliver services effectively to children and families; and 2) outcomes of services for children in foster care and for children and families who receive services in their own homes (Milner & Hornsby, 2004). The CFSR includes a statewide self-assessment, an on-site review (including reviewing a sample of cases and interviews with stakeholders), and a Program Improvement

Plan (PIP) developed by the state to address areas in which efforts need to improve to meet the national standards. The first round of CFSRs was completed in March 2004. The second round of Reviews is currently underway.

The CFSR measures seven outcomes within the domains of safety, permanence, and well-being. The safety outcomes are: 1) children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect; and 2) children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. The permanency outcomes are: 3) children have permanency and stability in their living situations; and 4) the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. The well-being outcomes are: 5) families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs; 6) children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and 7) children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. These outcomes are measured by 45 items. In the first round of CFSRs, no state achieved substantial conformity on all seven outcomes.

The CFSR also measures seven systemic factors: 1) staff and provider training; 2) statewide information system; 3) case review system; 4) quality assurance system; 5) service array; 6) agency responsiveness to the community; and 7) foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention. Most states (75%) were found to be in substantial conformity with the area of staff and provider training.

Conducting an analysis of data from states' final reports and the Children's Bureau website, Martin, Barbee, and Antle (2003) provide information about the preliminary results of the CFSR and the implications for training. They examined the relationship between outcomes and the correlation of systemic factors with items and outcomes. For example, they found that the more systemic factors in conformity, the more likely "children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect." The systemic factors most strongly correlated with outcomes were "case review system" and "service array," with service array most strongly correlated with the total number of items in conformity across all outcomes. Martin, Barbee, and Antle suggest that as states plan for program improvement, training will be a key strategy to address nonconformity in several areas. They warned, however, that although training has always been a part of change strategies, the results of the CFSRs suggest that training cannot be the only solution for program improvement.

Milner and Hornsby (2004) present an overview of the CFSR process and its examination of three types of training provided by the state: 1) pre-service or initial training for newly hired workers; 2) training beyond pre-service for workers

to maintain and advance their skills; and 3) training for foster and adoptive parents and caretakers. They report that in the initial reviews, only 2/3 of the states had adequate provisions for pre-service training, and that the greatest challenge for states is in providing ongoing training. Problems in providing pre-service and ongoing training are described, and difficulties in the training of foster and adoptive parents are identified. For example, problems in pre-service training include, workers being assigned caseloads and dealing with clients prior to receiving training, inconsistent training requirements across counties, and insufficient time dedicated to training. Similar problems were noted in ongoing or in-service training: no standardized or core requirements for ongoing training; inconsistent training requirements across counties; barriers to accessing training (e.g., high caseload); insufficient time devoted to training; and uncertain quality of training offered. Several implications are discussed, including the need for training outcomes to be evidenced at the work site and not just at the training site. The authors conclude that training has the potential to be a major force in helping state agencies address the challenges they face (e.g., high staff turnover, high caseloads, and court-ordered changes), but success may depend on the congruence between training and agency goals and vision, as well as coordination between training and other parts of the agency to achieve necessary outcomes.

3) Development of Professional Training Infrastructure

The National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) was founded in 1983 and incorporated in 1985 as an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association for the purpose of supporting persons responsible for human service training and staff development at the local, state, and federal levels. The mission of NSDTA is to build professional and organizational capacity in the human services field through a national membership interested in training. Many child welfare training specialists utilize NSDTA materials and policies as a guide for their work.

The NSDTA publishes competency-based guidelines for effective staff development and training programs. Since 1997, it has identified several key roles and components that need to be performed in staff development and training. NSDTA developed guidelines based on a literature review and discussions with leaders in the field. They used two major sources in their work on role development: *Models for HRD Practice* (McLagan & Suhadolnik, 1989), which describes eleven roles in the training and development field and tends to reflect private sector staffing; and *Public Welfare Staff Development: A Role and Competency Framework for Curriculum Development and Instruction* (Kinney, Cooke & Fox, 1982), which identifies six roles for staffing in public welfare training programs.

NSDTA also developed 12 "competency clusters" that include: administration, communications, course design, evaluation, group dynamics/process, instructional techniques, learning theory, manpower planning, person/organization interface, research and development, training equipment and materials, and training needs analysis. One of the organization's goals is to determine how these competencies can be used practically in staff training and development. Bernotavicz and colleagues (2002) envision that various organizations might prioritize these competencies, depending on the challenges and contextual situations they face.

NSDTA has made important contributions in operationalizing key concepts and advocating for the professionalization of the training field. It is likely that the NSDTA competency clusters developed for roles such as Training Programmer and Curriculum Designer will become reference points for child welfare organizations that seek to hire individuals. The competencies clarify both the expectations for the tasks to be accomplished and the type of work experience and skills needed in the individual hired. Following these guidelines may help child welfare agencies feel more confident that the trainers they hire will be effective in doing the job.

4) Linking Training to Performance

Performance improvement has roots in such disparate fields as behavioral psychology, management sciences, and research and evaluation (Sanders & Ruggles, 2000). It differs from traditional training in that the learner's preferences for attending training on certain topics may be subordinated to organizational needs for them to acquire specific skills.

Robinson and Robinson (1998a) emphasize the national trend for trainers in human service organizations—as well as in business and industry—to focus on outcomes rather than inputs. The goal is to enhance human performance in support of the goals of the organization or business as a whole. The authors contend that four types of needs must now be aligned: business or organizational needs, performance needs, learning needs (of individual workers), and work environment needs. The authors contrast the traditional training focus and the new performance focus in the following way (see table at right).

> *Traditional Training vs. Performance Improvement*
> *(adapted from Robinson & Robinson, 1998b, p. 9)*

- Focus on what people need to learn vs. focus on what people need to do.

- Acquisition of knowledge and skills as an end in itself vs. acquisition of knowledge and skills as a means to an end.

- Often enters the work process reactively vs. enters the work process proactively and reactively.

- Biased in favor of a single solution, often a structured learning experience vs. unbiased in favor of multiple solutions of which training is only one.

- Works independently of partnerships with parts of the organization vs. must be partnered with a segment of the organization that has joint ownership for success.

- Front-end assessment is optional; work environment barriers to desired performance are rarely identified vs. front-end assessment is mandatory; work environment barriers to desired performance are identified.

- Success is measured by quality of the training program vs. measured by contribution to performance changes and operational impact.

Various performance models are provided (Elliott, 1998), including ones that begin with determining the major performance outputs required for the job, collecting data on those outputs, and producing a best-practice list for them. Other models begin with identifying deficient performance outputs; defining the practices leading to the deficient output; generating hypotheses about multiple causes of deficient practice (e.g., lack of resources, lack of incentives, lack of understanding); collecting data to confirm or discredit the hypotheses; and identifying causes and making recommendations. In addition to training, the solution to performance problems might include: 1) setting clearer performance expectations; 2) providing feedback systems so workers can see how they perform relative to other workers doing the same tasks; 3) eliminating task interferences; 4) redesigning the job to make it more manageable; 5) providing job aids that make necessary information more available or provide decision trees to facilitate

decision-making; 6) adopting recruitment methods that insure that workers have the necessary prerequisite skills; or 7) redesigning organizational processes, such as improving communication, climate, or administrative procedures that inhibit performance (Stolovitch & Keeps, 1998).

In discussing the trend from training to performance improvement, Bassi, Benson, and Cheney (1996) predict that organizations will be forced to become "high performance work systems" following similar guidelines to the ones outlined above by Robinson and Robinson. Trainers and training departments will be pivotal in facilitating this process. In a survey of professionals from the Training and Development field, the great majority of respondents agreed that the shift from training to performance improvement was one of the most important trends occurring in the field (Bassi, Benson, & Cheney, 1996). In the child welfare field as well, some state agencies have recognized the need to make the critical link between training, worker performance, and outcomes, and see performance improvement methods as a way of doing so (Bernotavicz, personal communication, 2006).

Due to pressures on child welfare systems to demonstrate results related to the well-being of children and families—and employment of specific risk-management procedures throughout the system—it is likely that future training will be expected to demonstrate learner (e.g., worker) outcomes in the classroom and on the job, as well as ways that learner outcomes are tied to organizational performance measures. This means that trainers will need to consider how training will meet organizational objectives, and work more closely with managers and supervisors in planning and implementing training.

Thus, good training should lead to increased performance and better outcomes for children and families involved with child welfare systems. It should also increase retention in the child welfare workforce (leading to reduced system costs, and again, better service to children and families). But it is not a panacea. Much greater attention needs to be provided to "training as an intervention" and "training as a field of scholarly study" in order to fully understand the benefits and limitations.

Chapter 1
Adult Learning Theory
for Education and Training

Introduction

Over the past 30 years, adult education theories and approaches have so thoroughly permeated the fields of education and training in the U.S. and other countries that it is difficult to discuss them in a circumscribed way. Theories of adult education and adult learning are utilized for teaching and staff training in settings as diverse as colleges and universities, large corporations and small businesses, governmental and military organizations, human service agencies and local communities.

This chapter highlights seminal adult education theories and discusses their variations and utilization in contemporary educational and training settings. Of special interest are situations and settings where theories have been utilized for child welfare training or may be utilized in future training efforts.

There are many perspectives on how adults learn when the goal is preparation for a particular job or to improve job performance skills. Below we discuss several of these perspectives including: *andragogy*, the study of adult learning and the foundation for the development of several other theories; *transformational learning*, in which educational experiences are seen as modifying how people see themselves and their world; and *objectivism* and *constructivism*, which are contrasting approaches to designing educational experiences, the former viewing knowledge and truth as existing outside the mind of the individual, and the latter viewing knowledge and truth as constructed by learners through their active participation in the learning process.

Andragogy: The Study of Adult Learning

Andragogy is a key term in understanding adult education and learning theory. Although the term has been used since the 1830s in Europe, the modern concepts associated with andragogy are generally credited to Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer and leading theorist in the area of adult education. Knowles (1970) noted that the teaching of children had its own sphere of knowledge and convention, referred to as pedagogy. Finding that the concepts and methods of pedagogy did not fully apply to adult learners, Knowles proposed a set of precepts to study adult learning.

Andragogy is premised on at least four crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the assumptions about child learners. These assumptions are that as a person matures: 1) his/her self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being; 2) he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning; 3) his/her readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of social roles; and 4) his/her time perspective changes, from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problems-centeredness (p. 39).

Knowles' principles provide themes requiring attention by those who educate adults. Adult learners learn best when they are involved in decisions about what to learn and how to learn it. They come with wisdom and experience that should be tapped to keep them engaged, to help them move to a more advanced level, and to benefit the learning of others in the learning group. They are most ready to learn when their roles demand certain knowledge and skills and they come with the expectation that they will be able to apply learning immediately. Seven phases for the development of an adult learning program include: 1) a climate conducive to adult learning must be established; 2) an organizational structure for participative planning needs to be developed; 3) the need for learning is diagnosed; 4) learning objectives are formulated; 5) a design of activities is developed; 6) the activities are implemented; and 7) the needs for learning are re-evaluated.

There is an important caveat in this discussion: Although the adult learner requires respect and an environment of mutual inquiry, when a learner is first exposed to such a novel environment "the initial reaction is usually one of shock and disorganization" (Knowles, 1970, p. 40). The adult is generally not prepared for such a scenario since, in the majority of his/her experience, the learning environment has typically been more structured and instructor-directed than learner-directed. Thus, the student must make an adjustment to understand that

he/she controls the learning process. Once this understanding occurs, the student "enters into the learning with deep ego-involvement, with results that are frequently startling both to himself and to his teachers" (Knowles, 1970, p. 40).

Oduaran (1996) summarizes Knowles' points by saying, "Andragogy is based on the understanding that the greatest need of an adult is to be treated as an adult, to be treated as a self-directing person, to be treated with respect" (pp. 83–84). In the andragogical paradigm, the learner must feel valued and respected as an adult and an equal, rather than as a subordinate.

Elias (1979) sees Knowles' theory as suitable for guiding the teaching of any age group and believes that debate about methodologies for the teaching of children versus adults is forced. Knowles (1979, 1984; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005) eventually acknowledges that it is a mistake to present andragogy as totally distinct from traditional pedagogy. In retrospect he views the two "disciplines" as forming the endpoints of a spectrum of methods. An adult approaching an entirely new subject might best be taught with traditional pedagogy, but a learner with some experience in a topic might do better with andragogical methods. Thus, new child welfare workers in pre-service training might benefit from training that was pedagogical in approach, whereas experienced workers, supervisors and administrators attending in-service training would likely seek and benefit from a collaborative approach.

Concerning applications of the term andragogy, Rachal (2002) points out that 1) there are few empirical studies of andragogical concepts, with most evidence provided by "anecdotal, expository, and polemical writing" (p. 211); 2) researchers who say their studies examine andragogy have investigated a broad range of dissimilar phenomena (the key similarity should be a joint facilitator/learner learning contract); and 3) effectiveness is often judged through tests and grades, which Knowles believed were largely unhelpful to adult learners. Confusion stems from Knowles' focus on adults as self-directed human beings and on the need for adults in formal education and training programs to be involved in "self-directed learning." One adult education expert defined self-directed learning as "activities where primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating a learning endeavor is assumed by the individual learner" (Brockett, 1983, p. 16).

Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) point out that Knowles was advocating for increased participation of all learners in determining what and how they would learn in structured educational settings. In other words, "a role for educators of adults is to help learners become increasingly able to assume personal responsibility for their own learning" (p. 27). Adult learners will possess different degrees of willingness to accept responsibility for their learning and it is a "misconception

to assume that learners necessarily enter a learning experience with a high level of self-direction already intact" (p. 27). Advice about how educators can facilitate learner self-direction includes: viewing learners as partners in the educational process by placing value on the experiences the learners bring with them; stimulating critical reflection; promoting rational thinking and rational choices; and establishing an effective helping relationship with the learner that includes attending, listening, empathizing, and probing (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). An elaboration of these ideas can be found in Brockett (1991) and Tennant (1991).

Such recommendations have particular relevance for child welfare training where learners often come with varying degrees of understanding of what they need to learn. Gleeson (1992) reports on a survey of child welfare workers regarding their perspective on how they have acquired their practice knowledge. In particular, caseworkers reported life experience, self-directed learning, and supervision as the largest factors in how they acquired knowledge and skills. Other sources included agency-sponsored in-service training, formal degree education, and professional continuing education. Gleeson concludes that although professional education in university settings and in-service training are important methods of learning, other more informal methods of learning might be considered. In particular, universities and colleges might be more effective by helping students become self-directed learners, who are ready to engage in self-directed learning once they are employed in child welfare settings.

Accounting for Diversity in Learning Styles

Effective training requires attention to diversity in learning styles and individual ways of learning. Learners tend to have characteristic ways in which they prefer to receive information. Cognitive psychologists have divided these into three ways: visual, verbal, and tactile (Jonassen & Grabowski, 1993 as cited in Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005)—with most learners using a combination of all three. In addition, Gardner (1983) suggests that there are seven types of intelligence: 1) academic, 2) linguistic, 3) logical-mathematical, 4) spatial, 5) musical, 6) bodily kinesthetic, and 7) understanding oneself and others. Individuals are likely to be high in some and low in others.

Some critics (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005) refer to Gardner's multiple intelligences as talents. The significance of multiple learning styles and multiple intelligences is that when training sessions involve diverse learners—who each have different learning styles and preferences—teaching must be multi-sensory. The trainer who primarily relies on auditory teaching (e.g., the content expert or didactic trainer) will be less effective than one who uses multiple methods (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

In the Title IV-E child welfare training program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Social Work, curriculum designers used Knowles' philosophy to guide them, i.e., adult learners 1) are self-directed, 2) bring a reservoir of experience, 3) have a "need to learn", and 4) have a problem-centered and performance-centered orientation to learning. An initial disjuncture was identified when students said they needed training to be better county employees, but that faculty members were focused on educating them to be professional social workers. This controversy of training vs. education echoed questions raised nationally about Title IV-E programs which were criticized for being too focused on training for specific agency functions rather than social work practice. To address this dilemma, students were asked to identify the skills they needed to do their jobs better, the skills they would need after completing their obligation to the agency, and the skills they might need later in their careers.

Another disjuncture came when students requested more problem-focused material (e.g., cocaine abuse or youth violence) rather than the content-oriented material (e.g., human behavior). To address this dilemma, students were given more options of problem-centered courses in their second year. These courses were designed with more experiential activities. Students were encouraged to work in groups with others at their particular skill level (this type of homogeneity in the learning group is seen to facilitate learning) and to bring their own cases to class (rather than relying on the instructor for cases). In policy classes they were encouraged to engage in debates by taking the side of the issue that was opposite from their personal beliefs. To integrate other principles of adult education, student competencies were developed for field placements.

Graduating students reported a sense of empowerment beyond acquiring skills to fulfill job functions. The author recommends that schools of social work 1) provide and balance both training and education in such programs, 2) help students develop individualized learning plans before they select courses, 3) utilize more experiential activities in policy and theory classes, and 4) be more creative in finding ways for learners to work in groups with others at the same "need to learn" level.

Further, concerning what scientists tell us about adult learning and how it evolves over time, adults grow as learners because of their life experiences (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). They can better manage the learning process and they expect their learning opportunities to give them more control over their learning. This is of particular importance to child welfare training since workers have varying levels of education, life experiences, work experience in child welfare roles, and work experience in other settings.

Amstutz (1999) groups theories of learning into several categories: instrumental learning (or behaviorally-oriented learning), which promotes standardization and is the basis for instruction in competency-based curricula and government and business training programs; self-directed learning, which emphasizes the value of autonomy and individual freedom in learning; experiential learning, which involves observation, discovery, and collaborative inquiry or discourse through shared experiences; and perspective transformation learning, in which one's assumptions and beliefs are examined and changed. There are limitations of each learning method in terms of responsiveness to diverse participants and needs. For instrumental learning, "learners conform to the views, attitudes and behaviors of the dominant economic and social groups in society" and "cultural or local knowledge held by some learners is not recognized as being legitimate" (p. 22), especially when views, attitudes, and behavior come from one dominant cultural view.

For self-directed learning, the primary focus is on the individual learner. This suggests that collaborative, cooperative, and other forms of learning are not as effective. Experiential learning faces the limitation of developing individual knowledge within the social context of the learning group. Perspective transformation learning has also been criticized for its individualistic, cognitive-psychological focus, rather than a focus on social context or social change.

Attending to Cultural Diversity

Attending to cultural diversity in training audiences and content is essential in child welfare training, due to the racial, ethnic, cultural, and class diversity in the child welfare population and the high likelihood that workers and supervisors will come from backgrounds that differ from those of their assigned families and communities.

Amstutz (1999) believes that mainstream learning theories and methods must address the real-world learning needs of women, people of color, and working-class individuals, to enable adult educators to enhance education for these learners.

She sees the central challenge for educators as adjusting instruction to provide meaningful learning for all participants by "increasing the congruence between learning preferences and needs based on the learners' cultural backgrounds" (p. 25). She offers a host of ideas for addressing cultural, gender, ethnic, and racial diversity in the classroom: help students question theory relative to their own cultural experiences; teach non-dichotomous ways of knowing; seek, acknowledge, and foster alternative forms of knowledge; have the "courage to teach"—don't give up the classroom to students entirely and expect them to teach each other; use a variety of instructional strategies including cooperative learning; and construct and maintain supportive learning environments. She further advocates for educators to raise learner consciousness about gender inequalities, acknowledge the daily life experiences of oppressed groups, and adopt policies that increase empowerment of disenfranchised groups.

Francis (1995), a trainer with experience in the human resources field, asks the question, "Is adult learning theory culture-bound?" She believes that most human resource professionals would describe themselves as experiential trainers subscribing to the theories of the major adult education theorists. In keeping with this approach, experiential learning would be active and participatory, based on interdependence, and on the learners' internal direction with shared access to power and knowledge. Francis points out two ways that adult learning theory is culture-bound: 1) in its view of "power distance"—the extent to which the less powerful members of a group accept an unequal distribution of power; and 2) in its approach to "uncertainty avoidance"—the degree to which learners seek to avoid ambiguity through generalized principles and a search for absolute truth (p. 103). Cultures that value large power distance place particular emphasis on trainer-centered learning and keeping order. Similarly, cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance expect the trainer to have the answers and view intellectual disagreements with the instructor as disrespectful.

To respond to learners from different cultures, Francis presents a continuum of teaching methods that range from the didactic to the experiential (e.g., lecture, panel presentation, case study, demonstration, and role-play). She contributes to the dialogue on this issue by alerting educators that 1) various teaching methods can be ordered along this continuum; 2) as educators they will encounter learners who learn best at various points along the continuum—regardless of the learners' "cultural background," and 3) they must be "culturally-responsive" to their learners. Educators need to select from among these techniques and cannot simply cast themselves as one type of instructor (e.g., experiential, content-oriented) to the exclusion of other types.

Francis also notes that culturally responsive training should:

- be aware that the learner's cultural background influences the ways he/she learns best and involve efforts by the trainer to assess and respond to this when appropriate;

- include the writings and voices of groups who historically have been marginalized in the child welfare system (e.g., ethnic minorities), in particular foster parents, biological parents, and foster youth;

- avoid teaching methods that reinforce the views and practices of the dominant society at the expense of other legitimate constituencies;

- avoid a training atmosphere where the individuals who are the most privileged—by virtue of educational degrees, race, socio-economic status or other such factors—are allowed to dominate the conversation to the exclusion of others.

Developing the Ability to be Critically Self-Reflective

Brookfield (1995) recommends that instructors become critically self-reflective by discovering and examining their assumptions about their teaching through four distinct interconnecting lenses: 1) autobiographical reflection (from personal experiences as a learner and teacher); 2) their students' view (students' assessment of their actions as inhibiting or affirming); 3) their colleagues' perceptions and experiences of them as teachers (they serve as mirrors, mentors, or critical friends); and 4) the literature which helps to locate what they do within alternative theoretical frameworks.

Critical reflection can expose power dynamics in the classroom that may inhibit learning. With appropriate intervention, an instructor's power *over* learners can instead become power experienced *with* learners. An example is having students sit in a circle in the classroom. Instructors often view this as empowering to students. However, students who are generally most comfortable with the circle are the ones who are self-confident, verbal, and familiar with an academic culture. But it can be a painful experience for students who are shy, embarrassed by being different by virtue of skin color or physical appearance, or intimidated by the learning culture. In spite of the circle's democratic appearance, it may feel coercive. Brookfield is not advocating eliminating the use of circles but rather wants instructors to be aware of the multiple meanings they may have for students. Instructors can come closer to embodying the principles of adult education in the training by seeking students' feedback on whether the instructor's actions were empowering or inhibiting.

Considering the Role of Learner Motivations

Houle's (1961) research (as described in Courtney, 1992) and subsequent typology of adult learner motivations was a key development in the adult education field. Houle determined that a broad range of learner motivations centered around three basic learning orientations: 1) the learning-oriented learner participates because he/she enjoys learning and would participate almost regardless of the subject matter; 2) the goal-oriented learner has a specific purpose or objective in seeking education (often to increase occupational mobility or resolve a job dilemma); and 3) the activity-oriented learner seeks participation for reasons other than learning (for example, to meet new people or to escape boredom).

A number of researchers (see Courtney, 1992) building on the work of Houle, have found additional types, the most important and consistent of which is the learner motivated by a desire to comply with formal requirements. This motive grows out of mandates to receive training by an outside entity, rather than from any self-generated feelings of desire or need (Courtney, 1992). This motive is likely to apply to some proportion of participants in child welfare training, since much of the training is mandated. Certainly child welfare training also includes learning-oriented, goal-oriented, and activity-oriented learners. But finding ways to engage each type of learner is a challenge for the instructor when these four motivation types may be present in the same training audience.

Transformative or Transformational Learning

Much current work on adult learning theory centers on a paradigm known as transformative learning, which focuses solely on adults and "how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experiences" in a process termed "perspective transformation" (Daley & Kappel, 2004, p. 54). Transformative learning is set apart from other forms of learning in its focus on modifying "the way people see themselves and their world" (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16), and not just on the acquisition of knowledge or skills. For example, in addition to learners being exposed to new perspectives, these new perspectives must be validated for former perspectives to be truly replaced. Transformative learning must involve attitude change, but it is generally more profound in scope and/or depth than what is commonly thought of as attitude change.

Several current trends in child welfare practice may have come about through transformational learning: 1) partnering with parents, 2) positive youth development, 3) interdisciplinary work, and 4) work with specific ethnic/cultural groups (e.g., Native American tribes). This is likely because each trend reflects a "paradigm

shift" in practice. These trends may, in turn, lend themselves to training that is designed for and produces transformational learning among individual participants and larger systems.

Four Lenses on Transformational Learning

Several approaches to transformational learning converge in what has been termed the "four-lens approach" (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16). The four approaches are Freire's (1993) consciousness-raising approach to education, Mezirow's (2000) cognitive-rational paradigm, Daloz's (1999) narrative approach, and the spiritual approach of Dirkx (1997). The four lenses approach seeks to join these threads into a unified whole.

