CHAPTER 1. CHANGE AND CHALLENGE IN THE PARENTING ENVIRONMENT

The Impact of Democracy

Because of radical change in the environment in which parents have to raise their children, there is an urgent need to focus on adaptive parenting styles, and particularly on the language parents use. There has been flux in accepted parenting styles from 1900 onwards (Lomax, Kagan & Rosenkrantz, 1978) but from the fifties societal structures of authority, as well as the authority of parents over children, have changed, sometimes gradually, almost unnoticed, but often much faster throughout all Westernised countries. Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) have asserted that the impact of democracy has transformed the social atmosphere and made the traditional forms of child-raising obsolete.

Accelerating social change has brought many problems and upheavals to family relationships, particularly in the Western world (Garbarino & Bedard, 2001; Marwick, 1998; Edgar, Earle & Fopp, 1993). After World War II, the rise of a new youth culture, full employment, consumerism and the beginnings of the permissive society challenged the old certainties (McMillan, 1987). Garbarino & Bedard (2001) assert that belief in the protective structures of authority in the lives of both parents and children has been eroded, with a consequent loss of respect and trust. The reaction against authoritarianism was hastened in the early eighties (Balson, 1994) coinciding with an attitudinal shift towards more equality, but parenting styles, language and behaviour have changed very little in the face of this very different familial environment (Gordon, 1989; Wood & Davidson, 1993).
Social and Technological Change and Families

The Impact of Television

The current social context in which parents raise children has altered even compared with a generation ago (Eckersley, 1988, 1998; Garbarino & Bedard, 2001). The biggest single changes spring from the expanding use of visual media in the home. Television has had an impact on relationships in Australia since the mid-sixties, and it has brought with it many difficulties for parents. These include violence in films, electronic games and news, with programs showing age-inappropriate sexual mores at times when younger children may be watching. Of even more concern is the promotion of adult themes through extensive advertising aimed specifically at the child and his ability to manipulate his parents’ choices (Postman, 1994).

Television programs in Australia are classified separately from films on video and in cinemas, so that people can choose what they want to watch, or permit their children to watch. G signifies “for general viewing”, PG is “parental guidance recommended”, M “for mature audiences 15 years or over”, MA “for mature audiences because of sex scenes, language or drug use”, and AV for “adult violent”. A film classifier for a commercial television network recently pointed out that distributors and film programmers for television prefer films which can get an M rating, which is permitted to go to air at 8.30 p.m., and hence reach the biggest prime time audience. So that this can be achieved, raters for these networks aim to find ways to reduce coarse language, violence, sex scenes, or whatever needs to be done, so that if possible an M classification can be obtained (Stockbridge, 2001).
Horsfield (1986) warned of the "displacement effect", wherein television can dominate parental control over what takes place in the home. This is a cause for real anxiety, because the influence of media can potentially erode the core values which parents wish to build up in their families. Torres Strait Islander parents in the international study Parenting-21 conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Soriano, Weston & Kolar, 2001) complained of the loss of community activities resulting from individual families viewing television at home in the evenings instead of storytelling in outdoor gatherings. There was also concern at the amount of violent video viewing and subsequent aggressive behaviour by the children.

Children throughout Australia who are heavy viewers of TV, three hours or more daily, are growing up as unwitting targets of external adult manipulation. This results both from advertising and the dominance of viewer-number ratings rather than quality of content as the chief criterion of what is to be shown. Television viewing can also become addictive. Reporting a number of empirical studies, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) conclude that self-described television addicts are more easily bored and distracted and have poorer attentional control than non-addicts, the orienting response which seems to be activated by movement on the television screen is overworked when there is continuous change from screen cuts, as in music videos and commercials, and children report feeling tired, dizzy and nauseated after long sessions.

Postman (1994) contends that the visual ingestion via television of the total gamut of human experience from interpersonal and sexual mores to international occurrences, disasters, famine, terrorist activities and war as well as positive happenings, has had such an impact on children that childhood no longer exists in the
sense that it has been understood in the Western world over the past century. Instead he has proposed that the human life-cycle now can be said to have only three stages - infancy, child-adulthood and senility, since children are no longer protected from information that they are not yet mature enough to understand. This has enormous implications for the socialising practices of both parents and educators.

Violence in the Electronic Media

There is concern about the amount of violent behaviour children see, from legislators in a 1997 Australian Senate Report on the portrayal of violence in the electronic media, from psychologists and from professionals concerned with film classification (Biggins, 2001; Bretherton, 1997).

Most at risk, according to Pennell and Browne (1998, in Unsworth & Ward, 2001) are younger children, boys, children from violent homes and those who are insecure. The combination of violent cartoons and toys marketed to tie in with their characters has been shown to influence more aggressive play in pre-schoolers (Sanson & Di Muccio, 1993).

Parents are warned that it is unwise to use the TV as a babysitter in the absence of alternatives, that predators cruising the internet can potentially hurt their children, and that over-use of computers can also become addictive (Garbarino & Bedard, 2001). Anecdotal reports suggest that pubescent children raised to be obedient are more vulnerable to adult predators because of their concept of adult authority (M. Wood, 2002), and Kohn (1999) points out that children rewarded for mindless obedience learn nothing of making moral choices. Other causes of anxiety to parents include children’s safety between home and school, and the complications
arising for mothers in the workforce, particularly when they work full-time (Alvy, 1994).

Children's Computer Use

Computer games, which are played by older children who have considered them fairly harmless (Aisbett, 1997) are using new technologies with more graphic violence, sparking concern that they are highly unsuitable for younger siblings, especially those under eight or nine who can so easily get involved (Fleming & Rickwood, 2001; Unsworth & Ward, 2001). Fleming and Rickwood (2001) showed that both boys and girls experienced greater arousal after playing a moderately violent video game, and voiced the concerns that (1) this arousal partially explains the attractiveness of the games, and (2) that the pleasure of playing may be a factor in desensitisation to violence.

There are further concerns among educators and researchers in early childhood that computer use is affecting the development of young children in a way that is inappropriate. Development of their ability to achieve rapid response times on screen has “speeded up” reaction times in some children, and research has reported that they have become unable to pick up interpersonal signals, especially nonverbal indicators such as facial expression (Alliance for Childhood, 1999).

Nevertheless controversy remains as to whether the evidence which links the viewing of violent TV shows and videos and increased aggressiveness in children is sufficiently substantial. As an example, Bensley and Van Eenwyk (2001) conducted an extensive and careful review of the literature on video games and real-life aggression in relation to three age groups: pre-school and elementary school children, middle and high school students, and college students and young adults. Studies were
categorised as experimental (random assignment to groups and measurement of an aggression related outcome), quasi-experimental (pretest-posttest design), correlational (participants asked about video-game playing and feelings related to aggression) and descriptive (participants asked how video-game playing affected them). Pre-school and elementary school studies showed behavioural observations as well as other outcome measures, and studies in the two older groups used mainly measures of self-reported aggression, antisocial behaviour and mood. The results of the survey were mixed. Many studies appeared to be flawed and results were inconsistent. Gender effects in this area have been clearly established, but some of the studies were flawed because they failed to control for gender. In the youngest age group, eight experimental studies were found, and of these there were four which used observations of aggression during free play. Three of these studies found that violent video-game play caused increased aggressive play immediately after the video game. The fourth study found that boys were more aggressive than girls before playing any video game, but reduced their aggressiveness to a level similar to that of girls after playing a video game. Results for other kinds of outcome measures in this age group were quite mixed.

Results for middle and high school students were also very mixed, with results from one experimental study, one quasi-experimental, six correlational and two descriptive studies. Four studies found some association between the amount of time spent playing video games and self-reported aggression, but the patterns varied, and contradictory results were reported in some of the other studies. The pattern was similar for other outcome measures.

Seven experimental studies were included relating to the older age group plus one that compared playing with observing a violent game, but only one of these used
outcome measures other than self-report, and again the results were mixed. It would seem that the most consistent results were found for the youngest group, in the studies which used observational outcome measures, but the studies included in the review by Bensley and Van Eenwyk (2001) have not established any clear link between the playing of violent video-games and increased aggression in the young.

The Decline of Human Interaction in Spoken Language

Locke (1998) has drawn attention to the importance of language use per se in a healthy society, and pointed out the growing trend for the employment of electronic communication at the expense of human interaction. Social voices have given way to phone and text messages, and children spend hours with television, video recorders and computers, often longer than they interact in person with peers and family. Television has changed the patterns of family meals, and for many children the times for homework and sleep. While children often make constructive use of the internet, and email for interaction with their peers and as a resource for information gathering, overuse of computer-assisted communication may flatten intimate forms of self-expression, hindering the development of personal warmth and trust, both of which are essential for cooperative communities. Spoken language in families is important for the development of respect, openness and trust (Locke, 1998). Solitary computer use limits a child's verbalisation, and language skills are needed for both emotional development and problem solving (Healy, 1999).
Changes in Family Structure, Roles and Relationships

Size and Structure of Families

Families themselves are more complex. The question of what constitutes a family in the 21st century is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics by living arrangements. In 2000, in round figures, there were over five million families in Australia, over half of whom had children under 15. Four million were couple families, and fifty-two percent of these were couple-only families. Other categories of family included lone fathers with children under 15 (2.3% of all families with children under 15), and lone mothers with children under 15 (13.2% of all families with children under 15), de facto couples (10.1% of all couples-only in 1996, including same-sex couples) and persons living alone (Australian Social Trends, 2001). The quality of parenting and parent-child relationships can be diminished after separation, (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001), with less authoritative parenting in lone-parent households (Baumrind, 1967).

Some changes within the family which have impacted on parenting seem to be cyclical (Edgar, Earle & Fopp, 1993). Families in 2001 tend to be smaller, and mothers older at the birth of the first child. In Australia in 1999 the fertility rate of women aged 35-39 had almost doubled that in 1979, from 24 to 47 births per 1000 women, and similarly for women aged 40-44 from 5 to 9 per 1000 (Australian Social Trends, 2001).

Changes Within Families

Perhaps the most striking social change in recent times is the very large increase in the workforce of women with families. Participation in Australia has
almost doubled since 1966 (Weston, Qu, & Soriano, 2002). Mothers have generally had longer in the workforce before starting their families, and many continue to work while raising children. As a result of these trends, many first-time parents are less familiar with the management of babies and small children. Mobility and immigration often mean that the extended family is absent, or far away. Without such social support, mothers can be very isolated at the birth of a first child.

The role of fathers is changing. Fathers are expected to, and do take more interest in the birth of their children, and many provide more help to their wives than their own fathers did. There is currently considerable motivation among fathers to be more involved with their children than those of previous generations (Hand & Lewis, 2002). Conversely, many men of both high and low income status are working longer hours, which constrains the time available for their families (Healy, 2000; Weston et al., 2002).

Workplace Changes

Changes such as corporate restructuring, contract employment rather than permanence, the threat of redundancy, unemployment or under-employment mean that parents of both sexes often work very long hours. Concern has been raised about the possible negative impact on family wellbeing when there is conflict between the demands of employment and that of bringing up a family (Gray & Stanton, 2002). The long-term costs of imbalance between the two are very high in terms of poor child development outcomes (Gray & Stanton, 2002; Prior, Sanson & Oberklaid, 2000).

Economic changes now cost younger people and families more in terms of time and money than those at the older end of the scale (Thomson, 1999), while
mothers in particular have to juggle their commitments to children and work in spite of supposed improvements in social policy and enterprise bargaining agreements (Morehead, 2002; Probert, 1999). Children can be at home unsupervised for longer, particularly as they get older (Edgar, 1997).

Family Breakdown and the Need for Parenting Skills

Stress at work causes stress at home, and vice versa (Glezer & Wolcott, 1999; Nickols, 1994). Of particular concern is the negative impact on families of the combination of stress and poor conflict resolution skills (Weston et al., 2002). Family breakdown brings its own set of problems, including lone parents, often the absence of fathers, and disadvantaged single mothers in comparative poverty. Even mothers who successfully manage the transition from intact family to sole parenthood have to work very hard to maintain their domestic responsibilities in conjunction with paid work. It requires a high level of social skills to re-organise the necessary child care, including after-school supervision, social support, household management and financial arrangements without the same level of involvement of the partner, if there is any involvement at all (Morehead, 2002).

Those who remain disadvantaged face the likely repetition of the same problems for their children. The perpetuation of low levels of achievement in disadvantaged families was pointed out by Anastasiow (1988) who recognised the importance of brain development in infancy and early childhood, and the need for prevention of problems through parent training in interpersonal skills. Lack of these skills in parents and young people is a factor in anti-social behaviour (McCord & Tremblay, 1992; Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998), eating disorders (Touyz, Russell & Beumont, 1996), family break-down (Eastman, 1989), homelessness (Sykes, 1993),
mental health problems including depression (Spence, 2001), and youth suicide (Eckersley, 1998; Mitchell, 2000). Using data from the Montreal Longitudinal-Experimental Study, Pagani, Boulerice, Vitaro and Tremblay (1999) found that family poverty had a direct effect on both academic failure and extreme delinquency in boys.

A major ongoing investigation, the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, has followed the health and development of a cohort of 1037 babies born between 1 April 1972 to 31 March 1973 in New Zealand. It has established the negative impact on families of adverse parenting practices and environments, resulting in emotional and psychological distress, behaviour disorders, cognitive disadvantage and delinquency (Pryor & Woodward, 1998). Similarly, Farrington and Hawkins (1991) found, from data in the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, that poor parental child-rearing practices and a low level of commitment to the family were among independent predictors of participation by 411 young London males in officially recorded offending, while an early onset of offending (between ages 10 and 13 years) was predicted by low paternal involvement with the boy in leisure activities, as was persistence in crime between ages 21 and 32 years. Integrating findings from a wide range of research studies, Maughan (2001) concluded that the three most deleterious styles of parenting were coerciveness and the use of physical punishment; hostile, critical parent-child relationships; and inconsistent, ineffective management styles.

Baumrind (1993) distinguished the normal socialisation practices of the families of comparatively affluent background studied in the Family Socialisation and Development Competence Project (FSP) at the University of California, Berkeley (Baumrind 1967, 1971, 1980, 1989, 1993) from those found in disadvantaged and poverty-stricken families, who in coping with a more hostile environment, tended to
use harsh methods of discipline, often with disastrous consequences. Equally, in better-off families, the impact of long working hours, over-stressed parents and the demanding schedules of parents and children can similarly result in poor child development outcomes (Gray & Stanton, 2002).

Changes in Social Trends and Law

Rights of the Child

Changes in social trends, custom and law in Australia, Europe and North America have been instrumental in forcing a shift in the basis of previously accepted parental authority, although it remains less observable in other cultures. Social understanding of these trends has acquired a new importance in view of the implications for families. Two examples show how a major change has occurred in previously held values. The first is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), in which the responsibility of society and of parents to their children is focused on the need for respect for children as people. It has been pointed out that most societies have previously considered the young rather as juniors who belong to the older generation, to whom they have an obligation of respect (Rayner, 1994).

Legal Changes

The second example is Gillick's case in the UK, in which it was found that access to contraceptive information could legally be given without parental consent to a 14-year old girl provided that she had sufficient understanding of the issues involved (Gillick v. West Norfolk and Wisbech Health Authority (1985) 3 All E R 830). The case was particularly significant in terms of its implications for parental
rights and responsibilities (Wilson, 1986) and it has had extensive repercussions throughout the English-speaking world, particularly in countries where the common law is practised (Bunney, 1997; Eekelaar, 1986; Levy, 1996; Montgomery, 1988; O’Connor & McMillan, 1987). The legal debate reflects the complex changes occurring in relation to the rights and responsibilities of parents, children and the state (Atkin, 1986; Dickey, 1992; Downey, 1986; Seymour, 1999). The basis of once commonly accepted parental authority has shifted in quite a concrete fashion, yet complex social and moral issues are still unclear. Some boundaries have been legislated apart from the common law, for example, the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 in Tasmania, in which parents are subsumed as guardians, and in an explanatory leaflet, published by the state Commissioner for Children, parents are not mentioned at all.

Children, according to Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) were already showing sensitivity to a changed social climate, and whether or not they understood what was happening, were no longer willing to be submissive to adults. Many of them now are aware of changes such as those enacted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), but often parents feel confused about what is acceptable. This can result in a permissive approach and an apparent inability to set boundaries of any kind (Cloud & Townsend, 1998), a situation that might seem to reflect aspects of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1973, 1996). Other parents become trapped in an ineffective model of coercion (Wahler & Dumas, 1986). Martin, Linfoot and Stephenson (2000) found that aggressiveness in pre-schoolers was associated with lower maternal confidence, and maintenance of a self-defeating cyclical model of coercive exchanges. The importance of intervention at this early stage has been emphasised by Tremblay (2001) who pointed out that the age at which humans are most frequently
physically aggressive is during the last half of the second year after birth and that the frequency does not increase with age.

Tremblay, Japel, Perusse, McDuff, Boivin, Zoccolillo and Montplaisir (1999) found that the onset of physical aggression had occurred in close to 80% of a sample of 511 children by the age of 17 months. The age of onset appeared to be influenced by both the sex of the child and the presence of a sibling, but most children had learned to inhibit physical aggression by the time of school entry. Tremblay (2001) however, noted that while most children have found alternative ways of achieving their aims by the time they enter kindergarten, those who have not are at increased risk of adolescent and adult violence, as well as later dangerousness. Among low socio-economic groups, the family can serve as a powerful buffer, and early interventions have been shown to successfully alter trajectories that begin with aggression and lead to grade failure and criminality (Tremblay, 1999).

**Physical Punishment and the Use of Power**

Some formerly accepted parental methods of family management such as smacking have been discouraged for many years, but in Australia, a comparative study of Anglo, Torres Strait Islander and Vietnamese families (Kolar & Soriano, 2000) found that while Anglo parents were generally uncomfortable with discipline that relied on smacking or hitting, the more traditional islanders and the Vietnamese parents were confused by current disapproval of a practice they regarded as both effective and necessary.

While physical punishment can work as a deterrent, it also teaches children that aggression is acceptable (Parke, 1977). Graziano and Namaste (1990) found that over 90% of 19-year old college students in a US sample had been spanked as
children, and a third of these still felt resentment. In a cross-cultural survey (Gelles & Edfeldt, 1986) it was found that high levels of physical punishment were used by both American and Swedish parents on their children. Gordon (1989) believed that physical discipline was not only ineffective, but encouraged children into undesirable behaviours such as lying, resentment, retaliation, avoidance and withdrawal. Porter (2001) concluded that smacking children of any age is unethical, ineffective and risks damaging the relationship of parent and child, and Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1981) found physical punishment both damaging and ineffective. Corporal punishment is proscribed for educators and schools in Australia, Sweden and the UK.

**Ethnic Variations**

What most parents actually do is influenced by patterns from their own family of origin. In a major investigation of parenting practices in Australia, linked with similar studies in Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United States, (McGurk & Kolar, 1997) results from the first part of the study showed that parents were influenced by the way they themselves were brought up, though they rarely accepted it unconditionally (Kolar, 1999). Only thirteen percent consciously tried to re-create their family of origin, but others admitted that despite intending to be different, they realised that they were still copying their own parents. Some immigrant parents in Australia reported difficulties with intergenerational cultural differences, because the child management practices of the grandparents seemed inappropriate in their adopted country (Soriano, Weston & Kolar, 2001).

Apart from ethnic variation in a multi-cultural society like Australia, there is considerable debate about what constitutes good parenting practice. Advice from books and magazines is frequently conflicting, and with the rejection of authoritarian
patterns of discipline, many parents are uncertain as to how they can best raise their children. Children have assumed, at least on the surface, a sophistication their parents never had. They frequently have greater knowledge in some areas, especially in technology - television, audio, electronic games and computers. They have access to sophisticated information which once would have been available only to their parents and other adults.

Social, legal, and technological changes have impacted on the roles of parents and children in such a way as to render traditional parenting methods ineffectual, yet children’s emotional development and interpersonal skills depend upon their interaction with parents, early carers and families. There is a need for a parenting style which is effective in bringing up competent children in the environment of the 21st century.

Dimensions of Child Development Which Need To Be Understood and Supported in Parenting and Education

Early Brain Development

The views of researchers in psychology about the need for effective parenting have been emphasised in the light of physiological evidence that has accumulated in developmental studies over the past ten to fifteen years. The critical importance of experience in infancy and very early childhood has not previously been well understood from a neurophysiological point of view. First from animal investigations (Liu et al. 1997; Meaney, Aitken, Van Berkel, Bhatnagar & Sapolsky, 1988) and thence from human studies (Dawson & Fischer, 1994; Keating & Miller, 1999),
researchers have emphasised the critical importance of the early years for successful brain development and its implications for the competent functioning of adults.

Interestingly a large body of research from different areas and disciplines has shown converging results in this regard. Studies emanating from developmental neurophysiological investigations in early childhood (Cynader & Frost, 1999), in medicine and health (McEwen, 1998; Power & Hertzman, 1997), and in psychiatry (Maughan & McCarthy, 1997) have important consequences for parenting practices, childcare and schooling (McCain & Mustard, 1999). From these converging studies, McCain and Mustard (1999) have pointed out that the years from conception to three are crucial for brain development, as well as influencing life-long health. Citing Swedish longitudinal studies which show that there are higher levels of juvenile delinquency among children who have lower verbal skills and literacy when younger, Stattin and Klackenberg-Larsson (1993) suggested that both cognitive and emotional development depend on competent, nurturant parenting, which includes language acquisition. Tremblay, Pihl, Vitaro and Dobkin (1994) found that early onset of male anti-social behaviour could be predicted from the way boys behaved in pre-school, and that preventive efforts should be targeted there to children at risk. Power and Hertzman (1997) asserted that both social and biological pathways link early life and the development of disease in adults, therefore the ongoing role of social investment cannot be overstated.

Early life experiences of human infants and toddlers have been shown to have a fundamental effect on the building up of brain connections, and moreover different developments occur in critical or "sensitive" periods, outside of which they may either not occur or be problematic (Cynader & Frost, 1999). The development of neural pathways in the brain occurs broadly in stages and in individual contexts
(Fischer & Rose, 1994), so that behaviour and the ability to manage emotion can be affected by the infant's interactions with the parent. In this framework, the centrality of emotion matches that of cognition. The implication here is that good parental handling from the beginning is important for encouraging competent functioning in childhood and later adulthood. Nurturant parenting may also be critical to facilitate the maturation of normal immunity in a healthy body (Coe, 1999).

The Centrality of Emotional Development

Dawson (1994) argued that earlier observations that neonates are primarily emotional beings have been confirmed by empirical studies of brain development, and that it has further been established that expressions of emotion activate specific areas in the frontal and anterior temporal regions, (Davidson, Ekman, Saron, Senulis & Friesen, 1990). Lateral asymmetry is shown according to whether the emotions are reactive towards the environment (joy, interest and anger) or withdrawal (distress, sadness and disgust). By six months of age the infant begins to show behaviours such as signalling discomfort to engage a parental response. After six months, planful behaviour becomes possible, including self-regulation and inhibition of a pre-potent response "as reflected in delayed and detour responses and means-end behaviour" (Dawson, 1994, p. 359). The lack of positive reinforcement for these behaviours is more likely to lead to inhibition and withdrawal. Compared with infants of non-depressed mothers, infants of depressed mothers who talk less to their babies, show different patterns of brain development and behaviour (Dawson, 1994), which do not change after the mother's recovery (Field et al. 1988, in Halberstadt, 1991). Dawson (1994) concluded that the infant's parenting environment plays a part in shaping subsequent behaviour as well as defining various thresholds of endurance.
Longitudinal studies have also shown predictive ability in relation to depressed mothers and later delinquent behaviour in their children. A recent study (Laplante, Perusse, Boulérice, Malo, Boivin & Tremblay, 2001) concluded that psychological distress in either parent might degrade parent-infant interactions. No gender differences were found for infant visual processing abilities or parental psychological distress, but the visual encoding abilities of girls, (and not of boys) appeared to be affected, perhaps because of female characteristics in personal interaction.

Basically these studies also point to the equal importance of emotional and cognitive development, and run counter to the views of educationists in earlier generations, who considered emotion to be secondary to cognition, or even as unworthy, a shortcoming to be overcome by rigid training. This view derived ultimately from the philosophy of the Stoics, which was picked up in early Christianity, and in the Latin writings of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. The Stoic influence was extended through classical, religious and ethical education, and can still be seen in the British tradition of the “stiff upper lip” (Magee, 1998).

Behavioural psychologists during the first half of the 20th century also believed that emotions, like perceptions or memories, could not be categorised as observable facts or objectively measurable behaviours, and were not worthy of study (Le Doux, 1998; Zajonc, 1980). As a behaviourist, R.S. Lazarus (1984) espoused this view, which was contested by Zajonc (1984) who suggested the likelihood of independent pathways in the brain for processing affect and cognition, and pointed out that there was already some experimental evidence for the primacy of affect.

While developmental neuronal studies have particular importance for parenting practices in early childhood, empirical findings show that an understanding of emotional development is equally important in the management of later childhood
and adolescence (Maughan & McCarthy, 1997; Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, et al., 1997; Tremblay, Pihl, Vitaro & Dobkin, 1995).

Social Intelligence and the Primary Role of Emotion

Mayer (2001) has shown how over the past decade new empirical studies have been investigating the concept of social intelligence (Marlowe, 1986), and separating out the fields of cognition and affect, nonverbal intelligence (Buck, 1984) and finally emotional intelligence (Mayer, DiPaolo & Salovey, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper & Golden, 1998). Social intelligence was first defined by Marlowe (1986) as including social skills, empathy skills, prosocial attitudes, social anxiety, and emotionality, which were further defined as emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Shortly before this, Lane and Schwartz (1987) proposed the concept of levels of emotional awareness as a foundation for that of emotional intelligence. Levels of emotional awareness were posited to be both developmental and experiential, hierarchically developed in stages comparable to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, and ranging from physical sensation through action tendencies, single emotions, blends of emotions, and blends of emotional experiences. These were suggested to be experienced individually and differentially, understood and interpreted according to their representation through the learning of language, and tending to be adaptive (Lane, 2000). Karmiloff-Smith (cited in Lane, 2000) described a similar process in cognitive development wherein the transformation of knowledge is mediated through "representational redescription", from implicit to explicit thought, for example through words, thus making the thought itself more flexible, adaptable and creative. A Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS) (Lane, Quinlan, Schwartz, Walker &
Zeitlin, 1990) has been developed and tested in 8 separate psychometric studies, and shown to have high inter-rater reliability, and internal consistency, and norms for age, sex and socioeconomic states have been established. It has not, however, yet been assessed for test-retest reliability in the general population. Lane (2000) has pointed out that it is unlikely to be a measure of verbal intelligence only, since significant effects are shown when verbal ability is controlled. Emotional awareness has been shown in independent samples to be significantly correlated with both impulse-control and self-restraint, indicating that greater emotional awareness is associated with greater self-reported impulse control (Lane, 2000). The latter is a component, according to Goleman (1996) of emotional intelligence. This is also consistent with the theory that higher levels of emotional awareness permit modification of lower levels of action.

The Importance of Fostering Emotional Intelligence

Gottman (1997) believed that democratic styles of parenting were more functional than authoritarian approaches, but concluded after ten years of empirical investigations that the emotional interactions between parent and child are even more important. Advice to parents sometimes focuses on obedience, addressing children’s misbehaviour, but fails to take note of the feelings that underlie the misbehaviour. Most parents want more than mere compliance, they want children to be moral and responsible, to have good relationships and eventually become good parents themselves, an outcome which is increasingly problematic (Amato & Booth, 2001). Gordon (1981) described the undesirable effects of teaching children to be compliant rather than responsible, and cited Milgram (1974) who showed that teaching people submission to authority effectually precludes development of a sense of
responsibility. Instead, Gordon advocated that parents (and teachers) should learn the interpersonal skills that would enable them to establish relationships with children that are "egalitarian, collaborative, synergistic, collegial, reciprocal, mutually beneficial and democratic" (Gordon, 1981, p.239). In this kind of model, which was developed in Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), Gordon (1981) explained that control was replaced with influence, domination with leadership, and win-lose methods of conflict resolution with a win-win (or no-lose) method. Similar doubts about teaching compliance have been expressed by Kohn (1999), who pointed out that this fails to teach children how to make moral choices.

Gottman (1997) found in his extensive research that the majority of parents wanted their children to grow up leading productive and enjoyable lives, and that most crucial to achieving these goals was the way the family manages emotional interactions. Moreover Gottman emphasised that his research validated the notions of Ginott (1969) who believed that parents' therapeutic talk with children when they were emotional is the key to their subsequent maturity. Ginott, he pointed out, had said that a child cannot process good advice in the midst of his own strong emotion, nor can he get rid of his feelings when told to do so, or told they are "not nice" unjustified, or not what he ought to feel. This kind of parental advice teaches a child not to trust his own emotions. Ginott's methods, on the other hand, engage with the child in her own emotional world, and show parental acceptance of her feelings, which is quite different from acceptance of all her behaviour. It is perfectly proper for a parent to set limits, moving from feeling to action, and problem solving with the child in a moment of strong emotion.
Emotional Self-Regulation

Porter (2001) urged that parents of young children should aim at guidance rather than control in child management, fostering consideration, respect and healthy self-esteem. Building a warm, nurturing relationship is essential for teaching young children emotional self-control, and is the key to management of challenging behaviour. Listening skills, encouragement rather than control, and firm assertiveness about the parent’s own needs and standards all help babies and toddlers to know they are valued members of the family, as well as what they are expected to do. The guidance approach comes from a belief that young children make behavioural mistakes rather than “misbehave”, and that they need help to learn self-regulation in both emotion and behaviour. Self-regulation may be an inhibitory mechanism to reduce arousal, or it may also be an enhancing function to allow a needed expressiveness of a particular emotion (Halberstadt, 1991), but it has been shown to be associated with greater emotional awareness (Lane, 2000).

A recent study (Zins, Elias, Greenberg & Weissberg, in press) cited in Mayer, 2001) has suggested that training young people in emotional intelligence leads to more adaptive behaviour and improved mental health. Zirkel (2000) pointed out that the concept of social intelligence is historically derived from the personal construct work of Kelly (1955), Rogers (1961), Rotter (1966, 1975), and the “new look” of the 1950s, including G.A. Miller (1969) and Galanter and Pribram (1960). Both the latter and the “new, new look” (Bruner, 1990, cited in Zirkel, 2000) presume an interplay between the individual’s creative understanding and interpretation of their life goals and their actual behaviour. The focus is on the purpose and the inherent potential for constructive change within the person (Rogers, 1961) as much as on the specific behaviour elicited (Zirkel, 2000).
The Importance of Temperament

A longitudinal study, the Australian Temperament Project 1983-2000 (Prior et al., 2000) has investigated temperament and development in an Australian cohort of children, beginning at 4-8 months and continuing up to 16 years at the present time. The project has produced a number of important findings which parallel those in the neurophysiological studies. It has been shown that individual temperamental characteristics have a significant long-term influence on positive adjustment and socially adaptive behaviour, and that specific temperamental types are linked to particular outcomes. While different temperaments require variations in child management, it is important to assist individual children towards the capacity to self-regulate their emotional responses and behaviour. Family interaction and interpersonal responses are affected by the temperaments of individual children. This effect occurs from very early in life and is relatively stable.

Baumrind (1980) also pointed out that within a reciprocal and interacting system such as the family, individuals produce by their actions the environmental conditions that affect their own as well as others' behaviour. She suggested that children have to learn not only about the realities of their physical environment, but also about more abstract social realities. In order to function effectively in a changing world, they need a reciprocal flexibility, and the ability to postpone gratification. These qualities are nurtured in the effective family, modelled by parents and assimilated by children (Baumrind, 1980).

The researchers in the Australian Temperament Project (Prior et al., 2000) found that persistence, flexibility, emotionality and reactivity in children are features of temperament which need guidance, and parents should be helped to encourage and teach positive capacities for self-regulation in these areas. They concluded by
suggesting that accessible, sought-after community resources should be developed to assist families to cope effectively and to avoid undesirable outcomes such as school drop-out, substance abuse and delinquency.

Other Powerful Influences

Arguing against blanket acceptance of the persuasive notion of infant determinism, Kagan (2000) suggested that powerful influences which affect children particularly after age two, include birth order, the influence of siblings, temperament, class and ethnicity, as well as the impact of major historical events. Experience does affect brain plasticity, but the dynamic interaction does not necessarily have a permanent effect, and the Piagetian stages of concrete and formal operations also have a profound influence (Kagan, 2000). Children’s emotional development is affected by early experience, but Kagan argues, not necessarily permanently, since cognitive capacities also develop serially, and together with environmental factors, can mediate earlier influences.

The Impact of Families on Children

There is plenty of evidence from empirical studies in psychology (De Frain, 1999; Stinnett, 1983) that families, however defined, are still the strongest factor in the development and maintenance of human competence, and that the vital ingredient in this is to be found in the family’s own internal dynamics, “the way family members relate to each other and the outside world” (Eastman, 1989, p. xvi). Family communication style and the way family members recognise and affirm each other’s
unique qualities are fundamental to the development of the mature adult (Edgar, 1999; Gordon, 1989; L’Abate, 1990; Mace, 1983). Indeed, Edgar (1999) asserts that in a changing social ecology, family influences are “the crucible in which the basic mould of civilisation is formed”. Personal competence and social skills are not the only benefits an individual acquires in the well-functioning family of origin. The success or failure of outside education also is bound up with the self-esteem children acquire within the family.

**Baumrind’s Research on Parenting Styles**

Commonly found parenting styles in the United States were established empirically in the longitudinal parenting project known as the Family Socialisation and Development Competence Project (FSP) at the University of California, Berkeley (Baumrind 1967, 1971, 1980, 1989, 1993). A detailed summary was made of Baumrind's observation studies with a cohort of children born in 1958, and the analysis of their parents’ behaviour and attitudes. The investigation centred on the children's behaviour at ages five, nine and fifteen. Parents of optimally competent children in 1967 were designated as authoritative (and some as harmonious) while those of less competent children were separated into categories labelled authoritarian or permissive. As the study progressed other distinctions were made, but the broad categories were confirmed. It was shown that authoritative parents maintained a unique combination of demandingness and responsiveness which could be assessed by how well the parent balanced the parent/child interaction between disciplinary demands and respect for the child, and how well the child balanced reliance on parental care with progress to emancipation. In practice this could be shown by the resolution of social conflicts with justice and compassion (Baumrind, 1989).
Demandingness related to the expectation and insistence by the parents that the children would contribute to the family, fulfil the duties expected of them, and achieve developmental goals to the best of their ability. Responsiveness referred to the parents' ability to attend to the children's stated feelings, and to take them into account when deciding on a course of action. Baumrind (1980) also pointed out that parents play a determining role in the way their children develop in intelligence, character and competencies. Children learn by insight, by training and by imitation. Schwebel and Christie (2001) suggested that children raised by parents using an authoritative style of interaction tend to have high levels of self-esteem, self-reliance, and achievement; they also tend to comply with their parents' requests.

According to data from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, parents who establish a strong sense of family connectedness, and show warmth, love and caring (Resnick et al., 1997) also protect their children across domains of risk, including substance and alcohol abuse, early sexual debut and suicide. For at-risk children, protective factors seem to reside in the promotion of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Maughan & McCarthy, 1997). In their longitudinal study of temperament, Prior et al. (2000) found that factors which contributed to social competence in resilient children and adolescents were cooperation, assertion, self-control, responsibility and empathy. Children who exhibited persistence, flexibility and positive emotionality were better able to remain well-adjusted through adversity. It is therefore important that parenting practices should take account of the development of emotional intelligence.
Effective Families

Pointing out that discussion of the strengths of family is more productive than too great an emphasis on its problems, De Frain (1999) alludes to the six most important qualities shown by strong families, qualities which can be encouraged by modelling, education and their own positive reinforcement. The six qualities, first proposed in the Family Strengths Model (Stinnett & De Frain, 1985) include commitment, appreciation and affection, positive communication, time together, spiritual wellbeing and ability to cope with stress and crisis. The researchers found these qualities in 660 self-defined strong families across very different cultures in American society (Stinnett, 1983).

The Importance of Parents' Verbal Style

Important aspects of positive communication in effective families (De Frain, 1999) were good listening, checking people's ideas through open questioning rather than making assumptions, and kindly humour. Sarcasm and shaming were not commonly practised. The good listening practices of the family members communicated respect, and facilitated their abilities to use conflict creatively (Stinnett, 1983).

Verbal style is one of the variables that affects parenting patterns; it is considered a key to cognitive, emotional and social growth (O'Connell & O'Connell, 1992). In line with the neuronal studies already discussed, it has also been suggested that spoken language has a measurable effect on the building up of brain circuitry in the developing infant and young child, and that developmental milestones occur in critical or sensitive periods for different aspects of language, with individuals showing
differing degrees of brain plasticity over time (Mills, Coffey-Corina and Neville, 1994).

Bernieri and Rosenthal (1991) postulate that the body may learn the physical manifestations and patterns of speech long before the mind is developed enough to learn the words. They also suggest that the degree of bonding, synchronisation and rapport between a mother and her infant may have a profound effect on a child’s cognitive, emotional and social development. Interpersonal coordination, together with emotional positivity and attentional focus make up the experience of rapport, according to Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, (1987), and in rapport lies the experiential foundation of empathy. Emotional bonding, and its expression in verbal tones and patterns of language can be said to lay down the foundations of healthy emotional development. Jaffe, Beebe, Feldstein, Crown and Jasnow (2001) showed that infants of four months are already actively engaged in coordinating interpersonal exchanges, and moreover that at this stage the dynamics of preverbal mother-infant interaction in the patterns of sound and silence can differentially predict both levels of attachment and cognitive development at twelve months.

Language Development Within the Family

Linguistic studies have shown the immense complexity of adult language (Chomsky, 1964; de Joia & Stenton, 1980; Halliday, 1976; Sinclair, Jarvella & Levelt, 1978). Eliot (1999) pointed out that Chomsky’s (1964) exposition of the universality of human language and the developmental stages of its acquisition clearly indicate that children’s linguistic learning is far more complex than the simple behavioural feedback suggested by Skinner (1957). Children pick up complex grammatical sentences without any training, but if deprived of all language exposure
for long enough will be unable to learn and use grammar. Grammar, according to Eliot (1999) resides in the frontal lobe, along with planning, sequencing, logic and rule-learning. A particular language is acquired by the child through a pattern of experience, rather than by individual stimuli/responses, as learning directs the specialisation of the linguistic brain, and this, bounded by a critical period, includes the level of language skill and social communication (Eliot, 1999).

Lukin (2001) has pointed out that the systematic study of living patterns of language and their acquisition in infancy and childhood has distinguished the work of Halliday (1973, 1975), which, while it is not as well known as that of Chomsky, is more widely applicable and more widely applied in a variety of human social issues associated with language.

**The Complex Patterns of Language Acquisition**

Halliday (1970, in Kress, 1976) pointed out that the structures of language have their origins in the social functions which language serves. Language is fundamentally a system which is organised into a small set of highly generalised functional components, a multiple coding system and further divided into levels or 'strata', which reflect the role of language. In adult use of language, each utterance must be able to be multifunctional, existing simultaneously on ideational, interpersonal and textual levels; an utterance needs to be about something, it needs to express the speaker's stake in the matter, and it must be operational in its own context, either in the 'here and now' or in some second-order context created by the language (Halliday, 1976). Adult language, therefore, functions at once on a number of different levels, which young children acquire and use quite separately ("one utterance - one function"), beginning with sound patterns, which they enjoy at first
without any understanding of the content. Nevertheless, Halliday (1970, in Kress, 1976) recognised four uses of language, each with two or three options, demonstrated by his eleven-month old son. For very young children these include objects of desire ("I want...") with further options of positive and negative ("don't want..."), and the regulatory function of manipulating or controlling another, again with positive and negative options, presence or absence, and dealing with objects ("put it there").

Halliday (1969, in Kress, 1976) described the basic set of language functions for the child as instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and representational, which latter term he thought would have better been called 'informative'. As the child matures, this fairly discrete set of functions is replaced with a much more highly organised, and more abstract but also much simpler adult functioning system with a multiplicity of social uses (Halliday, 1969, in Kress, 1976).

It is important to remember, nevertheless, that in the developmental process, language is the primary symbolic system. "A child's construction of a semantic system and his construction of a social system take place side by side, as two aspects of a single unitary process" (Halliday, 1975, p. 121). From this aspect, therefore, parental linguistic style is instrumental in the construction of the child's world view, values and philosophy of life.

Lukin (2001), in applying the approach suggested by Halliday (1969, 1970) has shown the sophistication and complexity of three linguistic stages of learning demonstrated by a six-year old girl who managed to ensure she was given a lolly bag at the end of a small friend's birthday party, without being rude, and without directly asking for one, which her mother had forbidden.
Competent Communication in Childhood

Schwebel and Christie (2001) assert that maturation of the mind in children occurs through the multiple activities of childhood, playing, exploring, eating, observing and above all, interacting with others. Drawing from the views of Vygotsky on mediated learning, these authors point out that children make enormous advances in ability when they understand and use speech. Thought is a sequence of learned verbalisations, according to Vygotsky (1978) (in Schwebel & Christie, 2001), and children’s intellectual development is in part a result of the skilled mediation of adults through daily activities. From a number of mother-infant studies, Schieffelin (1983) has documented the ways in which the complex interactive patterns of looking and talking facilitate the child’s communicative competence from the age of 16 to 22 months. Parents who respond promptly and appropriately to a child’s needs elicit a two-way positive interaction which has been associated with positive developmental outcomes (Schwebel & Christie, 2001). De Paulo (1991) pointed out that even nonverbal skills of behaviour and self-presentation need training by parents, continued practice and refinement throughout childhood, adolescence and later for competence in maturity. Stattin and Klackenberg-Larsson (1993) reported that in a study by Norman-Jackson (1982) it was shown that in families of low socio-economic status, a greater number of verbal interactions among family members and fewer parental discouragements were associated with greater maturity of child’s language, while in their own study children whose parents read to them at the age of 3 years had a better comprehension of language than those whose parents did not read to them.
The Language of Parenting

The language used by parents as they deal with their offspring particularly from the toddler stage onwards, is generally the kind of language that parents have always used, from the perspective of the person in charge, responsible for the welfare of the children, and frequently from a position of superiority despite the societal changes already discussed. But for many reasons, children growing up in a media-driven world do not identify with a lower status for childhood. One reason is the fact that they are wooed by advertisers (Garbarino & Bedard, 2001), and another, resulting from this, that they often have considerable influence over some aspects of family spending. Young people living in an increasingly adult world also resent the fact that respect is demanded by elders, but often not given to children. This can be readily observed both from what parents say about it, and from what they write down (Wood & Davidson, 1987, 1993, 1994/95).