Freire (1972), a Brazilian educator known for his empowerment approach in working with oppressed peoples, argues against education built on the "banking" concept. In the banking model, the depositor is the teacher and the students receive, file, and store the deposits. The teacher's task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his or her narration, regardless of the degree to which the narration is detached from the students' reality or personal experience. While students may become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store, the system is ultimately misguided for it leaves the "educated" with a lack of creativity and personal transformation with regard to the learning. Freire sees "problem-posing" education as the alternative. In this model, the teacher is no longer merely "the-one-who-teaches," but also the one who is taught through dialogue with the students. In turn, the students teach while being taught. Problem-posing education enables both teachers and students to become subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and intellectualism. While part of the educator's purpose is to present material, he/she must engage in dialogue with students to the point where even the teacher's opinion of and approach to the subject matter may change.

Mezirow (2000), a Columbia University adult education professor, has an approach similar to Freire's but with a different theoretical base. Instead of focusing on education's impact on oppression and justice, his approach is cognitive. Mezirow (1978) conducted one of the seminal studies of transformational learning with adult women attending community college. He found that critical conditions fostering transformational learning were 1) an understanding of one's frame of reference, 2) experiencing a disorienting dilemma, 3) critical reflection, and 4) dialogue with others.

"Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight" (p. 8). In Mezirow's view, discourse requires maturity, an understanding of the self, and the understanding that not all issues have only two sides. For the learning group as a whole, "feelings of trust, solidarity, security, and empathy are essential preconditions for free full participation in the discourse" (p. 12). He discusses the importance of frames of reference, which are different for every individual. Assumptions based on a frame of reference are termed "habits of mind." Examples include religious beliefs or political doctrine acquired uncritically in childhood through socialization and acculturation, or through important experiences with parents, teachers and mentors. "A habit of mind becomes expressed as a point of view," which is essentially an automatic reaction to an issue (p. 18). Transformative learning requires critically examining and modifying one's viewpoint, habits of mind, and frames of reference.

Daloz's (1999) "narrative/mentoring approach" to transformative learning is rooted in classic Hegelian dialectics: an idea (the thesis), is countered by another idea (the antithesis), and results in a third idea (the synthesis). The process continues with the synthesis becoming the new thesis. Historically, this approach has limited applicability for formal training programs because it is mentor-based with a single, more enlightened individual guiding another individual through difficult areas of learning and life transitions. Yet some newer, more creative approaches to training that involve supervisory or mentoring programs might include these elements.

Dirkx (1997) describes transformative learning as "learning through soul," with a "focus on the interface where the socio-emotional and the intellectual world meet, where the inner and outer worlds converge" (p. 80). From this perspective, art, music, and dance—along with processes such as intuition, imagination, empathy and inspiration—are viewed as alternative languages that can lead to self-knowledge. Modeling by educators is another example. Learners can acquire a sense of how to learn by watching instructors who examine their own assumptions critically in front of others and perhaps change their perspective on important issues (Mezirow, 2000).

Bernotavicz (personal communication, 2006) sees these approaches as related to the conscious use of self and believes that training programs need to help new staff develop self-understanding related to their practice roles. Bernotavicz (1994) stresses that self-awareness and reflective practice are essential components of child protective services work.

Methods for Implementing Transformative Learning

Cranton and King (2003), using the theories presented above, provide practical strategies for integrating transformative learning into the training setting. Their strategies have influenced the design of training in many settings and are particularly relevant to the training of child welfare personnel. They place strong emphasis on 1) the use of intriguing cases and a short list of starting questions (to help learners debate the philosophical and practical aspects of their craft and to benefit from probing unspoken assumptions and analyzing consequences of choices and actions in a laboratory setting); 2) having learners apply the learned material to their work while still in the classroom (for example, Cranton and King spend classroom time having trainers develop the actual curricula they will use in teaching and then provide feedback on those curricula to help learners link the theory just learned to the practice of curriculum development); and 3) engaging in critical theory discussions to build critical thinking skills.

Cranton (2002) makes clear that there is no way to ensure that students have a transformative learning experience. Methods that encourage learner transformation include activating events (e.g., portray unusual perspectives in dramatic and interesting ways and expose learners to new viewpoints); articulating assumptions (e.g., instructors question their own perspectives on the material being taught and ask students to do the same through autobiographies and other similar methods); critical self-reflection (e.g., learners examine what they think and how they feel and consider the consequences of holding certain assumptions); and openness to alternatives (e.g., facilitated through role-playing or having learners write letters to themselves from a different perspective—for example, managers in a leadership program might be asked to write hypothetical letters to themselves from their employees recommending changes in the manager's leadership style). Cranton (2002) concludes by saying that for transformative learning, the instructor needs to "provide an ever-changing balance of challenge, support, and learner empowerment" (p. 71).

Transformative learning has attracted increased research attention over the past 20 years. Most published papers on the topic focus on a theoretical critique of some aspect of the approach, such as reflection, social action, or power. Taylor (2000) reviewed 46 studies examining Mezirow's model of perspective transformation. The studies generally supported the ideal conditions outlined by Mezirow as essential for facilitating transformative learning: the importance of instructional methods that support a learner-centered approach; the importance of activities that encourage exploration of alternative personal perspectives via problem posing and critical reflection; the need for the instructor to promote a sense of safety, openness and trust; and the need to encourage learner autonomy, participation,

and collaboration. However, many additional factors were found to be important, including an instructors' demonstration of high integrity; the need to discuss and work through emotions prior to moving on to critical reflection; the importance of feedback to learners and providing opportunities for learner self-assessment; the need to give learners experiential, hands-on learning activities; and the importance of addressing—rather than avoiding—dissonance and conflict in the learning group. Taylor concludes that the studies suggest that much time, intensity of experience, risk and personal exploration are needed from both student and instructor to foster transformative learning. Much more research is needed to determine how this can be done within the time constraints and priorities of typical educational programs, especially those provided for child welfare personnel.

Rowland and DiVasto (2001) designed a qualitative study to determine the elements of powerful learning experiences (similar to transformative learning), experts and adult learners described such an experience as "something that stood out as unusual and important and which led to a deeper understanding … and personal connections between the content and experience" (p. 16). These were not necessarily positive experiences, they sometimes involved emotional distress or painful shifts in self-perception or worldview. Learners reported that "pieces of the puzzle come together" and "you see the big picture" (p. 16). This was experienced not as an event but as an evolving process, with the power increasing and sustained over time. Another theme was that powerful learning went beyond cognition to the emotional and sometimes spiritual level. A change in worldview and reactions to future situations was reported. Primary contributing factors were interactions with mentors, active experiencing by doing the activity in authentic situations, and reflection. Exposure of the learner to powerful learning is a type of goal that instructors and curriculum designers can achieve through careful selection of methods (Rowland & DiVasto, 2001).

Brown (2004) is concerned about the ways that educational ideas serve the dominant class to the detriment of non-dominant classes or groups. She wants to help learners who will assume leadership roles in society to embody the values of social justice and equity. She sees adult education theory as the "warp" (vertical threads) and eight transformative teaching strategies as the "woof" (horizontal threads) for preparing such leaders. She explains how transformative teaching strategies, such as cultural autobiographies, cross-cultural interviews, diversity panels, educational plunges, and activist action plans can be used to address the objectives of adult learning theory. She highlights Brookfield's (1995) four research areas of adult learning (described earlier but discussed here as the "vertical threads") in leadership formation: self-directed learning focuses on the process by which adults take control of their own learning; critical reflection involves

thinking contextually (about historical, cultural, and personal influences) and critically (including identifying and critiquing ideology); experiential learning functions as a key building block, since action or learning-by-doing is seen as an intrinsic way that people learn; and learning to learn, which means that adults have a self-conscious awareness of how they have come to know what they know and can learn to reflect on and distinguish between their own assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge. Brown illustrates how adult educators can take an active part in bringing about social change by validating and incorporating the adult learners' personal knowledge and experience within their course content.

Facilitating Learner Readiness to Learn and Self-direction

In considering new perspectives on andragogy, Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) discuss recent research on such factors as readiness to learn, motivation to learn, and orientation to learning and problem solving. They point out that adults have a three-pronged "need to know" prior to learning: how the learning will be conducted, what they will learn, and why it will be valuable to them. Research indicates that this "need to know affects motivation to learn, learning outcomes, and post-training motivation to use learning" (p. 201).

Increasingly, the adult learner's experience has become an important focus because experience creates biases that can greatly impact new learning (Tessmer & Richey, 1997). New learning is resisted when it challenges the learner's existing mental schema from prior life experience. Examples abound in child welfare training of situations in which new workers come with existing mental schema, such as viewing a severely depressed mother as irresponsible or unmotivated, a substance-abusing pregnant woman as a perpetrator rather than a person in need of clinical intervention, or abusive parents as undeserving of having any continued contact with their children. New workers are expected to give up these mental schema during initial training and may understandably resist doing so. Thus, the unlearning process becomes as important as the learning process when new learning significantly challenges existing schema.

In addition to changing mental schema, emphasis for adult learners must be placed on how learning can help them solve both current and future problems (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). For example, new child welfare workers will be frustrated with training whose purpose seems to be intellectual stimulation rather than guidance on how to function on the job. Adolescent workers may be impatient with training focused on theories of adolescent development unless the theories are closely tied to what the worker should do in assessing and intervening with adolescents on their caseloads. Workers may also be impatient if the training

Case Highlight: Y.O.U.T.H. Training

Transformational learning can occur in child welfare training where the goal is to facilitate a paradigm shift that allows workers to engage in new ways of practicing. A child welfare training program in San Francisco, based on a Positive Youth Development approach, was designed to create such a paradigm shift. Through this approach, workers came to view foster youth as mature and capable individuals who could provide them with training on ways to help foster youth move toward healthy independence (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2007).

This training program developed a competency-based curriculum that targeted public child welfare workers working with older youth in foster care or independent living programs. Youth who had experienced the child welfare system planned and developed the curriculum and participated in all phases of decision-making. Goals were to provide workers with assessment tools and intervention skills to 1) aid youth (ages 16–21) in successful transitions to adulthood and avoidance of long-term dependency on the social welfare system, and 2) provide age appropriate, youth-focused assistance for youth (ages 13–16) leading to successful transitions and emancipation. Youth trainers were key in delivering training for 445 child welfare workers in 19 training sessions throughout California, and at conferences in Chicago and Washington, DC.

With 20 original interactive exercises, the curriculum utilized small and large group discussions, youth-made videos (digital stories), interactive games, music, kinesthetic activity, and a powerful injection of firsthand knowledge and input from the youth trainers themselves. The youth trainers were unique components in this training. When social workers wondered aloud why transition age youth made certain decisions, or how transition age youth felt about certain situations, it was very likely that a youth trainer would offer her/his personal experience or knowledge of a peer's experience as a direct answer. The Y.O.U.T.H. training experience is unlike any that currently exists for child welfare staff working with adolescent foster youth. From the moment the social workers walk in the door (greeted immediately by a youth trainer and instructed on how to fill out their pre-test) and throughout the entire training process, the sessions are led by at least four youth trainers.

describes only "normal" or "ideal" adolescent development, ignoring the impact of early trauma, inferior parenting, and multiple placements that characterize the life experiences of many adolescents in care.

Helping Learners Learn How to Learn

Reflection on the learning process or the concept of "learning how to learn" is a relatively new way of thinking. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) distinguish between three types of learning: natural learning that occurs as individuals interact with their environment; formal learning in which other people choose the content of what the individual will learn; and personal learning in which the individual engages in self-directed, intentional learning activities and skills, e.g., deciding what to learn, how to manage the learning process, and how to learn from experience. The authors place special emphasis on these aspects of self-learning, noting that learning how to learn has been determined to be a basic skill by the American Society for Training, and that the U.S. Department of Labor has included it among the skills workers need to develop to be competitive in today's workplace (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 220). A challenge to using this approach in child welfare training is to determine at what point in the training process workers can make use of it. Workers would probably find it more helpful when they have considerable job experience and are participating in continuing or in-service education, rather than when they are enrolled in pre-service training. When supervisors and administrators are the learners, a heavy emphasis on this approach would be stimulating and actively embraced.

Helping Learners Construct their Own Learning

Objectivism and constructivism are two contrasting approaches to designing training experiences that are prevalent in the training and development field and reflect assumptions about the origin of knowledge (Gagne, Wager, & Briggs, 1992). Objectivists see knowledge and truth as existing outside the mind of the learner. Thus, knowledge and truth are objective and desired learning outcomes are the same for any group of learners. Constructivists see knowledge as constructed by the learner, based on his/her prior learning experiences and through active participation in the current learning process. From the constructivist viewpoint, a group of learners might each have somewhat different learning outcomes. Constructivists see group-based learning as important, with key gains in learning coming from the give-and-take with other learners and the opportunity to reflect on learning and performance. For constructivists, a primary role of instructors is to create conditions conducive to collaborative learning (Winn, 1991).

Peters (2000) espouses constructivism as an approach to instructional design. It helps learners view knowledge as a product that develops in relation to broader social, cultural and historical factors, and has the potential to enhance self-directed learning. Although Peters points out that constructivism has some more radical aspects that are not compatible with theories of adult learning, moderate applications of constructivism have been useful in guiding trainers in instructional design. Both constructivism and andragogy stress the learner's ownership of the learning process, experiential learning, and problem-solving approaches (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Constructivism emphasizes that all knowledge is bound to the context in which it is acquired and used, and that individuals make personal meaning of their learning experiences.

Learning is also cumulative in nature—new information must be related to other existing information in order for learners to retain and use it. A funnel image can be used to illustrate this idea in relation to adult learners. A giant funnel represents the adult's previous knowledge and experience, "… new information that enters the top of the funnel cascades downward and eventually falls out unless it 'sticks' to some element of prior knowledge" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 192).

Knowles, Holton, and Swanson view constructivism as an important perspective for some adult learning situations. They highlight Savery and Duffy's (1996) eight constructivist instructional principles (pp. 192–193):

1. Anchor all learning activities to a larger task or problem. (Create immediacy.)

2. Support the learner in developing ownership for the overall problem or task. (Have the learner define how the task will meet his/her particular needs.)

3. Design an authentic task. (Make the problem very similar to the real problem or simulate the situation.)

4. Design the task and the learning environment to reflect the complexity of the environment in which learners should be able to function at the end of learning. (Learning activities should not be simplistic.)

5. Give the learner ownership of the process used to develop a situation.

6. Design the learning environment to support and challenge the learner's thinking. (Learning activities should not be easy.)

7. Encourage testing ideas against alternative views and alternative contexts. (Initial workable solutions should not be settled on as the only ones.)

8. Provide opportunity for and support reflection on both the content learned and the learning process.

Instead of assuming the expert teacher role and passing on facts and answers to student questions, the trainer guides and challenges students to test and question their current and newly acquired knowledge, and exercises empathy for a wide range of personal constructs expressed by students. Students must discover and construct meaning from their own environments. This requires instructors to create learning situations that engage students in reflecting on and evaluating their learning experiences. This promotes student ownership of learning, as well as freedom and respect for opinions and their expression. It also stimulates critical thinking. A constructivist teacher brings together the curriculum and learner in a way that is meaningful to the learner rather than the instructor alone.

Learners need to be socialized to participate in this process, actively exploring what they already know about a given topic, how they came to know it, and in what context. If students reflect on how learning happens, they will be better equipped to enhance their own learning. Brookfield (1986) agrees with this perspective and views the teacher/facilitator as the key to climate building in the classroom, as well as the person who must help learners see that "bodies of knowledge, accepted truths, commonly held values, and customary behaviors comprising their worlds are contextual and culturally constructed" (p. 125). Part of the learner's job is to find out about those contexts and cultures to better evaluate the usefulness of the information they acquire.

Related to constructivism as defined by viewing knowledge within a social context, Fleck-Henderson (2002) describes courses in which students are expected to think and reflect on the cultural and political roots and implications of various systems of thought. Focusing on social work education—and human behavior courses in particular—Fleck-Henderson says it is no longer possible to simply teach the facts or a single theoretical approach. Instead, instructors must teach multiple theories that lead to varied truths and understanding of human development, organizations, families, and communities. Students are asked to reflect on where each theory came from and its limitations and then discuss its application to various racial, class, and cultural groups.

This creates considerable difficulty in training students for practice in child welfare where social workers have a legal and professional mandate to make judgments about matters such as child abuse. Fleck-Henderson sums up the dilemma for the social work educator in this way, "At the same time that academic work has become more complicated and tentative in its claims, practitioners face increased demands for certainty (p. 12). … Students are being trained to be tentative and suspicious of theory in school and asked to be definitive and speak with authority at work" (p. 13). Fleck-Henderson does not offer a solution but asks educators to be attuned to the students' dilemma created by this situation.

Ross, Wright, Skipper, and Valentine (1998), writing on constructivist theory and its relevance to child welfare practice in South Carolina, emphasize that this focus has stimulated the development of new teaching tools and methods that

have added to the evolution of adult education. Examples include formal student self-assessments, assessments of the student-teacher partnership, goal attainment scaling as a tool to measure learning, and awareness by instructors of mutual teacher-student obligation to create an ideal learning environment. The authors describe a model of child welfare training that attempts to move learners "further along the constructivist continuum" and allows them to take more responsibility for their own learning. Facilitators are more akin to resource gatherers and moderators than teachers in the traditional sense.

Benefits for participants include high accountability for outcomes because they are able to set individual objectives within the framework of the curriculum objectives; they can identify their learning needs and focus specifically on those needs; and they can achieve high individuality in learning. The authors see this individuality in learning as necessary for the complex topics addressed by child welfare workers. They see overly prescribed training as inappropriate for learners grappling with this type of material. However, they acknowledge that the achievement of consistent training outcomes is an ongoing challenge. Such outcomes are owed to the child welfare administration and the community at large. What the future may call for—in the view of Ross, Wright, Skipper, and Valentine (1998)—is that trainers who are faithful to this constructivist perspective be prepared with several variable outlines, a packet of resource materials on related topics, and a range of teaching-learning activities that can be chosen for a group of experienced professionals, beginning professionals, or groups with mixed expertise. The appropriate curriculum can then be developed in close partnership with participants.

With constructivism in mind, Tisdell (1998) contends that adult education has inadequately addressed four interrelated themes that feminists view as central: authority, voice, positionality, and the construction of knowledge. Her goal is to heighten the awareness of educators about the need to deal with systems of power and privilege in the classroom. To summarize the issues, she emphasizes that all feminist approaches focus on gender relations, women's emancipation, and the connection, relationship and important role of emotions in learning (in contrast to "masculine" approaches that elevate rationality above all else).

She concludes by pointing out perspectives that need to be introduced into adult education debates: 1) continued emphasis on gender as a key category of analysis —not just another one in a long series of categories; 2) direct attention to the positionality of the instructor (by virtue of his/her race, gender, class, or sexual orientation) and how this affects the learning environment; and 3) recognition that all learners do not come into the learning environment as equal players with equal chances of being heard because the contributions of some learners

are awarded a privileged position—overtly and covertly—by virtue of their race, gender, class, and/or sexual orientation. For this reason, the writings and voices of groups who have historically been marginalized must be included and validated in order to consciously "disrupt the dominant discourse" (p. 154) in the learning environment.

In thinking about the utility of constructivism and related theories for child welfare training, it is again relevant to consider at what point in the training workers could make best use of it. Workers would probably find it more helpful when they have considerable job experience and are participating in continuing, in-service, or professional education, rather than when they are enrolled in pre-service training. In contrast, when supervisors and administrators are the learners, a heavy emphasis on constructivism—even in early training—might be a preferable approach over one that emphasizes a single point of view and is more trainer-than learner-centered.

Identifying Effective Teachers

Ross-Gordon (2003), a professor of education, provides an overview of several more recent adult learning studies divided into three categories: 1) adult learners' perceptions of effective teaching, 2) characteristics of adult learners, and 3) concerns adult learners bring to the classroom.

Two "perceptions of effective teaching" studies are particularly relevant here. First, Migletti and Strange (1998) examined the relationship between student age and preferred teaching style. Using Conti's Principles of Adult Learning Scale (1985), they examined the attitudes of 185 adult students and found that learner-centered instruction was more satisfying to students over 25 years of age. "This style of instruction is characterized by an emphasis on learner-centered activities, personalized instruction, relating the course to student experience, assessing student needs, and maintaining flexibility for personal development" (Ross-Gordon, 2003, p. 47). This supports many of the elements previously described as part of andragogy.

Second, Ross-Gordon's (1991) own study of adult undergraduate students similarly supports the principles of andragogy. This survey of 181 learners examined students' satisfaction with their learning experiences. Several of the top characteristics of effective teaching can be predicted by adult learning theory (instructor's availability and helpfulness, concern and respect for students, encouraging discussion, and flexibility), but others cannot (clear presentations, well-organized lectures, and knowledgeable instructors). Although the learners'

satisfaction with the classroom experience was tied to principles of adult learning, Ross-Gordon's (2003) work indicates that adherence to an andragogical framework alone does not create a satisfying adult learning experience. The instructor must be a competent educator, as well as knowledgeable about the subject matter studied.

Conti (1985) studied the question of whether the instructor's teaching style affects achievement among adult learners. He found that GED students learned more in a teacher-centered environment than in a teacher-student collaborative one. However, the teacher's style was crucial in an English as a Second Language setting, where skill acquisition was related to the learner's self-concept and necessary risk-taking was dependent upon a supportive environment. Another study (Migletti & Strange, 1998) found that older students were more satisfied with a course employing adult learning methods than one using more traditional teaching methods. Thus there are some parallels between adult education theory and theories about the role of the helping relationship. As with clients, learners can benefit from a consistent person who understands their needs (individual and group), understands the organizational context, provides objective feedback, facilitates problem-solving, and assists in implementing personal change through skill practice both in and outside of sessions.

Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that adult learning theory views learning as more likely to take place and motivation more likely to be increased when:

- Learners participate in determining what and how they will learn (e.g., even with mandated courses, choosing from a master list of particular courses, modules or exercises to best meet their needs, or the sequence in which they will take those courses).

- Learners can see that the trainer places value on the experiences the learners bring with them (rather than "starting from scratch"), stimulates critical reflection, and establishes a helping relationship with learners, where they feel heard and know that the trainer has empathy for the challenges they face.

- Learners know that what they are about to learn has immediate applicability to the work setting. Ideally, training is introduced with statements about the ways learning will have immediate application on the job. It is counterproductive to offer training for the sake of training if applicability to the work setting is not clear.

- Learners are helped to address the question: "Within the broader agenda of this training session, what particular knowledge, attitude, and skill gains are most important to me and why?"

- Learners are provided with ways to acknowledge and address their existing mental constructs that might contradict the new learning to which they will be exposed.

- Learners are provided with problems to solve in the classroom that replicate the actual situations they will face on the job.

- Learners reflect on not only what they have learned in the current training environment, but how they have learned it, and gain an understanding of how they can learn better in the future.

- Learners are exposed to a training environment that does not simply reinforce individuals who are most privileged (e.g., educational degrees, social class, race), but provides learning opportunities and reinforcement equally for everyone (and may even ask learners to reflect on the status quo and ways it may inhibit learning).

- Learners are supported in collaborative learning where the give-and-take with others helps them "construct their own learning."

- Learners are given opportunities for transformational learning that resonates emotionally and spiritually, and changes their view of themselves, others, and the world in a way that opens them to future experiences and learning.

- Learners have some opportunity to be mentored and receive individual feedback on their progress as a learner—a process that has been identified as a primary contributor to transformational learning.

These themes will continue in future chapters as we examine the process of training implementation, training partnerships, and training evaluation. The value of the adult learning theories and principles from which these themes were derived lies in the direction they provide for 1) engaging learners as more active participants in the training environment, 2) structuring training to meet their specific learning needs to improve learner outcomes, 3) ensuring that the instructor is flexible in filling various roles depending on the context, and 4) motivating learners in such a way that they have the chance for intellectually exciting experiences.

The dominant educational paradigm in many fields is still one of expert and learner in well-delineated roles, rather than instructor-facilitated learning or education focused on learners teaching learners. There are organizational, financial, and time constraints that often limit the range of options that can be considered in integrating adult education principles—particularly in child welfare training. Nevertheless, in the next section on training implementation, we provide examples of child welfare training activities underway across the nation that embody adult education principles and move the training field forward in additional ways.
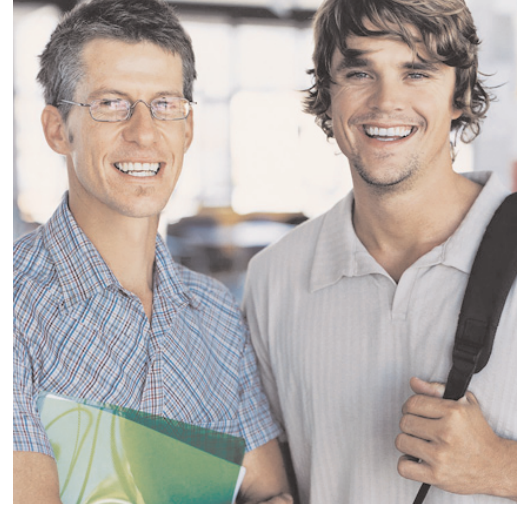
Chapter 2
Training Implementation

Introduction

This section reviews what is known regarding training implementation, including training assessments, learning objectives, delivery, content, and systems. The information in this section is not solely dependent on the published academic literature, but also includes selected articles in non-peer reviewed journals. Practitioners of training and other training experts often reside outside the academy and depend on a greater variety of resources; much important information is found in these other sources.