Ginott (1969) believes that conflicts and misunderstandings would be avoided if parents spoke in a different way to their children; he also suggests that adults often misinterpret what young speakers are trying to say. Gordon (1995) points out that parent-child conflicts are often human relations problems rather than psychopathology. His early experiences with difficult youngsters and their parents showed that their problems were largely those of deficits in interpersonal skills: the inability "to communicate openly and honestly, to listen, to resolve conflicts amicably, to establish rules and standards in the home, to show respect for each other's needs, or to make their relationships seem equitable and fair to both parent and child."

Parents and families are still the most important factors in children's development, and the actual language that parents use in interactions with their
children has the potential to inhibit or encourage their emotional and cognitive growth.

**Importance of Training for Parents**

**Prevention of Problems**

Advocating a shift from a remedial to a preventive emphasis in professional services, Mace (1983) suggested that the two major functions of a family are to provide a setting for children to develop their highest potential in becoming mature, responsible adults, and to allow people of all ages to find emotional and social security through relationships in which they can live together in mutual love and trust. At the very least, where remedial services are offered, there should be a corresponding effort put into preventive education so that more families can fulfil both of these functions. Wiese and Kramer (1988) believe that school psychologists and researchers would do well to focus on prevention rather than remediation, focusing on the training of broader skills for parental competence in addition to working with the specific concerns brought by parents.

L’Abate (1981,1983,1990) has continuously argued for a frame of reference which includes three levels of prevention. Primary prevention, which is largely education and skills training, deals with “normal” couples and families, who nevertheless need assistance in the management of family problems. Secondary prevention deals with relationships at risk, which may overlap with therapeutic interventions, while tertiary prevention is concerned with problems that are beyond skill training, and which require a specific therapeutic approach. Prevention, according to L’Abate (1981), is just as important, perhaps more important, than treatment, because the numbers of couples and families involved are far greater than
those needing treatment, but their needs are just as real. Most families could benefit maximally by enhancing their awareness of each other, and at the same time improving their problem-solving abilities, their decision-making patterns and their communication.

A similar case was argued by De’Ath (1982). Prevention is cost-effective, innovative and reaches families before serious problems develop. It is best delivered in a collaborative way, with agencies who deliver skills programs and those who specialise in treatment working together, rather than in competition, as usually occurs. Such an approach would save money and avoid misery, but is rarely the chosen mode of service delivery. Sufficient evidence to justify the cost-effectiveness of prevention compared with remediation and treatment has accumulated comparatively recently, and the results show cause for optimism (Spence, 1996). Prevention of psychological problems in children and adolescents therefore should be a priority.

Spence (1996) also points out that a recent shift in the understanding of prevention has been an emphasis on protective rather than causal and risk factors alone, but both must be taken into account in the development of preventive programs. While poor parenting skills are included among the risk factors, early childhood education in social and problem solving skills and parent training skills have been identified as protective factors against the development of mental health problems.

Early intervention for young mothers in at-risk families has shown the benefits of social support and parenting training. A 15-year follow-up of a randomised controlled trial investigating the effects of pre-natal and early childhood home nurse visitation (promoting good health care, competent child care and maternal personal development) to first time mothers from low socio-economic backgrounds found a
dramatic reduction of the rates of serious antisocial behaviour and substance use of their adolescent children compared with controls (Olds, Henderson, Cole & Eckenrode et al., 1998).

The Need for Parent Training

The social implications of family competence are far-reaching, yet for the generations since World War II there has been very little training for parenthood. Where large families and extended families once provided knowledge and support for young parents, during this time there has been comparatively little systematic preparation (Alvy, 1994; Anastasiow, 1988; Pugh & De’Ath, 1985; Silcock, 1979).

Indeed Alvy (1994) believes parent training to be now a social necessity. Anastasiow (1988), arguing for mandatory parent training, notes that particularly with poorer, less educated parents, the potential is high for producing children who are even more disadvantaged in both health and education. The economic cost of such an intervention is considerable, but it would be far outweighed by the economic and social gains made through the provision of parent training.

The seriousness of the situation has been recognised in Canada, where due to the efforts set in motion by the Early Years Task Force Study undertaken for the government in Ontario, early childhood centres have been established to teach parents, especially those at risk, how to acquire parenting skills (McCain & Mustard, 1999). This move has been seen as imperative, because of the rapidly mounting neurophysiological research that shows the early years as absolutely crucial for raising children to be competent members of society. Emotional competence is also seen by Goleman (1996) as preventive. Emotional self-regulation and empathic responses can be built up from infancy onwards, but it has to be borne in mind that
children’s emotional and cognitive as well as biological growth proceeds and matures over time, with varying needs throughout development. A more adaptive style of parenting is urgently needed, because the present generation of youngsters is more troubled than ever before, with increases in alcohol and drug abuse, crime, depression, eating disorders and youth suicide, an assessment echoed by Rutter, Giller and Hagell (1998) in the UK, and in Australia by Stanley (2001).

While it has been established that parenting style in the early years has a lasting effect on human development, which is particularly concerning for disadvantaged families, it should not be assumed that lack of parenting skills is irremediable or that later years are less important. Even mothers with intellectual disability can be trained in child care skills (Feldman, Case, Garrick, MacIntyre-Grande, Carnwell, & Sparks, 1992; Feldman, Towns, Betel, Case, Rincover & Rubino, 1986). Resilience has been shown in young children who have survived extraordinarily adverse circumstances, and brain development is a continuous process (Kagan, 2000). For children with either early-onset antisocial behaviour or hyperactivity or both, a good outcome has been associated with positive family features, including absence of expressed negative parental feelings (Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998). Parent and child training has been shown to prevent the early onset of delinquency in disruptive kindergarten boys from low socio-economic areas (Tremblay et al., 1992).

The Importance of Training Parenting Style

There is considerable difference between families that are reasonably competent and those who are dysfunctional. Parents in the latter category have been shown in numerous studies to have benefited from behavioural interventions and
training in order to establish boundaries where family management is out of control. On the other hand, the qualities which need to be fostered for children's competency and maturity, and the need for parents to understand and encourage their development have been shown to be critical for the prevention of the severe social problems which confront families today. Gordon (1983) has argued that a radical change in parenting attitudes, language and style of interaction with children is essential to cope with these problems, yet our current responses remain poor (Stanley, 2002). Parenting styles which take into account the importance of emotional development must be included in training and made widely available.

In summary, changes occurring in the last fifty years have had a major impact on families. Social and legal changes have affected the relationships of parents and children, television and computers have changed the patterns of family life, while workplace changes and economic uncertainty have increased family stress and the need for coping skills. At the same time, multidisciplinary understanding of child development has highlighted the need to foster children's emotional growth through parenting practices which emphasise both affection and competence. Clearly the context of parenting has changed from that of the previous generation, and with the possible exception of dysfunctional families, there is a need to move away from a primary emphasis on discipline and obedience towards a more flexible style of management, prioritising instead an emphasis on relationship enhancement and the teaching of coping skills. Ginott (1969), Gordon (1976), Gottman (1997) and Porter (2001) have all advocated a style of parenting that is based on interpersonal skills, the needs of the child as well as the parent, and a collaborative approach towards solving the problems and conflicts that inevitably arise in family life. Parents do not always have the necessary skills, and it is important that parent training should be available at
a suitable level for all families, at whatever stage they seek it, and that information
and evaluation of all types of program is available and kept up to date. Chapter 2 will
examine the kinds of parenting programs available in Australia.
CHAPTER 2. PARENTING PROGRAMS IN AUSTRALIA

The Effects of Ecological Changes on Parenting

At the beginning of a new millennium, family life and parenting practices are not working for many parents in the way they had hoped, and this is occurring in families with younger and younger children (Marwick, 1998). Changes in the context of family life clearly require an adaptive approach for raising children effectively, a position which has been argued by innovative psychologists and thinkers for several generations (Adler, 1914/1986; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964; Ginott, 1961, 1969; Goleman, 1996; Gordon, 1970, 1975, 1976, 1980, 1989, 1995; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Kohn, 1999; Porter, 2001).

Intervention as a Means of Change

Some families need clinical intervention, which has generally been seen as family therapy (Bloch, Hafner, Harari & Szmukler, 1994; Gurman & Kniskern, 1981-1991; Kramer, 1985; L'Abate & Young, 1987; Richter, 1993), or behavioural parent training (O'Dell, 1974; Patterson, 1971; Sanders, 1996; Sanders & Markie-Dadds, 1996) but many who do not have clinical problems are frustrated with received parenting practices that seem outdated and unworkable. They are anxious to find a way of interaction that will provide a more satisfying home life and meet their responsibilities for children more successfully (Wood & Davidson, 1994/95).

There is interest, particularly among middle class parents, in joining parenting classes in order to gain knowledge both of child development and family management, but Sanders (1997b) has noted that no more than ten per cent of families in Australia have had any form of parent training. Since parenting styles affect the
emotional abilities of their offspring, (Goleman, 1996; Prior et al., 2000), and parents are instrumental in the way their children mature (Baumrind, 1980; Prior et al., 2000; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001; Pryor & Woodward, 1998; Resnick et al., 1997), it is important that they understand the capabilities of family strength, the changing needs of children, and the qualities that must be fostered. Family socialisation is an exceedingly complex, multifaceted process, occurring through modelling, reinforcement, coaching and labelling, (that is, providing the actual words to describe, for example, feelings or happenings) (Halberstadt, 1991).

The family appears to be under stress in the present age more than ever before, due to factors such as economic uncertainties, changing standards and expectations, and the ambivalence forced on parents through the lack of definition of appropriate role behaviour. An important intervention could be found in the provision of parenting education with a focus on interpersonal relations rather than on more traditional understandings of the family in society (McKenry & Price, 1994).

It is also crucial that both parents and educators are aware of the key ways to encourage and support the emotional wellbeing of young people. Within the family, the dynamics of interaction between parents and children not only determine the likely outcome of each encounter but also construct the context in which they live (Baumrind, 1980; Eastman, 1989; Edgar, 1999; Gordon, 1989; L’Abate, 1990; Mace, 1983; O’Connell & O’Connell, 1992). Tremblay, Larrivée and Gregoire (1985) showed that child and parent characteristics considered together can be used to account for more of the variance in a parent’s behaviour with his/her child than if either is assessed independently.
The Emergence of Parenting Programs

Various parenting courses with differing orientations and philosophical backgrounds have been developed over the past three decades, mainly in North America, and there has been extensive evaluation as well as a good deal of outcome research. To the ordinary parent, searching for practical advice among the myriad available publications, the differences may not be readily apparent. In the light of the current understanding of child development and family competence, it is appropriate to consider the different approaches they offer in the areas of emotional training, respect, appreciation, assertiveness, negotiation and problem solving in leading to the prevention of problems. An understanding of the content and aims of each program will enable assessment of their ability to provide parents with the training they need to foster these qualities. This will be the main focus of this chapter.

Programs Available in Australia

In Australia there has been considerable interest in parent education over the past decade. Parent education has been seen as one way to prevent child abuse and domestic violence but also as a means of giving normal parents some understanding of child development and sufficient competence in child management to reduce family stress (Tomison, 1998). Local councils and community health centres often work with parents, particularly those under stress for various reasons, with social workers and community health nurses giving short courses to small local groups. Information and skills are targeted to specific needs, generally at a basic level, with individual workers putting materials together in a fairly eclectic fashion. Non-government organisations such as Anglicare, Centacare and Relationships Australia
also provide parenting courses at varying levels as the need arises. The non-government organisations raise their own funds and also receive government funding. The federal government website Relate lists 141 agency centres in major towns across Australia which offer parenting and relationship education and support through numerous organisations, some local and others nationwide. Of these centres, 23 are run by Anglicare, 13 by the Anglican Family Service, 53 by Centacare (a Catholic family welfare organisation), and 22 by Relationships Australia. They also sponsor courses of the major parenting program packages such as PET (Gordon, 1976) and STEP (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) generally on an ad hoc basis. The Australian parenting program Triple P (Sanders, 1996) is provided to parents through its own organisation, the Parenting and Family Support Centre (PFSC) which is a specialist family intervention research and training facility in the School of Psychology in the University of Queensland. As such it receives specific government funding. It has also sought and obtained a large amount of corporate sponsorship, and has negotiated a contract with Queensland Health, a state government department, to deliver Triple P. The Annual Report of the PFSC (2000) points out that its primary research and clinical activities revolve around its Positive Parenting Program (Triple P).

The major parenting programs noted above also fall into three different categories, behavioural, Adlerian and humanistic. The behavioural approach is represented by the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) (Sanders, Markie-Dadds & Turner, 1996). The Adlerian approach, which combines communication and management techniques is presented in Australia as Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). The parent-child relationship is the primary focus of the humanistically based Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) (Gordon, 1976). There are distinct differences in each of these programs.
Interestingly, each ultimately derives from a separate twentieth century movement which was originally established in the clinical area, subsequently developed for non-referred populations for prevention of problems, and brought into prominence mainly after World War II:

1. Triple P from behaviour modification (Eysenck, 1960; Skinner, 1953, 1971; Watson & Rayner, 1920; Wolpe, 1969) and Learning Theory (Bandura, 1969; O'Dell, 1974; Patterson, 1971)

2. STEP from individual psychology (Adler, 1914/1986; Dinkmeyer, 1986; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964)


A Comparison of the Three Parenting Programs

Most Widely Available in Australia

The three parenting programs most widely available in Australia are Triple P, STEP and PET. Triple P is disseminated through the Parenting and Family Resource Centre (PFSC), which was established in 1996 as a specialist family intervention research and training facility within the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland. The PFSC has developed a nationally coordinated system of training and accreditation for practitioners in each of the five levels of family interventions. It also collaborates with other similar research groups throughout the world. In Australia, Triple P is available in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia,
Victoria and Western Australia. Practitioners have also been trained in New Zealand, Germany, the United States, Scotland and Singapore. Between 1996 and 2000 more than 27 substantial grants of funding were obtained for the work of the Centre from both government and private sources. In Queensland in 2000, approximately 100 group programs were run each quarter, involving more than 850 parents.

STEP in Australia is available through the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), a national educational research and development agency, which was established in 1930 as an independent, not-for-profit company. STEP, which is published by the American Guidance Service, is distributed through ACER Press.

In response to an inquiry, ACER Customer Service reported in 2000 that it usually sells 3-4 Instructor kits per year Australia-wide, and approximately 350 parent handbooks. In 2000, the agency also supplied 125 Early Childhood STEP handbooks and 110 for STEP Teen. There are no figures for the number or location of courses conducted in any one year. There is no instructor training, although in practice, instructors tend to come from schools and educational institutions which hold the kits in their libraries.

In Australia, PET, developed in America by Thomas Gordon, is available through the national provider, the Effectiveness Training Institute of Australia (ETIA), which is a non-profit umbrella organisation comprised largely of representatives of the various state instructor associations, including those in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia. ETIA is responsible for training and accrediting all instructors, to whom it supplies course materials, including the Australian PET Workbook (Wood, 1997), which has been used exclusively since 1998. It was developed by the present
author as a foundational part of the current study, and in response to repeated requests from instructors and parents who found the American version culturally inappropriate.

The Australian Workbook is now in its second printing of 3000 copies, and has reached approximately 1000 parents each year Australia wide. It has also been used for the past two years in Canada (over 500 copies supplied), the UK and Hong Kong. The program, which divides neatly into skill modules, has undergone a rigorous evaluation for national accreditation with VETEC (Vocational and Educational Training and Employment Commission) offering transportable qualifications for those parents who seek them and who fulfil the necessary requirements. PET is therefore a competency based training, appearing on the national database with ETIA as a Registered Training Organisation. PET is currently available in 21 countries world-wide, in 28 languages, with varying provider arrangements from Gordon Training International in Solana Beach, California.

Evaluations of Parenting Programs

The three categories of program have been evaluated together in the literature as reviews (Alvy, 1994; Dembo, Sweitzer & Lauritzen, 1985; Krebs, 1986; Levant, 1983; Wiese & Kramer, 1988), and as comparison studies (Schultz, 1981; Schultz & Nystul, 1980; Schultz, Nystul & Law, 1980). All three categories have been shown to be effective in achieving the results they claim for the parent groups to whom they are taught (Alvy, 1994). The specific programs, Triple P, STEP and PET have each generated a body of literature, including a series of empirical studies of the first and a considerable number on STEP and PET. Both PET and STEP are educational courses, mostly targeting self-selected parents and utilising the dynamics of group
presentation (Bion, 1959; Gordon, 1955). Triple P has mainly been concentrated on remedial work at various levels with clinical populations, but is now engaged in the production of community based programs delivered by health professionals other than psychologists, and is intended to be available at a population level (Sanders & Markie-Dadds, 1996).

**Behavioural Parent Training**

The traditional approach of behaviour modification for problems of children's behaviour has generally been one of interventions by professional workers such as psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers (Griffin & Hudson, 1980), chiefly with the children as the target. It came to be recognised that both parents and the home environment were implicated in the generation and maintenance of maladaptive social behaviours (Patterson, Reid, Jones & Conger, 1975; Wahler, Winkel, Peterson & Morrison, 1965), and that parents themselves could benefit from training, even ultimately acting as therapists for their children (Berkowitz & Graziano, 1972; Forehand & Atkeson, 1977; Wahler, 1967). Wahler and Erickson (1969) advocated treating the child within the immediate environment (whether family, school or outside) following the principles of reinforcement theory, with parents, teachers and peers if necessary being trained in modification techniques. The strong emphasis on behavioural parent training at this time has resulted from the rapid growth of behavioural psychology and the development of the experimental paradigm of Watson and Skinner. Wiese and Kramer (1988) in a review of empirical investigations of direct parent training from 1975 to 1985, pointed out that 66% of refereed articles on the topic appeared in behavioural journals, 26% in clinical and counselling journals
and 6% in journals of special education. Little research was directed at parents of normal children, and little was appearing in school psychology journals.

Following the principles of operant conditioning (Skinner, 1953, 1971) and learning theory (Bandura, 1969), behaviour modification uses positive reinforcement to elicit desired behaviours, and techniques such as ignoring, time-out and deprivation of rewards to discourage undesirable behaviours. The focus is on actual behaviours in present time and the elimination of circumstances causing their occurrence or maintenance. Parent training is described as a number of specialised procedures within this framework (Patterson, 1971; Salzinger, Feldman & Portnoy, 1970; Thomas, 1974). Skinner (1957) classified spoken interactions as verbal behaviour, with stimulus, response and reinforcement contingent upon each other, and open to be controlled exactly as any other behaviour.

Behaviour modification is effective and often necessary for remedial work and clinical intervention, and can be done individually or in groups. In family interventions, it is not primarily concerned with the development of relationships, but the parent is taught that the techniques should be applied in a warm and understanding social climate (Rose, 1974; Sanders, 1996). Rose (1974) suggested that while parents cannot be taught warmth as such, feelings can best be changed by changing the behaviours associated with them. He contended that the satisfaction of parental success in the achievement even of small steps in a clearly articulated behavioural program could result in appropriate feelings of warmth.

Hudson and Griffin (1980) point out that the therapist's interpersonal skills and display of empathetic appreciation of the parents' situation play an important part in the success or failure of remedial programs. Nevertheless these authors contend
that the process is essentially empirical and remedial, treating individual cases by applying psychological findings in relation to human learning.

Positive Parenting Program - Triple P

Triple P was developed through twelve years of research and assessment at the Behaviour Research and Therapy Centre, which was founded in 1982 as a joint venture between the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Queensland. It is currently administered, presented and continually researched by a team of psychologists at the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University, under the direction of Professor Matthew Sanders.

A Multi-level System of Family Intervention

Triple P provides a comprehensive multi-level system of family intervention to address a wide range of parents. A media information campaign is used to reach families at a population level, and the next levels target first parents of children with mild behaviour problems, and then those with children at-risk with more severe behavioural problems. The focus is mainly one of professional intervention, comprising behavioural training based on social learning principles, using the least necessary intervention to reach the desired outcome, and claiming to have the strongest empirical support of any intervention with children, particularly those with conduct problems (Sanders, 1999). A feature of Triple P has been the multidisciplinary approach, encouraging the participation and training of community health professionals in the delivery of clinical family interventions and training medical practitioners in parent consultation skills using Triple P.
Interventions for Behavioural and Emotional Problems

Triple P also provides group training courses (Markie-Dadds, Turner & Sanders, 1996). As a behavioural program it is particularly suitable for remedial purposes, but it is equally applicable to children with normal everyday problems (Sanders, 1999), and is advocated also for prevention (Sanders & Markie-Dadds, 1996). Cognitive-behavioural training has developed a variety of well-validated interventions for assisting children and adolescents with behavioural and emotional problems (Sanders, 1997a), but it is extremely important to provide access to interventions for more than the 2% of children with identifiable clinical problems who up to this point have received treatment from mental health specialists, according to the Western Australian Child Health Survey (Zubrick & Silbern, 1994). Sanders (1997a) cites the lack of services for rural and minority groups, for preventive strategies, for research into effective methods of disseminating empirically validated treatments, and the need for multidisciplinary approaches to all these problems. Triple P has developed a nationally coordinated system of training and accreditation for practitioners in health, education and social welfare.

Problems of Normal Families

A textbook for parents (Sanders, 1996) and a series of Triple P Tip Sheets for parents address the normal family problems of infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, older children and the parents themselves. Clear, concise instructions are given in the Tip Sheets for parents, together with friendly advice on the implementation of behavioural management tactics in varied situations. The emphasis is on coaching good child behaviour through clear teaching by the parents, explaining what is expected ahead of
time, using positive reinforcement, and avoiding negativity. Parents are advised to encourage children's own cooperation and problem solving where possible.

**Clinical Interventions**

The Triple P approach for referred families deals with parents and pre-adolescent children specifically on a behavioural level, using the same well validated child-management skills such as clear, calm instruction, logical consequences for misbehaviour, planned ignoring, quiet time (non-exclusionary time-out), and timeout (Sanders, 1999). Reward and punishment are part of the behavioural management system, but reinforcement such as praise, star charts, smiley face stickers or other small rewards is preferable for achievement of behavioural goals, and parents are cautioned against unintentionally rewarding unacceptable behaviours (Sanders, 1996). Methods for training parents include modelling, rehearsal, emotionally supportive feedback and homework tasks. Video presentations are utilised to show positive parenting skills. Parents are taught to use the naturally occurring daily interactions of family life to train their children's language, social skills, developmental competencies and problem solving skills in an emotionally supportive context, that is using clear, calm instruction, framed in a positive manner, and avoiding coercive and ineffective methods of discipline such as shouting, threats or physical punishment. Assertive discipline is included, such as making ground rules for particular situations, discussing rules with children, and using logical consequences for misbehaviour as well as quiet time, timeout and planned ignoring. Marital communication skills are included in a more intensive level of intervention, where parents are taught to understand how their own emotional condition affects their parenting and
consequently their children’s behaviour. They are also taught coping skills for management of depression, anger, anxiety and stress.

Disadvantaged Families

Where children are severely oppositional, where families are not functioning well and are out of control, a remedial program is obviously indicated, and the behavioural program is necessarily one of regaining control. For the choice of program for particular parents, not only the parent’s objectives for training need to be assessed, but also the levels of skill and education. A positive program of control may appear to be the only comfortable option for parents with considerable deficits of skill or education, or for those of very traditional, culturally conservative or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Research in Triple P

The importance of parents’ self-management in relation to the maintenance and generalisation of parenting skills once acquired was early emphasised in the research (Sanders, 1984; Sanders & Glynn, 1981; Sanders & James, 1982), and is a current feature of Triple P (Sanders, 1999). In a comparison study investigating the effects of child management contingency training and planned activities training in five different situations at home for parents of oppositional children, Sanders and Christensen (1985) found that the children improved with both treatments, showing no difference from a social validation group of nonproblem children. The parents in both treatments showed a decrease in aversive behaviour. It was suggested that planned activities training (advance planning, avoidance of rush, pre-establishment of
rules, role-play and rehearsal of correct behaviour) may provide some important educational and relational skills for parents using child-initiated interactions to teach language and social skills to children, and to engage their interest.

Sanders (1999) has asserted that Triple P studies provide a body of methodologically sound evidence-based outcomes. Nevertheless the following studies provide interesting examples of possible shortcomings. Both use control groups, random assignment to groups, and a wait-list control, the "gold standard" of experimental design discussed recently by Robson (2002), who pointed out that in the real world such investigations are not necessarily ideal for the assessment of complex and sensitive issues in human behaviour. According to Robson, they may even transgress ethical boundaries where very troubled participants are deprived of choice and timing in treatment. Flexible and qualitative approaches may be preferable in teasing out real issues, and more successful treatments may be found using quasi-experimental designs (Robson, 2002).

Connell, Sanders and Markie-Dadds (1997) investigated the effects of a self-directed family intervention for parents of 2-6 year-old oppositional children in rural and remote areas. The program was based on self-regulation principles, and consisted of a written information package together with weekly telephone consultations for ten weeks. Parents were randomly assigned to the treatment and to a wait-list control. Compared with the control group, the trained parents reported greater levels of competence and fewer dysfunctional parenting practices following treatment, and mothers reported lower levels of anxiety, depression and stress. At a 4-month follow-up, improvements in child behaviour and in parents' practices and emotional states were all maintained, according to mothers' reports.
While the settings for this study pose the considerable difficulties of distance, it should be noted that there are also difficulties of assessment in that the treatment consisted of a self-administered information package (together with the ten weekly phone calls) which all may have been understood differently by the participants, and also that the outcome measures are all self-report. It is important, as far as possible to have some objective assessment to balance self-report measures. As to the question of treatment delay for the wait-list control, those participants in rural and remote areas would presumably have continued with their pretest levels of anxiety, depression and stress for at least four months.

In the next study, three levels of the Triple P Positive Parenting Program were compared by Sanders, Markie-Dadds, Tully and Bor (2000). The families of 305 preschoolers at high risk of developing conduct problems were randomly assigned to the enhanced, standard or self-directed Triple P programs, or a wait-list control. Following the program, the families attending the practitioner-assisted enhanced and standard programs showed lower levels of parent-reported disruptive behaviour, lower levels of dysfunctional parenting, greater parental competence and more consumer satisfaction than those in either of the other two conditions. The children in the enhanced level showed greater reliable improvement. At a 1-year follow-up, children in all three conditions showed similar levels of clinically reliable change in observed disruptive behaviour. Although this study is better designed than the first in using both self-report and behavioural observation as outcome measures, the problem of minimal or delayed treatment remains. Parents in both the self-directed Triple P participants and the wait-list control reported less improvement in children’s disruptive behaviour and less satisfaction with their treatment. Here the families with pre-schoolers at high risk of developing conduct problems are denied early treatment
for a condition in which timing may be crucial. Robson (2002) has pointed out that such a situation raises a considerable problem for researchers.

**Assessment and Validation**

Empirical validation of the techniques used, and outcome evaluations are regarded as crucially important in behavioural research, both because of the critical need for effective clinical interventions and for on-going financial support from government and community. Behaviourism is founded on the importance of demonstrating successful change from maladaptive to adaptive behaviour through objective scientific investigation. It is interesting to note that in the pursuit of scientific method (Robson, 2002) the language used in the presentation of Triple P’s outcome reports is heavily weighted with terms such as “evidence-based” and “empirical support” with the implication that other paradigms have little value. It is important to note once again that the evaluation and quantification of separate behaviours present fewer methodological problems than do those in the area of complex emotional and relational interactions (Eastman, 1983; Gurman & Kniskern, 1981, 1981-1991, Robson, 2002).

Behaviours rather than emotional and relational problems are the focus of behavioural training. While the importance of maintaining a positive atmosphere in the training and application of particular skills is part of behavioural parent training, the focus is necessarily on concrete behaviour change, and it is expected that emotional problems will be improved along with behaviour. As an example, one study from the PFSC, “whose primary research and clinical activities revolve around Triple P” (Parenting and Family Support Centre Annual Report 2000, p.5), used
cognitive behavioural treatment for families with children reporting recurrent abdominal pain (RAP).

Sanders, Cleghorn, Shepherd and Patrick (1996) investigated the role of children’s pain history, their coping style and their mothers’ caregiving, and the type of treatment, (behavioural or paediatric) as predictors of improvement in children with recurrent abdominal pain (RAP). They found that children with the greatest pain reductions on the child’s pain diary at the 6-month follow-up were those with a stress-related mode of onset (as compared with an illness related onset), those who received cognitive behavioural family intervention (as compared with standard care, mainly reassurance), and those whose mothers used more adaptive caring strategies such as encouraging the children to deal with the pain themselves and minimising attention following pain complaints. The study is reported as an example of a behavioural approach to an emotional problem, in which the main outcome of treatment for stress-related recurrent abdominal pain appears to be the extinction of the children’s pain reports. This outcome raises questions about the adequacy of behavioural treatment in dealing with such psychogenic problems in the light of recent understanding of the salience of children’s emotional health and training. Is the inference to be that if pain reports have been extinguished, then the concomitant emotion has also been extinguished? Damasio (2000) has pointed out that pain and the emotion associated with that pain are clearly not one and the same.

Ralph (2002) has recently reported development of Triple P for Teens as an important extension of the behavioural program. The teen program, now being trialled in Brisbane schools, emphasises positive relationships and recommends family meetings for negotiation and problem solving. With respect to emotional problems, parents are advised to deal appropriately with teenage emotions, to listen to
and acknowledge them, and to respect the growing autonomy of the adolescent. A key suggestion, which highlights the behavioural approach, is to separate emotions from the problem solving (italics added).

The question of the importance of emotional training exposes a core difference between the three parenting programs, Triple P (Sanders, Turner & Markie-Dadds, 1996), STEP (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) and PET (Gordon, 1976). All three are further distinguished by differences in the issues of power and control. The next section will examine the underlying philosophy and historical development of STEP and PET.

An Adlerian Program - STEP

The Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) is based on the child-rearing philosophy of Alfred Adler, which was subsequently expanded and updated by Rudolf Dreikurs in the US (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964).

Alfred Adler in Vienna

A contemporary of Freud, Alfred Adler was a physician and psychiatrist before World War I in Vienna. He founded his own school of therapy, one which was cognitive-behavioural in today's terms rather than psychoanalytic. His main object was to help individuals, families and communities to achieve more effective social living. To this end he worked with parents, teachers and children both as a psychotherapist and educator, offering them knowledge and skills. Early in the twentieth century Adler established over 40 child guidance centres in Europe, mainly
in Austria and Germany, where he was assisted by his student and later colleague Rudolf Dreikurs. Unfortunately these centres were forced to close when Hitler came to power, and subsequently both men fled to the United States (Christensen & Thomas, 1980).

**Intergenerational Maladaptive Patterns**

Adler had earlier recognised that many of the ills of society could be traced to faulty upbringing in the family, often as a result of the transmission of cultural patterns, education and language style from one generation to the next. He pointed out that this can clearly be seen in impoverished and disadvantaged families. He also emphasised that each individual could only be understood as existing within a social environment continuously exerting its own social pressures and expectations. Therefore it must be understood that the small world of the family and children’s development within it will always be tied to what is happening in the wider society (Adler, 1986). Garbarino and Bedard (2001) similarly point out that parenting is always related to and must take account of the social context.

Adler (1986) maintained that each person lives a purposeful life, aimed at achieving significance within his or her particular environment, and this includes emotional characteristics, temperament, sex and place in the family. Problems arise often because people choose maladaptive ways of reaching their goals. The most serious mistake that parents or others can make is to rob a child of his belief in his ability to overcome whatever difficulties will inevitably come his way, and this can happen when autocratic parents insist on submission and unconditional obedience. Some children learn to change faulty beliefs through the influence of school, or
through other people when they go to work, but others need professional help, such as that offered by Adler’s development of Individual Psychology (Adler, 1986).

Adler believed that the tasks of psychotherapy and education were to help the individual, and to educate the community towards more effective social living.

With children Adler used a problem solving technique to help them recognise they were pursuing mistaken goals (Christensen & Thomas, 1980).

**Further Development of Adlerian Ideas**

In the United States, Dreikurs refined and expanded Adlerian concepts, developing a system of democratic conflict resolution for the family, and explaining his ideas in a way that would appeal to American parents (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964).

Tracing the history of child-rearing practices in the US, Dreikurs pointed out that most of them originated in a European feudalistic system that was almost exclusively autocratic, based on superior-inferior interpersonal relationships, and endorsed by both political and religious structures. Hence children were taught “to know their place” and “to show deference to their betters”. But, Dreikurs insisted, the emergence of the democratic social system and the pervasive striving for social equality had affected Western culture in its entirety, including its children. The result was that parent-child interactions using reward and punishment, and talking down to children from a position of authority no longer worked as once they did, a pattern which could be seen in family after family across the social spectrum (Christensen & Thomas, 1980). Equality in this sense did not mean that children were the same as their parents, but implied that they had equal value as persons. Since reward and punishment were no longer effective, Dreikurs proposed that a system of logical consequences could be used as a corrective procedure (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968).
Dreikurs, like Adler, believed that the best way of helping parents to recognise that the family environment had radically changed lay in education and not in psychiatry. New responses were needed to address the problems of child management, and the only way to achieve this satisfactorily was through parent training. It was important to show that the goals of child-rearing in an egalitarian society were very different from those of the traditional autocratic family where compliance without question was the norm.

Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) suggested that in this changed society children needed training in responsibility and self-control, which required understanding, encouragement and motivation of appropriate behaviour on the part of the parent, rather than control and insistence on obedience, an insight recently confirmed by the findings of the Australian Temperament Project (Prior et al. 2000).

According to Dreikurs (1947), the four goals of children's misbehaviour (whether or not they are conscious of them) are attention, power, revenge and the display of inadequacy. He believed that attention is sought by children for reassurance that they belong in the family, while power is used as defiance of parental power. Revenge is sought for unjust treatment, and inadequacy is shown in order to elicit help. All, he suggested, are maladaptive ways of acquiring security and worth. However Dreikurs and Soltz in 1964 insisted that although the principles of child raising no longer depended on power and control, they still required firmness and consistency on the part of the parent.

Respect and Logical Consequences

According to Dreikurs and Soltz (1964), parental encouragement of routine was essential, and respect for order and the rights of others very important. This
should also include respect for the child, who should be talked with, not talked to, in a pleasant tone of voice, even when giving firm directions. Parents should always follow through with instructions, and should also be consistent. Instead of attracting rewards and punishments, children should be taught that their mistaken actions resulted in natural and logical consequences - if these were unpleasant they would learn to avoid them. Expanding this idea, Gilbert (1986) explained that logical consequences in this view arose from social reality rather than parental action and they related logically to the misbehaviour. They contained no element of moral judgement, and were to be applied in a respectful manner, concerned only with what would happen following the child’s choice of action, i.e. the misbehaviour.

Family Conflict Resolution

Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) also emphasised the importance of listening to children - suggesting that if parents would listen, and not discount children’s ideas, they would discover that children make excellent and practical suggestions. Finally, following Adler, Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) pointed out that the weekly family council provides a great opportunity for parents and children to solve family problems as well as to enjoy time working together. Dreikurs had developed a system of democratic conflict resolution for use in family therapy, the school and the workplace (Christensen & Thomas, 1980). Dinkmeyer (1986) explaining in his own words that Adlerian family therapy has an educational component, suggested that four steps were useful in family conflict resolution procedures:

1. Show mutual respect by listening carefully and acknowledging that the other person has a point.
2. Pinpoint the real issue. Identify the priority that seems to be dominant, whether it be status, prestige or the need to control.

3. Seek areas of agreement by concentrating on what the individual is willing to do, making no demands that other members of the family change, and agreeing to cooperate rather than fight.

4. Mutually participate in decisions where all feel they are a part of the decision-making process.

Development of STEP

Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976) utilised the principles outlined above in developing Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), and added a presentation of the communication skills which they acknowledged had been developed by Thomas Gordon (1970) in Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). Both authors had in fact taken PET instructor training (Gordon, personal communication, 1998). The program is nevertheless essentially Adlerian, with an emphasis on the need to accommodate to current changes in the parenting environment by a shift in the use of parental power, rather than by the focus on relationship which is the prime concern in PET. STEP focuses on the reasons behind children's non-compliance, and proposes parent-initiated controls to manage it, including the use of natural and logical consequences for misbehaviour. Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976) point out that full use of the program requires participation in a STEP study group convened and presented by a leader. There is, however, no requirement for training or accreditation of the presenter.
The STEP Program

The program begins by exploring children's behaviour and misbehaviour in an egalitarian world, and explaining the Adlerian examples of attention and power seeking, revenge and the display of inadequacy. Misbehaving children, it suggests, are in reality discouraged children. Parents are advised that time and effort are needed to build mutual respect, to encourage good behaviour, demonstrate affection and set up enjoyable family interaction.

A discussion of emotions in STEP suggests that people's emotions are tied to their beliefs about the world. Examples are parents' beliefs that their anger and annoyance serve as a mechanism of control, or that children learn to use their emotions to achieve one or more of their four mistaken goals. Once parents realise that they do not have to be controlling they can avoid being reactive and can start to positively influence their children. It is pointed out that emotional self-control is part of maturity.

The communication skills presented in STEP include reflective listening, I-Messages and problem ownership, although they are not taught in depth as in PET. Parents are warned against using sarcasm or labelling, and are advised instead to communicate always with respect, and to be ready to acknowledge the fact when they do not know something, or have made a mistake. Following a discussion of reward and punishment as a disciplinary method, and its disadvantages, STEP presents the alternative system of using natural and logical consequences to motivate children towards making responsible decisions. Examples show parents how consequences can be applied and in what situations. Finally the family meeting is suggested as a useful tool, with guidelines for its various functions, together with a chart of the main
points to remember about democratic and positive parenting, and a table of self-defeating beliefs for parents to avoid.

Throughout the program, STEP is presented in a consistent format, offering clear explanations, easily understood charts and Points to Remember about each of the concepts discussed. Each week parents have a personal assessment page in their handbook to record their progress, learning and areas of concern.

Research into the Outcomes of STEP

Interest in STEP has recently focused on the mental health outcomes for the children of parents who have taken the course, and a recent study has shown STEP to have benefits for parents whose children were attending a psychiatric day hospital for clinical treatment. Snow, Kern and Penick (1997) showed STEP to be useful in enhancing the treatment effects on 119 mentally and emotionally disturbed children and adolescents, when their parents attended by choice a STEP course as part of the treatment program. Participants whose parents chose the standard program without STEP, attended their treatment program on average for seven weeks only, whereas those whose parents were involved in STEP stayed in the treatment program for the entire 12 weeks. While the STEP program was shown to be effective as a therapeutic intervention for families, the retention rates of parents who participated were a matter of some importance and were not investigated (Snow, Kern & Curlette, 2001). In a second study, therefore, these investigators attempted to predict which parents might not complete the course using scores on the Adlerian Scales for Interpersonal Success. They found that participants who scored highly on the Entitlement scale were more likely to terminate prematurely than those who did not score highly.
Adams (2001) investigated the effect of a STEP program in which parents focused their skills training on a particular child. Thirty-nine parents completed the training, and compared with a control group of 35 parents who received routine mental health services, reported more improvements in family functioning, including problem solving, communication, affective responses and behaviour control. This study would have been more persuasive if there had been measures other than self-report alone.

In an exploratory study of non-clinical families, Sharpley and Poiner (1980) showed that STEP provided parents with an effective means of learning to interpret their children's behaviour according to the theoretical approach of the program. Furthermore the parents who completed the measures used had significantly changed their cognitive responses in regard to typical child raising problems.

Allan (1994) studied the effects on ten parents of a STEP program in middle-class suburban Melbourne. The parents reported that they got what they wanted from the course, one saying that getting some good ideas about parenting was a sufficient help. Others reported being able to understand and manage their children's behaviour better, being able to control their own angry reactions, and generally becoming more reflective. The use of I-messages and reflective listening were considered helpful, but one parent found difficulty with the examples of the latter, saying she simply did not talk like that. One father thought the program was too prescriptive, (the "little set formulas" and "little neat boxes") and felt it was a bit like "psychobabble, or pop psychology". Most of the parents found things they felt were useful, and one pointed out that as in everything else "you take in the knowledge that you need, to adapt and use". On the whole there was little negative evaluation of the program, but neither did it seem to have had a major impact on the parents.
Allan (1994) stressed the importance of understanding the value bases of parenting education programs. She pointed out the importance of including in the course some discussion of the discrepancies between the real social difficulties faced by the parents and the possibly out-of-date assumptions about gender, work and parenting roles upon which a particular program may be based. Writing from a feminist social worker's point of view "with a critical perspective which highlights the impact of individuals and society upon each other," Allan (1994, p. 357) concluded that STEP fails to address the broader social issues because its emphasis is on the management of family problems and communication. She pointed out that it ignores issues such as the relative isolation of families, which impact particularly on mothers and make the lives of the parents more stressful. Therefore Allan's criticism is really directed at the philosophy of STEP, which was in fact formulated purely for the management of family problems in an egalitarian society. It should be noted however that Allan's study depends on self-report measures, without any form of quantitative assessment.

**An Ecological Adaptation of STEP**

McInnis-Dittrich (1996) in a study which addresses some of the social issues raised by Allan (1994), examined an ecological adaptation of STEP presented in an isolated community in the Appalachian mountains, where domestic and societal violence occurred widely, and aggressive and punitive child-raising methods were common. The parent educators realised that work with the parents about social and cultural issues was essential before any change in local parenting practices could possibly occur. They elicited the input of some parents who had already taken STEP, and made some revisions to the program which would reflect the importance to
participants of examining the ecological context of their violent society. Three changes were made to the program. The first was the issue of corporal punishment which was directly tackled from the point of view of the parent who had also been raised the same way. Secondly, the model of the individual as parent was shifted to that of parent as an individual operating within the larger systems of family and local community. Thirdly, a revised approach included the cognitive, affective and applied aspects of adult learning, which allowed for discussion of the parents' own experience of harsh discipline, some evaluation of its effectiveness, and suggestions of possible alternatives.

More than 75 parents took the adapted version of STEP in the first three months after its introduction. None of the parents who took part was involved in a case of alleged child abuse before the training or within six months of the training. Self-reports were extremely positive. Many parents had never previously questioned the use of physical punishment before the course, primarily because they were unaware of any alternatives. Many of them also appreciated the opportunity to reconsider their own childhoods, and how they felt about being punished, and many seemed to remember more about this aspect of the course than about the specific training skills.

It was pointed out that, because of the privacy aspect of parent-child interactions, it was very difficult to gauge the true success of the program in other than a qualitative way. Nevertheless the successful adaptation of the course showed that such changes were possible, and it was believed that similar adaptations could be made to any standard parenting program (McInnis-Dittrich, 1996).