Conducting Needs Assessments

Several theorists cite the importance of conducting needs assessments in developing training programs (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Knowles, 1970; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Knox, 1986; Morton & Kurtz, 1984). Brockett and Hiemstra recommend the use of two methods: 1) a written needs-assessment form that asks learners to rate themselves on a list of competency areas and to add items they think should be included on the list, and 2) small group discussions of five to eight learners, held during one of the first two class sessions to better understand the differences in various learners' needs. The responsibility for learning is transferred to the learners when they are forced to recognize their personal strengths and weaknesses. The small groups utilize the earlier assessment form to discuss group needs. They rank listed topics based on how each person rated a topic and how much class time they think should be devoted to it. The full group hears the findings from each subgroup.

Knowles (1970) and Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) list additional methods of needs assessments that they believe are useful in developing training programs: face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, diagnostic tests, group problem analysis, job analysis and performance reviews, and records and reports. Knowles believes that no single assessment method is best; each provides a different view of group needs. He suggests that a trainer choose the method(s) with which he/she feels most comfortable and which best fit the context of the training.

Knox (1986) recommends that "context analysis" be included in needs assessment. "Adults' motivations to learn and to apply what they learn are influenced by their perceptions of standards, opportunities, and expectations related to enhanced proficiencies" (p. 67). Context analysis looks beyond the immediate needs of the learners to the larger environment in which the learning will be used. According to Knox, understanding the organizational setting helps instructors design customized learning experiences by putting learners together in groups that make sense in that setting; establishing appropriate expectations for mastery of the training material; helping learners make use of positive influences following training (e.g., supportive reference groups in the organization); and helping learners avoid negative influences that could undermine gains made through training. For example, heavy demands back at the office, anxiety and fatigue from driving to the training site, and several hours of continuous training activity can reduce learner concentration, motivation, and the effectiveness of any training.

An important limitation of needs assessments is that while they may identify content areas for training, they rarely specify the performance capabilities that are essential for effective evaluation (Morton & Kurtz, 1984). Morton and Kurtz believe that many needs assessments survey participants' preferences but not their actual needs. Participants are often not aware of all the capabilities necessary for learning a new area and performing the skill. Participants' lack of knowledge about an area limits their ability to describe what they need to learn. This is a common and considerable limitation. Instructors alone may not be in a better position to decide, but feedback between instructor and participant can be effective. To address this issue some organizations have begun employing learner-supervisor-trainer pre-training and post-training evaluations. In the child welfare field, this model is being employed by a few training institutes (Bernotavicz, personal communication, 2004). The development of formal learner competencies is likely to provide the missing link between needs assessments and accomplishing training outcomes.

Using Competencies in Assessing Training Needs

Definitions, Benefits, and Guidelines

Many public child welfare agencies around the country are using competency-based training to bridge the gap between professional education and practice (Bernotavicz, 1994). As educators and administrators seek ways to improve child welfare practice, there is a greater need for accountability and demonstration of worker competence. Bernotavicz (1994) points out that many states—among them Tennessee, Ohio, Florida, and California—have adopted competency-based worker preparation and certification programs. This is happening in spite of competency assessment limitations related to 1) capturing what workers do rather than what they ought to do, 2) reducing a particular role to individual tasks, 3) citing minimal skills and knowledge, and 4) isolating job duties from the context in which they are performed.

Generally speaking, competencies are a comprehensive list of significant skills, knowledge, and characteristics that might be needed on the job by a person in a particular role. Bernotavicz and colleagues (2002) report that the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) offers several definitions of competencies in an effort to embrace multiple approaches to competency development. Some definitions are:

- A competency is a grouping of the knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of a job task. Competent workers have the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs (Hughes & Rycus, 1989, p. 9).

- [A competency is] any attribute of a person that underlies effective performance; a job competency is simply an attribute related to doing a job effectively. People carry with them a wide assortment of knowledge, abilities, interests, traits, and motives, but unless these attributes relate demonstrably to doing a job well, they are not job competencies (Klemp, 1981, p. 55).

- A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job situation (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, p. 9).

- [Competencies are] internal capabilities that people bring to their jobs. They may be expressed in a broad, even infinite, array of on-the-job behaviors (McLagan & Suhadolnik, 1989, p. 77).

Taking a holistic view, competencies needed for job performance would include 1) specific content and interactive skills necessary for that particular organizational context, 2) personal characteristics, and 3) what Bernotavicz (1994) calls the meta-competencies of self-assessment and reflective practice that stimulate ongoing learning. Lahti and Berdie (2002, p. 62) point out that the utility of competencies is that they "can be used by administrators during the hiring process" as guidelines for professional development or for "individual needs assessments, self-assessments, and performance evaluations." Competencies provide "a way of having conversations with people about their skills" in professional development programs.

Assessment Approaches

Often in the planning phase of a training project there is an effort to collect data to inform the development of the training program. Alvarez, Salas, and Garofano (2004) state that, "a thorough needs analysis takes into account the individual differences of trainees, the organizational climate and objectives, and the characteristics of the task(s) to be learned. This information is then used to determine both the method and content of training. In sum, training cannot be effective unless it meets the individual, organizational, and task needs as identified by needs analysis" (p. 389).

Historically, data collection has focused on the training *needs* of the intended audience. As the child welfare training field has developed, increasing attention has been paid to the assessment of the audience *competencies*. Regardless of whether training needs or staff competencies are assessed, the purpose of both is to inform the development of the training program. Assessment of needs and competencies is frequently a key step in developing training programs, but rarely are these efforts reported in the literature. In part, this is because these types of studies usually lack rigor, conceptual grounding, or other attributes that make them of interest to peer-reviewed journals. Here we provide a summary of the needs and competency assessments that have been reported in the literature.

Surveys. Pecora (1989) used a competency-based needs assessment survey to assess the training needs of 276 frontline and supervisory public child welfare staff members in two states, Alaska and Oregon. The approach is described as a "worker ability/characteristic method," which focuses on job hindrance due to insufficient knowledge or skill. This method is thought to provide more valuable data than worker or supervisor "wants" or their perceptions of training needs. Workers were asked to respond to ability statements that reflect best practice principles in child welfare. They were surveyed on both functional skills (needed for effective work performance) and specific content skills and knowledge. In

addition, the survey asked workers to identify the *extent of satisfaction* with a set of personal skills that allows them to be effective child welfare workers. The survey also asked workers to share perceptions about job hindrance, as well as training incentives and barriers.

In this study, high-ranking job hindrance areas included skills in assessment and how to enhance client motivation. Both these areas were thought to be large parts of the core training and—the author suggests—might have been easily overlooked without this survey data. Data also indicated substantial agreement among workers and supervisors; both identified timing, stress and case management as areas of worker job hindrance. But of significance was the greater number of items supervisors rated as high in worker hindrance. In contrast with front line workers, supervisors identified worker ability limitations and training needs related to time constraints, goal-oriented case planning, and service plan documentation.

Scales (1997) also describes the use of a survey method to gather data about the training needs of workers in contracted family support programs. The study was specifically interested in workers' perceptions about training needs and service delivery to families with young adolescents. The variables measured included the quality of workers' previous training for addressing the needs of the targeted group, workers' knowledge of adolescent development, and their perceptions of the usefulness of selected training content.

The quality of previous training did not appear to be related to the workers' knowledge of early adolescence, but was related to their offering more services, collaborating with other community resources, and promoting developmental assets among young adolescents and their families. Inaccurate knowledge about early adolescent psychological health, adolescents' desire for independence, and unevenness of developmental maturity among young adolescents was reported. However, workers were most receptive to future training or resource development that would assist them with forging collaborations with other youth development organizations.

Melpignano and Collins (2003) describe the use of a Delphi Survey for gathering information regarding training needs of child welfare workers working with youth transitioning out of care. The Delphi survey is thought to be useful when seeking data from diverse groups and is viewed as an effective method for building consensus among varied constituencies. The survey respondents included academics and practitioners. This questionnaire method is facilitated through a series of questions known as "rounds," which are analyzed and presented to the respondents in the next "round." The first round of questions elicited qualitative responses regarding the youth development approach's applicability in child welfare settings; the second

round identified specific training priorities. Challenges in using the Delphi Survey method include maintaining the commitment of participants for two rounds of questions, and the development of clear and precise open-ended questions to address complex topics. The authors found the Delphi Survey to be useful in clarifying specific worker approaches, but emphasize the need to rely on multiple sources of data in the development of training.

Focus Groups. In addition to surveys, assessments of needs and competencies can be informed by focus groups. Denning and Verschelden (1993) describe the focus group approach used to assess training needs of child welfare workers in rural areas of Kansas. Separate focus groups were held for workers and supervisors. The sessions focused on training content (topics, organizing topics into units, and prioritizing topics), training delivery and method, demonstration of multimedia and computer-based training technology, and feedback regarding the focus group session.

The focus group method was thought useful because it was less time consuming than surveys, could be seen by workers as the first phase of the training process, and is consistent with adult learning theory which supports the involvement of workers in every stage of training design. Focus group participants' feedback and recommendations about training delivery (desire for interactive training, use of visual aids and case material, and ongoing training instead of the one session format) was seen as quite useful for designing training curricula. The training topic that received the most votes was for survival skills to help workers deal with time, crisis, and stress management.

Drake (1996) also describes the use of focus groups to determine the key competencies in child welfare practice as perceived by both workers and consumers. This effort is particularly helpful because consumers' views have frequently been neglected. An unexpected study finding was that both groups viewed the worker-consumer relationship as the most essential competency. Workers and consumers emphasized the need for workers to have good relationship-building skills. Other key competency areas included workers' ability to procure services for their clients by networking with service providers, to work within a bureaucracy, to prioritize effectively, and to blend agency and consumer needs in setting agendas.

The authors noted that focus groups were useful in getting important qualitative data that could not have been captured in a written survey. The authors suggest that gathering data from both consumers and workers strengthens assessment of training needs for workers in public child welfare settings.

Packard, Jones, Gross, Hohman, and Fong (2000) describe the use of focus groups to design an interagency training program for child welfare workers. In the project, they conducted five focus groups with staff from a variety of agencies targeted for training, to gather feedback on curriculum needs from the social service community. Questions for participants included content areas that needed to be covered, the best format for training, and the most effective teaching methods. In addition to the input into the development of the training, the authors noted the focus group process contributed an "energizing and marketing function" (p. 24). It also increased trainer credibility; during training sessions a subject could be introduced by noting that it came up during a focus group session with providers.

Critical Incidents. Cranton (1992) discusses the use of critical incidents in assessing needs and designing transformative learning experiences. She recommends Brookfield's (1990) approach of having learners fill out a ten-item Critical Incident Questionnaire on a relevant personal experience connected to the area of desired learning. The learner describes the critical incident as honestly as possible in terms of 1) aspects that were most exciting and rewarding, and most distressing or disappointing; 2) helpful and hindering behavior by others; 3) times when the learner felt valued and affirmed in his/her role, and others of feeling demeaned and patronized, and what led to these feelings; and 4) the most important insights about the self gleaned from reflecting on the incident. Brookfield asks learners to formulate advice they would give to others entering that work role on how to survive and succeed, and then has them identify assumptions that underlie the descriptions of positive and negative experiences. In a variation of this, Brookfield has learners think back to a time when they were ready to give up in their work roles or professional identity and asks them to articulate what made them continue on in the role.

The state of Maine uses a similar approach in their child welfare training, which they term "reflective practice" (Bernotavicz, personal communication, 2006). "Self-assessment helps learners become more independent, creative, and self-reliant in future self-directed learning activities" (Knox, 1986, p. 37). By evaluating him/herself in this way, the learner becomes more aware of his/her learning style, strengths, and weaknesses.

Broader Assessments. Some studies examined training needs as part of a more general examination of agency practice. For example, to increase understanding of the effect of cultural auspices on professionalization, tasks, training needs, and job satisfaction of tribal child welfare personnel, MacEachron (1994) conducted an exploratory survey of supervisors from eleven tribal child welfare agencies and one state child welfare agency. The survey found that an equivalent percentage

of tribal and state child welfare supervisors had social work degrees, similar years of previous experience, and similar agency position requirements. Cultural auspices were not related to supervisory job satisfaction, but did influence who was hired for positions—most tribal supervisors were Native American and most state supervisors were Caucasian. Regarding supervisory tasks, Native American supervisors handled traditional activities of front line supervisors, but tended to also carry a client caseload and many other agency- and community-focused responsibilities. These extra responsibilities were not typical for the state supervisors. Related to this, tribal supervisors were more likely to have wanted and received training in a much broader range of skills than state supervisors.

Preston (2004) used a different method to understand current training offered by states. Preston examined state-sponsored training programs for newly hired child welfare supervisors by collecting data from state training programs and conducting a content analysis of the training. Of 31 states that responded, 13 provided child welfare-specific management training for newly hired supervisors, nine provided general managerial training (i.e., not specific to child welfare), and nine offered no training at all. The primary foci of most of the child welfare-specific managerial training were on interpersonal and technical skills (e.g., supervising, evaluating, and facilitating). Much less attention was paid to strategic skills (e.g., boundary spanning, developing visions for the future, and advocating). Preston suggests that omitting strategic skills from state management training may lead to the eventual undermining of effectiveness of many child welfare supervisors.

Curry, Caplan, and Knuppel (1994) recommend using material that is often ignored in training needs assessments: critical incident reports, state monitoring findings, turnover rates, accreditation reviews, and exit interviews. The authors believe that identification of the factors that facilitate or impede transfer of learning should always be part of assessing needs. They also believe that a common mistake made by trainers is that they focus too much on what occurs during the training and not enough on what occurs before and after.

Competency-based Assessments

Recent trends in planning for and conducting training have focused increasingly on competency assessment, rather than needs assessment. Hoge, Tondora, and Marrelli (2005), discuss the need for behavioral health to borrow methods of competency development from industry and business. They favor a competency model that uses multiple approaches, including specifying job duties and tasks; identifying the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required to perform each task; clustering lists of competencies; and observing the behaviors

of highly effective workers. Regarding outcomes, the authors urge that 1) workers' specific behaviors be measured in routine practice and 2) links be established between this routine practice and outcomes. Unless these activities become priorities, there is no way to validate the competencies that are deemed essential. In terms of training implications, the authors suggest that some competencies are more difficult to teach, such as interpersonal skills and problem solving abilities. These should instead be part of the selection criteria when hiring individuals for the job, which would leave the easier-to-develop competencies as the basis for training programs. The authors also emphasize that training and education will be ineffective in promoting competent behavior if organizations do not provide a culture that supports and fosters effective performance.

In an extensive commitment to competency-focused curricula, Kentucky developed a continuum of pre-service, in-service, and advanced leadership opportunities for child welfare workers (Fox, Burnham, & Miller, 1997). The authors describe a second stage of development focused on revamping and fine-tuning existing competency-based curriculum models. This included an expansion of the use of occupational analysis. Focus groups of highly effective workers were used to develop an occupational profile—including knowledge, skills, and other characteristics— of high-performing workers. In addition, the state developed a competency-based instructor certification program in which instructors received training in such areas as needs assessment, learning theory, facilitation skills, effective use of technology, and program specific knowledge. Additional emphasis was placed on principles of cognitive learning, including the use of experiential techniques, qualitative experiences, and transfer of skills. Several other states—Ohio, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania—use competency-based needs assessments in their child welfare training programs (Curry, Caplan, & Knuppel, 1994).

Setting Learning Objectives

After needs assessment and context analysis, the literature views setting learning objectives as the next important step in developing a training program. The setting of objectives should not be an informal process. Individual learners benefit from participation in objective setting, which gives them a personal investment in the outcome of the learning. Knox (1986) stresses that even if outside individuals or groups set learning objectives, participants themselves should have input into the final objectives. In their focus on learner self-direction, Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) suggest that learners should set individual goals to be "incorporated into a learning contract or plan. The facilitator and learner can then share in the refinement of this contract" (p. 118).

Knowles (1970) proposes three categories of learning objectives: general purposes, program objectives, and specific educational objectives. General purposes connect the education program to its parent organization, enumerating the various roles the education program is to play in aiding the overarching organization's goals. Program objectives should be based on the previously completed needs assessment, with those needs ranked by their level of importance. These rank-ordered needs should be screened based on institutional purpose and educational philosophy, feasibility, and student interest. Specific educational objectives should enumerate intended behavioral outcomes for a group of learners.

Objectives are generally based on three domains of learning: *cognitive*, which addresses the recall of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities; *affective*, which describes changes in attitudes, values, and appreciation; and *psychomotor*, which refers to skills (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). To serve as a basis for curriculum development, objectives should be written down. In response to individual learner needs, objectives must reflect what the learner needs to know, what the learner can value and commit to, and what the learner needs to be able to do (Wentz, personal communication, 2006). Effective learning objectives and activities are particularly important. Without them, the adult learner may have the knowledge and skills to perform a task, but often will not do it outside the classroom (Wentz, personal communication, 2006). When workers are overworked, they decide whether a new skill or task will be performed. Thus, learners may say after the training, "I agree with the information and know how to perform the task, but due to time/resources/ management issues, I will not be using this on the job" (Wentz, personal communication, 2006).

Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005), commenting on the application of adult learning theory in the 21st century and reflecting on whether adult learners should control their own learning, explain that training must ensure that an organization's performance improvement needs are met. Without this achievement the organization will cease to exist. So the authors answer "no" to the following questions: "Can a large organization in a survival mode allow individuals the freedom to choose whether they want to learn a new way to run the organization?" and, "Can an organization continue to invest in learning programs for its employees that do not lead to performance improvements over the long run?" (p. 172).

The authors acknowledge that some adaptation of the core andragogical principles may need to occur. Andragogy suggests that adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own lives and expect others to treat them as being capable of self-direction, but this does not mean that all adults must or can become self-directed. The goal of adult education is to develop self-directed *learning capacity*

in adults. Many adults develop from dependent learners, to interested learners, to involved learners, to self-directed learners (p. 187) but this process takes time. The authors also point out that not all adult learning experts endorse the idea that every adult has the capacity for self-teaching and personal autonomy. However, adult learning studies suggest that involving learners in planning for training, designing training in response to their stated needs, and giving them reports of successful application of training by previous trainees all lead to more positive outcomes.

Designing the Training

Purposes of Instruction

Adult learning theory assumes that the purpose of instruction is to provide new knowledge and skills that are conceptualized and delivered in a way that makes them readily applicable to real life situations (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992). However, many adult learners experience frustration in training due to the gap between the theoretical ideas in courses and the relevance and applicability of the material to their work.

Instructional design has become an important area of study. Some researchers and educators have begun advocating for *motivational* instructional design, an approach in which the instructor takes specific steps to both attract learners to the instruction and increase the effort they invest in learning (Bohlin, Milheim, & Viechnicki, 1993–94). Keller (1987) identifies four categories of conditions that accomplish this goal: learner attention, content relevance, learner confidence, and learner satisfaction. Keller believes that the instructor usually has control over these four instructional elements, even when he/she has no control over organizational or contextual elements.

Heimlich and Norland (1994) discuss purposes of instruction (from the teacher's perspective) and highlight six key teaching methods that respond to each purpose: 1) *Presentation* focuses on efficient delivery of a large quantity of information and is aimed at cognitive learning—the teacher "holds the information and gives it to the learners" (p. 162); 2) *Experiential exercises* expose learners to a particular experience and are aimed at integration of learning—"the teacher still holds the knowledge and allows the learner to acquire it by controlled experiences" (p. 163); 3) *Discovery* focuses on self-understanding and involves the learner in an experience where he/she can hold his/her own knowledge eventually—but the teacher guides the activity initially; 4) *Games* focus on affective learning and psychological and physical stimulation—they help learners assimilate knowledge into a new level

of understanding, can be used to create trust in a learning group, contribute to the development of a group culture, and help participants learn to work together; 5) *Media* focuses on sensory learning that the instructor cannot provide directly, for example, seeing an erupting volcano; 6) *Teacher-absent activities* focus on efficient delivery of information to a dispersed population, such as computer-aided instruction or distance education. Knowing this taxonomy, instructors can mix or match methods to suit their teaching style and can choose appropriate methods that fit each of their learning objectives.

Berdie, Leake, and Parry (2004) propose a model for skills-based classroom training that improves the transfer of training from classroom to work site. They report that many child welfare training programs are focusing more on skill development, as well as evaluating trainee outcomes and the impact of training on agency objectives. Their model is based on the principles of several of the theorists cited above. In addition, they cite as important Kolb's (1984) cycle of learning that describes the four steps experienced by many learners: having a concrete experience, observing and reflecting, forming abstract concepts, and testing learning in new situations.

Berdie, Leake, and Parry's six-step skills training model includes: 1) explain and discuss, 2) demonstrate/model and discuss, 3) practice, 4) feedback, 5) discussion of transfer implications, and 6) embedded evaluation. This model reflects the assumption that skills in child welfare practice involve the integration of various competencies, including knowledge, cognitive strategies for applying knowledge, and behaviors or actions. It suggests that embedded evaluation can be used to assess training effectiveness and provide learners with an opportunity for feedback. In its marrying of key adult learning theory principles, mainstream child welfare competencies, and a focused evaluation method, the model offers the child welfare field a possible avenue for improving the relevance and transfer-ability of training. However, skills training requires more resources (e.g., development and delivery time) than training focused mainly on knowledge and awareness, and trainers must be competent in the skills on which they are training. Thus, it will help trainers if they—like their trainees—have opportunities to be observed and receive feedback from master trainers or peer trainers.

Delivering Training

Instructional Materials and Activities

Morton and Kurtz (1984) describe Gagne's (1977) three considerations in choosing instructional materials and activities: 1) the activity must be capable of producing the type and optimal level of learning sought; 2) the activity must take into consideration those capabilities that students lack; and 3) performance assessment should specifically measure the type of learning the instruction was designed to teach (e.g., knowledge vs. skill). The authors go on to cite Gagne and Briggs (1979) who propose eight task activities that instructors need to accomplish to facilitate learning: 1) gain attention, 2) inform the student of the objectives, 3) stimulate recall of existing capabilities, 4) present the stimulus material, 5) provide learning guidance, 6) elicit performance, 7) provide feedback, and 8) assess performance (p. 44).

Informing trainees of the objectives of each activity helps them focus their energy on meeting those objectives. Stimulating learner recall of capabilities reinforces those capabilities and helps the instructor identify gaps in them. The need for a positive helping relationship between instructor and students grows out of the idea that effective training changes a learner's worldview and self-concept. It requires a safe environment in which students can undergo this sometimes emotion-laden transition of coming to see the world and one's self differently.

The goal of instructional design is to construct experiences for adults that match learner needs and learning objectives with appropriate content and teaching methods. In view of this goal, many short-term continuing education programs have serious limitations. Morton and Kurtz (1984) categorize these limitations as *task factors*, which concern the clarity of tasks and preparation to accomplish them; *relational factors*, which concern qualitative conditions between the trainer and participants (as well as among participants) that can determine such things as how feedback is received by the learners; and *situational factors*, which concern conditions, such as training location and duration, and the characteristics of the learners, such as their motivation to learn and pre-training skill level. For example, too much content may be covered in too short a time. This leaves little time for relationship-building and trust-formation, which can be a problem in teaching about emotionally charged topics, such as sexual abuse, or in structuring activities, such as role-play where learners' skill deficits may be exposed (Gagne & Briggs, 1979).

To increase the responsiveness of short-term training to adult learning theory, Morton and Kurtz (1984) recommend 1) reinforcement of learning from outside readings, practice sessions, or homework assignments; 2) individualized instruction

and personal feedback; 3) more homogeneity of skill level in the learning group; 4) more complete descriptions of courses given to participants ahead of time so they can judge how suitable the program would be for their learning needs; 5) direct communication beforehand between instructor and participants so the course design reflects the participants' needs and preferences; 6) accurate assessment of learner performance in the course; and 7) some method for the instructor to review with participants what they already know.

Role of the Trainer/Educator

Rather than hiring people with specific credentials and experience in training methods, educational institutions and corporations often rely on subject matter experts to do training (Williams, 2001). This can create problems if the experts 1) know so much about a topic that they have difficulty condensing the information to a manageable level, 2) overuse jargon and make assumptions about what the learners already know, 3) do not possess competencies in instructional methods and over-emphasize didactic methods, and 4) provide the type of training that does not allow employees to apply the skills on the job (Williams, 2001).