The McInnis-Dittrich (1996) study highlights the difficulties of evaluating parenting courses such as STEP in a setting where the participants have a number of
sensitive issues. Without some kind of quantitative data it is not easy to establish the value of the presentation or of the program itself. Nevertheless the admission that many of the participants seemed to remember their own emotional satisfaction with the program rather than the skills which were taught suggests that they got something they needed even if they were not ready for the program.

Research over the last twenty years according to Snow (2000) has supported STEP as an effective intervention for parents and families. A number of studies are cited, including Esters & Levant (1983); Jackson & Brown (1986); McKay & Hillman (1979); Meredith & Beninga (1979); Noller & Taylor (1989); Nystul (1982); Summerland & Ward, 1981; and Williams, Omizo & Abrams (1984) (all cited in Snow, 2000).

B.J. Larson (2000) investigated STEP/Teen, developed for the parents of adolescents, but conceded that results should be treated with caution since there was no use of a control group. However both parents and adolescents reported improved family relationships, which were related to an increase in authoritative parenting and a decrease of authoritarian parenting. Unfortunately a study such as this, which presents only self-report measures and does not include a control group, makes any reliable evaluation impossible.

PET - A Relationship Enhancement Program

Thomas Gordon who developed the Parent Effectiveness Training program (PET) trained in psychology as a graduate student at Ohio State University where the lectures of a new professor who had recently published a treatise on the treatment of maladjusted children (Rogers, 1939) attracted his interest. Not only had Rogers
proposed psychological rather than psychiatric treatment for the problems of children and young people, but he also introduced his students to non-directive, client-centred counselling, and an experimentally oriented evaluation program of counselling outcomes. In his second year Gordon also became a research assistant in a study assessing the flying proficiency of civilian pilots, a position which required that he had himself to obtain a private pilot’s licence. Within a short time, America had entered World War II, and Gordon was accepted for Army Air Corps Training, which he completed and was selected to become a twin-engine aircraft instructor. This required that he attend a course on the psychology of instructing, which he was quite soon asked to teach, an assignment which prefigured his eventual life’s work of designing and teaching training programs (Gordon, 1995).

The Effects of Authoritarian Leadership

As leader of a group of officers involved in flying training, Gordon discovered that an authoritarian leadership stance, even in a military program, was destructive both of morale and of open and honest communication. It encouraged resistance, and reduced creativity. When he began to invite participation, to listen to the officers’ ideas and feelings, and encourage group responsibility, the negative reactions ceased, communication opened up and the work became productive and enjoyable (Gordon, 1995).

Leadership in Groups

After four years in the military, Gordon went on to graduate studies in the new interdisciplinary department of Human Development at the University of Chicago,
where at the same time Carl Rogers had accepted an appointment in the Department of Psychology. Gordon completed his studies and received his Ph.D in 1949, when he was invited to become an assistant professor and staff member of the Counselling Centre. He also sat in on some T-groups at the summer program of the National Training Laboratories at Bethel, Maine, where he saw some positive changes made by group members who became less shy and hostile, and increased their self-esteem and trust in others. Believing that a more democratic style of leadership than the one he had been observing would further improve the therapeutic outcomes, Gordon followed up with his own summer training program and subsequently described his model of group leadership (Gordon, 1955). He remained on the faculty at Chicago for five years, teaching and working in psychotherapy and researching non-directive counselling.

Clinical Work with Families

At the end of this time, he took a change of direction and spent three years as an organisational consultant to a large firm in California, but in 1957 he returned to psychotherapy in private practice, as well as consulting to businesses, churches, hospitals and government agencies. He began working with problem youngsters referred by schools or brought in by their parents. He became convinced that the teenagers brought to him for treatment were in fact perfectly healthy. They were coping to the best of their ability with the ways they were treated by their parents. Just as Bion (1959) had found in relation to groups where power was used for coercion, Gordon discovered that the youngsters, according to temperament, ended with fighting, flight or submission.
The parents in their turn, were also healthy people. The real trouble, Gordon believed, lay in the kind of relationship each had with the other (Gordon, 1977b).
Most of the parents, many of them professionals with tertiary education, had no understanding of more recent psychological findings about the development of self-concept, a climate of acceptance, the effects of punishment, modelling theory, or problem solving. Most were trying hard to be responsible and effective parents and were very concerned when their children disappointed them. Usually they used the same kind of training methods their own parents had used, (except for a few who were deliberately the opposite). These methods appeared to Gordon to be rather like dog training, both as to rewards and punishments, and in the patterns of communication, authority and discipline. In addition, there was a great deal of evidence that for many families the time-honoured procedures were ineffective, and for some, actually destructive, leading to real mental health problems.

Disenchanted with the application of the medical model of psychotherapy to normal families, Gordon also realised that society would never be able to solve such problems by waiting until people had developed psychological disorders, and then setting out to treat them (Gordon, 1970). He realised that the problems facing most of the parents and children he had seen were human relations problems and not psychopathology. Few had any human relations skills, honest communication, listening skills, respect for each others’ needs or fair ways of solving conflicts, all of which he had found to work in the research and treatment programs with Rogers at Chicago. He decided to design a leadership program for parents which would enable them to avoid potential problems with their children.
Prevention Rather than Treatment

Clearly, the preventive approach must be an educational one, moving away from the concept of illness and treatment. Gordon described how encouraged he was by the attitude of George Albee, who had challenged the wisdom of using the medical model in psychotherapy. He was further inspired by the words of G. A. Miller, who in stressing the need for psychology as a means of promoting human welfare in his Presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1969, had suggested that psychologists must find ways to “give psychology away to the public” (Gordon, 1977b).

Gordon had already had fifteen years’ experience in developing and teaching human relations training for business and industrial executives, as well as Air Force personnel (Gordon, 1995). He had continually found a lack of awareness of the effects of various styles of interpersonal communication (Gordon, 1977b).

Gordon had also recognised some important factors in the success or failure of training programs. They included the value of group training, the need for a non-threatening environment, the importance of allowing and accepting resistance, the necessity of actual skills training, and the importance of modelling by the instructor. Together with his theory of human relationships, all of these had to be taken into account in designing a course for parents. Again, he had to deal with the most critical variable in human relationships, that of the power differential between persons (Gordon, 1977b). A major dilemma for parents and their adolescent offspring was the growth of a struggle for power with both sides thinking only in terms of winning or losing (Gordon, 1970).
Solving Family Conflicts

Parents were not alone in regarding negotiation as an unsuitable technique of conflict resolution in their own domain. Gordon pointed out that negotiation was used frequently in disputes where both parties had equal power, that it was sought by parties with less power, and rarely considered by those in power. Human beings in general seemed to think that a democratic method of conflict resolution was considered useful only by those without power. "The idea that it can be used even when you do have power over another is not commonly accepted" (Gordon, 1970, p. 423). Realising the problem-solving potential of Dewey's (1933, 1938) democratic method of inquiry, Gordon set about effecting a synthesis of Rogers' listening skills, Jourard's self-disclosure and Dewey's six-step process together with his theory of relationships (Gordon, 1970) as the foundations of a pioneering, logical program. These approaches to personal interaction also included his understanding of problem ownership, the changed context of parenting and his belief in the capability of each person to develop self-awareness and make autonomous yet relationship-enhancing choices. In 1962, he taught the first courses himself, and the program was published eight years later.

From the first, PET was tailored to provide parents with skills for what he termed no-lose conflict resolution, and as essential pre-requisites for this, careful training in empathic listening and non-antagonistic assertiveness. It was a course focused on goals which Gordon came to see were the same for the enhancement of all relationships, whether parent-child, teacher-pupil or boss-subordinate - "achieving open and honest two-way communication, creative problem solving, constructive conflict resolution, mutual goal-setting, teamwork and co-operation" (Gordon, 1975, p. xiv). Based on Rogers' ideas of the conditions needed for ensuring a healthy
personal relationship, PET also set out to build up children’s self-esteem and self-responsibility (Gordon, 1975).

The PET Program

The PET course consists of eight weekly sessions of three hours each. The three major groups of skills taught are concerned with empathic listening, (Active Listening), assertiveness skills (presented as “I-Messages”), and skills for Conflict Resolution and family problem solving. Basic to the course is the insistence on its presentation by trained instructors, who provide detailed skill practice in a group setting, offering additional support for participants.

Behaviour

Group members learn to regard behaviour as acceptable or unacceptable, rather than "good or "bad". All behaviour is described as an attempt to meet the legitimate needs of living, which is explained in terms of a hierarchy from basic physical needs and loving care to achievement, eventual autonomy and fulfilment of potential (Maslow, 1943, 1970). Children’s unacceptable behaviours are seen simply as attempts to meet their needs in ways which happen to conflict with the legitimate needs of the parent in the same situation.

It becomes clear that what is acceptable is influenced by three factors - the self, the environment and the child (the other). These variables exert differing rather than constant effects over time. From them parents begin to learn self-awareness in terms of their own feelings, the effect of differing temperaments, both of their child’s, their own and those of the other parent, and how the time and place of interactions
affect every interaction. They learn that these are the dimensions within which they must work, and that it is far more important for two parents to be honest about their true feelings and to work out acceptable ways of dealing with situations than to seek always to be consistent in a joint approach to children's behaviour.

To many parents this view comes as a great relief, since most programs emphasise consistency, often resulting in one parent repressing strong feelings for the sake of unity. It also underlines the fact that in PET the dominant structure in which the family functions is the parent-child relationship. The major attitudinal shift in Western society, in a Kuhnian sense, is the departure from hierarchical structures of authority to accommodate more participatory modes of decision making, illustrated, however imperfectly, in democratic societies, and reinforced by the pervasive changes in the status of women both at home and in the workforce.

Within the family, the PET paradigm proposes the personal relationship between parents and children as taking the place of the wider society which once functioned as the structure. The structure of the healthy personal relationship is to become the main support for the interaction of the various family dyads even while the parents are learning more effective patterns of communication. In this, PET differs from programs which aim to use a pre-set structure of control in which to work. The parents' own philosophy of living sets the values they wish to teach their children within this relationship, whether liberal or conservative, religious, agnostic or secular. Nevertheless the fundamentals of personal respect, warm affection, authenticity, the value of experience, high parental standards, acceptance of differences, the nurturance of personal growth and mutual problem solving, together with the total rejection of coercion and punishment are the values which underpin the PET program. The question of differing parental views within the relationship must
be handled by the parents, using the problem solving method in PET, which emphasises openness, honesty and mutual respect. The importance of being congruent, that is matching external expression to real internal feelings, is also stressed. Early in the course participants learn to raise their awareness of feelings - their own and other people's - a crucial skill which is often lacking in our present culture, and one which provides a foundation for parents to learn and teach emotional competence to their children.

When parents new to PET are faced with particular problems of child behaviour, they sometimes feel unsure about which skill to use, whether helping skills or those of confrontive assertiveness are needed. If the primary responsibility for action rests with the parent, confrontation is needed. If the child’s expressed emotion is of concern to the parent, but the child will benefit by becoming responsible for change, then the helping skills are indicated. If both parent and child are involved in a situation where they have differing needs, then problem solving or conflict resolution is called for.

A simple and effective visual model, the behaviour rectangle, shown in Fig. 2.1, enables parents to make quick decisions for action by mentally identifying the emotion expressed, who is feeling it and who, therefore, owns the problem. The model shows how the helping skills, particularly Active Listening and I-Messages are used when the parent is feeling accepting about the child’s behaviours. In this instance, the I-Messages are those which are called declarative, in which the parent communicates his own values, or appreciative, with which the parent shows approval of the child. They should not be confused with confrontive I-Messages, which are used when the parent is feeling unaccepting of the child’s behaviours. It can be seen from the model that the line of acceptance is not necessarily static, and moves up and
down in relation to the parent’s feelings about the behaviour, in a particular context of space and time. The ultimate aim of PET is to enlarge the family’s No Problem Area through use of the helping skills when the child owns the problem and assertive skills, problem solving and conflict resolution when the parent owns the problem.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.1.** The behaviour rectangle: Interpersonal skills required in differing circumstances of parental acceptance and problem ownership.

**Empathic Listening**

Empathic listening in PET is the foundation of a flexible system of family communication training. The Gordon model provides operational skills training for emotional self-regulation and tutoring - later termed “emotional coaching” by Gottman (1997) - targeting individual goals set by the parent, and providing a positive approach to parenting in a way which can be developed as the family grows, and which does not have to be changed to meet the demands of adolescence. The basic skill to learn and apply is empathic listening, to use when the child is upset about a
problem. As *active listening*, this skill is taught quite intensively over two sessions; it is modelled by the instructor, and the parents' understanding and competence is monitored over the whole course of eight weeks. Active Listening is an important adjunct to the subsequently taught skills of parental assertiveness (and is used to deal with resistance), as well in problem solving and conflict resolution, where the parent must be able to listen carefully to identify the needs of the other people.

**Unhelpful Responses**

Parents are early made aware, either by role-playing or by written exercise, that most people, with the very best intentions, employ unhelpful or even destructive tactics with others who are experiencing a problem. It is pointed out that twelve typical responses, (designated *roadblocks* in PET) are, in this situation, actually inhibiting to the personal growth of the unhappy person to whom they are addressed. For this reason counsellors and therapists avoid their use. These responses include ordering, warning, moralising, arguing, blaming, judging, name calling, analysing, probing, sarcasm, and even reassuring and praising. There are, of course, situations where most of them are perfectly legitimate (generally when the other is not upset over a personal problem). It is pointed out however, that name-calling and sarcasm are almost always destructive, and best avoided in personal relationships.
Assertiveness and Confrontation

The effective parent is assertive, and the key to appropriate assertiveness in PET is self-disclosure (Zener, 1981a). Self-disclosure helps both personal self-awareness and the understanding of others. It enables a parent to be honest and clear with her children, and incidentally to model these desirable attributes. It also joins with empathic listening to model openness, which in turn, is part of constructing a climate of trust. Parental assertiveness is the skill needed to confront a child's unacceptable behaviour, and the parent is taught to understand that if a child's behaviour is preventing the parent from getting his own needs met, the parent owns the problem and must do something about it. The first tool for confrontation is assertion, in this case the "I-Message", in which the parent first describes the unacceptable behaviour without blame, then the parent's honest feelings about it, and the consequences to the parent in terms of cost, for example of time or money.

Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving

In the PET course, the background to resolution of family conflict is a discussion of three possible methods of solving it. The first method involves the use of power or coercion ("I win - you lose"). The second method is equated with permissiveness ("You win - I lose") and the third is mutual decision-making, using Dewey's method of problem solving (Dewey, 1933, 1938), with six sequential steps. Gordon's adaptation, first used in 1962, which he called "No-lose", was a pioneer of so-called "Win - win" methods. It combines the attempt to meet people's legitimate needs (Maslow, 1970) with "brainstorming" (Maier, 1960; Osborn, 1963) and the consideration of all possible solutions as put forward by Dewey. It depends on
empathic understanding of the needs of others, and an ability to be assertive about one's own needs. Like De Bono's (1970) lateral thinking, it requires creativity about solutions. It also involves self-control and mutual respect. The six steps used for conflict resolution in PET are:

1. Defining the problem in terms of needs
2. Generating possible solutions
3. Evaluating the solutions
4. Deciding on a mutually acceptable solution
5. Implementing the solution
6. Evaluating the solution at a later date

Gordon (1976) pointed out that in many situations of conflict, antagonism is maintained because one party to the problem imposes a unilateral solution, moving in at Step 4, but without mutuality and without going through the first three.

Shared Concerns and Values

The three programs outlined in Chapter 2 have a number of shared concerns and some similarities, and there are several areas in which they differ. In Australia, each of them is opposed to the use of physical punishment and smacking, and parents are told of the negative effects which may follow their use. Each one targets behavioural problems in children, with a focus on their improvement and on positive parental management leading to smoother running of the family, and each one advocates the importance of specifically acknowledging good behaviour as the best way of encouraging its repetition. Triple P uses the principles of behaviour modification and behavioural learning, and in a sense, some of these are used in both STEP and PET, both of which advocate focusing on the concrete behaviours rather
than the personal attributes of children. While STEP and PET do not use rewards and
punishment per se, their methods of approval and disapproval could be described as
forms of positive and negative reinforcement.

Each of the programs has been developed from both a theoretical and clinical
background by a psychologist with extensive experience, and a commitment to the
improvement of parenting skills and the enhancement of family life for parents and
children. STEP (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) and PET (Gordon, 1976) have
common ground in overtly insisting that a missing value in many parent-child
interactions today is respect, especially in regard to respect from parents to children.
Parents often fail to see personal respect for their children as the crucial value that it is
(1977b) went so far as to say that family life would be revolutionised if parents would
stop treating their children like puppies, and instead treat them with the courtesy they
accord to other adults, a sentiment also voiced by Brown (1976). Such respect would
both serve as a model, and invite reciprocity. Indeed personal respect has been
identified as a fundamental need of human beings (Harre, 1980), and the current
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1999) emphasises such a need in all families.
With the shift from authoritarianism and patriarchy towards the sharing of power,
respect must be two-way, and not as deference to be shown by inferiors towards their
betters (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964).

While Triple P is less concerned about power sharing, it does advocate the
management of children's behaviour in a constructive and non-hurtful way (Sanders,
Markie-Dadds & Turner, 1996). It also advocates the use of assertive discipline,
which is defined as being consistent, acting quickly when children misbehave, and
teaching them to behave in an acceptable way. Parents are advised to avoid yelling, name-calling, threatening or smacking, which are all incompatible with respect.

Differences in Theory and Practice - Emotional Training

Core differences between the programs lie in the management of behaviour and the emotional training of children, both in theory and practice.

_Triple P_

In Triple P parents are taught how to attain an emotionally supportive context by using clear, calm instruction framed in a positive manner, in order to help them to train their children's language, social and emotional skills, developmental competencies and problem solving skills. Parents are advised to give their children plenty of physical affection especially in the first few years, to establish secure attachment, and to tell them they are loved. However, in accordance with behavioural principles, they should avoid physical manifestations of affection in order to calm a misbehaving or agitated child. If they are being trained in a more intensive level of instruction, parents can learn marital communication skills, (understanding how their own emotional condition affects their parenting and consequently their children's behaviour) as well as coping skills for management of depression, anger, anxiety and stress.

Triple P recognises that lack of a warm, positive relationship with parents is a risk factor for children, but again, the behavioural principle is to focus on and deal with actual behaviours in the present time, and not on the antecedents of those behaviours, as already discussed in relation to a study of recurrent abdominal pain in children (Sanders, Cleghorn, Shepherd & Patrick, 1996). While Triple P is presented
as a program which aims to prevent both behavioural and emotional problems in children (Sanders, 1999), it does not seem to take any cognisance of emotional questions per se. These include training children in greater emotional awareness as raised by Gottman (1997), the Australian Temperament Project (Prior et al., 2000) and Porter (2001) for normal child populations. To put it simply, the difference is that of two basically different models (Barrett-Lennard, 1970; Tavormina, 1974).

**STEP**

STEP suggests that a positive relationship for parents and children is built on the four basic ingredients of mutual respect, taking time for fun, encouragement and communicating love. Emotions are conceptualised as being based on beliefs and purposes. For example, the belief that people are friendly and trustworthy, will create positive feelings towards others, while the belief that others are unfriendly and untrustworthy generates hostile feelings, in order to keep them away. Parents’ angry feelings are often used to control children’s behaviour, but once parents realise that they do not need to be controlling, they find they do not need to be angry either. On the other hand, children who have discovered the power of tears will use them to get their own way, and to achieve one or more of the four goals of misbehaviour (attention, power, revenge and the display of inadequacy) although they may not realise what they are doing. Parents can refrain from reacting to children’s emotional manipulation, and so teach their children that managing feelings is a necessary part of growing up. Nevertheless, reflective listening to a child’s feeling messages is fully explained and recommended, although with the caution that some children’s messages may be manipulative. Unhelpful parental responses are listed. In STEP, it is
important to consider the motives behind children's behaviours, in order to focus on
the best way to deal with them. Emotional development as such is not emphasised.

**PET**

The cultivation of empathy is central to Gordon's model of communication
and to the radical transformation of parenthood he believed to be a necessity for the
health and wellbeing of families today. Empathy presupposes an understanding of
feelings, both of Self and the Other, and the importance of that understanding in
constructive verbal interactions. Parents learn in PET that feelings are neither bad nor
good, they arise spontaneously, and contrary to popular supposition, do not
necessarily take charge. If emotion is expressed it is comparatively transient, but it is
a potent cause of problems, both somatic and psychological, if repressed. A child
who is troubled may not be able to see his problem clearly, but the parent who listens
empathically without judgement, and without giving advice, empowers the child to
express the emotion, understand more clearly, and be free to find his own solution.
Emotional awareness is trained by empathic interactions, enabling personal growth
for both parent and child.