An erroneous assumption fueling these problems is that technical or subject matter experts are adult educators. Since adult education theory tells us that the educator is one of the most critical elements in the adult learning process (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1984), organizations sponsoring training must insure that subject matter experts have the competencies required of effective adult educators (Williams, 2001). Further, a trainer has different roles at various points in the instructional process (e.g., providing structure, responding to group dynamics, facilitating discussion, and motivating learners).

Since child welfare training organizations may rely on subject matter experts to deliver training, they can avoid the types of problems described above by using the following NSDTA competency guidelines for trainers

> Instructor/Trainer Role, Discussion of Role, and Outputs: The role of facilitating individual performance improvement, including delivering training, directing structured learning, and facilitating groups. The role focuses on performance improvement for individuals or groups and includes both preparation of individuals for training (developmental planning), direct delivery of instruction, and follow-up activities to promote transfer of learning. A competency model was developed for this role by NSDTA in 1999.

At least one state (Ohio) has developed a certification process for trainers to ensure that they have the necessary training skills in addition to program knowledge (Bernotavicz, personal communication, 2006).

Role of Supervision

Some child welfare agencies have become more creative in their use of supervisors to provide support and mentoring to workers who receive training. In some cases, supervisors are included as participants in worker training programs so that they will understand the knowledge and skills taught and can reinforce this learning on the job. Some examples of this can be seen in the report on the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants focused on youth transitioning from care (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2007).

Supervisor training efforts are rarely reported in the literature, perhaps because not enough attention is focused on their training needs. However, in one example, Strand and Badger (2005) describe a 3-year demonstration project focusing on a clinical consultation model for supervisors. Implemented within the auspices of an existing university/agency partnership, the project involved faculty from six schools of social work in a large, urban, public child welfare system. The program was "designed to assist supervisors with their roles as educators, mentors, and coaches for casework staff, specifically in relationship to case practice decisions." According to the authors the consultation program offers a tool for professional development that links faculty from schools of social work with MSW-level supervisors in the field.

Supervisors can play a key role in assessing the learning needs of workers. In this model, the supervisor and worker decide before training takes place what specific knowledge and skills the worker needs to acquire and communicate this to the trainer. Following training, the trainer provides face-to-face feedback to the worker and supervisor about the worker's progress in the training program. The three individuals then decide on appropriate learning goals for the worker in future training. This model reduces the number of reluctant learners in the classroom because each worker knows the purpose for his/her participation in that particular training (Bernotavicz, 2004).

Using Small Groups in Training

Since team-based approaches are becoming more important in child welfare practice, child welfare workers need to develop team-learning competencies (Bernotavicz, personal communication, 2006). Learning in groups is an important aspect of child welfare training. Group learning appears to motivate participants

to become actively involved in the learning process (Millis & Cottel, 1997). When the learning environment is structured so that learners share ideas, problem solve, analyze cases, produce group products, role-play or engage in similar activities, then they must *apply* learning rather than passively absorb it. Learners often integrate, reinterpret, and transform the learning until new knowledge is formed. Thus, learning is produced rather than regurgitated (Millis & Cottel, 1997).

However, the training field has divergent goals when it comes to the use of groups and this can lead to confusion or tension. The acquisition of knowledge by the individual is a key outcome of training, but it conflicts with skills that cannot be acquired in solitary situations: helping the learner build confidence, increase self-esteem, and improve his/her ability to express him/herself in public (Rose, 1996). This issue is of particular concern because groups are now an educational staple in a variety of settings, but there is a lack of data to show that participatory activities actually lead to cognitive growth (Imel, 1999; Rose, 1996). Regardless of the lack of supporting data, small groups may be heavily relied on in human services training because of their psychosocial outcomes in non-educational settings, rather than their cognitive outcomes in educational settings.

Although small group work seems to be ever-present in training, many trainers hesitate to use them for fear of negative results, e.g., a lowering of teaching standards, a loss of control of the teaching and learning process, or a sacrificing of content in favor of the time needed for group interaction (Imel, 1999). Imel argues that the benefits of using groups far outweigh their disadvantages and that the instructor can control what happens within the group by providing sufficient structure to ensure a positive outcome. This is more likely to occur if the instructor clarifies the purpose of the learning experience, the role of the facilitator, and the composition of the group.

Using Cranton's (1996) framework, Imel distinguishes between three types of groups: cooperative (focusing on subject matter), collaborative (focusing on an exchange of ideas, feelings, and information to arrive at knowledge acceptable to all members), and transformative (focusing on critical reflection to examine expectations, assumptions, and perspectives). In transformative learning, synergy develops among the members and blurs the line between individual and group learning because knowledge is jointly produced. Each type of group serves a different purpose and falls along a continuum from individual learning to group learning. There is considerable research demonstrating that cooperative learning results in better learning outcomes than competitive learning (Millis & Cottel, 1997). Imel suggests that these findings are applicable to adult education programs.

Using Games in Training

Games (loosely defined) have been used as a teaching technique in many fields. Visser (1996) advocates for greater use of games in adult education to engage and stimulate both right-brain learners (creative, intuitive, visual, holistic) and left-brain learners (logical, systematic, linear). If Dirkx (1997) is correct that transformative learning occurs at the interface where the socio-emotional and the intellectual world meet, and that self-knowledge is facilitated by imagination, inspiration, and intuition, then games may have a legitimate role in the classrooms of adult learners.

Training programs in business and industry are employing games as learning methods (Visser, 1996) and developing products to assist trainers in using them. For example, to teach trainees about the intricacies of manufacturing sweatshirts, one company has employees play the roles of materials (the cloth, the needle, the thread, the sewing machine) and act out the processing they experience as the product is produced. To teach accounting, a game based on the childhood enterprise of the lemonade stand has been developed to "emphasize the physicality underlying accounting concepts" (p. 39). Each participant has a game board with cardboard pieces representing assets, liabilities, cash and equity. Lemonade is sold and new supplies are purchased to illustrate the concepts. To teach the use of a software data-base index file (which sorts data by particular characteristics) and help students get the big picture before sitting at keyboards, one Florida firm has students stand and assemble themselves first in alphabetical order, then by height, then by shoe size. Then, following segments of technical learning, trainees are asked to write a poem or song, or design a poster to demonstrate what they learned and how they will use it at work. Hand manipulated toys at each workstation, background music, and collaborative learning activities are also used.

Electronic Learning and Distance Education

Technology and distance-learning opportunities have the capacity to provide training to those whose participation might otherwise be prevented due to time, travel, or other obstacles. Many professions are increasingly considering the use of technology and distance education as delivery methods for training. There is little agreement on a definition of electronic learning (e-learning), but the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) states that the term "covers a wide set of applications and processes, such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via Internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, CD-ROM, and more" (ASTD, as

Case Example

An example from human services training is the day-long course taught at the University of California, Davis, entitled, "Welcome to TANF Town," named after the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grants (http://www.news.ucdavis.edu). The class puts welfare workers in their clients' position, having them apply for public assistance in a simulated welfare office to see how the system can foster (or hinder) self-sufficiency. Using similar methods, *Teen Town* was created as part of an Independent Living training program in San Diego. It is an interactive 3-hour process for 50–75 learners involved in various child welfare-related and youth-related roles, involves extensive props and simulations, and has been described by participants as transformative in changing their views of youth (Collins, Amodeo, & Clay, 2007).

cited in Bellefeuille, 2006). The three most common terms used to describe these efforts are distance learning, multi-media interactive training, and computer-assisted instruction. These three methods are distinguished by their mode of delivery. In *distance learning*, the instructor and learners are in different locations —often with a significant geographic distance between them—and use a mix of technologies (Conklin & Osterndorf, 1995). In contrast, *multi-media interactive training* occurs either during on-site training with both instructor and learners present, or via a multi-media computer program. The third method, *computer-assisted* (or *web-based) training* usually allows the trainee to access the educational materials at a time convenient for him/her, but with no direct contact with the instructor (Bookhagen & Wegenast, 2004).

Since distance education and computer-assisted learning are recent phenomena, the technology literature is primarily descriptive. However, there are a few studies addressing utilization specifically in child welfare training. For example, instructors from professions such as social work, nursing, and education have been somewhat reluctant to use these delivery methods because they do not offer interpersonal interaction or the same types of opportunity for critical reflection on learning and practice (i.e., reflective practice) (Abell & Gallinsky, 2002, as cited in Bellefeuille, 2006).

Numerous reasons are given for the increased interest in the use of technology for training purposes. Moore (2005) discusses the theoretical shifts in adult learning perspectives that have occurred along with technological advances, and identifies parallels between web-based learning and adult learning models used in training professionals. A shift to more learner-centered, non-linear, and self-directed learning is thought to make technology assisted training an important tool (Howell, Williams, & Lindsay, 2004). Leung, Cheung, and Stevenson (1994) note that when the technology became available in child welfare settings, the early emphasis was on the technology rather than the training. Agencies increasingly used computers for case record management and documentation, client information databases, and internal communication networks. Worker familiarity and comfort with computers in the workplace made it a reasonably easy transition for use in training. (Leung, Cheung, & Stevenson, 1994).

Advantages in using computer-assisted training that occurs outside the classroom include 1) reduced need for geographical access to trainees, 2) reduction in loss of time at the job due to training, 3) capacity to rapidly update instructional materials, 4) capacity for immediate feedback on learning through quizzes and exercises, 5) capacity for repetition and drill, 6) branching functions that allow trainees to select only content with which they are unfamiliar, and 7) worker ability to practice without harming the client (Bookhagen & Wegenast, 2004; Launderdale & Kelly, 1999; Leung, Cheung, & Stevenson, 1994). Some authors raise concerns about the use of technology for training and practice-related work. They warn that vigilance is necessary concerning ethical issues, such as protecting worker and client confidentiality and potential misuse of training data. They also note that training and practice experts must communicate through technologists who use a different language and may inadvertently distort the content of the work (Kreuger & Stretch, 1999; Leung, Cheung, & Stevenson, 1994).

One web-based child welfare practice course, sponsored by the University of Northern British Columbia, illustrates how the goals of reflective practice can be approached in e-learning. Bellefeuille (2006) believes that instruction should foster but not control learning and that e-learning enhances the creation of effective constructivist learning. That is, learners can be self-motivated, self-directed, interactive, and collaborative. Benefits of the technology include: students have unlimited access to information in different formats; communication is facilitated; learners can present their ideas and work to a broader audience; and they can receive feedback from people outside the classroom, school, and local community. Such web-based courses allow for "place and time independence" (Bellefeuille, 2006, p. 88)—learners can interact on their own time and take courses without going to a classroom. Such courses allow for self-paced learning and reflection, two key constructivist tenets.

The particular on-line child welfare course described here used Web Course Tools (WebCT) because of its wide variety of communication tools (bulletin boards, e-mail, chat rooms, discussion groups, and audio and video file transfers); on-line activity tools (quizzes, short-answer assignments, self-assessment tests); and tools for organizing course content and developing student Web presentations. These methods lead to "the expanded social construction of meaning" (Bellefeuille, 2006, p. 88). The course combined the training design approaches of both *objectivism* (e.g., defining traditional knowledge domains and practice competencies, and using them as learning objectives) and *constructivism* (e.g., identifying teaching strategies that would require critical reflection on the course materials). For example, one module presented practice standards and challenged learners to identify why these standards were better than alternatives, what values and assumptions were represented in the standards, and on what grounds these values and assumptions could be defended.

Bellefeuille (2006) describes four instructional strategies (collaborative learning activities, embedding skills and knowledge in holistic and realistic contexts, authentic learning tasks, and multiple representations and perspectives on the content); their influence on five exemplars of a constructivist learning environment (direct instruction, independent study, experiential learning, indirect instruction, and interactive learning); and how *scaffolding* ties them together. Scaffolding is an instructional technique in which the instructor models the learning activity in detailed steps and then helps the learner assume responsibility for the task. When using web-based methods, "scaffolding techniques are built into the technology rather than delivered directly by the course instructor" (p. 93). Effective scaffolding requires 1) modeling the desired behavior, 2) support for the learner so he/she can do the task independently, and 3) diminishing the support to allow learner self-reliance. Bellefeuille (2006) describes how the on-line child welfare course integrated these elements into the instructional design. The course instructor participated actively in discussion board forums, exchanged e-mails with individual learners, and provided feedback on assignments. Bellefeuille concludes by saying that students may be unprepared for the level of self-directedness, collaborative learning, and self-reflection that is required in a computer-mediated "constructivist" learning environment. One of the early tasks of the instructor-as-coach may be to help students prepare for this environment.

Examples: Distance-learning or Distance-education

Bibus and Rooney (1995) describe one of the earliest evaluations of a distance education course for human services providers entitled, *Child Welfare Work with Involuntary Clients*. Graduate students took this course in a traditional educational model, while distance learners attended the class at different sites linked by a one-way television monitor and limited two-way communication. Students receiving live instruction rated it as more useful than the distance-learning model. Thyer and colleagues (1998) found similar results in an evaluation of students exposed to both live and televised instruction on alternate weeks of classes, concluding that students had a preference for live over televised instruction.

The Department of Social Work at Southern Connecticut State University adapted a graduate course for distance learning in child welfare policy and practice for staff in the department of child welfare. Provisions were made to transmit the course to agency sites and other locations in close proximity to the regional offices. The course was not limited to child welfare workers. Three evaluation methods were used: 1) student course evaluations, which indicated that student satisfaction was similar to that of students in traditional classroom courses, 2) curriculum authors' and technicians' assessment of the class experience, and 3) open-ended questionnaires, which indicated that students found the use of videotapes and graphics particularly helpful (Jennings, Siegel, & Conklin, 1995).

The Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, in collaboration with Kansas State University, developed a training curriculum to address the needs of rural child welfare workers entitled, *Building Family Foundations*. The project used a multidisciplinary model with collaboration between departments of social work and education on subject matter, and with professionals on computer programming, graphic design, and instructional design. The large team presented varied challenges regarding workload and management of staff—the greatest being collaboration across disciplines. Considerable time was needed for understanding each other's language, professional values, and theoretical orientation. However, the project was deemed successful and the use of the multi-media training modules continue as both mandatory training for new staff and continuing education for senior staff (Cauble & Dinkel, 2002).

The University of Wisconsin School of Social Work developed a substance abuse course available to both traditional students at the Madison campus and human service professionals throughout the state (Petracchi & Morgenbesser, 1995). Technologies used a combination of one-way television broadcasts and videotapes of the course. The ability to edit the filmed course allowed the teacher to move back and forth from conceptual material to interviews with persons in recovery,

which would have been difficult in a traditional class setting. The distant students could videotape the broadcast and view it at their convenience. All students were assigned a text and additional readings. The distant learners received a detailed study guide and were contacted through regular mailings. They could access instructors via telephone or in person meetings. Students who had taken the broadcast course performed better on their mid-term and final examinations than students who had taken the face-to-face course. Additional advantages of the broadcast course included allowing the instructor to use guest lecturers/presenters who might not be available for multiple presentations in a traditional classroom format, and practitioners' ability to preserve the material for future use (Petracchi & Morgenbesser, 1995).

A distance-learning program was offered in rural Maine to instruct social workers and other health care providers (e.g., nurses, occupational and physical therapists) on practice methods for clients with physical disabilities (Miller, 1999). This program was not specifically directed to child welfare practitioners, but it does highlight experiences that could be relevant to child welfare agencies. Several technology options were considered for course delivery. A participant needs assessment found that computer-assisted learning combined with Internet use was the best option. Students had various levels of computer proficiency and during the course they faced periodic technology problems (e.g., overloaded servers, connection problems). Videotapes of actual cases in rural Maine were provided to students to enhance discussion of practice approaches. Evaluation conclusions were limited by a small, self-selected sample, but students said they could not have taken the course if it had not been offered in this format.

Computer-assisted or web-based training can take many forms, from full courses that can be completed on-line (i.e., computer-assisted instruction or CAI), to the instructional applications of CD-ROM (compact disk read-only memory). Students can view CD-ROMs of teaching materials on their own time. Disks can be distributed as part of traditional courses, chat rooms, and other Internet-based methods. They can also be used to supplement teacher-to-student or student-to-student communication in traditional courses (Kelly, 1994).

Many of these methods are referred to as asynchronous learning. The term indicates that learners are learning the same material at different times and in different places. The term Asynchronous Learning Networks (ALN) indicates that learners are tied together by an electronic network, usually the Internet or organizational intranet for their agency. This method has been used for in-service training, as well as by educators of professional practitioners (Lauderdale & Kelly, 1999), and is an important tool for developing learning organizations. For example, it has been used by the University of Texas School of Social Work for its biannual Survey

of Organizational Excellence for all state agencies. The submitted information is returned to the agencies via the Internet and all members of an organization can review the responses. In collaboration with the school, the feedback is then coupled with learning activities that focus on the organization's gaps and needs. Web site traffic for these learning activities indicates more utilization of this method of continuing education than the traditional methods (Lauderdale & Kelly, 1999).

Expert systems are another available technology resource that may be underutilized by social work educators and trainers. Expert systems are "computer programs that emulate the behavior of human experts within a specific domain of knowledge" (Liebowitz, 1988 as cited in Kelly, 1994). Kelly provides an example of how these systems can be especially helpful in child welfare training: a client case can be presented on a computer and workers or supervisors can be led through clinical decisions or supervisory decisions related to that case. Such expert systems can provide learning exercises, give and score examinations, and provide feedback to learners on their progress. Other advantages include self-directed and self-paced learning, enhancement of learning because the learner receives immediate and individualized feedback, uniformity in presentation of content, and administrative flexibility allowing delivery in many locations (Kelly, 1994).

Training Content

Child welfare systems need to respond to a variety of challenges and, consequently, specialized training needs are typically addressed through advanced or elective training offered by child welfare systems or their university partners. Many have been federally funded. Some of the specialized topics have included domestic violence, substance use, cultural competence, gay and lesbian youth, and interdisciplinary training.

Domestic Violence: Although the child welfare and domestic violence fields work closely with families, they have rarely worked collaboratively. The relationship between the fields has historically been tense and full of mistrust (Findlater & Kelly, 1999). Several training efforts have taken place with the goal of addressing these difficulties and bridging the gap between the two fields. Mills and colleagues (2000) provide an overview of four projects that were funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct child abuse training and research on exemplary practice in domestic violence. The projects' structure, scope, and target audiences varied by site. Mills and Yoshihama (2002) discuss in greater detail three of the projects reviewed by Mills et al. (2000) and highlight several differences between the projects. Although all projects were designed to educate

child welfare workers on domestic violence assessment and intervention, they differed in perspective and focus. Perspective refers to the lens through which the curricula view the causes of domestic violence and the barriers to battered women's safety (Mills & Yoshihama, 2002).

Characteristics of the child welfare system present additional challenges for training in this specialized area. Mills and colleagues write that the four projects found child protective services difficult to penetrate, in part because of their highly bureaucratic structure. In addition, the absence of formal mechanisms for collaboration between the fields made it difficult to work together. One approach used by the projects to deal with this challenge was to emphasize the importance of getting support for the training from key players such as supervisors (Mills et al., 2000). The inclusion of these key individuals was found to increase the child welfare workers' level of participation in the training. Due to the crisis-oriented nature of child welfare work, attendance was noted as a problem (Mills et al., 2000). To address this concern, one project strategically conducted training of child welfare supervisors (Fleck-Henderson & Krug, 1998) to gain their support for the training and ultimately to increase workers' participation. In addition, this project used a "grounded training" approach in that trainees were included in the curriculum development process. This method held the training accountable to local needs and conditions (Fleck-Henderson & Krug, 1998).

Substance Abuse: Some experts (Gregoire, 1994; Tracy & Farkas, 1994) believe that substance abuse is not being adequately addressed in child welfare practice, and conversely, that child welfare is not being adequately addressed in substance abuse treatment. One way of addressing this is through specialized training on the topic. Tracy and Farkas (1994) argue that there is a need for the child welfare and substance abuse treatment systems to combine their perspectives to deal with both the well being of children and the mothers' recovery. The authors argue that child welfare professionals are not trained in substance abuse and are unprepared to deal with such issues when they arise. Meanwhile, substance abuse treatment systems fail to view women in their roles as mothers and caregivers, thus women are not supported in these areas as part of their recovery. To enhance capacity in both fields, Tracy and Farkas (1994) recommend that training address staff attitudes, values, knowledge, and specific competencies that cut across both the child welfare and substance abuse service systems. Thus, to provide more comprehensive and timely services for such families, training of practitioners in both fields would be necessary.

Cultural Competency: The need for culturally competent practice is paramount in child welfare. In the current review, two projects addressed culturally competent practice specifically with Native American clients (Bending 1997; Mindell, Vidal de Haymes, & Francisco, 2003). Both Bending (1997) and Mindell and colleagues (2003) discuss training efforts in response to poor implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act. In complementary works, Stevenson and colleagues (1992) and Leung and colleagues (1994) present a three-dimensional model for training child protective workers for ethnically sensitive practice. Stevenson and colleagues (1992) introduce the model's first three phases, and Leung and colleagues (1994) follow this by reviewing the model and presenting its last phases.

Unlike Bending (2003) and Mindell and colleagues (2003), Stevenson and colleagues (1992) do not describe a specific training program. Instead, they detail a systematic approach to ethnic sensitivity. They reviewed existing frameworks for ethnically sensitive practice and found that most frameworks focus broadly on cultural competence, rather than specifically on ethnic sensitivity. Moreover, knowledge and skills are at the center of the framework, rarely addressing attitudinal biases that may hinder ethnic sensitive practice. In response to their findings, the authors propose a three-dimensional systematic approach to ethnic sensitivity. The first dimension is composed of the seven phases of child protective services (i.e., contact, problem identification/data collection, assessment, case planning, intervention, termination, and evaluation). In the second dimension, the model addresses not only knowledge and skills, but also attitudes required in ethnic sensitive practice. The final third dimension considers the importance of cross-cultural interaction between worker and client (Leung, Cheung, & Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson, Cheung, & Leung, 1992).

This systematic approach is designed for training, as well as for supervision and evaluation of child welfare professionals. The authors suggest that specific questions on ethnicity be utilized to train workers in each phase of child protective work and that small groups and/or case vignettes be employed (Leung, Cheung, & Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson, Cheung, & Leung, 1992). The questions encourage child protective workers to simultaneously assess their attitudes, knowledge, and skills at each stage of the assessment and intervention process. The focus always remains on ethnic sensitivity. For instance, a question a caseworker might ask themselves during the case planning stage is: "To what extent have I considered ethnically sensitive strategies in determining a contract with the family?" (Leung, Cheung, & Stevenson, 1994).

Gay and Lesbian Youth: Quinn (2002) and Mallon (1997) discuss training programs developed to fill what they see, respectively, as lack of knowledge and homophobia in the child welfare system. The training programs described by the two authors differ in several ways. The target audience for *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: An Administrative Approach to Diversity* (Quinn, 2002) is top-level administrators of one state's child welfare department. Quinn chronicles the process of developing a GLBTQ training program for top administrators. This involved a local nonprofit organization that provided services to GLBTQ youth and the clinical training specialist at the child welfare agency.

The training program described by Mallon (1997) was more generally targeted to child welfare professionals. In this training, youth were central to the development and delivery of the curriculum. The program, based on an empowerment model, was developed and delivered by gay and lesbian youth in out-of-home placement. This training was done in partnership with openly gay and lesbian child welfare practitioners. Covering knowledge building, skill building, and attitudes, the training focused on: 1) developmental issues and adaptive strategies for gay and lesbian youth; 2) useful language and phrases for practitioners; 3) experiences of gay and lesbian adolescents in the child welfare system; 4) the coming out process (particularly with respect to family issues); and 5) strategies that could be adopted by the child welfare system for creating nurturing environments.

Multidisciplinary Training: Zimmerman and colleagues (2003) discuss the use of the SPIN/Video Interaction model to train child welfare team leaders. The purpose of the training was to enhance the effectiveness of team leaders and their teams in working with families. The SPIN/Video Interaction model required team leaders to be videotaped during team meetings. They would then review the tapes with a consultant, focusing on their interventions. The model is strengths-based in that the consultant focuses on and reinforces the team leader's use of the SPIN core communication principles. The training program took place over a 15-month period and was evaluated through the use of intervention and comparison groups (Zimmerman, Amodeo, Fassler, Ellis, & Clay, 2003).

Training Systems

Increasingly and importantly, training implementation is not limited to curriculum, instruction, and setting, but is also cognizant of larger system issues that support or impede effecting training. Kanak, Maciolek, and O'Brien (2005), from the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine, have authored a *Training System Assessment Guide for Child Welfare Agencies* of performance

principles, related indicators, and tools for child welfare agencies to use in assessing the extent to which their training systems contain the integrated components necessary to bring about children's safety, well-being, and permanency. By *training system* the authors mean, "all of the policies, resources, procedures, structures, and curricula combined into a coherent whole to provide and support formal and informal instruction, learning opportunities and professional development aimed at improving agency outcomes" (p. 2). The term, *comprehensive training systems* refers to the organization and governance of the training program; approaches to making decisions about the focus and direction of resources; approaches to ensuring quality of materials, trainers, and delivery; and approaches for ensuring transfer of training to ongoing practice. This publication is a contribution to the field in its effort to take a systemic view of training needs, programs, and outcomes. Notably, the authors recognize that child welfare agencies typically focus on the individual components of a training program (e.g., trainers, content areas, training classes) and there is extensive work available in these areas to guide efforts. Agencies place much less attention on how the training system is integrated into the overall effort to improve client outcomes.

This publication is intended to guide agencies in assessing their training systems and then taking action to improve them. The performance principles are organized by tiers of organizational practice that the authors believe must be integrated in a coherent way: 1) *case/clinical practice*, including agency outcomes and aligning training with organizational goals; 2) *supervisory practice*, including the role of supervisors and responsibility for training and mentoring; 3) *internal managerial practice*, including leadership, quality improvement, training policies and procedures, and evaluating and rewarding staff; and 4) *external managerial practice*, including stakeholder involvement in training and partnerships to create a full array of training. The publication also includes case examples of successful training system practices of public child welfare agencies across the country, sample assessment tools, and training workshop materials. It does not describe what is current in child welfare practice, but rather sets out a blueprint for ways child welfare agencies can view, organize, and integrate the various elements of training practice. For this reason, it provides a guide or vision for the future of child welfare training practice, and represents where the field is likely to move in the future.

A few examples in the literature address state-level systems of training. Using a process developed by the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, Miller and Dore (1991) identified innovative state child welfare training programs in four states: Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington. Factors central to the states' provision of support for comprehensive training included "legislative mandates; administrative and committee oversight; technical

assistance; needs assessment; establishment of competencies; and program evaluation" (p. 439).

- Florida: Innovative aspects from Florida included legislation ensuring ongoing funding for training; the establishment of four academies for new worker training; mandated provision of ongoing worker training; and the hiring of an evaluation organization to report back to the legislature on training effectiveness and the internal activities of the academies.

- Tennessee: Innovative aspects in Tennessee included broad employee input into the creation of a certification program; schools of social work and experienced child welfare practitioners working in teams to train workers; a required 10-week training period for all new workers; an initial required week-long residential course on interpersonal helping skills; a second required residential training period focused on assessment skills; completion by new workers of a certification exam (such an opportunity is also available to ongoing workers); a condensed version of this training delivered to and mandated for supervisors; and funding provided by federal and state dollars.

- Ohio: Employing strategies similar to those of Tennessee, Ohio provided oversight and planning through a state-level committee; used an Individual Training Needs Assessment Instrument when supervisors or workers thought further training was necessary; and maintained an individual training record for each worker (recording workshops attended, hours of training received, and needs assessment scores).

- Washington: The state of Washington legislated more stringent requirements for worker training. New workers were mandated to have 95 percent attendance at training and pass an examination at the end of each of three weeks of residential training; receive three weeks of on-the-job training in between each week of training; develop an individualized training plan in consultation with the supervisor; and review progress on meeting training goals throughout the year.

Focusing on one state, Breitenstein, Rycus, Sites, and Kelly (1997) describe a comprehensive approach in Pennsylvania. "Through a lengthy sequence of developmental efforts, Pennsylvania conceptualized, developed, and fully implemented an integrated system of education and training designed to promote best practices

in child welfare throughout the state" (p. 14). The article describes the objectives, goals, content, and values of the statewide competency-based system. The authors noted that the development of statewide competency-based child welfare training and the statewide Title IV-E professional education are not unique to Pennsylvania. But what is distinguishing is the interdisciplinary, competency-based focus that works to integrate university education with formal in-service training.

The political context of a state is also relevant. Ortega and Levy (2002) identified specific challenges of providing child welfare training in a state system that has privatized its child welfare services, including a large influx of new workers, high worker turnover as a result of the contracting process, and the development of partnerships among several agencies with different policies and approaches. This article is helpful in recognizing how the larger policy context—in this case the impact of privatization—can affect the entire training enterprise and subsequent outcomes.

Toward Reflective Child Welfare Organizations

Morrison (1997) presents a model with nine key ingredients for effective training: 1) a learning environment supported by the organization; 2) readiness on the part of trainers, learners, and the organization; 3) a specific learning contract between trainers, learners, and the organization; 4) connectedness and relevance of policy, philosophy, and practice; 5) modeling of good professional practice by the trainers' manner and management of the learning experience; 6) rehearsal of and high-quality feedback on new skills or strategies learned; 7) continuous reflection by learners and the organization; 8) reinforcement of learning by the workplace; and 9) review and evaluation of training.

Many of these elements have been discussed in this review, but Morrison is particularly helpful in addressing the need for an organization to support a learning environment. He points out that the purposes and mandate of child welfare training are often misunderstood and lead to conflicts over definitions of training between employers, trainers, and staff. "These include perceptions that training should deal with poor performance, resolve staff stress, act as a substitute for a lack of policy or as a conduit for difficult messages" (p. 23). With so much recent emphasis on outcomes and the bottom line, *feeling* and *thinking* can be perceived as unacceptable. Trainers, especially in child protection, may feel pressure to act more like instructors and less like facilitators. They may experience conflicts between organizational demands for training and principles related to their professional or educational mission. They may experience tension

about whether training should serve the needs of the organization, the participants, the service users, or the profession. Members of an organization may perceive that "training" equals courses. There may be demands for short-term training to solve organizational problems or to put large number of staff through programs to show that something has been done.

Unacknowledged organizational motives can erode participants' confidence and sense of safety in the learning environment. In such a climate, management support for learning is ambivalent, participants fail to engage, there are more frequent organizational intrusions into the learning environment, organizational problems are minimized or denied, training is not evaluated or followed up, and the overall credibility of training is reduced. In systems where there is a great deal of anxiety, workers and managers (and the system as a whole) are more likely to be defensive and resistant when it comes to reflecting on practice or sharing experiences of less than ideal personal performance.

Morrison also describes the effects of these influences on child welfare training units, where trainers and training units exist in a climate of budget cuts and feel like easy targets due to the low status training sometimes receives in this environment. Trainers may become reluctant to take risks due to a concern for self-preservation. Also, if the workplace does not allow workers to feel and think, training may be a place where stressful experiences and primitive emotions are increasingly shared. This may take its toll on trainers who are faced with having to contain these roiling feelings. Trainers may become more impatient with participants, adversarial with the agency, or even disengaged.

Morrison emphasizes that times of high stress and crises can be catalysts for positive growth and change, and offers examples of ways training can help staff deal with organizational change and agency upheaval. He points out that training —especially over a period of time—can offer staff a constructive group experience in which participants feel a sense of belonging, identity, self-esteem and self-efficacy. "Training depends on an effective partnership between organizations, learners, and trainers that is rooted in an understanding of the expectations and needs of users, and departmental responsibilities towards them" (pp. 28–29). He encourages the reader to consider how the principle of user involvement applies to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of training; gives examples from involvement of youth in care; and contends that consumer involvement may prove to be a key catalyst for promoting anti-discriminatory practice.

Citing Bell (1993), Morrison says that the primary purpose of organizational training must be to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals, rather than to meet the needs of individuals within it. However, organizational goals are often not clearly articulated, making it difficult for trainers to facilitate their achievement. Even when goals are clear, trainers may find themselves at odds with them, for example, if case reviews result in solutions that are "prescriptive, defensive, and pathologizing" (p. 30). It may be difficult for trainers to tell who is defining the organization's child protection goals—especially when central command structures are broken down as a result of budget cuts and other influences. Defensive responses often favor powerful or high-status groups over others, for example, senior managers or doctors over front line workers. Morrison concludes discussion of these points by saying that the overriding aim of child protection training is "to equip staff with the values, frameworks, knowledge, skills, personal awareness and strengths necessary for the exercise of judgment, discretion, and decision making which enables the organization to fulfill its child protection goals and responsibilities" (p. 31). Morrison goes on to discuss "safe" vs. "healthy" organizations and distinguishes three approaches to viewing problems: as isolated events, as patterns, and as the result of underlying organizational elements (e.g., structures, attitudes, perceptions, power relations, values, and belief systems that give rise to patterns). Healthy organizations are able to investigate at which level problems should be resolved, and address them at the systemic level when necessary.

In spite of the strong appeal for training to be a closely integrated function in the organizational context, when considering how to "position training" within the organization, Morrison acknowledges the trainer's possible ambivalence about how much to be identified with a corporate function. The trainer's profession and values related to the purpose of training may put him/her in conflict with the organization—especially if the organization's goals for training are related to conformity and following the rules. Child welfare trainers have valued their autonomy because it provides distance from undesirable aspects of organizational dynamics, and because it may allow them to influence the culture "from outside." However, this autonomy may result in structural isolation, a lack of agency recognition, and the inappropriate use of training. Morrison would like to see training located within "human resource development" and strategically linked to the organization's goals and planning process.

Summary

Summarizing key points that can inform child welfare training, we have seen that:

- Learners are likely to be less resistant if they know the training has been designed (at least in part) by individuals who represent them and their interests and needs.

- Learners are more likely to learn if they know that the trainer understands the organizational context in which they work (i.e., challenges and facilitating factors) and the influences that might impede application of learning on the job.

- Knowledge-based training, without an experiential component or opportunity to apply the learning during the training, is likely to cause learners some frustration and lead to negative rather than positive or neutral outcomes.

- Overreliance on didactic methods hampers transformative learning in which learners leap forward in their cognitive and visceral understanding of an issue.

- Interactions with mentors, performing the activity in authentic situations, self-reflection, and feedback from others are primary contributing factors to transformative learning.

- The consumer voice is noted to be important but rarely considered in planning training.

If the dominant educational paradigm in many fields in this country is still one of expert and learner in well-delineated roles, then in some ways the child welfare training field may be more advanced. Many examples have been provided here of activities that are moving training forward into new paradigms. However, the goal now is to ensure that innovative programs become the norm and that child welfare agencies transform themselves into supportive learning environments. Multi-level approaches will be needed to do this, including increasing the use of supervisors for education and mentoring; ensuring that training is focused on the critical components of the job; encouraging workers to consult with peers about cases and how best to perform specific job functions; involving workers and supervisors as active participants in planning training; making the work setting a more effective learning environment; and formulating agency policies and practices to reinforce training goals.

Chapter 3
University/Agency Partnerships for Professional Education and Training

Introduction

Substantial amounts of professional education and training are delivered through partnerships between universities (frequently schools of social work) and public child welfare agencies. These partnerships resulted from federal legislation that created funding opportunities for training. By reviewing the extant body of literature, this chapter examines how federal funding has been utilized in various ways to create collaborative training partnerships, the challenges and benefits of collaboration, and the existing and needed research on this topic.

The Historical Relationship between Social Work and Child Welfare

From its earliest beginnings, the profession of social work has been engaged in promoting the welfare of children and families. While social work has always been involved in child welfare, the disciplinary domain of the child welfare field has not been limited to professional social work. Consequently, the field of child welfare is not dominated by social work professionals. In fact, studies have found that the majority of caseworkers do not have a social work degree. For example, Costin, Karger, and Stoesz (1996) found in a national study of child welfare caseworkers that only approximately 27 percent had a BSW or MSW. Moreover, even those entering the child welfare workforce with an MSW often had no specialized training in child welfare practice; thus further in-service training is critically important.

As simultaneously independent and interdependent entities, child welfare agencies and schools of social work have a relationship characterized by shifts in collaboration. These shifts are often influenced by such macro level factors as policy changes, variable funding patterns, and political dynamics. There are also significant regional variations in child welfare systems across the country. Every state has its own distinct child welfare system and each system has its own unique relationship with the social work profession.

Dickinson and Gil de Gibaja (2004) trace the historical connection between social work and public agencies. They note that during the 1970s, Title XX funding provided support for many social work students preparing for public sector work. However, this period of support was followed by more than a decade of inattention. Factors influencing this inattention were the growing distrust of government (Dickinson, 1995), increased employment opportunities in other sectors, and the de-professionalization of child welfare jobs (Leighninger & Ellett, 1998). The authors describe the relationship between public child welfare agencies and schools of social work as "estranged." Concurrent to the estrangement, "there was intense growth in the need for child welfare services across the country" due to increasing reports of child abuse and neglect, and the frequently co-occurring problems of domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and other challenges for families. Partnerships between schools of social work and public child welfare agencies were developed in the mid-to-late 1980s, to begin addressing the disconnection between professional social work education and the needs of public child welfare agencies (Dickinson & Gil de Gibaja, 2004).

Past and Current Issues in Child Welfare Training

Many child welfare caseworkers—charged with the heavy responsibility to engage and assist families to protect the lives of children—have not had specialized training in social work and, in some cases, no professional training at all. Concerns about insufficient training for these workers are expressed repeatedly throughout the literature (Breitenstein & Rycus, 1997; Briar-Lawson & Zlotnick, 2003; Chavkin & Brown, 2003; Jones, 2002; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Lewandowski, 1998; Risley-Curtiss, McMurtry, Loren, Gustavsson, Smith, et al., 1997).

In response to concerns about inadequate professional preparation, the literature is full of calls for improved child welfare training. Public child welfare agencies and their workers face incredible demands in fulfilling their commitment to insure child well-being. Tracy and Pine (2000) discuss the many "economic, political and societal trends" that have recently impacted child welfare policy

and practice. In addition to these complex macro-system factors, federal policy mandates now require workers to know and adhere to specific requirements in case planning and intervention. Public laws, such as PL 96-272 (Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980) and PL 105-89 (Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997) establish strict child welfare guidelines to be followed by all state child welfare agencies.

Given the difficult challenges faced by public child welfare workers, the need for effective training programs is great. Fox and Burnham (1997) note that an increased need for services has caused child welfare agencies to re-evaluate and focus on training. Many researchers have noted the value and need of specific social work oriented training/education for child welfare workers (Breitenstein & Rycus, 1997; Clark, 2003; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Gibbs, 2001; Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999; Jones, 2002; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Lewandowski, 1998; Pierce, 2003; Tracy & Pine, 2000; Zlotnick & Cornelius, 2000; Zlotnick, 2001). For example, Breitenstein and Rycus (1997) state that less than 25 percent of child welfare workers in the United States have undergone any type of "pre-service training" (p. 1). Harris (2001) makes the assertion that 75 percent of public child welfare cases are handled by workers with no professional training. Many researchers further note disturbing trends towards lack of training and de-professionalization in the child welfare field (Briar-Lawson & Zlotnick, 2003; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Lewandowski, 1998; Risley-Curtiss, 2003; Risley-Curtiss & McMurtry, 1997; Robin & Hollister, 2002).

In the search for innovation, collaboration with mezzo and macro systems in the larger community has been recommended. According to Tracy and Pine (2000), collaboration between systems and service providers must include both strong relationships and partnership training efforts. In addition to the partnership of agencies and schools of social work, the authors stress the need for joint efforts between community service providers and other systems, for example, between the courts and mental health systems or between the schools and law enforcement.

History of Title IV-E Legislation and Provisions for Training Funds

According to the Child Welfare League of America (2003), federal funding for child welfare originated under Title V of the 1935 Social Security Act. From 1935 until 1962, amendments were added for a variety of child welfare expenditures, including provisions that enabled federal monies to be allotted for training purposes. In recent decades, federal funding specifically designated for child

welfare training has primarily been available through two specific amendments to the Social Security Act: Title IV-B Section 426 and Title IV-E. In 1962, Section 426 of Title IV-B established a discretionary grant program (Zlotnick, 2003, p. 6) to provide funding opportunities "to public or other nonprofit institutions of higher learning for special projects training personnel for work in the field of child welfare" (Administration for Children and Families, 2003, p. 6).

The other significant provision for child welfare training is entitlement funding under Title IV-E, which was established through stipulations of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (PL 96–272) (Zlotnick, 2003). Title IV-E represents a much larger federal investment in child welfare training and provides states with funding for training that specifically influences "the provision of child placement services," as well as "the proper and efficient administration of the State Plan." The remainder of this chapter will focus specifically on the use of Title IV-E funding for collaborative training partnerships between social work education and public child welfare agencies.

A Closer Look at Title IV-E in Relation to Training

According to a report from the Government Accounting Office (GAO), Title IV-E is perhaps the most significant national resource for child welfare training, providing about 42 percent of all federal, state, and local funds for child welfare education and training in 1990 (GAO, 1993). Under this program, the federal government matches 75 percent of funding for training provided by the state for both current and prospective child welfare staff. Training that is eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement includes courses at educational institutions and in-service training. Courses at educational institutions may lead to a degree in social work (or a related field) for those preparing for employment in public child welfare. In-service training includes training to administer the Title IV-E foster care program in such areas as, determining the eligibility of children for the program, placing children in foster care, and licensing foster homes. As is evident, the specific funding eligibility requirements allow for broad interpretation regarding the utilization of training monies. This allowance for broad interpretation has caused great variation in how funding is utilized by participating states, but also considerable confusion about eligibility, access, and implementation.

While Title IV-E does not specifically discuss formal collaborative training partnerships between educational institutions and public child welfare agencies, such partnerships become necessary since the funding is given to the states and not directly to the educational institutions. As Zlotnick (2003) notes, "Since Title

IV-E is an entitlement program, which requires partnerships across many levels of government and between government and the university, the implementation process may be more complex than the implementation of legislation, which creates a grant program" (p. 10). This requirement for collaboration across systems is what has enabled and required the development of collaborative partnerships in training.

Diverse Patterns of Utilization of Title IV-E Funds

Although Title IV-E funding has been available to the states since 1980, it has only been used extensively since 1990 (Zlotnick, 2003). The initial lack of utilization is often attributed to the changing political climate in the early 1980s. Zlotnick reports that prior to the Reagan era, DHHS had been concentrating on efforts to improve training and qualifications of child welfare workers. The election of Reagan precipitated a decrease in federal social service funding across the board, with the unfortunate result that the Children's Bureau staff and funding were cut.

According to Risley-Curtiss (2003), the policies of PL 96-272 never became fully institutionalized within DHHS. Plans to focus on child welfare training and to clarify regulations surrounding the use of Title IV-E funding were superseded by other concerns, such as saving programs and recovering lost funding. After concentrating on maintaining the most basic necessities of administering social services, DHHS had few resources left for attending to child welfare training. While Title IV-E funding itself was still available, the means for utilizing the funding were impeded. It wasn't until the beginning of the 1990s that the Children's Bureau was again able to focus on improving child welfare training and developing the competency of qualified child welfare staff. At that point, the use of Title IV-E funding began to grow (Zlotnick, 2003).

Although some ambiguity remains in interpretation of the legislation, Title IV-E's training provision has generally been understood as allocating funding for pre-service, in-service, and/or college/university coursework for current or potential employees of a state's child welfare agency. As a result of the naming of these various categories, Title IV-E training monies tend to be used by states in the following ways:

- To collaborate with educational institutions for the funding of pre-service training programs for new employees;

- To collaborate with educational institutions for the funding of in-service training programs for existing employees;

- To provide existing employees with funding for continuing education through course work at colleges or universities;

- To provide funding for undergraduate or graduate degree programs for potential or existing employees.

When considering Title IV-E partnerships, the extant research shows some trends in the history of funding utilization. Zlotnick and Cornelius (2000) reviewed the past 20 years of Title IV-E funding utilization by social work education programs. They found that only three of the programs (4.6%) in their survey reported receiving funds between 1980 (when PL 96-272 was passed) and 1987. By 1990, three more programs were receiving funding. Seven additional programs were participating by 1991, eleven more by 1992, and 41 more programs between 1993 and 1996.

In spite of this increasing utilization of Title IV-E monies, social work programs in many states are still not fully benefiting. In their study of 550 BSW and MSW programs existing in 1996, Zlotnick and Cornelius (2000) report that only 75 of the 280 programs (responding to the survey) were utilizing Title IV-E funding, while another 46 were in the process of trying to acquire the funding. Of the 75 programs receiving Title IV-E funding, 68 were using it for a combination of degree education and staff training, and seven were allocating it solely for staff training. Of those 68 programs using the funds for degree programs, 48 percent were for MSW education only, 35 percent for BSW education only, and 16 percent for both BSW and MSW education.

For FY1994, the combined Title IV-E funding for all programs in the study was $50.9 million, with California receiving the highest amount ($32.30 million or 24%). Of the total $50.9 million, $4 million was spent on BSW education, $21 million on MSW education and $25.9 million on in-service training. In total, 68 programs in 29 states used Title IV-E funds for BSW and MSW education programs (Zlotnik, 2003). Funding utilization varies by geographic region, with the greatest number/ proportion of Title IV-E participants in the southwestern states (Arizona, California, Nevada) and Hawaii, and the smallest in the New England region (Zlotnick & Cornelius, 2000).

While the research seems to indicate a greater use of funding for MSW than BSW education, a study by Pierce (2003) provides data on the specific use of Title IV-E funding for BSW education. In a survey sent to 464 BSW programs, 48 of the 282 responding programs indicated that they used Title IV-E monies in a variety of ways to support BSW students who made commitments to pursue child welfare careers. Programs supported 1–30 students per year, with a median of 5 students.

Stipends ranged from $2,000 to $14,000, with an average amount of $5,250. While 61 percent of the programs reported that none of their supported students were currently employed in public child welfare, the remaining 39 percent reported varying rates of current child welfare employment for their students.

Examples of Collaborative Partnerships

Collaborative partnership training models are many and varied, with designs shaped by the unique organizations and institutions that undertake these training efforts. Due to the diversity of existing models, there are no typical examples. Project designs reflect the mission and visions of those involved and are usually tailored to meet their particular needs.

An example of a partnership involving BSW programs is described by Fox, Miller, and Barbee (2003) in their study of a collaborative training model implemented in Kentucky. To address the common concerns of recruitment and retention, the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children utilized Title IV-E funding to develop a collaborative training program with its University Training Consortium. The Public Child Welfare Certification Program is described as "a special multi-university preparation program designed to recruit excellent workers from BSW programs who are prepared to take on complex cases with normal supervision within weeks of employment and to sustain those workers over time" (pp. 67–68).

To accomplish recruitment and retention objectives, the training program's mission focused on changing "organizational culture" within the child welfare system by embracing three main principles: "create a culture that values the employee; create a learning organization based upon mission, vision and outcomes; and implement true learning transfer and reinforcement" (p. 70). To make this vision a reality, a design team of both faculty and child welfare representatives created a pilot training model that included courses in child welfare, field placements with the state child welfare agency, and pre-graduation agency training. Faculty and agency personnel shared responsibility for training delivery. In exchange for a two-year post-graduation employment commitment, participants received tuition, stipends, and the promise of job entry at a "higher classification level" (p. 72).

According to the authors, the Kentucky partnership demonstrated a high degree of collaboration between child welfare practitioners and academics at every level, from curriculum design, to implementation, to evaluation. Partnerships often face challenges due to differing views and goals of the academic and practice

communities (Unrau & Wehrmann, 2003), yet Fox and colleagues (2003) contend that these challenges were easily overcome in this Kentucky partnership project. The authors note the unusually successful and harmonious nature of the collaboration, not only between the academic and practice communities, but also across the various academic institutions. They attributed the success of the collaboration to a long history of partnerships in training efforts in Kentucky.

According to Scannapieco and Connell-Corrick (2003), a collaborative model evolved between the University of Texas at Arlington and the state public child welfare agency. This partnership had two primary objectives: to create opportunities for current state child welfare workers to earn their MSW degrees, and to recruit future child welfare workers from the existing population of undergraduate and graduate social work students. The model incorporated joint coordination of planning, curriculum development, training, and evaluation by a committee of social work faculty from the university and workers from the state child welfare agency. An analysis of program participants indicates that 133 BSW and MSW students (out of a total of 179 working for the state child welfare agency) were recruited into the child welfare field through this program. The program design included requirements for studying child welfare in the classroom and completing a field placement in the Child Protective Services division of the public child welfare agency.

The most common use of Title IV-E training funds is for MSW education. A prime example of this type of partnership model is found in California. The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) is "a consortium of the state's 16 accredited social work graduate schools, the 58 county departments of social service and mental health, the California Department of Social Services, and the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers" (CalSWEC, 2004, p. 1). CalSWEC describes itself as "the nation's largest state coalition of social work educators and practitioners." Although involved in many types of collaboration, CalSWEC's utilization of Title IV-E training monies is specifically designed to "offer financial support to graduate social work students who are preparing for careers directed toward child welfare practice in publicly supported social services" (CalSWEC, 2004, p. 1).

CalSWEC's current program is the result of a "10-year collaborative public agency/university child welfare social work project" and was "one of the first of its kind to utilize Title IV-E funding for MSW education" (Clark, 2003, p. 136). Its ultimate goal is to attract and recruit MSW graduates to careers dedicated to working with children and families in the public child welfare system. The program's design includes five major "interdependent components:" 1) financial support for students, 2) a competency-based curriculum, 3) program and curriculum

evaluation, 4) resource support for the development of instructional materials, and 5) active participation among public child welfare agencies and the universities. Clark (2003) asserts that two key elements of CalSWEC's success are the focus on competencies and an ongoing process of curriculum development and modification.