**Difference in Behavioural and Humanistic Orientations**

Barrett-Lennard (1970, p.450) summarised the crucial differences between the
behavioural and humanistic orientations as resting on sharply different concepts of
human personality. Motivation for the behaviourist is the reduction of tension spurred
on by multiple secondary drives, and behaviour change results from instances of
positive or negative reinforcement. For the humanist motivation stems from a
pervasive tendency towards self-actualisation and growth, which in turn mediates
shifts in the balance of a complex, unitary whole. The two systems differ in the assumptions they make about theoretical constructs and values as well as in the more concrete initiations of change. Barrett-Lennard suggested that behavioural methods have no serious use for a construct such as that of the self, and that in learning theory, control of behaviour is specifically directed at maladaptive habits and internal response patterns. Learning theory assumes that people's behaviour can and should be shaped to fit in with a comfortable and productive society, and that this can be achieved through reward and punishment schedules. Humanistic understanding targets the individuals' own self-awareness, experience and inner freedom to initiate personal change. Humanistic theory is based on the intrinsic nature of human beings to be constructive and socially responsible, tendencies which are specifically encouraged by the interaction and relationship with another who is caring, empathetic and non-judgemental. Barrett-Lennard (1970) also expressed the view that both orientations had the potential to exercise a powerful influence on human conduct and personality. The choice depended largely on the underpinning value either of the scientific control of healthy behaviour or the intrinsic worth of individuals, each with the inherent tendency towards achieving maximum potential, given the right conditions (Barret-Lennard, 1970). While Triple P is obviously based on the behavioural paradigm, and PET on the humanistic, STEP appears to straddle the two.

The Management of Undesirable Behaviour

Triple P offers strategies for dealing with difficult behaviour (italics added). These strategies include establishing clear ground rules, dealing with rule breaking through directed discussion, using good behaviour charts, giving clear calm instructions, backing up requests with logical consequences, quiet time, timeout,
planned ignoring and planning activities to prevent behaviour problems (Sanders, 1996). STEP focuses on the goals of misbehaviour; the desire for attention, power and revenge, and the display of inadequacy. Parents are advised to begin by building up a positive relationship with the child, and to realise that the behaviour is maintained by their present reactions, which they must change first. When the child misbehaves, the parent is advised first to use “I-Messages”, describing the behaviour without blame, the parent’s feelings about it, and the consequences of the behaviour for the parent. If this does not succeed, the next step is to apply natural or logical consequences, so that the child will learn what follows the misbehaviour, and can then choose a better course. Natural consequences are those which permit children to learn from the natural order of the physical world - for example, that not eating is followed by hunger. Logical consequences are those which permit children to learn from the reality of the social order - for example, children who do not get up in time may be late to school and have to make up work. Consequences must be applied firmly and kindly (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976).

In PET the parent also learns that in order to change a child’s behaviour, the parent must change as well, since her current behaviour is maintaining that of the child. PET then deals with unacceptable behaviour, first by confronting the child with a concrete, non-blameful description of the behaviour, using an “I-Message” and realising at the same time that the behaviour is really an attempt to meet the child’s need in the situation, but one which interferes with the parent’s need. The parent honestly adds her feelings about the behaviour, and states what it has cost her. The child is then free to choose to behave differently in order to be helpful to the parent, and is motivated to change by influence rather than power. If this method does not work, (usually when the child holds a different value from that of the parent, for
example over a hairstyle or choice of clothes) then the parent must turn to problem solving and conflict resolution.

**The Issue of Control - A Difference of Philosophies**

The nature of parental power and how it is used is a primary issue. Baumrind (1968) suggested that parents should exercise legitimate power over the child up to about age six years - which she called the Authority Inception Period. Following Piaget (1965), she insisted that when the child has reached adolescence "power cannot and should not be used to legitimate authority" (Baumrind, 1968, p. 265). Baumrind (1967, 1968) presented the Authoritative model as the alternative to both authoritarianism and permissiveness, pointing out that the authoritative parent expects high standards and achievement by the child, and at the same time exhibits warmth, empathy and nurturance.

Davies (1978) suggests that the concept of power is central, and that attitudes to power distinguish the various parenting programs. He believes that it is impossible to completely eliminate a power base within the family, but parents should be willing to give their children more autonomy in a graduated way. Eastman (1989) points out that the way power is used is critical to family functioning. She believes that in the healthiest families it is shared, but not equally, except by the parents towards each other. She suggests that gradual autonomy offered to adolescents is advisable, and is successful provided that earlier training is soundly based.
Power in Triple P

The prediction and control of behaviour is the ultimate aim of behavioural programs, and behavioural parenting programs also fall into this category. Examples of goals for parental change, in order to set about modifying their children’s behaviour, include ignoring undesirable behaviours, attending to and rewarding desirable behaviours in a consistent manner, establishing rules and maintaining them, and showing interest in the child’s school and other activities (Rose, 1974).

Triple P being a multi-level program, aims to assist parents achieve and maintain control of their children in varying degrees according to their need. Because the focus of interest in the current study is on parenting programs for non-referred families, scrutiny will be limited to the area of normal parents following the methods suggested by Sanders (1996) and found in Every Parent’s Workbook for Groups (Markie-Dadds, Turner & Sanders, 1996).

Triple P of necessity proceeds on the assumption that the parent needs to control children’s behaviour in order to encourage desirable ways of acting, awareness of others and cooperation with children as well as adults. Parents are taught how to monitor, tally and graph a child’s behaviour and their own responses, to praise good behaviour, set up behaviour charts, manage misbehaviour and set appropriate rules. Clear charts show the sequences for compliance and behaviour correction routines (Markie-Dadds, Turner & Sanders, 1996). Parents are nevertheless advised gradually to give children in the upper primary grades more responsibility in some areas “while maintaining firm control in others” (Sanders, 1996). Completion of responsible tasks should be praised, especially when it is spontaneously undertaken, appropriate skills should be encouraged and taught to
children, and their opinions on matters affecting themselves or the family should be sought, and included in family problem solving (Sanders, 1996).

**Power in STEP**

STEP (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) teaches parents behaviour management in the context of understanding behaviour and preserving or improving relationships between parents and children. The first mention of power as such occurs in the Parent’s Handbook in relation to children’s pursuit of power, one of the mistaken goals they may have, according to Adler (1986) and Dreikurs & Soltz (1964). Parents are warned that winning a battle over, for example, “No one can force me to do anything” would be “a temporary victory” which at the same time risks the loss of the relationship (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). Adults should disengage from the power struggle because parental power tactics only increase the child’s desire for power, and may encourage the further mistaken goal of revenge.

Instead parents should concentrate on building the relationship, with encouragement, mutual respect, demonstration of affection and having quality time with children, both individually and together. The responsible parent sets realistic standards, permits choices, expects children to contribute, encourages independence and knows when to say no.

When the child misbehaves the parent should look first for a “natural” consequence, such as that the child who refuses food will later be hungry, but if a natural consequence is not available or is inappropriate, the parent “should design a logical consequence” (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). Examples of logical consequences include the child’s having to walk or miss school if she has failed to get up in time for the bus; having to face the teacher if he has neglected to do homework;
or the parent refusing to put dinner on the table if it has not been set by the child whose chore it is. It is essential that the parent is friendly and matter-of-fact, but also remains firm, and does not intervene. The choice is up to the child.

**Power in PET**

Gordon (1975) makes an explicit distinction between authority as power, and authority as knowledge or expertise, stating that the use of power as control and the exertion of positive influence on children were mutually exclusive. Gordon (1989) further describes authority based on knowledge or expertise as authoritative, and points out that in family situations parental expertise can influence children’s behaviour in a way which is quite different from coercive control. He sees all use of power in personal relationships as damaging and destructive, and for this reason rejects authoritarianism. Like Baumrind (1967, 1968) he regards permissiveness as equally destructive because the power, either through the parent’s abrogation of it, or by default, then rests with the child. In both cases according to Gordon (1975) there is a flow of resentment from the powerless to the powerful. In a later publication, Gordon (1983a) suggests that in the PET method of conflict resolution, the authority rests in the contract made by mutual agreement, which both parties undertake to respect. Further, Gordon (1983b) points out that the traditional and almost universal style of parent-child relationships has always been couched in the “language of power”. This language of power, he suggests, is radically transformed in PET, in which the parent learns to respond to children rather than to control them.

This view seems to give credence to the proposition (Wood, 1985) that the PET model is equivalent to Baumrind’s (1971) fourth style of parenting which she
termed "harmonious", and in which, according to the raters, parents did not exert control over their children, but appeared to have control.

Gordon's (1989) discussion of power further clarified his views, clearly distinguishing three examples:

1. Authority based on expertise, where one person in the family (often a parent but not always) has special knowledge.
2. Authority based on position or job description, to do with accepted tasks of family members.
3. Authority based on informal contracts between people, such as agreements about how family members interact.

These all differ from a fourth example:

4. Authority based on power to control, usually vested in parents.

Training Young Children

Baumrind (1968) suggests that until the child is about six years old, (which she called the Authority Inception Period), it is quite legitimate for the parent to exercise power, but this implies a change to a graduated sharing of decision making as the child matures.

Sanders (1996) advocates the gradual introduction of responsibility and decision making for children, pointing out that they vary considerably in their capacity to manage these, and it would not be sensible to allow them too much freedom at once. On the other hand, expecting them to be capable at any age without training would be equally irresponsible.

Gordon (1983b), pinpointing the major change which occurs when the child emerges from infancy and becomes an active youngster, suggests that most parents
change from being sensitive responders to the needs of the baby, and become active change agents and behaviour modifiers, inexorably taking on the role of controller. Indeed, Gordon goes so far as to say that the ten years following infancy and prior to adolescence are crucial for children’s wellbeing, which he believes is seriously compromised by the controlling model of parenthood. A radical transformation of this model is needed to deal with the serious and widespread problems of youth. PET, he suggests, offers an entirely different model, a different way of being as a parent, which is radically different from simple skill-training to enhance or enrich family relationships because it depends on a serious change of attitude (Gordon, 1983b). The use of power and control to establish rules and standards in the home, according to Gordon (1995) is unnecessary, and shows a lack of parenting skill and expertise. Similarly, Porter (2001) believes that guidance and encouragement rather than control are the key to the management of challenging behaviour in young children. She recommends that parents aim at fostering consideration and respect to set the foundations of a strong and competent family.


In a 1978 review, Davies discussed several parenting programs which were then available in Australia, including PET (Gordon, 1976), and STEP (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). He also considered the work of Ginott (1969) and Satir (1972), and some behaviour modification programs, which now would be represented by the Triple P Positive Parenting Program, (Sanders, Markie-Dadds & Turner, 1996). Like Barrett-Lennard (1970) and Tavormina (1974), Davies (1978) pointed out that behaviour modification programs are differently based from the humanistic programs which emphasise communication skills. The major differences, according to Davies,
are found in the attitudes to reinforcement, conflict resolution, and accepted levels of parental power. Each of the programs accepts the importance of encouraging children’s self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967).

In discussing the use of rewards and punishments, Davies (1978) suggested that although neither is favoured by PET (Gordon, 1975) or STEP (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976), the parents’ expression of positive (accepting) and negative (non-accepting) feelings to the child in PET, and the use of natural and logical consequences in STEP could actually be seen as reinforcement techniques. Both natural and logical consequences were regarded by Gordon (1983a) as a covert use of power. However the question of parental power remained central for Davies (1978), and he believed that it was not possible for the family to operate without it.

Developmental Concerns

While Davies (1978) considered that all the programs at that time were concerned with the development in the child of autonomy, cooperation, responsibility and independence, they did not equally take into account theories of cognitive development such as that of Piaget (1965). Piaget saw the problem of moral development as bound up with the emergence of the child from his egocentricity and subsequent arrival at the stage of the reciprocal relations required for cooperation with others. This development was hindered in a situation where the parent wielded power over the child. Furthermore, cognitive operations developed best in situations of cooperation. Thus the program which sought to equalise the power between adult and child was assisting the development of responsible, autonomous behaviour (Davies, 1978). At about the same time, Gordon (1976) suggested that children and their
parents need to use reasoning in arriving at mutually acceptable solutions to conflict, which is also a way of encouraging responsible choices.

Piaget (1965), however, considered that before three years of age the child is egocentric, and incapable of seeing the viewpoint of another. Because of this, Davies (1978) voiced a caution about the use of power-equalised conflict resolution in the early years, suggesting that a gradual equalisation of power, as put forward by Ginott, might be preferable. Davies also believed that reliance on verbal methods of conflict resolution with very young children might be problematic. However Kieschnick (1979) in the PET supplement for instructors *Teaching PET to Parents of Young Children* pointed out that Gordon, while addressing the training to the parents "who normally have the power", also teaches them to offer small early steps towards independence as it becomes appropriate.

Davies (1978) concluded by suggesting that an eclectic approach in parenting skills might be more valuable than too rigid an adherence to any one program. The reality of parent power, (with cautions about its inappropriate use), the need to regard the family as an interactive unit, and the desirability of teaching parents about normal child development, while at the same time respecting their autonomy and common sense, were all important questions which he believed should be taken into account.

**Parents’ Management of Power**

*Triple P*

While the emphasis is on positive management, calm instruction and parental self-control, in Triple P the parent is clearly in charge even in sharing information and encouraging discussion. Children's behaviour is controlled by the parent using appropriate rule setting, praise, behaviour charts, suitable rewards, and punishments
such as quiet time, timeout and planned ignoring for young children, and others suitable for older children such as deprivation of treats, money or privileges.

**STEP**

Discipline in STEP is addressed by the use of "natural and logical consequences" rather than reward and punishment, the use of which makes the parent responsible for the child's behaviour, invites resistance and risks non-compliance when the parent is absent. It also fails to teach the child decision making and personal responsibility. Natural and logical consequences on the other hand, relate to the natural or social order of events, in the light of which the child must decide how to act. The decision belongs to the child, rather than being imposed by the parent.

STEP points out, however, that there is a fine line between logical consequences and punishment. For example, if the parent speaks harshly, the consequence will be experienced as a punishment. Punishments demand obedience, logical consequences permit choice. Gordon (1983a) strongly disagreed with this assessment, asserting that logical consequences are imposed by the parent, and so are a use of power.

**PET**

Treating the family as an interactive unit, respect, autonomy, and commonsense (Davies, 1978) are core values in PET, but Gordon (1983b) also suggested that PET teaches a model of parenthood that requires a radical transformation of attitude to be successful in achieving wellbeing for the family and the wider society in the context of today's world. Basically the attitude needed as a substitute for parental power is one of profound respect, including self-respect, respect for another human being and respect for the relationship.
Gordon's work, both in psychotherapy research and in adult learning groups had led him to the discovery that the success of any human endeavour rests ultimately in the quality of the relationships between those involved in it. Where people interact and make mutual decisions based on open, intelligent discussion and genuine mutual respect, the outcome is likely to be satisfactory and stable. It may take time, and appear to be more trouble to achieve, but it is better than an arbitrary decision based on unilateral power which is likely to be resisted, and ultimately unsuccessful. It is an insight which applies equally to enterprises in education, business, government and families (Gordon, 1975).

Discerning the Benefits of Parenting Programs

It is clear that there is a need for parenting programs to assist parents of normal families to be more effective in raising competent children in the post-modern, deconstructed parenting environment. There is a vacuum created by the demise of a formally structured society in the West, making it paramount to promote an internal locus of control in the individual. The need for children to develop persistence, flexibility, emotional self-regulation and a sense of personal worth has been established, as has the necessity of warm and nurturant parenting, clear communication, and the fostering of interpersonal skills, including those of negotiation and conflict resolution. In the light of these needs, the standard programs available, including their aims and content have been described. It is important for parents who seek to improve their skills and self-confidence to understand the differences between the programs, in order to make an informed choice about which one best meets their needs. Such information is also essential for bodies who intend to sponsor programs, or are considering funding or providing other support. They
require not only rigorous empirical investigation into the different elements of each program, but also into the philosophy and outcomes for parents.
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH IN INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND THEIR APPLICATION IN PET

The Use of Interpersonal Skills in Parenting

The three main parent training programs available in Australia have been described, together with their theoretical backgrounds. Because of emphasis on the importance of training emotional competence in children, the focus now will be upon the PET program (Gordon, 1976), on the research into the separate interpersonal skills it embodies, and their applications in PET. The importance of linguistic skills will also be considered.

The fundamentals of interpersonal skills training are specified by Bolton (1993) as listening skills, including reading body language, assertion skills, and skills in conflict management, which includes handling emotions and collaborative problem solving. Essential substrates are empathy, genuineness and non-possessive love.

Bolton (1993) acknowledges that his approach to social skills enhancement has been nurtured by the thinking, research, teaching and writing of Gordon, Rogers, Ivey, Egan and Carkhuff who all began their work in the clinical area. Gordon and Carkhuff were closely involved in Rogers’ research programs, clinical work and teaching at the University of Chicago after the war (Gordon, 1995; Kirschenbaum, 1995). Egan had published his early work in interpersonal growth and group processes (Egan, 1970) and Ivey in microcounselling and interviewing skills (Ivey, 1971).

Like many others originally involved in clinical work, for example Adler, Dreikurs and L’Abate, Gordon came to believe that a wider approach, reaching out to non-referred parents, would benefit more families, whose needs were just as real as
those requiring professional treatment and expertise. Moreover, such an approach, if
developed systematically, would lead eventually to the prevention of many tragic and
unnecessary community problems (Gordon, 1977b, 1980), a position taken also by
Levant, (1978). Indeed, Gordon (1983b) came to believe in the necessity of radical
change in normal parenting practices, away from mere compliance with parental
expectations. He believed radical change was essential in order to advance the self-
responsibility and self-actualisation of the child through an empathic, healthy, growth
promoting relationship with the parent, based on acceptance, love and mutual respect,
and teaching emotional competence through reciprocal interactions.

A Healthy Relationship as a Basis For Parent Effectiveness

Gordon first developed a new theory of parent effectiveness, and then built up
a specific program based upon it. He pointed out that, while the theory was
developed specifically in relation to the parent-child relationship, it was really a
model for all healthy human relationships. It took into account the fact that there was
usually a power differential between two people in a relationship, that conflict was
inevitable, and that it was possible to resolve it in a healthy, relationship-enhancing
way (Gordon, 1970). The theory, Gordon explained, advanced a model of a truly
democratic relationship, in which people could relate to each other in mutual respect,
friendship, love and peace, and thus provide an environment in which each could
reach maximum potential. Like Ginott (1969), he suggested that such a relationship
would be therapeutic, i.e. facilitating healing and growth. Human beings have an
essential need for such a relationship in order to grow through developmental stages
The Theory of Healthy Relationships (Gordon, 1970)

The theory of healthy human relationships was presented (Gordon, 1970) as a set of principles for one person in a relationship. The requirements were the same for both persons, but Gordon pointed out that as the primary responsibility for initiation of change rests with the person in power, the focus for action was set for the parent.

There were nine principles in Gordon’s theory of healthy relationships, covering feelings and behaviour, and encompassing self-awareness, acceptance, two-way communication, and the use of power, which all relate to the major skills taught in PET. The first three principles cover empathic listening, the second three relate to non-antagonistic assertiveness and the third three to democratic conflict resolution. (It will be noted that in accordance with the style at the time Gordon had not used inclusive language in the Principles, but in early editions of the PET Workbook (Gordon, 1976) he acknowledged the problem and solved it by alternately using “he” and “she” in the examples used). The nine principles are set out below:

1. Feeling Accepting of the Other
   I must feel quite accepting of the other. The more of his behaviour I can accept, the better for his growth and health, because acceptance is a powerful therapeutic force.

2. Demonstrating Acceptance of the Other
   Because it is one thing to feel accepting of the other person and another thing for him to perceive that acceptance, I must demonstrate or communicate my acceptance clearly and effectively.
3. **Trying to Become Accepting of More of the Other's Behavior**

I must have a genuine desire to extend my area of acceptance - to try to bring about a condition in which less and less of the other's behavior is unacceptable to me. Or conversely, I must try to increase my "therapeutic potential" by becoming more accepting or by feeling acceptance more often.

4. **Becoming Aware of Nonaccepting Feelings**

I must learn to be aware of and admit to myself the existence of my non-accepting feelings toward the other's behavior whenever I have them.

5. **Unaccepting Feelings**

I must also learn to act congruently or honestly. I must have the courage to be "transparently real" - to be what I am feeling. My communications must match my inner state.

6. **Communicating My Unaccepting Feelings Nonevaluatively**

Realizing that communicating my true feelings may be upsetting to another, depending upon how I do it, I must learn certain ways of communicating my feelings that are less threatening.

7. **Refusing to Use Power in Conflict-Resolution**

I must commit myself to refuse to use my power to resolve conflicts between myself and the other. Power, punishment, threats of punishment, unilaterally established limits, discipline through fear - none of these belong in a healthy or therapeutic relationship between people or between groups.

8. **Refusing to Give in to the Other's Use of Power**

I must be unwilling to let the other impose his solution on me such that his needs are met and mine are not.
9. Resolving Conflicts by a "No-lose" Method

I must commit myself to use a "no-lose" method to resolve all the inevitable conflicts that occur in my relationship with the other.

Gordon summarised what he saw as the requisite interpersonal conditions for a radical transformation of parenthood in the nine principles, and condensed them into a one-page *Credo for My Relationships with Others* (Gordon, 1970c) for presentation to participants along with a certificate of completion at the end of the course. The Credo appears inside the front cover of the Australian Workbook (Wood, 1997, shown in Appendix A).

The nine principles express the underlying philosophy of PET (Gordon, 1970) which challenged many of the commonly accepted traditions of parenting. They were translated into the practical skills of the course itself and stimulated considerable critical review and experimental research.

**The Concept of Empathy**

The concept of empathy first appears in psychoanalytic literature early in the twentieth century, and the name, according to Brothers (1989), was coined by Titchener as a translation of the German "Einfühlung". Empathy, according to Rogers, (1951) is a fundamental way of knowing both the other, and oneself, via empathy turned inward. It is awareness of feeling states, the accurate perception, according to Rogers, of the internal state of another "as if one were the other person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition" (Shlien, 1970).