Grossman and McCormick (2003) discuss another project developed by CalSWEC in which a selected group of ten social work programs engaged in an "interdisciplinary practice curriculum experiment." MSW students were given "specialized fieldwork and training" in a variety of agencies where they experienced an interdisciplinary approach to service provision (p. 98). The goal was to prepare students for future careers in social work, particularly in areas where skills in interdisciplinary practice were necessary. Since California's collaborative project is one of the most established Title IV-E programs, it has been the focus of many additional research studies. Such studies have focused on the description and evaluation of various elements of CalSWEC's training models (Coleman & Clark, 2003; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Jones, 2002).

Other examples described in the literature include the following. Rose (1999) provides a description of the Title IV-E program in Wisconsin, with a specific focus toward constructing the training based on principles of adult education (Knowles, 1980). Gansle and Ellett (2002) describe the implementation of a Title IV-E training collaboration in Louisiana. Phillips, Gregory, and Nelson (2003) describe a partnership between the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and Eastern Washington University. One feature of this partnership was innovation in discovering "funding and staffing strategies" that resulted in "flexible services and increased levels of collaboration" between many organizations involved in service delivery (p. 116).

Barriers to Access, Utilization, and Implementation of Title IV-E Training Funding

Although the preceding discussion indicates a growth in Title IV-E utilization and an increasing diversity of uses, it is important to note that many areas of underutilization remain. The 2000 study by Zlotnick and Cornelius reports that 75 BSW/MSW programs were participating in Title IV-E, but that number seems small when compared to the total number of more than 600 accredited BSW and MSW programs nationwide (CSWE, 2004). Why isn't this resource being fully utilized? An examination of the literature yields two themes in response to this question. The first is the historical complexity of Title IV-E's rules and

regulations. The second concerns general issues that arise when different organizational cultures enter into collaborations.

The Historical Confusion Surrounding Interpretation of Title IV-E. Since the inception of Title IV-E, access and implementation have been characterized by confusion. The lack of clear regulations and guidelines in the legislation itself, compounded by the lack of available guidance from the funding source, have combined to create a situation in which states have not understood how to properly access and utilize this funding. One indication of the confusion surrounding Title IV-E training provisions can be found in a GAO report published in 1993 entitled *Foster Care: Federal Policy on Title IV-E Share of Training Costs*. The opening paragraphs state that "the extent of the federal obligation for the education and training of child welfare workers is a subject of controversy" (p. 1). It continues by discussing specific conflicts that have arisen between DHHS and the states

> … the dispute between the states and HHS exists in part because
> Title IV-E does not discuss cost allocation, and its language leaves
> room for more than one interpretation concerning the allocation of
> training costs. Because the meaning of the statute is in dispute,
> HHS' policy notices, based on HHS' interpretation of the law, also
> are called into question. If the law is not clarified, the matter may
> in effect be resolved through litigation, the outcomes of which may
> not reflect the Congress' legislative aims for the program.

Zlotnick (2003) notes how problems in interpretation and understanding of regulations have impacted states, educational institutions, and the Children's Bureau itself. These problems are many and varied, but can be summarized in the following way:

- Educational institutions are sometimes not aware of their eligibility for Title IV-E funding;

- There is continuing confusion regarding application procedures;

- There is a lack of clear guidelines for utilization and implementation;

- There are not enough available communication mechanisms and information sources for guidance about Title IV-E;

- Specific organizational variables, such as lack of time and resources, affect the institutions' ability to develop Title IV-E programs;

- Since Title IV-E is an entitlement program, the funding is not direct, and can only be accessed through an agreement with the state. This creates issues that can impede access to funding on the organizational level.

Discussion of these barriers to access, utilization, and implementation abounds in the literature. According to Zlotnick and Cornelius (2000), many educational institutions reported not being fully aware of this funding source. Additional barriers, including "lack of clear regulations" regarding how funds can be used (p. 12) and "regional variations" in understanding regulations, have increased the confusion about correct interpretation of the legislation (p. 11). Zlotnick and Cornelius point out that these problems in interpretation are supported by and exemplified by Reilly and Petersen's (1997) description of Title IV-E implementation in Nevada. Further, respondents in Pierce's (2003) national study of BSW programs reported the desire for more awareness and information regarding Title IV-E programs. Zlotnick (2003) found the following factors were still inhibiting Title IV-E access, utilization, and implementation: vague enabling legislation; vague regulations; variations in interpretation of policy; limited support for the requirement that child welfare workers should be professionally trained social workers; lack of leadership in the Children's Bureau; and lack of expertise of federal and state staff.

In their study of child welfare training in Pennsylvania, Breitenstein, and Rycus (1997) note specific barriers faced by private educational institutions that may have wanted to be involved in Title IV-E training partnerships. Pierce (2003) also notes the particular issues facing private universities and colleges who must either enter into "subcontracts with public programs" or "provide a cash match rather than the in-kind match allowed public programs" (p. 23). Further, Pierce asserts that it is ultimately up to the states to decide who receives funding. This could undoubtedly result in a favored advantage for the state educational institutions over private universities and colleges.

Challenges and Barriers to Establishing Effective Partnerships. Educational institutions and child welfare agencies are different types of organizational entities. Any type of partnership requires that the entities come to agreement on mutual goals, objectives, and methods of implementation. The academic and practice communities come to the partnership with different institutional philosophies, missions, visions, and unique organizational cultures designed to carry out their respective aims. The academic institution's mission is education, while the child welfare organization's is practice. Although visions of the common good can serve as unifying principles, differing views on implementation can result in particular challenges for each partner and for the partnership as a whole.

Unrau and Wehrmann (2003) discuss the differing perspectives on child welfare training of the academic and practice communities. Many challenges can arise as the partners attempt to reconcile their divergent viewpoints concerning the best approaches to training. The generalist curriculum focus in some schools of social work—particularly at the BSW level (Pierce, 2003)—can conflict with the specialized child welfare focus of the protective service agency. Hodges, Morgan, and Johnston (2003) also note the divergence between the university's more theoretical orientation, and the agency's strong preference for specialized, practical training. Tracy and Pine (2000) further examine the differences in agency/ university views of "training" versus "education" (p. 96). Clark (2003) suggests that a focus on competencies could be the key to establishing common ground between the conflicting goals of generalist education versus specialist training.

Effective partnerships also depend on a strong commitment to child welfare on the part of the educational institution. Although social work and child welfare have a strong historical relationship, Jones (2000) asserts that "the social work literature describes a widespread abandonment in the last two decades of child welfare by social work" (p. 42). Gibbs (2001) stresses the need for academic institutions to promote the value of entering into careers in child welfare. In her study of rural recruitment and retention, some students reported being discouraged from or warned away from this field of practice. Academic institutions also need to ensure sufficient child welfare curriculum content and program focus so that students are adequately prepared for their careers.

For both child welfare agencies and educational institutions, time, funding and resource availability influence the ability to explore and enter into partnerships (Zlotnick, 2001, 2002; Pierce, 2003). An already short staffed and overburdened public child welfare agency has difficulty allocating scarce resources to program development, even if the ultimate goal is one that would enhance the system's ability to fulfill its mission more effectively.

Perceived Benefits of Collaboration

The benefits of collaborating for the purpose of child welfare training are highlighted throughout the literature on Title IV-E training programs (Clark, 2003; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; Hodges, Morgan, & Johnston, 1993; Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Lewandowski, 1998; Risley-Curtiss & McMurtry, 1997; Robin & Hollister, 2002; Tracy & Pine, 2000; Unrau & Wehrmann, 2003; Zlotnick & Cornelius, 2000; Zlotnick, 2001).

Dickinson and Gil de Gibaja (2004) note that

> In any successful partnership, two or more entities contribute distinct
> expertise, resources, and knowledge to create a synergistic whole that
> is more than the sum of their individual attributes and contribution.
> In a training collaborative, for example, the public child welfare agency
> gains an alternate source for or back-up to its internal training department,
> which is often under-funded and understaffed. Additionally, the agency
> is able to tap into the academic and research expertise of schools of social
> work. Finally, the university contributes indirect costs and other matches
> to help increase the federal costs recovered for operating state training
> and educational programming. Universities also benefit from partnering
> with public child welfare agencies. An infusion of federal dollars supports
> faculty and an infrastructure to prepare social workers for careers in child
> welfare. Furthermore, universities are able to access generous stipends
> or internships to recruit eligible students to BSW and/or MSW programs.
> These students gain concrete experience in child welfare practice by
> taking their field practica at public child welfare agencies, working with
> preceptors, and shadowing supervisors and workers in their interactions
> with children and families (p. 28).

Hopkins, Mudrick, and Rudolph (1999) discuss how collaborative training
partnerships can influence worker performance, as well as engender positive
structural and organizational changes including communication patterns and
decision making. Robin and Hollister (2002) suggest that the perceived benefits
of Title IV-E partnerships include enhanced quality of services and "professional
credibility of child welfare staff" (p. 54). Zlotnick and Cornelius (2000) discuss how
collaboration can help both educational institutions and child welfare agencies
to attain increased funding and resources (including staff resources). Some sources
(Hopkins et al., 1999; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Reilly & Petersen, 1997; Robin &
Hollister, 2002) posit that Title IV-E collaborative training programs can increase
an organization's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff. Zlotnick (2001)
notes that partnerships can offer additional mezzo-level organizational gains for
both the university and the child welfare agency. The educational institution is
enhanced through curriculum development that is "reflective of public agency
practice" (p. 3), and faculty can increase their knowledge and understanding of
the current practice arena. On the agency side, child welfare personnel will
have more "knowledge, skills, and opportunities for advancement," as well as

the opportunity to serve in academic roles (p. 3). These observations denote a strengthening of the connection between theory and practice, which can have a positive influence at all systems levels.

Hodges and colleagues (1993) discuss the specific benefits of project partnerships and describe the important role of educational institutions in training. The authors explain how partnering enables universities and agencies to combine their unique attributes to offer a training model that neither entity could offer alone. Agency training is usually program focused and is limited by time and funding. University training is often more focused on theory than practice and has limited ability to instruct "around specific program models" (p. 45).

On the macro level, Risley-Curtiss (2003) notes that the collaborations established through Title IV-E have been strong enough for the partners to work together on other causes beyond training, for example, to advocate for child welfare concerns. Reilly and Petersen (1997) report that the agency/university collaboration in Nevada includes four primary areas: in-service training, professional education and teaching, research and evaluation, and community service. Risley-Curtiss suggests that these partnerships be institutionalized in order to insure the continuation of the collaboration and to enable the partners to address other issues in the future. She emphasizes the importance and urgency of institution-alization in response to the political atmosphere and the potential deleterious impact it may have on social services.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Title IV-E Training Programs

While many benefits of collaboration have been discussed throughout the literature on Title IV-E training programs, there is an ongoing need to verify these benefits through further research, including outcome studies. Many researchers have emphasized the need for further evaluation of these programs (Alperin, 1996; Chavkin & Brown, 2003; Clark, 2003; Coleman & Clark, 2003; Hopkins et al., 1999; Jones, 2002; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Lawson, Anderson-Butcher, Petersen, & Barkdull, 2003; Pierce, 2003; Risley-Curtiss, 2003; Risley-Curtiss, McMurtry, Loren et al.,1997; Robin & Hollister, 2002; Tracy & Pine, 2000; Unrau & Wehrmann, 2003; Zlotnick, 2001, 2002, 2003; Zlotnick & Cornelius, 2000). There are also a number of studies in different states that have evaluated specific collaborative partnerships.

Selected Outcome Evaluation Studies

Many of the evaluations reported in the literature are focused on implementation and process studies (some of these have been discussed earlier in this chapter). Outcome evaluation studies are fewer and are often based on one small training program, frequently a pilot. Consequently, many of the reported evaluations have methodological shortcomings related to design, sample size, and measurement. However, though limited by design considerations, these reports do show a commitment to measuring the impact of the programs and can be used to build the knowledge base of evaluation research in child welfare training.

Bronson, Newsome, and Vonk (2003) use a pre/post-comparison group, quasi-experimental design to evaluate a Title IV-E funded training program for second-year MSW students. Though the sample size was small, findings indicate significant differences regarding attitudes toward child welfare practice, but no differences regarding child welfare knowledge.

Scannapieco, Bolen, and Connell (2000) use a survey methodology of current and past MSW Title IV-E students, supervisors, and administrators in the state agency. They report that students believe their MSW education has a positive impact on their professional abilities, although the degree of perceived impact is not large. Findings were based on 50 returned surveys (42% response rate) and the lack of pre/post-test measurement was a key limitation. Findings from the administrator survey (46 returned surveys, 42% response rate) indicate that perception of the impact of the Title IV-E program was either none or slight.

Fox, Miller, and Barbee (2003) report outcome data for the first cohort of 27 students. The design included a comparison of pre- and post-test scores of students with the scores of other agency employees completing core competency training, and interviews with graduates and their supervisors six months after graduation. The certification program students scored significantly higher than other new employees on both pre- and post-test measures. Interview data with supervisors found high ratings for the graduates in several areas, including intake investigations and ongoing treatment. Graduates of the program also rated themselves very highly.

Some of the studies with larger samples and/or longitudinal designs provide more substantial information, with the outcome of retention often of central interest. For example, in a study of California's Title IV-E program, Dickinson and Perry found that 78 percent of workers in the sample (N=368) remained

on the job for at least 3–6 months after completing their contracted period of employment. Jones (2002) found that there were higher retention rates among Title IV-E graduates than among other child welfare workers. In Minnesota, Robin and Hollister (2002) found that 93 percent of trainees were still employed in child welfare 4–7 years after graduation.

Jones and Okamura (2000) used a quasi-experimental design to compare Title IV-E trained workers to non-Title IV-E trained workers. The sample included all new hires in the public child welfare agency between June 1994 and August 1996. The trained group consisted of 39 workers, the comparison group of 227 workers. Data collection included a baseline questionnaire, phone follow-up, and review of personnel records. Measures included a knowledge test, a competence rating scale, a job satisfaction scale, and a job stress scale. Results suggest that there were no significant differences in overall satisfaction or stress (although there were some differences on subscale items). However, differences were found on measures of knowledge, self-perception of competence, and retention. Title IV-E trained workers scored higher on the knowledge measure and were more likely to remain employed at the child welfare agency than the other workers.

Lewandowski (1998) evaluated employment and retention outcomes of a Title IV-E child welfare traineeship program in one state. The partnership had been in operation for six years, but was then terminated "primarily because of a changing political climate that fails to support professional social services in the public sector" (p. 38). Data were collected from the training program's records and the state's personnel database. Also a survey was conducted of "key actors" to gather data on perceptions of the program's benefits. The study found that of 191 BSW and MSW graduates, 95 percent were employed in public child welfare. After a 2-year period, 58 percent were still employed with the agency, a similar rate to that reported by other studies. There was a larger retention rate among BSW social workers than MSW social workers. Trainees who were employees at the time they were accepted into the training program had lower turnover rates compared to those who became employees upon graduation. The author concludes that overall the training program did not appear to enhance retention in child welfare, but other influences occurring at the time (declassification and privatization) may have negatively influenced retention.

Evaluation Challenges

There are numerous challenges surrounding the task of evaluating Title IV-E effectiveness. Since Title IV-E funding was not extensively utilized until the early 1990s, most programs are relatively new, posing a particular research challenge with regard to evaluating effectiveness (Pierce, 2003; Zlotnick, 2001). Chavkin and Brown (2003) posit that "knowledge, time, and budget constraints" are common issues impacting the evaluation process (p. 63). The literature offers a range of recommendations to respond to the many evaluation challenges identified.

In particular, Smith (2002) discusses the need for more evaluation of federally-funded child welfare training partnerships. She emphasizes the importance of studies focused on professional child welfare training, and then speculates about why there may be few such studies. One reason is timing. Although Title IV-E has funded child welfare training for about 20 years, the majority of child welfare training efforts occurred in only the past 10 years. A second reason may be attitudes toward evaluation research. Key stakeholders may not see the value of demonstrating effectiveness to others when they are convinced of the value themselves. Third, useful evaluation studies are difficult to conduct.

Methodological recommendations are scattered throughout the literature. While they address different aspects of research, a common thread among them is the need to increase the methodological rigor of future evaluations. For example, since existing research tends to focus on individual program case studies, Chavkin and Brown (2003) suggest that Title IV-E evaluations target larger samples to include multiple programs and comparisons across programs. The use of control groups has also been recommended (Chavkin & Brown, 2003; Dickinson & Perry, 2002). Smith (2002) writes that better, more useful evaluation studies need well-targeted questions, strong research designs, strong and innovative research methods, and theory-driven approaches. In her research on California's Title IV-E collaboration, Clark (2003) notes the need to "better operationalize competencies" (p. 152). Coleman and Clark (2003) suggest strategies that include elements of experimental designs such as quantitative methods, random sampling, correlational studies, and increased use of client outcome measures. Zlotnick (2001) cites the need to assess the current capacity of research to measure client outcomes accurately.

Due to the diversity of program models and the unique variables impacting their success, researchers caution against applying the same evaluation model across studies of diverse collaborations (Reilly & Petersen, 1997). Chavkin and Brown (2003) emphasize that "traditional methodological approaches are not entirely

appropriate for partnership evaluations" and recommend that programs be "open to developing their own evaluation plans" (p. 54). They offer an eight-step evaluation model to guide partnerships in creating their own research designs. Their detailed descriptions of each step provide suggestions for measurement methods and evaluation indicators.

The Title IV-E literature also includes discussion of specific research questions and topics for future evaluation. For example, Alperin (1996) proposes examining whether social work students ultimately enter into child welfare careers. She also suggests the need to analyze the different types of child welfare jobs available for BSW and MSW graduates, as well as the content of classroom and field instruction in various social work programs. Jones (2002) recommends that Title IV-E evaluations focus on appraising worker performance. Jones and Okamura (2000) suggest long-term follow-up studies of retention rates for Title IV-E workers in public child welfare. Zlotnick (2001) recommends that subsequent studies analyze recruitment, retention, and the long-term cost/benefit of Title IV-E's success.

Lawson and colleagues (2003) endorse the future study of group "dynamics" and "work settings." These researchers state that "the most important evaluation criterion is the extent to which individual and group members demonstrate that powerful learning and development have occurred" (p. 178). These findings are crucial, as they will ultimately indicate "systems change and cross-systems change" (p. 179).

Summary

The future of child welfare training and collaborative partnerships will be impacted by many forces at the agency, organizational, and policy levels. Social and political forces will affect the resources and opportunities for partnerships between child welfare and social work education. Organizational variables within partnering systems will also affect the success of collaboration. Whether these multi-systemic, environmental influences facilitate or impede future collaborations may ultimately depend on the solidarity and commitment of the partners involved. Through their mutual commitment, current partnerships can strive to institutionalize their collaborative relationships, ultimately becoming powerful forces on behalf of improved child welfare practice.

Chapter 4
Evaluation of Training

Introduction

In this chapter, we review the literature in three areas: 1) outcome evaluation of training, 2) transfer of training studies, and 3) developments in training evaluation practice. This section is primarily about pre-service and in-service training. Because the previous section focused specifically on partnership models —including a discussion of evaluation issues—we do not include information on evaluation of partnership models here. We also do not include articles on training related to child maltreatment specifically (e.g., recognizing signs of abuse), training targeted toward lay audiences (e.g., parent training), or targeted toward allied professions specifically (e.g., teachers, police). However, we do include information on interdisciplinary training that includes these professions.

We found in our search that many articles have only tangential reference to training that occurs within a larger initiative, often a program. Training, although briefly described, is not the focus of the article, and limited or no evaluation data is provided. For example, Hawkins and Bland (2002) report on a kinship care project and its evaluation. As part of the project, formal group training was provided to relative caregivers, a training group evaluation form was used, and evaluation results suggested positive feedback about the training group. But little detail is provided about the actual training. The bulk of the article provides information about the larger project rather than the training segment. Articles such as these are not included in the review, because their primary focus is not training.

As described by Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001), "Training evaluation is one of those activities that is easier said than done. Training evaluation is labor

intensive, costly, political, and many times is the bearer of bad news" (p. 487). The field of training evaluation recognizes the need for more and better evaluation of training interventions. This was a common theme in the reviewed literature and we concur that there is a need for more attention to evaluation, especially in child welfare. However, we recognize that the field of training evaluation in child welfare has grown significantly, improved its evaluation efforts, and explored a variety of methodologies to provide needed information to inform the design and delivery of training.

Our focus in this section is on training evaluation, although we provide some brief attention to organizational characteristics that may impact the effectiveness of training in the work environment. Alvarez, Salas, and Garofano (2004) provide a conceptually useful distinction between training evaluation and training effectiveness. Training evaluation "is a methodological approach for measuring learning outcomes," and training effectiveness "is a theoretical approach for understanding those outcomes." Because training evaluation focuses solely on learning outcomes, it provides a micro-view of training results. Conversely, training effectiveness focuses on the learning system as a whole, thus providing a macro-view of training outcomes. "Evaluation seeks to find the benefits of training to individuals in the form of learning and enhanced on-the-job performance. Effectiveness seeks to benefit the organization by determining why individuals learned or did not learn. Finally, evaluation results describe what happened as a result of the training intervention. Effectiveness findings tell us why those results happened, and so assist experts with developing prescriptions for improving training" (pp. 387–388).

A commonly utilized model for classifying training evaluations is provided by Kirkpatrick (1976, 1994). Kirkpatrick's taxonomy offers four levels of measuring the effectiveness of training: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. This model has brought simplicity and clarity to the child welfare field's complex task of measuring training outcomes. Most of the research literature reports results at Kirkpatrick's level 2 (learning) and, to a lesser degree, level 3 (behavior). This is predictable because evaluations reporting only level 1 (reactions) would be unlikely to be published, and evaluations at level 4 (results) are difficult to conduct and thus rare. Although widely used, Kirkpatrick's model is often criticized and other alternatives advanced. As yet, however, his conceptualization of evaluation continues to frame the discussion. We will revisit theoretical and empirical literature on training evaluation later in a discussion of the transfer of training.

Outcome Evaluation in Child Welfare Training

Child Welfare Workers

Leung and Cheung (1998) briefly summarize the literature on the effectiveness of child protective services (CPS) training prior to 1990. They suggest that in the 1970s the research focus was on the content and curriculum of training, worker satisfaction with training, and the use of collaborative models. In the 1980s research attention focused on specific changes in skills post-training, as well as on identifying factors that led to training success. Since 1990, evaluation research has focused on the assessment of competencies in the areas of skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Early in the 1990s, Cheung, Stevenson, and Leung (1991) conducted an evaluation of a training protocol for case management in child sexual abuse cases. For competency-based evaluation of case management skills, an essay-type service plan exam was developed. The evaluation instrument consisted of a case vignette and four open-ended questions, to be completed in a maximum of two hours. Evaluation of skills was based on the trainee's understanding of the problems in the vignette, the clarity of communication, and inclusion of necessary information in four conceptual areas: problem definition, goals formulation, setting objectives, and contract negotiation.

The training and evaluation were conducted with 18 trainees. Good inter-rater reliability was established ($r = 0.85$). Using a paired t-test, the researchers found overall improvement immediately following the training (compared to baseline). Improvement was noted in three of four conceptual areas: ability to formulate goals, to set appropriate objectives, and to define the components of negotiating a contract. The fourth area, ability to conceptualize problems, did not improve significantly, but the authors report that responses to this baseline measure were already at a high level. Even though post-training scores were significantly higher in these three areas, the trainees would still benefit from improvement, suggesting the need for continued skill practice. The authors note that while the essay format poses challenges regarding the reliability of measurement, it recognizes the complexity of the subject matter and the need for flexible approaches to situations. Although the sample size was small, the utilization of an essay-type exam and the two hour time commitment demonstrate some of the measurement challenges within the highly nuanced work of child welfare.

More recently, Leung and Cheung (1998) conducted one of the most sophisticated evaluations of training reported in the literature. They describe a longitudinal evaluation of an entry-level training program focused on caseworkers' performance,

knowledge, and attitudes. This is one of the few evaluations that tried to examine the long-term effectiveness of training. The training was designed for entry-level caseworkers to learn CPS practice. It was a 3-month program of highly-structured classroom training and on-the-job supervision. Content included: introduction to CPS; child maltreatment; intake; investigation and assessment; human development and needs of children; child placement; working with families; legal aspects of CPS; and field preparation. The sample for the evaluation study included 152 trainees and a comparison group of 51 caseworkers who did not complete the training. Skill competency was measured using data from the state performance evaluation forms, and performance was compared at three time periods: program evaluation (6–9 months with CPS), first annual evaluation (12 months with CPS), and second annual evaluation (24 months with CPS). Following training, trainee knowledge was measured in four areas: introduction to CPS, human development and needs, family assessment and treatment, and child placement. Additionally, a self-report questionnaire was used pre- and post-training to determine participants' perceptions of how much information and experience they possessed to accomplish specific tasks (e.g., identify abuse, utilize resources). Finally, an attitudinal scale was used with 20 trainees that measured the extent to which the trainees believed they were culturally competent.

No significant differences were found on the performance measures between the trainees and the comparison group. The authors suggest that although the comparison group did not attend training, perhaps they learned their skills on the job. Also, the comparison group of current workers may have contained better workers, since poor workers might already have been dismissed from their jobs. Regarding the four knowledge measures, the average percentage of correct results was 87 percent. This is considered a "good to excellent" level of knowledge attainment immediately after training. A measure of 188 participants' perceived level of information/experience in several tasks was assessed at pre- and post-test. Results showed a significant increase in all 19 task measures, especially in risk assessment, child removal, and abuse identification. The attitudinal assessment, using pre- and post-tests with the 20 trainees, found a significant increase in awareness of stereotypes, ethnic differences, ethnic values, and value of family preservation. The authors conclude, "although there is still no statistical evidence from the comparison data to support that the trained workers performed better than the untrained ones, entry-level training is perceived as essential to prepare CPS caseworkers to perform difficult tasks from investigation to assessment and from child placement to treatment."

Also focusing on CPS work, Freeman and Morris (1999) evaluated the effectiveness of a training program to increase front-line worker skill in conducting investigative interviews. This evaluation included an examination of the impact of training on workers' behavior during the conduct of interviews. A quasi-experimental design was used and 12 CPS workers participated. Outcome measures were completed before, immediately after, and three months following the training. Measures included a questionnaire to assess knowledge about interviewing practices; simulated interviews (using a confederate in the role of alleged child sexual abuse victim) to assess participant behavior during interviews; and questionnaires to gather information related to the simulated interviews. The training consisted of three weekly 2-hour sessions.

Researchers found a significant increase from pre-test to post-test on the knowledge measure, but no additional improvement at follow-up. Regarding the interviewing behavior, the significant changes included decreased percent of intervals in which participants praised the confederates for verbalizations not related to disclosure, increased ratio of open-ended questions in relation to all questions, and increased amount of time spent explaining the purpose of the interview. Behaviors not changed by the training included the percent of intervals during which participants evidenced behaviors defined as inappropriate, and the percent of intervals participants spent asking appropriate questions. Additionally, the percentage of open-ended questions asked—although significantly improved—remained low. Researchers concluded that the training program did not have a strong effect on behavior. Methodological issues (e.g., small numbers, use of confederates rather than actual interviews) may have played a role in the lack of substantial effects.

Alpert and Britner (2005) report on a training program in Connecticut that was designed to change caseworker attitudes toward families to be more family-focused. Participants included 251 employees, all of whom were CPS workers. The sampling strategy was designed to include both workers who had received the training and those who had not. Statistical analysis found no significant difference in average score between those trained with the specialized family-focused curriculum and those not trained. Both groups of participants reported a fairly high level of accordance with the curriculum's family-focused principles. The authors conclude from these results that, in general, agency workers believe they are working from principles of family-focused casework.

Gregoire (1994) discusses a pilot study on addiction training for public child welfare workers which examined the effect of training on both workers' attitudes and practice. Post-training surveys were completed by all participants (N=47)

and 32 successfully completed a follow-up survey. Out of thirteen attitudes measured in the post-training survey, ten items showed significant changes in a positive direction. For instance, workers were more likely to see addiction knowledge as important to their practice, and more likely to see themselves as being helpful to substance abusing individuals. The follow-up survey asked participants to assess the progress they had made on goals they established at the end of the training. Gregoire reports that complete or partial completion was reported for half of the goals participants established for themselves at the end of the training. Workers reported several barriers to completing the post-training goals, most of which were work-related. Gregoire acknowledges the limitations of the study (i.e., sample size and study design), while noting future directions for child welfare training including greater supervisor involvement to enhance the transfer of training into practice. The author finds that goal setting and contracting with participants about the follow-up assessment contributed to workers' efforts to change practice and suggests that this method can be used to increase the transfer of training into practice.

Some simpler evaluation designs were used to evaluate more specific training topics delivered as in-service training (Owens-Kane, Smith, & Brinson, 2005; Davidson & Levine, 2003; Smith, Schinke, & Springer, 2001). In these evaluations, the rigor is limited, but generally appropriate to this specifically focused training. Owens-Kane, Smith, and Brinson (2005) evaluated an Internet-based training series that provided continuing education for child welfare workers. The focus of the continuing education was to distribute research findings in the areas of youth aging out of foster care; siblings in foster care; drug exposed infants; and child welfare practice appreciated by children, foster, and adoptive parents. Data are reported on 106 registrants (63 who completed at least one module and 43 non-completers). Overall, pre-test and post-test scores for four content-specific modules were compared using t-tests to examine whether participation resulted in knowledge gain. Significant differences were found for each module and for overall score.

Davidson and Levine (2003) describe the need for CPS workers to have training in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), primarily for purposes of mental health assessment, but also to provide sufficient rationale for developing this training. They describe in-depth a professional development training course (day-long, 6-hour session) offered through the Protective Services Training Institute of Texas (a consortium of Texas graduate schools of social work), including the educational competencies, topic areas, instructional strategies, and experiential exercises of the course. Evaluation forms are completed at the end of each workshop. The reported results (based on 110 respondents) suggest that

the training was well-received, trainees felt confident in their knowledge about the topic, and planned to apply the knowledge in their job. Over 90 percent reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with each of these three assessments.

Smith, Schinke, and Springer (2001) evaluated a 5-day clinical training program for 34 CPS workers. All 34 workers completed a series of pre- and post-test measures. Additionally, six of the workers were randomly selected to participate in a single-system evaluation design involving a multiple-probe evaluation procedure. Post-test training gains were observed for knowledge of child development and behavior change principles, facts about child abuse and neglect, and self-control and anger management abilities. The behavior training methods (instrument, modeling, and practice) of the six workers were evaluated with a single-system design, which identified more specificity, reinforcement, modeling, and rehearsals with a client as the workers learned each training method.

Supervisor Training

The field of child welfare training recognizes the important role of supervisors in training, yet few trainings and consequent evaluations have included supervisors. However, Kessler and Greene (1999) conducted two experiments testing interventions that trained caseworkers and supervisors to manage visits between parents and their children in foster care. Managing skills included planning, conducting, and ending the visits. Although the experiment was limited by small numbers of training participants, the intervention and its evaluation were very detailed. The first experiment involved two caseworkers in individualized training; the second involved a group training intervention for two caseworkers and their supervisor. Observations were made in each of the three phases (planning, conducting, and ending) and percentages of steps performed correctly were assessed, both before and after training. The effects of the group training in the second experiment were similar to those in the first experiment, but considered more efficient since more (three) people were trained in the second.

Bibus (1993) reports the results of an exploratory study in which social workers and supervisors were trained in a collaborative practice model. A sample of 118 social workers participated in training that focused on the provision of services to involuntary clients. Two-thirds of these social workers also had supervisors who participated in a shorter training program. Bibus compared the results of workers whose supervisors had received training with those whose supervisors had not. The comparison focused on the submission of action plans following the training and the number of action plan items the social workers were able to implement. While no differences were found in the submission of action plans, an unexpected difference was found in the number of items implemented. The

group whose supervisors were not in the training had a significantly higher number of implemented items than the group whose supervisors attended the training. Researchers concluded that, in this case, supervisors' attendance in training did not have a positive effect as measured by the completion and result of participants' action plans. Bibus suggests that supervisory skill and worker skill in using supervision are likely to have more influence than attendance at training.

Bending (1997) describes a training program focused on core components of Indian child welfare practice. Participants included child welfare workers and supervisors from 17 of the 26 federally recognized tribes and ten of the state child welfare offices. Training evaluation included pre/post-test and a follow-up survey. Overall, evaluation of the program indicated positive outcomes. Attitudes and knowledge were positively impacted in some areas. Collaboration between state and Indian child welfare workers also showed improvement. Bending stresses however that training in itself is not enough. In the follow-up evaluation, workers indicated that they needed additional support to provide more culturally competent services. The types of support identified ranged from more foster homes to more flexibility in state-required practice procedures to facilitate implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The author also argues that in addition to training programs, schools of social work need to incorporate culturally relevant child welfare education into their curricula.

Mason, LaPorte, and Frankel (2003) conducted a study comparing training participants' and supervisors' perceptions of the impact of training. The training consisted of 42 seminars involving 743 participants. It was offered through a training consortium of New York City's Administration for Children's Services. The evaluation design included a mailed follow-up survey to participants and their supervisors three months after training. Supervisors were asked to respond to changes in their supervisees' on-the-job performance. A major design flaw in the survey was that, due to anonymity, supervisors' responses were not linked to specific training participants. The key finding was that the perceptions of supervisors regarding what was learned and applied to practice was significantly lower than the perceptions of workers/trainees. Attendees thought that supervisors had noticed and attributed changes in their practice behavior to the training, when in fact, supervisors had not. The authors offer possible interpretations of this finding: attendees might have overstated the training effect; supervisors did not have enough access to workers' practice to accurately assess changes due to training; or the supervisors did not know the practice themselves and thereby did not know what to evaluate.

Child welfare supervisors were the focus of Strand and Badger's (2005) report on an evaluation of a clinical consultation model designed to assist supervisors in their roles as educators, mentors, and coaches for casework staff. The authors note that training and consultation are important methods for preparing and retaining qualified supervisors. The program consisted of ten 3-hour consulting sessions held in the course of one year. Experienced faculty from schools of social work provided the consultation. Approximately 160 supervisors participated during the 3-year project. The evaluation consisted of a pre/post self-assessment measure, a consumer satisfaction questionnaire, and follow-up at 3 and 15 months after the program. A total of 84 participants completed both the pre-test and post-test, and thus formed the study sample. Scores on the self-assessment measure (as a whole) and on each subscale improved from pre-test to post-test. Gains in years 2 and 3 were greater than in year 1, likely due to program improvements and adjustments after pilot year 1. In terms of satisfaction, most scores were high, including data that demonstrated faculty facilitators were good leaders, well prepared, and knowledgeable.

The follow up survey was conducted with nine supervisors from year 2 (15 months after participation) and 11 supervisors from year 3 (3 months after participation). Questions were open-ended and primarily focused on perceived benefits. Because of small numbers and the open-ended nature of the questions, conclusions could not be drawn. The authors also report on program difficulties—particularly attendance—and suggest the following core conditions for maximizing attendance: 1) program units from which staff are drawn for training should be relatively free of exceptional organizational stressors; 2) administrative support for the training must be made available, including clear sanctions for time to attend and coverage provided in the office for those attending training; 3) the training opportunity should be introduced to staff in a way that pays particular attention to the substantive learning that will accrue to participants and the specific kind of administrative support available; and 4) only one training opportunity at a time should be provided, so that staff are not conflicted about multiple training requirements.

Foster Parents

Foster parents are a key target of training interventions. Lee and Holland (1991) conducted a pilot study to evaluate the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP), which has been a widely used foster parent training program. They note that at the time of their evaluation the training program had been adopted by 10 state child welfare systems, yet none of the sites had reported an evaluation of the effects of the training. In their evaluation, Lee and Holland compared two MAPP training groups (n=17) with a comparison group not receiving the training (n=12). Four hypotheses about trained foster parents

were tested: 1) they would have fewer inappropriate developmental expectations of children, 2) would place lower value on physical punishment, 3) would have better understanding of appropriate parent-child roles, and 4) would have greater empathy toward children's needs. Data analysis focused on comparisons between the trained and untrained groups, as well as changes within the trained group from pre-test to post-test.

The results found no significant differences on any of the comparisons and the authors suggest that the limitations of the design, instrumentation, and implementation of the program all played a role in the results. Additionally, the intervention may have rested on inadequate theoretical assumptions. "There was no available systematic presentation of a theoretical foundation for MAPP and no apparent logical or empirical justification for its assumptions, components, or methods. Rather, the curriculum appears to be a synthesis of currently popular ideology among some child welfare practitioners regarding what ought to be important to foster parents" (p. 172).

Burry (1999) describes a 10-hour training program with content designed to enhance foster parents' knowledge and skills regarding infants with prenatal substance effects. Several hypotheses were tested using a pre- and post-test, non-equivalent comparison group design. The dependent variables were 1) feelings of efficacy about caring for infants with prenatal substance effects, 2) demonstration of specific care giving skills, 3) attainment of specific knowledge about infants with prenatal substance effects, 4) feelings of social support, and 5) intent to foster infants with prenatal substance effects. An intervention group of 28 trained foster parents was compared to a group of 60 foster parents not receiving this specific training.

Results indicate that the specialized training met at least two goals: increased knowledge about these infants and increased skill in caring for them. These were observed in the intervention group but not the comparison group. No differences were found on levels of efficacy, social support, or intent to foster, which the author speculates could be attributed to high levels on these measures at pre-test. A key study challenge was the recruitment of foster parents to the intervention group, particularly their ability to complete the full 10-hour training. Burry suggests the possibility of developing a shorter training format, which is a common theme in other training programs.

Using a very different methodology, Sanchirico and Jablonka (2000) examined whether specialized training and agency support increased foster parent involvement in connecting biological parents with their children. The authors used data from a 1993 survey of New York State foster parents in a random

sample drawn from the State Foster Parent Registry. The sample was stratified based on geographic location (New York City versus Upstate New York) and 1,500 foster homes were selected from each stratum. A response rate of almost 39 percent was attained. Although not conducted specifically for this study, the survey contained variables that the authors used to test their hypothesis. The study found that 19 percent of foster parents received specialized training and support to help them facilitate contact between biological parents and children, and an additional 20 percent received training but not support.

Using multivariate regression analysis, the researchers examined the impact of training and support on the number of activities foster parents engaged in to keep foster children connected to biological parents (e.g., take child for visits with family, encourage phone calls). Training and/or support increased the number of reunification-promoting activities in which foster parents engaged. The combined effects of training and support were considered strong, whereas either effect on its own was significant but small. The authors conclude that agencies should require specialized training for foster parents to help foster children remain connected to their biological families, and that ongoing support needs to be provided.

Interdisciplinary Training

In recent years, there has been widespread advocacy for more interdisciplinary training. Consequently, several such training efforts have occurred. Jones, Packard, and Nahrstedt (2002) describe an evaluation of a training curriculum for inter-agency collaboration. The program provided a 5-day, competency-based, interdisciplinary curriculum designed to prepare trainees for child welfare practice. The evaluation examined the impact of the training on trainee perceptions regarding their acquisition of knowledge and skills, attitudinal change towards interdisciplinary practice, and skills gained in the practice. A total of 119 trainees completed a pre-test and post-test. Paired t-tests found significant differences in the expected direction on several items including trainees' 1) perceptions of the benefits of collaboration, 2) perceptions of their acquisition of knowledge, and 3) self reports of collaborating more with mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and CPS workers. The evaluation included a follow-up telephone interview six months after training to assess retention and transfer of learning. However, because of difficulty locating workers, the sample at follow-up was reduced to 52, and significance tests on differences were not conducted.

Anderson-Butcher, Lawson, and Barkdull (2002) conducted a unique evaluation focused on child welfare "design teams"—referred to as "action learning systems" —in four states. This initiative was designed to provide learning, training, and

capacity-building assistance to child welfare and collaborating systems. The initiative involved the following mission: "To enable the development of family-centered, culturally-responsive, interprofessional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that tie the child welfare goals of child protection, permanency, and family preservation to the needs of economic self-sufficiency, mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse; and to do so in ways that promote collaboration, service integration, and university reforms" (p. 134). This involved an "innovative, empowerment-oriented evaluation strategy" that could accommodate the initiative's complexity and facilitate development of an education and training model. The evaluation consisted of surveys sent to members of the design teams, and qualitative interviews with team members to measure perceptions about the teams' benefits and accomplishments. Results suggested that 1) the design teams had significant impact on promoting family-centered practice, 2) service delivery was enhanced, and 3) personal growth occurred as a part of the process. The authors note that the evaluation did not include observations of team members' work to determine whether there were changes in practice.

The authors contrast the experience of those involved in the teams with those involved in training. Training emphasizes technical-procedural competencies, whereas "design teams focus on people's meaning systems and identities, assuming an intricate and important relationship between who people are and what they do" (p. 153). The authors further stress that "training discourse, with its focus on individuals, trainers, training protocols and curriculum, and competencies, was a significant constraint" to their work. The design team process operates from a learning systems approach and relies on different discourses (e.g., team process, empowerment).

Transfer of Training

Training evaluation needs to measure both the training intervention's impact on specific, immediate learner outcomes and its ability to effect sustained change in learner practice that results in improved outcomes for clients. The "transfer problem" has been well documented in the literature—both within and outside child welfare—and there is widespread acknowledgement that training does not often transfer to the job. This has wisely led to some adaptations in training, including mentoring models, utilization of technology, and development of standards regarding training and professional development (Curry, McCarragher, & Dellman-Jenkins, 2005). Of course, much more innovation is needed to address the widespread lack of transfer of training.

Training Evaluation Models

Alvarez, Salas, and Garofano (2004) identify four training evaluation models, beginning with Kirkpatrick's 4-level typology (i.e., reaction, learning, behavior, results), which the authors describe as the simplest and most common model used for training evaluation. Levels 1 and 2 are usually measured within the training setting and are fairly easy to measure. Levels 3 and 4 are measured outside the training setting and are typically more difficult to measure, but they are relevant to discussions of transferring the training beyond the training setting. The model is often implemented sequentially, in the belief that success at each level requires successful completion of the previous level(s). Thus, reactions to training are related to learning, learning is related to behavior, and behavior is related to results.

Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver, and Shotland (1997) note that "although there are problems with Kirkpatrick's model, just how best to think about training criteria is not clear" (p. 342). Some suggest that the taxonomy needs further development, whereas others suggest new models are needed (e.g., Holton, 1996). Alliger et al. offer an augmented framework to capture some important distinctions that they then used for conducting a meta-analysis of the relationship between the levels of training criteria. *Reaction* might be divided into affective reactions (i.e., liking the training) and utility judgments (i.e., usefulness of the training). Although their work does not include it, they also note that Warr and Bunce (1995) suggest a third reaction measure, difficulty of training. For the second level, *learning*, Alliger et al. use the three subcategories of immediate post-training knowledge (commonly measured), knowledge retention (measured at a later time), and behavior/skill demonstration (within the training setting). Alliger et al. reclassify Kirkpatrick's third level, *behavior* as *transfer*, to denote skill performance transferred to the work setting. They retain the fourth level, *results* (organizational impact, e.g., productivity, customer satisfaction, profitability), but recognize that although important in measuring training success, organizational constraints often limit the ability to collect these data. Hence there are few published studies examining these criteria. Using their revised taxonomy the authors conducted a meta-analysis of 34 studies to examine correlations among the training criteria. Their results find modest correlations between the various types of training criteria. The strongest correlations were found between different criteria from within the same level.

Bates (2004) suggests three limitations to the Kirkpatrick model: 1) it is incomplete because it does not consider individual or contextual influences on learning, 2) it erroneously assumes causal linkages between the four levels, and 3) it assumes higher levels of information about training program effectiveness are more useful.

Specifically, Bates states, "the causal linkage assumption and the over-reliance on reaction measures also diverts trainers' attention away from efforts to make training truly effective, to a focus on developing entertaining, amusing, and easy-going training that participants find enjoyable. It is often easier to develop a training program that will elicit positive reaction from participants than one that will lead to true learning and behavior on the job" (p. 344). Moreover, learning is often difficult and participants may experience training as uncomfortable (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Thus, reactions to training may be negative even when a great deal of learning has taken place.

A second model (Tannenbaum, Cannon-Bowers, Salas, & Mathieu, 1993) discussed by Alvarez and colleagues expands on the Kirkpatrick model. They add post-training attitudes and divide behavior into two outcomes for evaluation: training performance and transfer performance. In this model, learning is related to training performance, training performance is related to transfer performance, and transfer performance is related to results. In a third model, Holton (1996) included three evaluation targets: learning, transfer, and results. According to Alvarez and colleagues, reactions are not a part of this model because reactions are not considered a primary outcome of training. Instead reactions are defined as a mediating and/or moderating variable between trainees' motivation to learn and actual learning. In this model, learning is related to transfer and transfer is related to results. In addition, Holton argues for an integration of evaluation and effectiveness.

Finally, Alvarez and colleagues describe a fourth model of evaluation provided by Kraiger (2002), which emphasizes three multidimensional target areas: training content and design (i.e., design, delivery, and validity of training); changes in learners (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioral); and organizational payoffs (i.e., transfer climate, job performance, and results). Reactions are not considered outcomes, but rather measure how effective training content and design were for the tasks to be learned. In this model, reaction measures are not related to changes in learners or organizational payoffs, but changes in learners are related to organizational payoffs.

Developed by Parry and Berdie (1999), the American Humane Association model, expands Kirkpatrick's model to ten levels: 1) course (formative evaluation to assess and improve content, structure, methods, materials, and delivery); 2) satisfaction (trainees' feelings about the trainer and training); 3) opinion (trainees' attitudes toward utilization of training, i.e., relevance); 4) knowledge acquisition (learning and recalling terms, definitions, and facts); 5) knowledge comprehension (understanding material); 6) skill demonstration (application of new material in the classroom); 7) skill transfer (application of new material

on the job); 8) agency impact; 9) client outcomes; and 10) community impacts. The authors also note that lower levels are more directly related to training and easier to measure. At higher levels, training is one of several variables that *potentially* impact outcomes, but direct connections of outcomes to training are very difficult to document.

Empirical Reviews of Transfer of Training

The transfer of training literature is extensive and much of it is based in fields that are substantially distant from child welfare training. Many of the studies come from business management, organizational learning, information processing, and human resource development. In these studies, sample sizes may be small, the focus of training very task specific (e.g., machine operation), and samples highly specialized (e.g., military personnel). Thus, while lessons from these transfer studies can be important, their relevance should be interpreted in terms of their fit with child welfare training.

There are already several excellent reviews of the transfer of training literature. In particular, Baldwin and Ford (1988), Cheng and Ho (2001), Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001), and Alvarez, Salas, and Garafano (2004) provide extensive reviews of the literature in the field. In addition, Yamnill and McLean (2001) review the theoretical literature on transfer of training. Here we provide an overview of these thorough reviews and encourage the reader who seeks more detail to read these reviews in their entirety.

One of the earlier—but most extensive and oft cited—reviews is provided by Baldwin and Ford (1988) who state, "For transfer to have occurred, learned behavior must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time on the job" (p. 63). Baldwin and Ford review major studies that were done prior to 1987, using a conceptual model that focused on training inputs, outputs, and the conditions of transfer. Training inputs included trainee characteristics (e.g., ability, personality, and motivation); training design (e.g., principles of learning, sequencing, and training content); and work environment (e.g., support, opportunity to use). Training outputs included learning and retention. The conditions of transfer of training included generalization of material learned in training to the job and maintenance of the learned material over time.

The authors reviewed 25 studies that examined trainee characteristics. The studies used a variety of different samples, training tasks, and research designs. The criterion measure was usually retention of learned material. The major source of information was the trainee; information was typically gathered soon after completion of the training program.

Baldwin and Ford reviewed 38 studies that examined the design of training (most of the studies were completed prior to 1970). They organize their discussion into four basic principles of training design: 1) identical elements (transfer is maximized when there are identical stimulus and response elements in the training and transfer setting); 2) general principles (transfer is facilitated when trainees are taught general rules that can be applied in a variety of situations); 3) stimulus variability (transfer is maximized when a variety of training stimuli are employed); and 4) conditions of practice (transfer is related to issues such as feedback, massed or distributed training, and whole or partial training). Although the research designs of the studies were strong (experimental or quasi-experimental), many of them involved college students engaged in simple motor tasks or military personnel involved in tasks specific to military training.

Seven articles regarding environmental characteristics were identified. Most of the studies involved interpersonal skills training for managers. Several major problems were identified with this body of work, primarily based on "the static nature of the research in relation to the dynamic nature of the transfer process" (p. 85). The link between environmental characteristics and transfer was strong, but based on correlational studies. Better operationalization of key variables was needed, particularly "supervisory support." Self-reports of behavioral change were typically used to measure transfer and should be supplemented with other sources of data. Additionally, measurements taken at two points in time, including follow-up, cannot identify why changes occur without including measures of process.

Baldwin and Ford are fairly specific in the research directions that follow from their review. In the area of trainee characteristics they note that research needs to more clearly identify important trainee characteristics. In particular, there is a need to identify the optimal matches between trainee characteristics and training program design and content. Even more so, "studies are needed in which personality/ability factors are measured and individuals placed into training programs under different conditions of instructional methodology to determine which 'types' of individuals best match which types of programs for effective transfer of skills to the job" (p. 91). A more coherent theoretical framework is needed for assessing individual characteristics, particularly motivation. While numerous individual characteristic variables were measured, not enough work was done on model development to guide the selection of variables. Also, variables such as motivation can change over time, but are usually treated as static within existing training evaluations.

In terms of training design, Baldwin and Ford state, "research is needed to explore the type and level of fidelity needed to maximize transfer given time and resource constraints" (p. 87). In essence, it is not clear to what extent training circumstances

should match real-life circumstances. Additionally, there is a belief that maximizing stimulus variability—using a variety of training methods, models, and situations—is important for transfer, but operationalizing stimulus variability has been problematic. More research is needed on appropriate and effective types of stimulus variability for different training tasks.