Empathy is a process. However it should not be confused with empathic accuracy, which is an outcome of the process. It is a process which requires
awareness of another's internal states on a moment-by-moment basis (Thomas & Fletcher, 1997). Empathetic understanding was the foundation of Rogerian psychotherapy, in which empathic listening by the therapist was developed as a primary tool for facilitating the client's self-directed change.

Empathic Listening

Empathic listening is the skill which enables one person to understand another's perspective, and to communicate or test that understanding without being judgmental, reassuring or oppositional. It should only be used when one person in a dyad is troubled, and consists of the other's decoding of the emotions being experienced, and feeding them back in a tentative fashion to demonstrate acceptance and understanding. The process enables the speaker to clarify and own feelings, to move through them and arrive at an equilibrium which permits self-directed choice of action and resolution. It was first developed as a clinical method by Carl Rogers at Ohio State University, and later at the University of Chicago, and was seen, though not without its critics, as an alternative to both psychoanalytic and behavioural treatment. It is sometimes termed “reflective listening”, and in PET is known as Active Listening. The term, according to Gordon (1977a) was coined by Richard Farson, with whom he was co-presenting a program in California.

Over many years, Rogers expanded and tested his ideas regarding the characteristics of the helping relationship, encompassing genuineness, congruence, respect, empathy, warmth, and acceptance. Understanding was essential and feelings acquired a new importance - in hindsight prescient of the developments of late twentieth century research. The authenticity of experience, the realisation of personal growth and change were ideas which challenged the old static certainties (Rogers,
1961). At Ohio State University, from 1940-1945, Rogers and his doctoral students pioneered the phonographic recording of therapeutic interviews for research in the processes involved, as well as the training of therapists. At the time it was a monumental task (Kirschenbaum, 1995). They analysed thousands of therapist and client responses, and were able to demonstrate how the therapist’s acceptance, reflection and clarification of feelings hastened the understanding and insight achieved by the client. They also discovered how more directive responses such as probing, explaining, making suggestions and interpreting the client’s statements often seemed to cause defensiveness and resentment, while also assuming responsibility and taking it away from the client (Kirschenbaum, 1995). Rogers pointed out that the aim of this type of therapy was to help the client to grow psychologically, with greater emphasis on the feeling aspects rather than the intellectual understanding of the problem. It was client-centred and non-directive, and placed more importance on the present than on the past, as behavioural therapy was later to do (Rogers, 1942). The new ideas appealed to many professional therapists, but were not rated highly by mainstream academia (Kirschenbaum, 1995). In 1945 Rogers accepted a research appointment to set up a new counselling centre at the University of Chicago, where he remained for the next twelve years, teaching, supervising students, publishing research and expanding his ideas of the therapeutic process. He further developed his client-centred therapy, still linked to research and generating large numbers of studies of every kind from intensive clinical investigations to semantic differentials and Q-sorts (Shlien & Zimring, 1970). His ideas progressed from concentration on the method to the attitudes of the therapist, and thence to the relationship between therapist and client as key to success in the therapeutic process along with acceptance and unconditional positive regard (Kirschenbaum, 1995).
Two of Rogers’ early publications detailing the experimental work contain chapters by Thomas Gordon: the first on group-centred leadership (Rogers, 1951), and two more in a second clinical volume, the effect of psychotherapy on attitudes to others, and the development of the research program in psychotherapy (Rogers & Dymond, 1954). From his research, clinical work and teaching with Rogers and his colleagues at Chicago, Gordon acquired a deep understanding of the workings of interpersonal relationships, how they developed, and the factors that hindered that development (Gordon, 1995; Hart & Tomlinson, 1970; Rogers & Dymond, 1954).

Empathic Listening Skills for Parents

Empathic listening is the skill most emphasised in the current literature on parental involvement in the emotional development of their children (Ginott, 1969; Goleman, 1996; Gottman, 1997; Porter, 2001), and in fostering resilience and coping skills (Maughan & McCarthy, 1997; Prior et al., 2000). Empathic listening needs a climate of genuine acceptance, and relates to the first three of Gordon’s nine principles. It is an intrinsic part of Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) (Gordon, 1976) and is the first major skill taught, setting the course firmly in the area of emotional competence and the development of a healthy relationship between parent and child. As indicated above, it was developed through intensive research both in theory and practice, and was seen as one of the first serious alternatives to psychoanalysis.

As Active Listening it is carefully taught in PET by a trained instructor, because it is not only fundamental, but is rarely found in Western culture and although simple, is the most difficult skill to acquire. Proficiency in Active Listening is an essential criterion for the accreditation of a PET instructor.
A New Generation of Empathic Listening Research

Empathic Accuracy

A generation later, empathic listening has re-emerged in a body of research which is examining the concepts of empathic accuracy (Ickes, 1997) and its relationship to cognition and emotion. Empathic accuracy is concerned with the decoding of verbal and nonverbal cues, which are integral to and essential for successful empathic listening. Empathic listening is the process of decoding the cues of another person, and feeding back the listener’s understanding in order to check on its accuracy. The development of empathic accuracy in children and the involvement of family interactions in children’s understanding of emotion (Eisenberg, Murphy & Shepard 1997) have contributed to current understanding of the importance of early intervention for the prevention of problems in later childhood and adolescence.

Research in Empathic Accuracy

Research into the neural substrate of empathy dates from the same time as the neurophysiological work in brain development (Brothers, 1989). Ickes (1997) suggested that empathic accuracy, the measure of skill in inferring the thoughts and feelings of others, is a fundamental dimension on which social intelligence can be assessed, a position also taken by Goleman, (1996). The study of interpersonal perception began with trait inference and progressed to the study of attitudes in dyads; from there investigation turned to affective sensitivity of perceivers in inferring emotional states, and lastly to empathic accuracy (Ickes, 1997).

Spontaneous communication between individuals is fundamental to life, is inherently dyadic, and requires a sender, a message and a receiver if communication
is to occur. Positive social behaviours such as empathy and altruism depend upon affective bonds that normally are formed during communication exchanges early in life (Buck & Ginsburg, 1997).

**Communication Between Neonates and Their Mothers**

Bernieri and Rosenthal (1991) pointed out that dyadic interactional synchrony was probably one of the earliest forms of human communication to develop, and has been demonstrated in infants only a few days old, who synchronise their movements to human speech, but not to non-speech related sounds. Citing the work of Capella (1982), which showed that infants match their vocalisations with those of their mothers, and that of Tronick, Als, Adamson and Wise, (1978) who showed that babies intensify their co-ordinating activity if an adult is unresponsive, Bernieri and Rosenthal (1991) added from their own investigations that a loss of synchronisation is associated with an increase in the infant’s negative emotional affect.

Suggesting that spontaneous communication is inherently genetic, Buck and Ginsburg (1997) distinguish it from symbolic communication, which includes spoken and written language and sign language. These are learned, are culturally patterned, have arbitrary relationships with their referents, and are both intentional and propositional. Spontaneous communication is biologically based, direct, “a conversation between limbic systems”, indicated by signs such as facial expression, which convey information but are neither intentional nor propositional. Early social deprivation, for both animals and humans, has been shown to be associated with serious deficits in later social competence. Such individuals appear unable to “read” the displays of others, and do not display socially appropriate species-typical behaviour themselves. Nevertheless accurate communication can be coached by other
individuals at the same socio-emotional level, both animal and human, modelling the skilful use of the perceptual and attentional systems. “Socio-emotional” skills are different from, and more complex than other learned skills. Like the sensitive periods of brain development, there are genetically based set points to be attained through emotional education, leading to ultimate social competence (Buck & Ginsburg, 1997).

The Fundamental Importance of Emotional Signals

While it has long been believed that the hypothalamus, amygdala and limbic system are more primitive structures than the cortex, this knowledge was frequently taken to underpin the idea that emotion was secondary and of lesser importance than cognition (Armstrong, 1999). Dawson (1994) showed not only the equal importance of emotion and cognition, but also that the healthy development of both required a nurturant caregiver from the earliest days of life. Buck and Ginsburg (1997), building on their earlier empirical studies of both animals and humans, suggested that the genetic nature of spontaneous emotional communication, and its need for social teaching from one generation to the next, point to its fundamental importance for social beings. The attainment of social competence requires that individuals be trained to recognise complex signals, including the ability to distinguish exaggeration, denial of emotional states and deliberately deceptive cues. An important component of this skill is to be found in the understanding and decoding of nonverbal behaviours, particularly facial expressions. Many studies have shown that a high degree of skill and understanding in the area of human facial expressiveness is closely associated with social competence in children and adults (Feldman, Philippot & Custrini, 1991). Through education by carers and later by peers, receivers learn awareness of their own feelings and thence those of others, as well as the cues that require attention. If
this learning does not occur, the result will be a failure in social and emotional competence.

Cues for Attention

Eisenberg, Murphy and Shepard (1997) distinguish the emotional response resulting from the recognition of another’s emotional state from the cognitive component of perspective taking, and point out that the difference has not always been clear within the literature. Contemporary experimental terminology, they suggest, includes the following categories of perspective taking: visual perspective taking (e.g. Piaget, 1956); affective perspective taking and cognitive perspective taking.

Concentrating on the latter two, Eisenberg et al. (1997) point out that emotional decoding skills rely in part on facial expression, body language, eye contact and tone of voice. Infants have been shown to monitor adults’ emotional responses and at 12 months old, their behaviour is guided by adults’ facial expressions in dealing with unfamiliar toys, strangers, and potentially frightening situations. Infants as young as 10 weeks are disturbed by their mothers’ anger expressions (Haviland & Lelwica, 1987) and toddlers and pre-schoolers are distressed by anger expression, even when the anger is not directed at them (Cummings, 1987). Toddlers become increasingly distressed with repeated exposure to adults’ verbal arguments (Cummings, Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1981 cited in Halberstadt, 1991). Moreover, Cummings (1985, in Halberstadt, 1991) suggests that children’s opportunities for expressing positive affect can be reduced by their own enaction of angry responses after witnessing angry encounters, or by their subsequent disinhibition of previously restrained aggressiveness.
The ability to discriminate emotion from faces (based on error rates) begins only with positive and negative expressions, but accuracy improves at rates which appear to vary for different emotions from happiness, through sadness, anger, and fear to the more complex shame, contempt, surprise, disgust and neutrality. By two to three years of age children seem to rely on cues based on similarity of expressions in the same way as adults. By four or five they can accurately name basic emotions in slides or photographs, but it has also been found that they begin to discriminate and understand emotional expressions before they have the language ability to understand and use emotional labels (Eisenberg et al., 1997).

**Language and Discrimination of Emotions**

Verbal ability is positively correlated with the ability to identify emotions at six to eight years of age. Eisenberg et al. (1997) conclude that young children are more sophisticated in the understanding of emotions and emotional displays than was previously thought. Studies suggest that girls are better at discrimination of emotions than boys, (although findings are somewhat inconsistent), an advantage which may occur because of social factors, such as expectations that they should be more aware or more sensitive (Joshi & MacLean, 1994). Interestingly, Joshi and MacLean (1994) also found that Indian preschool girls outperformed both English girls and boys from either country in discussing the difference between real and apparent emotions in a situation which involved children interacting with adults. Girls' responses were more sophisticated than those of boys, but by the age of school entry there were fewer differences (Eisenberg et al., 1997).

Decoding accuracy continues to develop with age and includes discriminating between mixed or deceptive cues, and social understanding of appropriate responses.
Interpersonal experience and social experience within the family enhance decoding ability (Feldman, Philippot & Custrini, 1991; Halberstadt, 1991). Halberstadt (1991) also found that adults who reported coming from more expressive families were better at decoding others' emotions than those who did not; the latter were in need of better decoding skills. Differences in academic achievement, popularity and locus of control are also associated with decoding ability (Nowicki & Duke, 1992; Walden & Field, 1990).

Zhou et al. (2002) hypothesised that observed parental warmth and positive expressiveness were related to children's empathy and social functioning, and that children's social competence and negative behaviours were mediated by parents' emotion-related socialisation practices. The data in a 2-year longitudinal study of 180 school children with mean ages of 9.4 years at pretest supported the hypothesis, suggesting also that there was a reciprocal relationship between parents' and children's responses, with children's empathy evoking a parental response.

Cognitive perspective taking requires a certain amount of understanding of the concept of mind, and children as young as three can distinguish between real and mental entities. They appear to understand desires earlier than beliefs (Wellman, 1991), and tend to understand the mind and emotion in terms of desires rather than beliefs (Wellman & Bannerjee, 1991). At four, the child is better at understanding beliefs, can appreciate that people may have differing beliefs, that his own beliefs about something can change, and that another person can believe something that the child knows is not true (Gopnik & Slaughter, 1991). Increased sibling interaction appears to assist children's advancement in the theory of mind (Perner, Ruffman and Leekam, 1994). By five, children can understand having simultaneous desires, for example both to do and not to do something (Bennett & Galpert, 1993).
Cognitive perspective taking skills continue to develop through childhood and adolescence as children learn to recognise their own internal states, and it is likely that socialisation experiences influence whether or not children try to infer others’ perspectives (Eisenberg et al., 1997; Halberstadt, 1991).

**Gender Differences in Empathic Accuracy**

An examination of gender differences shown in empathy research (Graham & Ickes, 1997) lead to the distinction of three different areas: vicarious emotional responding (or emotional matching), non-verbal decoding ability, and empathic accuracy. The first area, vicarious emotional responding, relates to the report or exhibition, by the participant being tested, of the same emotion as the target person displayed in the test. Non-verbal decoding ability on the other hand, refers to the perceiver’s ability to correctly identify the target’s emotion. The third area, empathic accuracy, is concerned with the perceiver’s ability to make accurate inferences from both the non-verbal and verbal behaviour, which requires close monitoring of a developing conversational interaction. Empathic listening as taught in PET relates to both non-verbal decoding ability and to empathic accuracy, but is not concerned with vicarious emotional responding. Indeed, parents are warned that empathic listening cannot and should not be attempted if the listener is emotionally affected by the situation.

Results of studies of empathic accuracy, where both verbal and non-verbal behaviours are interpreted by the listeners, have mixed results, but Graham and Ickes (1997) suggest that motivation may be more important than ability. Men in general may be less motivated towards empathic sensitivity, because it is not perceived as “masculine”, and fits less well in the competitive context in which leadership has
traditionally evolved. Studies which examine gender differences in non-verbal decoding behaviour suggest that although women consistently show higher levels of ability than men, the difference is not as great as is popularly supposed. Furthermore men's ability is higher (although still not higher than women's) when not only facial expressions but also body language, tone of voice, micro-expressions and discrepancies between visual and auditory cues are taken into account. Smith, Archer and Constanzo (1991) also showed that men's ability to decode non-verbal behaviour improves with practice to the point where male participants can at least closely approximate females' ability.

The studies of both verbal and nonverbal behaviour have established evidence-based outcomes of the importance of empathic skills in human behaviour from early infancy to adulthood, providing information which confirms the work in the applied fields of both clinical remediation and enhancement training for families. Empathic listening skills are also intricately involved in assertiveness training (Jakubowski & Lange, 1978), problem solving and conflict resolution. Gordon's model of problem solving and conflict resolution places emphasis on ascertaining the needs of all parties in the problem, and empathic listening skills have an important place in this process.

**Empathic Listening and the PET Program**

When it is obvious that a child is worried or upset, the PET parent is trained to be of real help by learning how to communicate true empathic understanding. Because nonjudgmental acceptance is demonstrated, the child is enabled to see his problem more clearly, and to be free to work out the solution for himself. The method assumes that the child is his own best problem solver, and that he is perfectly capable of so doing. The difficulty for most parents is to refrain from giving advice or their
own solutions, thus taking the responsibility away from the child, as well as the
opportunity for growth. It is also rarely appreciated that when a child is upset or
resentful, any attempt at teaching is certain to be ineffective.

Empathic listening should only be used when conditions are appropriate. The
parent must really want to be of help to the child, to feel reasonably separate from the
child’s problem, to have time to talk it over, and not be emotionally involved. If these
conditions are not present, active listening should not be attempted until they are.
Gordon pointed out that the ability to listen empathically actually requires a paradigm
shift on the part of the listener (Zaiss & Gordon, 1993) in order to take on the
speaker’s perspective.

**PET as a Key to Change For Parents**

From his work with Rogers at the University of Chicago, Gordon had a deep
understanding and appreciation of the potential of acceptance and empathic listening
to facilitate psychological growth; indeed, he pointed out that this was the key to
radical change into more adaptive parental attitudes and practices (Gordon, 1983b).
He lamented that unfortunately as babies become toddlers most parents tend to
become less accepting and see their role as changing from one of responding to the
child to controlling his behaviour. Gordon believed that such a change was severely
inhibiting to the psychological growth of the child and could put the relationship at
risk. In fact he was convinced that this shift in the parental role was responsible for
much of the serious and growing damage to the psychological health of young people
(Gordon, 1983b). From his experience of working with families, Gordon considered
that the ten years following infancy were the most critical period for parents. He also
believed that acceptance and empathic listening were far more effective tools for
helping children manage the difficulties of growing up than the dictates, advice, and reassurance he had seen almost universally used. He therefore devised a parenting program based on the emotional training of parents for themselves and their children, together with the appropriate assertiveness for relationship management and the solving of problems in a way that would enhance rather than harm that relationship.

Gordon was in the same position as Haim Ginott (1969) in maintaining that continuing conflicts between parents and children were often the result of the way they talked to each other, and that few parents truly listened to what their children were saying. According to Ginott, parents often misinterpreted their children’s messages, and faulty communication was at the root of most parent-child conflicts. Ginott’s sensitivity to children’s emotional needs, and his skill in deciphering the language in which children tried to communicate their feelings helped him to see that parents too needed this understanding in order to teach their children how to describe affective experiences accurately. He called this “congruent conversation”, which set the stage for training children’s emotional maturation. Ginott saw no reason why any well-intentioned and reasonably intelligent adult could not be taught techniques for communicating empathy, thus avoiding the clumsy interaction which often causes distress and erodes the confidence, self-respect and effectiveness of even the most conscientious and dedicated parents (Orgel, 1980). The value of Ginott’s work was confirmed for Gordon by his own experience as a psychotherapist with parents and teens, as it was later for Gottman in his experimental work with families (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Gordon included Ginott in his list of recommended reading in the PET Workbook (Gordon, 1976).
The Foundations of Self-Respect

Pulling together recent empirical research and emphasising the new understanding of the emotions in development (Damasio, 1995; Le Doux, 1992, 1993, 1994; Kagan, 1994; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schore, 1994), Goleman (1996) pointed out that there is a pressing need for parents to realise that self-control, zeal and persistence can be taught to children, and that parenting styles affect the emotional abilities of their offspring. Childhood, he believed, is an opportunity for psychological growth, and parents are uniquely positioned to understand the temperament of the child, and then to coach him or her through emotional situations which require first understanding, and then adaptive responses. Emotional abilities are learned, and emotional literacy is the foundation for all subsequent learning. Goleman cautioned that dismissive attitudes, lack of respect or disapproval for the way children were feeling all produce unfortunate outcomes. On the other hand, parents who use empathic responses to acknowledge expression of feelings are laying the foundations for their children’s self-esteem, respect and understanding of themselves and others.

Parents Also Have Legitimate Needs

Empathic listening in the PET program not only enables the parent to understand the feelings and needs perceived by the child, but also to help the child to clarify his own perception. The first part of empathic listening training concentrates on understanding feelings and self-awareness, following which the parent must acquire and model self-regulation. This enables her to put her own feelings aside (provided they are not strongly engaged in the same problem), and give her attention
as a free gift to the child. In addition, the parent's exploration of a problem in a non-judgmental way can also free the child to recognise that the parent may have a concurrent need.

Assertiveness

Gordon (1970) understood the fundamental importance of empathic listening, but he also realised that two people in a relationship must have a way of asserting their separate needs and of problem solving when these were in competition. He also believed it was right for each individual, in this case both parent and child, to be able to meet his or her own needs for lifelong healthy development through a model of assertiveness which would not trigger opposition and resentment in the other. This he found in the self-disclosure model of Jourard (1964, 1971), which also appeared to have some of the elements proposed by Salter (1949). Assertiveness skills embody principles four, five and six of Gordon's nine principles for healthy relationships, relating to self-awareness and the non-judgmental communication of unaccepting feelings.

The Skills of Assertiveness in Theory and Practice

The original model of assertiveness (sometimes described as assertion) as a component of social skills training was proposed by Salter (1949), a behavioural therapist who realised that if people are not articulate about their wants and needs they are not likely to be met. Salter also suggested that as well as suffering deprivation, they are likely to suffer emotionally through suppressing their thoughts and feelings (Salter, 1949, in Davison & Neale, 1982; Wilson & Gallois, 1993). Salter advocated
both verbal disclosure of feelings and "facial talk"—smiles, frowns or whatever facial expression was appropriate. He also insisted that people should be able to improvise replies with open disclosure; disagree spontaneously, and include the expression of their feelings about a matter; accept and agree with praise when it was offered to them, and use the pronoun "I" as often as possible. Thus openness and honest self-disclosure, which were later to feature in the experimental work of Jourard (1971) were being advocated by Salter (1949) as important components of emotional health. Assertion training, according to Salter was needed by individuals with excessive cortical inhibition, and in classical conditioning terms, they were in need of greater excitation.

Salter's work was extended by Wolpe (1969) who believed that many individuals with social anxiety needed assertiveness training to help them release the motor expression of other emotions, which was being inhibited by the bodily responses engendered by the anxiety. Adaptive assertiveness, according to Wolpe included the accurate expression of affection, admiration and gratitude, as well as the socially appropriate verbalisation of legitimate demands and opposition. Some forms of assertiveness training, Wolpe believed, really amounted to a variant of systematic desensitisation, such as treatment for anxiety triggered by fear of being pushy or inconsiderate.