Finally, the authors note that, "progress in the research on environmental characteristics requires the operationalization of key variables such as climate and supervisory support at a level of specificity that allows for the development of interventions for changing environmental characteristics and testing their effects on transfer of training" (p. 92). In particular, supervisory support is strongly believed to be a key environmental variable that can support or impede the transfer of training. Supervisors can encourage training in a variety of ways. They can support training through reinforcement of the content, help supervisees set goals related to the training, insure that supervisees have opportunities to use the skills in the setting, and offer rewards for the use of new skills. However, Baldwin and Ford note that greater empirical work is needed on supervisory support factors.

Conducting their review more than 12 years after Baldwin and Ford, Cheng and Ho (2001) report that although the studies thus far conducted are of value, "there is still a long way to go in order to reach the mature stage" (p. 102). The conceptual framework for their article begins with Kirkpatrick (1994), but expands the conceptualization of variables to include: individual (locus of control, self-efficacy), motivational (career/job attitudes, organizational commitment, decision/reaction to training, and post-training interventions), and environmental (supports in organization, continuous learning culture, and task constraints). Implications of their review suggest increased utilization of theoretical frameworks in conducting transfer research, more sophisticated research designs, testing of relationships in real job settings, and testing of relationships over the long-term. Moreover, much of the transfer research has been conducted in college settings and this needs to be extended into work settings. Self-reported measures of transfer are widely used, but should be supplemented by on-site observation and data from other sources (e.g., supervisors).

Also, Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001) conducted a review of the empirical literature. They derive several conclusions from their review: 1) the organizational learning environment can be reliably measured and varies in meaningful ways across organizations; 2) the context for training is important as it sets motivations, expectations, and attitudes for transfer; 3) the transfer "climate" can have a powerful impact on the extent to which newly acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes are used on the job; 4) trainees need an opportunity to perform;

5) delays between training and actual use on the job create significant skill decay; 6) situational cues and consequences predict the extent to which transfer occurs; 7) social, peer, subordinate, and supervisor support all play a central role in transfer; 8) training can generalize from one context to another and intervention strategies can be designed to improve the probability of transfer; 9) team leaders can shape the degree of transfer through reinforcement of transfer activities; and 10) training transfer differs depending on the type of training and closeness of supervision. Among the suggestions for further work in the field, Salas and Cannon-Bowers recommend increased attention to "vertical transfer," e.g., the extent to which learning outcomes at the individual level influence higher-level outcomes such as organizational effectiveness.

Rather than the empirical evidence, Yamnill and McLean (2001) review theories and conceptual frameworks that have been used to examine transfer of training. Following Holton (1996), they suggest that learning will result in performance change only when the three primary influences of *motivation, transfer design*, and *transfer climate* are at the appropriate levels. They then examine relevant theories in each of these three areas. *Theories of motivation* include expectancy (ability/willingness to perform a task and its relationship to outcome), equity (attendance at training results in more equitable rewards for participants), and goal setting (the process of setting goals for learning directs action toward performance).

Theories of transfer design include identical elements theory and principles theory. Identical elements theory (Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901) suggests that transfer is improved by a high-level of correspondence between the training setting and the work performance setting. Principles theory suggests that training should focus on the general principles of learning a task so that the learner can independently apply these principles to the appropriate situation in the work environment (Goldstein, 1986). Citing Laker (1990), Yamnill and McLean distinguish between near transfer (the application of learning to similar situations) and far transfer (application of learning to situations dissimilar to the original training event). Whether near or far, transfer should be reflected in the content and design of the training. Identical elements theory is more appropriate for near transfer and principles theory is more appropriate for far transfer.

Theories of transfer climate address the mediating relationship between the organization and the individual's work behavior. Yamnill and McLean design a conceptual framework offered by Rouiller and Goldstein (1993) that operationalizes transfer climate. This framework consists of two types of workplace cues: *situation cues*, which remind trainees of opportunities to use what they have learned in training (goal cues, social cues, task cues, and self-control cues), and *consequence*

cues, which are in the feedback trainees receive when they apply what they have learned in the workplace (positive feedback, negative feedback, no feedback, and punishment). Additionally, organizational theory—with its attention to external environmental influences, subsystems, and coordination within systems—helps to explain influences of the transfer climate.

Transfer of Training in Child Welfare

Having provided this overview of some of the key literature reviews in the field of transfer of training, we now provide some attention to the work conducted on transfer of training in child welfare. Curry, Caplan, and Knuppel (1994) summarize the literature on transfer of training in the fields of educational psychology, organizational psychology, and instructional design (as above). From this they develop a model of transfer of learning applicable to child welfare social workers. Their Transfer of Training and Adult Learning (TOTAL) model examines positive and negative transfer forces affecting five targets (trainee, trainer, supervisor, coworker, and administrator) at three points in time (before, during, and after the training session). As a whole, they suggest the TOTAL model provides a framework for assessment and intervention in the training process. Additionally, they offer some specific methods to increase transfer before, during, and after training workshops.

Gregoire, Propp, and Poertner (1998) provide a review of the transfer literature and report a study of the supervisor's contribution to the transfer of training. They sought to "assess the frequency with which supervisors engaged in behaviors believed to support training, and to determine the contribution of these behaviors to workers' perceptions of training benefit" (p. 2). The study is based on data reported in 210 surveys of child welfare workers who participated in one to six training sessions on substance abuse issues. The survey focused on the workers' perceptions of supervisor behaviors regarding supports for training, and changes in skills and practices attributed to training.

Based on the data reported, most workers did not perceive much supervisory support for training. For example, only 18 percent of respondents reported that supervisors always or often helped them decide what training would be beneficial, and about 40 percent believed that their supervisors encouraged them to apply new skills on the job; meanwhile about 34 percent of supervisors asked workers about the gains they received in training. The researchers then used exploratory factor analysis to create two scales: 1) supervisor's role in *identifying training opportunities* and 2) supervisor's role in *providing support* for the worker to attend training and attempt new behaviors upon their return. A measure of training impact was then regressed on the number of training sessions attended and the

two supervisory scales. Overall, there was a significant effect found for supervisory support for training, but not for supervisory identification of training opportunities. Although the study provides some support for the importance of the supervisory relationship for transfer of training, the authors recognize the limitations of the survey method for examining the transfer question, particularly the non-response of others attending the training and the self-report of training impact. Additionally, the authors note that there are several other important variables to the transfer process that are not measured in this study.

Wehrmann, Shin, and Poertner (2002) conducted an evaluation that asked training participants to conduct a self-assessment at the end of training and again six months later. At the end of training, participants completed an instrument measuring their perceptions of 1) their acquisition of clinical practice learning outcomes, 2) the instructional design of the training, and 3) pre-training transfer factors. The 6-month follow-up instrument again focused on participants' perceptions of their attainment of learning outcomes and post-training transfer factors. A total of 129 participants completed both instruments. A multivariate regression model identified three significant variables judged to be related to trainees' later use of knowledge and skills on the job: the opportunity to perform new tasks on the job (positive relationship), the support of peers upon returning to the job (positive relationship), and familiarity with training content (negative relationship).

Antle and Barbee (2003) report on key variables of training transfer in a child welfare evaluation of training for 72 supervisors and 411 caseworkers, including learning readiness, organizational support, and learning. Trainees who scored high on learning readiness were significantly more likely to transfer knowledge and skills from the training program. Trainees who rated their supervisors as more supportive of training (e.g., through discussion of training material, encouragement to use training, reinforcement of skills and terminology from training, and provision of opportunities to apply training) were more likely to transfer training knowledge and skills. Also, trainees who demonstrated higher levels of knowledge gain following training were more likely to transfer training material.

Curry, McCarragher, and Dellman-Jenkins (2005) conducted a longitudinal study of 416 child protective service workers to examine the relationship between learning transfer and staff retention in child welfare. The original sample included CPS workers who attended training and completed a questionnaire (the Transfer Potential Questionnaire, or TPQ) that measured variables likely to be related to transfer of training (e.g., motivation to attend training, coworker support for training). Three months later, participants completed a brief mailed survey to assess whether learning had been transferred to the work setting. The retention

phase of the study examined the employment status of participants seven years later. Analysis then focused on whether transfer of learning was associated with long-term employment retention.

The researchers found that overall transfer support positively affects staff retention. Several transfer of learning factors are associated with retention, including supervisory support, planning for the application of training, and coworker support for training and transfer (although these findings may vary depending on demographic variables and the workers' level of experience). The researchers also note that there are other, probably more important factors affecting retention. Based on these data, organizational support for training and transfer of learning is "one significant but small factor affecting turnover in child welfare organizations" (p. 942).

Curry et al. also note some innovations within certain states that are aiming to increase transfer, most notably mentoring models in the field that support the transfer of learning process and uses of technology that link research, training, and practice. Although recognition of the transfer problem is widespread, research on transfer is still in the beginning stages (Curry, 2001; Curry et al. 2005).

Organizational Context, Training Effectiveness, Links to Performance

The field understands the need for more expansive evaluation to address evaluation outside of the training context, and to include the transfer of skills to the work setting and its effect on the organization. Just a few of the many writings on this are offered here. McDonald (1991) suggests that the assessment of organizational context is the missing component in training evaluations and offers some empirical results identifying context-related problems (e.g., administrative commitment, external agency supports, incentives, personal attitude, and personal capacity). Bates (2004), in his critique of Kirkpatrick's model, suggests "the linkage between individual-level training outcomes and organizational outcomes is at best complex and difficult to map and measure even when training is purposely designed to address organizational objectives" (p. 345). Most training efforts are unable to directly affect level four (organizational improvement) criteria. "The training process and the organizational context are just too complex and the causal linkages too poorly specified in Kirkpatrick's model to provide reasonable evidence or proof of conclusions of this nature" (p. 345).

Some authors suggest methods for linking training to organizational performance, and frequently offer an adaptation of Kirkpatrick to do so. For example, Burrow and Berardinelli (2003) suggest a method for linking training, worker performance, and outcomes from the field of training and development. Again, starting with

Kirkpatrick's model, the authors contend that a level 3.5 is needed that connects individual and organizational performance. They recommend specific questions that can yield mid-level organizational measures to be used as part of the training evaluation process.

Two such questions are:

- How is the job performed by the trainee different and/or better as a result of training? Answers might include results such as quality, quantity, ability to handle new job duties, decision-making, error rate, and/or use of resources.

- How is the department or work group different and/or better as a result of training? Answers might look at department standards and measures that are directly connected to the performance targeted by the training program, including productivity, grievances, error rates, customer satisfaction, budget, materials use, and down time.

The questions demonstrate the contributions of individuals, work groups, and departments to organizational effectiveness. They are more organizationally focused than the traditional Level 3 performance outcomes, yet more specific and observable than typical Level 4 outcomes. Although the questions above are not specifically designed for child welfare training, it seems that they can be translated to outcomes of crucial concern to child welfare agencies.

Organizations need to transform themselves into "learning organizations" where training is integral to the actual work and a by-product of the work, rather than something done in isolation (Bassi, Benson, & Cheney, 1996). In learning organizations, training professionals are responsible for facilitating learning and tying it to organizational goals, so they need to have an under-standing of the business as a whole. They need to make sure that all systems encourage and maximize learning across all levels of the organization and that employees have opportunities to reflect on what they learn. Characteristics of learning organizations include: an endorsement of systems thinking as fundamental, a view that mistakes and failures are learning opportunities, widely available access to information and resources, and a desire for continuous improvement and renewal.

To gain and maintain ownership for the change process within the organization (represented by administrators) and within the "performer group" (represented by workers), the "change agent" (trainer) should form a change team in which

members of these two groups work together to help design and implement the change initiatives (Judge, Stevens, & Brewer, 1998). When this approach is employed, evidence from business and industry indicates lower employee turnover, higher productivity, greater employee job satisfaction, and greater company profitability (Bassi, Benson, & Cheney, 1996). To evaluate such programs, Brinkerhoff (1998) provides a 5-phase model occurring at the following stages: goal setting, performance analysis, design for improvement, implementation, and impact. Articulating several questions evaluators can ask themselves at each stage, Brinkerhoff demonstrates a method for integrating evaluation throughout such a project. Learning organizations develop systems to capture and store learning so it is not diminished by staff turnover (Bassi, Benson, & Cheney, 1996). Given the vast complexity of organizational and environmental context, far more work is needed to ascertain the linkage between training and organizational outcomes.

Training Evaluation Practice

This review of the literature on training evaluation has focused primarily on specific studies, their training audience, methods, and findings. The literature recognizes the widespread limitations of most training evaluation efforts and is focusing more attention on lessons in training evaluation practice. Three developments are helping to move the training evaluation field forward: The National Human Services Training Evaluation Symposium, the American Public Human Services Association guidelines for training evaluation, and the NSDTA code of ethics for training.

At the National Human Services Training Evaluation Symposium, training evaluators present and discuss emerging issues in the field of training evaluation. The symposium is held annually at the University of California, Berkeley, and is co-sponsored by the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), the California Department of Social Services, the National Staff Development and Training Association of the American Public Human Services Association, and the American Humane Association. Review of recent published proceedings of the symposium identify the following core topics: the relationship of the CFSR process to training (Cohen, 2004); statewide strategies planning for child welfare training evaluation (Parry, Berdie, & Johnson, 2004; Parry & Johnson, 2006); utility and needed adjustments to the Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation (Graef & Potter, 2004; Curry & Leake, 2004; Ilian, 2004); the impact of training on staff retention (Landsman, 2005); transfer of learning (Lindsey & Qaqish, 2005); organizational culture (Highsmith & Ilian, 2005); measurement of

attitudes and values (Cahn, 2006); and several examples of tools and methods in training evaluation (e.g., Collins, 2005; Pratt, 2005; Hoffman & McCarragher, 2005; Sanderson & Irwin, 2005; Highsmith & Ilian, 2006; Graef & Potter, 2006; Bell & Stark, 2006; Qaqish, 2006; Franke, Furman, & Donnelly, 2006; Pratt, 2006).

Parry and Berdie (1999) authored a document, produced by the American Public Human Services Association that provides guidance to the field for conducting evaluation of training in human service organizations. They identify the essentials for a successful evaluation: a strategic plan for training evaluation at the agency level; a supportive organizational climate; responsiveness to the needs of consumers; a shared understanding of what questions the evaluation will answer; a plan for how evaluation results will be used; and adequate resources for conducting the evaluation. Additionally, they outline a 10-step model for a successful evaluation of a training course: 1) identify the purposes of the evaluation; 2) determine the levels of evaluation needs; 3) develop the evaluation design; 4) select or develop instruments; 5) develop a data collection plan; 6) pilot and revise instruments and procedures; 7) collect evaluation data; 8) analyze evaluation data; 9) report results; and 10) provide feedback and disseminate results.

NSDTA recently adopted a Code of Ethics for Training and Development Professionals in Human Services. The purpose is to ensure that child welfare training and development professionals integrate ethical principles into training and development activities and help practitioners handle ethical problems and dilemmas (Curry & McCarragher, 2004). This is a new set of competencies to be considered by child welfare training organizations. Although various professions have codes of ethics for direct service staff involved in child welfare work, NSDTA wanted to address ethical issues related to training and development. Examples of such ethical dilemmas include conflicts when the trainer's role is blended with the supervisor's role, and identification of the trainer's responsibilities to employers, training participants, and clients when the responsibilities may not be totally compatible.

Curry and McCarragher (2004) describe recent efforts to provide ethics training and emphasize that ethics is an area where transfer of learning to the job has been particularly challenging. They propose that the principle of "identical elements" be used in designing training; that is, transfer is more likely to occur when the training situation and transfer setting are as similar as possible. Thus, the use of ethical case scenarios that create dilemmas similar to the actual dilemmas workers face is recommended (along with a number of other strategies).

Practicing skills in the training setting to the point where they become automatic is another key recommendation. Concerning a focus on transfer issues in the evaluation, the authors recommend that 1) the same curriculum and the same trainer be maintained over time if multiple groups will be trained and transfer evaluated; 2) a data base of transfer information be maintained so transfer can be assessed over time; 3) specific approaches be used, such as observing trainees on the job or sending a "transfer postcard" rating scale to trainees several months after training; and 4) feedback on the extent to which transfer occurs should be given to the trainers, ultimately affecting the training methods used. Currently, the human services field has not established what level of training transfer is acceptable.

Summary

In this section, we reviewed primarily empirical studies in training evaluation. This review of the published literature on outcome evaluation leads to several conclusions.

- The literature reporting evaluations of child welfare training is very limited. There are few training evaluation studies with sufficient rigor to withstand peer review and publication. While many non-published studies make important contributions to the field, they are not included in this literature review, which focuses only on published reports.

- Child welfare training (and its accompanying evaluation) has a variety of targets, topics, and goals. It is therefore not surprising that evaluators use multiple methodologies. Indeed, a wide variety of methodologies are appropriate, since there are widely different foci of training projects. The key is to match the appropriate design with the purpose of the training. Measures such as action plans or written essays may be more appropriate to the nuanced work of child welfare than a standard pre/post-test, but these qualitative methods are generally more difficult to administer and interpret. Moreover, when training is tightly linked with systems-change efforts, evaluating training effectiveness requires innovation. The wide range of possible evaluation strategies is probably not known to many of those designing training programs.

- Good evaluation requires the commitment of the state/county agency. Research designs are frequently compromised because of limitations imposed by the public agency.

- Evaluation tools to measure participant change may be at odds with principles of adult learning theory which suggest that testing or grading can inhibit an individual's commitment to learning.

- Following-up with participants is difficult and most studies that attempt to do this run into several methodological challenges. Invariably, sample sizes tend to be small and conclusions cannot be drawn.

Conclusions and Implications

This review has aimed to gather and summarize literature related to child welfare training, and to derive implications from the literature to further inform future training efforts. Through this work we discovered significant efforts undertaken in the field that are not available in the published literature. As a consequence, we suggest more effort to publish widely to advance the state of knowledge regarding child welfare training.

On many of the topics covered we believe there is an adequate beginning knowledge base to guide training efforts in the field. The challenges, however, lie in the implementation of what is believed to be good practice and the evaluation of these practices to determine if perceived good practice is effective.

Of course more research is needed in all of the areas addressed in this review. For example, in the area of adult learning, much more information is needed about how adults learn best, with specific investigation needed about learning related to child welfare practice. Both the complexity of the work and the organizational context need to be addressed in studies of adult learning. As we have noted throughout, much more evaluation needs to be conducted on individual training projects, but even more so on systems of training, transfer of training to the work setting, and the partnerships between universities and public agencies. In all these evaluation efforts, attention to the organizational context is of central importance.

On the following pages we summarize some final implications of the review.

Adult Learning

- There needs to be more of an effort to utilize principles of adult learning in the training of child welfare staff. This may be less of an issue with pre-service or core training, because learners are generally unaware of what they need to know. But it is very relevant to advanced, in-service training of workers and professional education of social workers. For these types of training, the task elements, strategies, and complexity of cases require high-level skill, and the workers' own practice experiences and on-the-job challenges must play a prominent role in the training and learning process.

- Core elements of adult learning to be infused into training include involving participants in decisions about what to learn and how to learn it; utilizing the wisdom and experience of those who come to training; timing training to fit the points at which learners are most ready to learn, or their roles demand certain knowledge and skills; and providing opportunities to apply learning immediately after training.

- Specific strategies to implement adult learning include the opportunity to practice tasks in the training setting and the workplace; use of a consultative model in training rather than a top-down/expert-to-trainee model; and linkage of training to the workplace via supervision, mentoring, and peer reinforcement strategies.

- Organizational realities that are barriers to these types of training need to be confronted head-on. These barriers include time and space for sophisticated training; lack of professional orientation toward workers that recognizes their expertise; and inadequate development of a learning culture in which organizational learning and development is the norm. Without addressing these barriers, training programs will have limited impact.

- There must be recognition that methods of transformative learning within agency settings (e.g., partnering with parents) may conflict with agency culture and therefore must be reinforced with policy and practice changes supportive of the transformation.

Training Implementation

- The method of conducting a needs assessment should match the reason for gathering the data. Sometimes needs assessments are conducted for purposes of achieving buy-in from constituencies, and in these cases simple assessment methods are sufficient. If, however, the assessment is meant to guide development of training, more sophisticated approaches to conducting needs assessments are needed. Also, training needs are rarely solely defined by participants and must be understood in relation to agency needs and role competencies.

- The shift to focusing on work competencies rather than training needs is an important conceptual shift. The refocus toward competencies is an advance of the field and a crucial building block for achieving desired outcomes and the linking of training to improved worker performance.

- Supervision is central to effective implementation of training. This is well known in the field and, although there is increasing attention to supervisors in training efforts, this attention needs to be more at the forefront of training initiatives.

- The field should move toward the development of training systems rather than training courses. Training systems infuse training within an organizational context and have greater potential for viewing training holistically, with connection to achievement of organizational outcomes. This will add to better conceptualization of the purposes of training and the anticipated linkage of training content and training activities with expected outcomes.

- As with many fields, the use of technology for training (via electronic learning and distance education) is at an early stage. We need to examine cautiously the best and most appropriate uses for technology in training.

- Training content should be derived from the needs of the child welfare field and the child welfare agency's performance outcomes. Staff preferences, current issues of interest in the human services field, and other such factors should be secondary considerations.

University/Agency Partnerships

- Professional education is not always delivered through partnerships. Independent of a partnership model, questions remain about how effectively BSW and MSW programs are preparing staff for public child welfare work and what might be done to improve this preparation, either within or outside a partnership model.

- As with other forms of training, better evaluation is needed to assess the results of partnership efforts. Most of the literature emphasizes the benefits of partnerships, but there are limitations. Sometimes these are discussed as logistical problems or the melding of academic and practice cultures. But there may be other, more serious, limitations. For example, partnerships may limit the voice of schools of social work to critique child welfare practice and policy, and may cause schools of social work to shift toward vocational education rather than professional education.

- Partnerships are varied. Some are very broad and include ongoing consultation, collaboration on research and evaluation activities, and other efforts in addition to training. Others are very narrow and may be formed for a specific training initiative. Some partnerships are long-standing, having been developed over the course of several years, while others are newly developed. Development of a typology of partnership models would be a helpful next step so that schools of social work or child welfare agencies planning a partnership could consider various options, and evaluation efforts could identify the strengths and weaknesses of various models.

- Recent literature (Perry, 2006 and invited responses) has opened the debate about the prominence of social work education for child welfare practice. Although our review did not attend to this debate specifically, it is another area of scholarly inquiry that is related to the training issues addressed in this review.

Evaluation of Training

- Many training evaluations find little impact and the interpretation of this is difficult. This could result from a weak study design (not enough statistical power to detect difference, poor instrumentation) or poor implementation of the training. It might also be true that there is no effect of the training. Strong research designs are important to provide clarity regarding the actual effects of the training.

- Although much of the emphasis on the improvement of evaluation focuses on methodology, there is an equal need for better conceptualization of training to guide training evaluation, and greater clarity regarding the intended impact of training.

- Many evaluations focus on perception of training, some on knowledge and attitude, a few on skill development, and fewer still on resulting practice. The methodology for evaluating outcomes related to knowledge gain and attitude are fairly well developed. In many cases simple pre/post-test tools are sufficient. The measurement of skill development is far more complicated and requires more methodological sophistication. Measures such as case plans and action plans should be more fully developed for use in training evaluation. Also observational methods and measures—rarely in use—should receive attention so that the field can begin to measure the interaction of worker and client.

- Transfer of learning models in child welfare research (e.g., Curry, McCarragher, & Dellman-Jenkins, 2005) should be utilized. Valid measurement for transfer of learning will require observation or supervisory report, rather than participant self-report. To effectively accomplish this, public child welfare agencies must be willing to allow such data gathering—which supervisors and workers are likely to experience as intrusive—until the practice becomes routine.

- More realistic expectations of outcomes of training are needed. This includes recognition of the environmental context of training and the various other factors impacting trainees' workplace performance (e.g., professional education, supervision, and experience level).

- Linkage of training outcomes to impacts on clients should be done cautiously. The field of training needs to move forward in this area, but training evaluation—like program evaluation—can be political. Evaluation results can be used in many different ways to support a variety of agendas.

- The Kirkpatrick model (1994) clearly has provided great service in framing the discussion of training evaluation thus far. The field has advanced beyond this model, and more complex typologies should be relied upon henceforth. The model developed by Parry and Berdie (1999) may be especially salient to the field of training in public agencies.

The premise of professional child welfare practice is that the relationship between the worker and the client is central to effective change for the client. Development of knowledge that leads to the best possible training systems that promote the relationship between worker and client should be a high priority for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. This review had identified the landscape of the current state of knowledge, promising strategies, and numerous gaps.

This review has necessarily been limited to certain topics in child welfare training, but the importance of training cannot be isolated from the many other important elements of creating and sustaining the highest quality workforce. These include identifying the attributes and experiences that make a person appropriate for this work; creating work environments that promote good child welfare practice; and establishing recruitment, hiring, and retention policies that support a high-caliber workforce. These areas also require concentrated attention in the service of high-quality child welfare practice.

Introduction

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