Another important addition to Salter's concept of assertiveness was made by Lange and Jakubowski (1976) who suggest that direct, honest and appropriate ways of expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs should also include respect of others and their rights. Furthermore Jakubowski (1977, in Jakubowski & Lange, 1978) points out that appropriate assertiveness increases self-respect, and gives others an opportunity to change their behaviour without demeaning them. Sharing one’s true
feelings and reactions to others, without blocking their responses leads to the establishment of authentic and satisfying relationships. Jakubowski and Lange (1978) also point out that effective communication requires listening skills as well as assertiveness, and suggest that Gordon's (1974) model of problem solving offers a constructive method of negotiation. Deschner (1984) used an approach to listening and assertiveness based on the work of Gordon, whom she acknowledged, in order to help violent families to control anger and find alternative ways of interaction.

A.A. Lazarus (1973) suggests that assertiveness includes four basic concepts: the ability to initiate, continue and terminate a conversation, the ability to say "no", the ability to make a request, and the ability to express both positive and negative emotions, and all these, according to Lazarus can be learned.

The Impact of Ecological Changes on the Concept of Assertiveness

Alberti and Emmons (1998) building on their earlier work ranging through 1974 to 1986 (which based assertive behaviour on the personal rights of individual people), point out that assertion must be used appropriately and responsibly, and that in a changed world, self expression must also be modulated by the context. Assertiveness must be person and situation specific, and more careful assessment of what is appropriate is called for today. Assertive behaviour is self-expressive; respectful of the rights of others; honest, direct and firm; equalising, hence benefiting both parties in a relationship; both verbal and nonverbal; appropriate for the person and situation, socially responsible, not universal and learned, not inborn. Assertiveness is a matter of choice, which should be exercised with care and thought (Alberti & Emmons, 1998).
Assertiveness Training Research

Assertiveness training was early accepted as part of behaviour therapy from which it had originated, and empirical studies came largely from the same area (Eisler, Hersen, Miller & Blanchard, 1975; Eisler, Miller & Hersen, 1973; Linehan, 1977; Goldfried & Goldfried, 1979; Linehan & Egan, 1979; McFall & Twentyman, 1973).

Suggesting that assertiveness is a complex construct comprising a number of component behaviours, Eisler, Miller and Hersen (1973) investigated high assertive and low assertive behaviours in a sample of male psychiatric patients. High assertive individuals were found to differ from those who were rated as low assertive on five out of nine behavioural components of assertiveness in dyadic behaviour. Compared with low assertive patients, they were less likely to accede automatically to demands, and were more likely to ask the other to change behaviour. They responded audibly and faster to interpersonal problems, and with marked intonation. There was a tendency for them to respond verbally at greater length, but this did not reach significance. These results suggest that the high assertive patients stood up for their rights, and were more confident in replying and asking for what they needed. Length of gaze, fluency and smiling did not appear to have a specific effect on assertiveness. There was a significant difference between low and high assertive individuals on the Wolpe-Lazarus Assertiveness Test (1966) but not on the Willoughby Personality Inventory (1934).

In another study (Eisler, Hersen, Miller & Blanchard, 1975), it was found that interpersonal assertiveness varied in different situations and contexts. Sixty male participants were rated on their behaviours in videotaped role-plays of various situations, including those requiring negative or positive responses, and situations
with a male or female partner, familiar or unfamiliar. Negative situations elicited significantly different responses from positive situations, and all responses were in the expected direction for each. In negative scenes, individuals generally spoke for longer, with increased eye contact, greater affect, louder tones and increased response latency. The male participants talked less to women, but smiled more. They complied more to the requests of other men, but were more likely to request a female partner to change her behaviour than to ask the same thing from another man, showing significantly more assertiveness with women in negative situations than with other men, and with unfamiliar partners rather than those whom they knew.

The results in these studies underline the behavioural complexities present in the concept of assertiveness, and question the extent to which it is possible to generalise their implications. While it must be remembered that they relate to a clinical population, their purpose is to illuminate the differences between low assertiveness and high assertiveness, with a view to encouraging the latter as more adaptive. It was pointed out that there was a need to determine better the components of appropriate assertive behaviour in different contexts, including opposite-sex and same-sex interactions, and in positive and negative situations. The investigators concluded by suggesting that there was a lack of training for individuals to be more reinforcing to others, and there were few experimentally validated procedures for training them to increase their expression of affection, appreciation and satisfaction. Training should target increased assertive responding to identified deficits in specific types of interactions (Eisler, Hersen, Miller & Blanchard, 1975).

Linehan and Egan (1979) suggested that while there are a number of different definitions of assertiveness, most include self-expressiveness and standing up for one's rights, as well as various forms of interpersonal verbal skills. Most definitions
include emotional expressiveness (Salter, 1949, 1977; Lange & Jakubowski, 1976), except that of Wolpe (1969) who, as already mentioned, excluded the expression of anxiety, since his contention was that anxiety inhibits assertiveness and the purpose of training is to overcome it. Other definitions included the expression of needs, wants, opinions and beliefs, and some included verbalising positive as well as negative feelings (Linehan & Egan, 1979). Linehan and Egan (1979) point out that researchers have emphasised various assertive response styles including those that are open, honest, confident, and respectful of the rights of others, but they have also cautioned that inappropriate openness and honesty may become self-destructive. The effectiveness of an assertive response can be judged from three criteria, according to Linehan (1977): achievement of the objective of the response; maintenance of the relationship and maintenance of the self-respect of the assertive person. Heimberg, Montgomery, Madsen and Heimberg (1977) suggested that assertion should be redefined to include effective problem solving.

Social Rules and Assertiveness

Wilson and Gallois (1993) believed that more research should be conducted into the social rules that govern the implementation of assertiveness, as well as into gender differences about what is not only acceptable, but also effective. They suggested that research should now focus on assertive communication rather than assertion training. Their research on definitions of assertion has shown that while the professional literature has tended to regard self-expression as an end in itself (given its clinical origins), it has neglected the dimension of dominance in interpersonal relations, an issue which surfaces constantly, particularly in difficult situations of conflict. All the definitions from untrained participants, except those from middle-
class men, polarised concern for self and concern for others, suggesting that people find it difficult to be friendly and influential at the same time. The definitions generated and judged by the men were most at variance with the professional literature; they emphasised power and influence, and included aggression and coercion as part of assertive responding. Assertion is defined differently by males and females, which implies that in discovering what is appropriate and effective, it is important to take note of the social rules of behaviour. Both men and women in the research made clear distinctions between assertive behaviour and socially skilled behaviour, with women favouring a mutual style of relating as the most socially skilled, and men preferring an expert style of influence as the most socially skilled.

The Importance of Context

Wilson and Gallois (1993) concluded that assertive communication must be studied and trained in conjunction with the context in which it is to be used, including the goals, roles, rules and behaviours that are relevant to it. A pattern of socially appropriate behaviour emerged from this research, in terms of self-expression within relationship rules, including those for avoiding conflict. It was shown to be important to have a balance between personal needs and those of others, between task achievement and relationship development, and to increase perception of the appropriate level of directness in handling relationship difficulties. People need to be able to make informed choices about what is appropriate in a given situation. Being effective involves more than simply being assertive.

Overall the results of the study indicated that socially appropriate behaviour is not merely the expression of personal rights, but rather the expression of rights accompanied by the active expression of obligations. This confirms the
appropriateness of the mutual rights position, but it is more than simply not hurting the other, towards whom it prescribes an active position of respect and positive regard (Wilson & Gallois, 1993). It should also be kept in mind that assertive communication sometimes pushes against the resistance of the whole social system. One way in which resistance is found is through the culturally transmitted reluctance in Western society for people, particularly males, to disclose much about themselves, their motivations and particularly their real feelings in many situations, both in the workplace and at home. Research in this area has linked self-disclosure with self-awareness and with psychological health (Salter, 1949; Jakubowski & Lange, 1976; Jourard, 1964; Linehan & Egan 1979), and was seen by Gordon as an essential part of non-antagonistic assertiveness. He based the assertiveness component of his program for parents on the principles that it must be effective, honest and should not damage the relationship between parent and child (Gordon, 1976). This stance was confirmed by the findings of Linehan and Egan (1979), who pointed out that the effectiveness of an assertive response could be judged by whether it achieved the objective of the response, maintained the relationship and maintained the self-respect of the assertive person.

Research into Self-Disclosure

The first research into self-disclosure emanated from the University of Florida in the fifties (Jourard, 1971), beginning with a number of exploratory surveys into the concept of “real self-being” from the aspect of a healthy personality, and progressing from the scientifically-based development of questionnaires to experimental behavioural investigations. The question was one of how much people allow others to really know them, and Jourard (1963) realised that most people are very selective
about what they reveal. As a psychotherapist, he was constantly encouraging people
to speak openly about themselves in order to manage their lives and relationships
more effectively.

It should be kept in mind that in the light of societal changes that have taken
place particularly in family structures, (in addition to methodological advancements),
in the almost fifty years since the work of Jourard and his colleagues, it is possible
that there would now be shifts in some categories of self-disclosure in the identified
relationships.

Self-Awareness, Self-Disclosure and the Healthy Personality

Citing the personality studies of Fromm, (1947), Riesman, (1950) and Horney
(1950) showing that misrepresentation of the self for various purposes is common,
Jourard (1964) suggested that accurate self-disclosure was a mark of a healthy
personality, while the inability to know oneself and reveal it to others was related to
neurosis.

Jourard and Remy (1955) suggested that self-esteem is largely derived from
the experience of being accepted by one's parents, and the resulting acceptance of self
enables the person to establish close relationships with others, while people who
reject much of themselves are less able to do so.

The attitudes and feelings of children towards their parents were found to
affect the amount of their self-disclosure to them (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). Other
factors affecting self-disclosure were personal marital status, gender and ethnic
effects, and ease of disclosure of different categories of personal information. Some
validity and reliability was evidenced in the measure of self-disclosure which had
been developed, and the study showed that the highest self-disclosure in MMPI
"normal"(sic) participants was given to mothers by young, unmarried participants, both white and black, with lesser amounts in descending order to same sex friends, fathers and opposite sex friends. The more the parents were liked, the higher the amounts of disclosure made to them.

The amount of self-disclosure was shown to vary with different categories of personal information, and was higher with attitudes and opinions, tastes, interests and work, and lower with money, personality and body. There was high disclosure within spousal dyads.

In a study of participants from a college of nursing, Jourard (1959) showed an interrelation between liking and knowing a person and the amount of self-disclosure that is made and understood. He pointed out that the data did not shed any light on whether liking or self-disclosure came first.

**Gender Differences in Self-Disclosure**

Men's self-disclosure was investigated by Jourard and Landsman (1960) who examined the relationship of knowing and liking and the "dyadic effect", that is the effect of reciprocity on self-disclosure. Results showed that liking someone had a lesser effect on self-disclosure for the men studied than the amount they knew about the partner, or the extent to which the other had confided in them. The correlation of liking and self-disclosure was much weaker than it was for women. It was suggested that the gender differences were indicative of the differing socialisation of the sexes - the "expressive" roles trained in females, and the ways men were trained to base their transactions with people on cognitive factors rather than emotion.
Reciprocity in Self-Disclosure

Jourard and Richman (1963) found that participants who reported that they revealed a good deal of personal information to their parents and closest friends also reported that their targets had revealed a lot to them. At the same time, those who reported they had disclosed relatively little to their significant others also indicated that the others had revealed little to them. The experimenters voiced a caution that the results could possibly be a "response set" from the participants, that is, they may have overestimated or underestimated the amounts of their own self-disclosure. On the other hand, the correlations were comparable with those from the earlier studies.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Self-Disclosure

A cross-cultural study (Jourard, 1961) showed that American female university students were higher disclosers than British female students; both groups disclosed more to females than to males, and both were selective about the amounts they disclosed to particular target persons. Puerto Rican students however, compared with American students, disclosed less personal data to both parents and friends.

In sum, Jourard was concerned about the need for human beings to be themselves among others rather than to hide their authenticity - the need to be honest and open. He queried why people generally chose semblance as being safer than disclosure, and pointed out that in concealment they also failed to know themselves. Transparency was perceived as risky, but it led to personal growth, and to the deepening of authentic relationships with others.
Assertiveness and the PET Program

Assertiveness provided a tool for confronting a child’s unacceptable behaviour, but it had to be couched in terms which were clear, honest and likely to influence the child to be helpful rather than obstructive. As well, it must not be damaging to the relationship.

Accordingly Gordon (1976) based the assertiveness component in PET on these considerations, particularly referring to the work on self-disclosure of Jourard (1964, 1971). He believed that self-disclosure about the parent’s own feelings would make it possible to confront a child’s unacceptable behaviour while avoiding the antagonism caused by blameful descriptions. In addition it encouraged self-awareness on the part of the parent, and a deeper understanding of the emotions involved. Again the parent had to take charge of her own emotions in describing the child’s behaviour without blame, and then disclosing her own feelings. The tool for assertion was therefore the “I-Message”. Such a message does not generate the same amount of anger and defensiveness as most blameful statements. It describes the parent rather than the child (hence the term “I-message”) and if honest is not really open to question. It leaves the child free to help the parent, and to act responsibly instead of being resentful and unwilling. If the child is defensive however, (having been presented with the problem of the parent’s unaccepting feelings), the parent is advised to "change gear" and active listen the child's feelings before moving in again with the confronting message.

Chant and Nelson (1982) showed in a multiple baseline study, that a mother learned to use both Active Listening and I Messages with her 7-year old daughter after PET training, and that the daughter demonstrated increased emotional expressivity once the mother was using both the skills.
Positive I-Messages

Other self-disclosing messages are the direct opposite of confrontation, but they are even more important for effective parents, actively influencing the way their children behave. These are positive and appreciative "I-messages". ("You-messages" in comparison, are often patronising. "You made a good choice"; "You're really kind at heart"). Positive "I-messages" on the other hand, are self-disclosing, and have a genuine ring about them. Examples are: "I was really pleased when I came in to the kitchen and found it all cleaned up". "I love the colours in that dress". "I was delighted when I walked into the bathroom this morning and found it all so tidy". "I was very happy to see you had already brought in the rubbish tins". Any one of these is far more effective in influencing the child to repeat the behaviour than a host of criticisms, which are often literally tuned out by the child. It is necessary first to be clear about saying what is wanted, second to be patient for a little while the child gets the message and actually does it, and last but most important, to be instant with appreciation.

Conflict Resolution

The Conflict Resolution Movement of the 1950s

Following World War II, a group of researchers centred at the University of Michigan attempted to systematise the study of human conflict and possible ways of its resolution. They hoped to establish an interdisciplinary "science of peace", which in turn would lead to the prevention of war as a means of settling international conflicts (Harty & Modell, 1991). The movement flourished between the mid-fifties and the beginning of the seventies, and established the Journal of Conflict Resolution,
aiming to set up a generic theory of conflict resolution and encourage academic empirical studies. It was envisioned at the time as part of the burgeoning behavioural sciences, with an emphasis on concrete problems, formal methods and statistical analysis. The hope was that studies would focus on all levels of conflict, interpersonal, intergroup, as well as conflict within persons, but with the ultimate aim of shedding light on the causes of international conflict and better ways of dealing with it. Harty and Modell (1991) point out, however, that the movement generated little empirical work, and studies remained largely abstract, except for those founded on game theory, such as that of Deutsch (1959) which produced generalisations about individual behaviour under certain circumstances. Game theory did become a focus for experimental work, but was concentrated on psychological aspects of decision-making behaviour, and the movement failed to have impact on government policies or international relations. Nevertheless an important achievement of the first conflict resolution movement was the opening up of what is now a major field of activity and study, both theoretical and applied, focusing on practical techniques for conflict resolution at every level in many real-world contexts (Harty & Modell, 1991). A new urgency in finding alternatives to violent solutions to human conflicts has emerged as peace psychology, generating both theoretical studies and practical applications on an unprecedented scale in numerous countries and contexts (Christie, Wagner & Winter, 2001).

Practical Applications of Conflict Resolution

There has to date, however, been a greater theoretical focus on the practical applications than upon experimental research (Littlefield, Love, Peck & Wertheim,
1993; Davidson & Versluys, 1999), perhaps because of the increasing urgency of an understanding of nonviolent methods of solving conflicts.

Fisher and Ury (1983) advocated a focus on interests rather than positions, and Burton (1984) made a distinction between values, interests and needs. The first two, he believed, are specific to the goals of individuals, parties and cultures. They are subject to priorities and to change. Needs, on the other hand, relate to universal goals. Examples are the need for security and for identity. Maslow (1970) maintained this distinction in his hierarchy of needs. Littlefield et al. (1993) in their conflict resolution model, refer primarily to interests, but point out that the term is often intended to include basic human needs in Maslow's sense of the word.

**Motivation and Needs**

The focus on needs in PET derives from Maslow's (1970) motivational theories which conceptualise the legitimate needs of human beings as existing in a hierarchy of developmental stages from birth to ultimate achievement. Abraham Maslow was originally an experimental psychologist, working in the field of dominance and sexuality in primates, and later with humans. The hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970) presented as a chart in PET, first appeared as a theory of human motivation and he continued to expand and develop it. Human beings, he believed, are not moulded or shaped from the outside, but have within themselves the potential for creativeness, spontaneity, authenticity, caring for others, being able to love, and searching for truth. Striving for these is a sign of emotional health. On the other hand, those people Maslow described as deficiency-motivated were able only to pursue their own unmet needs (Hoffman, 1988). Validation studies of the theory subsequently appeared (Aronoff, 1970; Aronoff & Messe, 1971; Damm, 1972).
Recently, interest in the concept of emotional intelligence has resulted in more sophisticated investigations which have theoretically affirmed and experimentally supported Maslow’s ideas of motivation leading to emotional health and self-actualisation (Bar-On, 2001).

The Bar-On model of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1997) was found to have ten key factorial components: self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, empathy and interpersonal relationship. The construct was tested and validated (Dawda & Hart, 2000) using the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) (Plake & Impara, 1999). Using the EQ-i, Bar-On (2001) has shown that emotional intelligence, (EI), (Le Doux, 1998; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000) and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954, in Bar-On, 2001) are highly correlated, based on a large cross-cultural study, with a North American sample (n=3831), an Israeli sample (n=2702) and one from the Netherlands (n=1639). Results suggest that the thrust for self-actualisation is facilitated by high scores in emotional intelligence. People who attain self-actualisation, according to Maslow (cited in Bar-On, 2001), show the abilities to perceive and be comfortable with reality; accept themselves, others and nature; focus on problems outside of themselves rather than within, and have a mission in life; to be detached and have a need for privacy; to be autonomous; to be constantly appreciative of life; to have peak experiences; to exhibit feelings for mankind; to have deep interpersonal relations; to be democratic rather than authoritarian; to have a kindly sense of humour; to be original and creative; and to resist enculturation.

Maslow’s methodology may have been questionable according to Bar-On (2001), but the sophisticated analyses possible today confirm his findings, and Bar-On
believes that emotional intelligence plays a part in self-actualisation, which in turn, is related to well-being and emotional health.

The Quest for Stable Outcomes

Data from conflict studies suggest that factors such as the inclusion of all involved parties in problem solving (Coleman & Deutsch, 2001; Opotow, 2001), and basing solutions on needs and interests rather than positions (Littlefield et al., 1993; Sanson & Bretherton, 2001) are also important for long-term stable outcomes. Openness about needs is more likely to result in an integrative solution (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Conflict can have positive effects, including encouraging creativity about solutions (Gruber, 2000). Properly handled it can lead to growth and improved relationship. The aim needs to be the refusal to use power and coercion in both the solutions and the means by which they are achieved (Gordon, 1970; Sanson & Bretherton, 2001).

Sanson and Bretherton (2001) also point out that communicating one’s own needs in a conflict resolution process must take account of the fact that the opposing party may not be able to listen effectively, but that open disclosure using “I-statements” promotes self-awareness and the effective articulation of needs while avoiding the use of blame and criticism.

Encouraging Cooperation

Brams & Taylor (1996) have tackled the problems of fair dispute resolution in many different contexts, evaluating experimental mathematical models and solutions, envy-free procedures for division of goods and money, and solutions which employ
auctions and voting. They conclude that dispute resolution procedures that allow for cooperation and more far-sighted thinking need to be investigated (Brams & Taylor, 1996).

Encouraging Cooperation

Deutsch (2000) distinguishes cooperation from competition in conflict processes, and the difference affects whether the conflict takes a constructive or destructive course. Deutsch suggests that cooperation induces and is induced by readiness to be helpful, similar attitudes, openness, sensitivity to common interests and encouraging mutual rather than unilateral power. Competition, on the other hand, induces and is induced by coercion, threats, poor communication, hostility, rigidity and sensitivity to interests that are opposed (Deutsch, 2000). As a result of their empirical work in this area, Eisler and Fredericksen (1980) concluded that from a social learning perspective, a major goal of intervention for society is to provide more appropriate skills for handling interpersonal conflict resolution.

On the practical level, cooperation is encouraged by the use of “I-statements” to communicate one’s own needs rather than “you” statements which can convey blame, and by listening for and acknowledging feelings (Littlefield et al., 1993; Sanson & Bretherton, 2000). Joint ownership of the solution leads to more satisfaction (Wertheim, Peck, Love & Littlefield, 1998, in Sanson & Bretherton, 2001), and being aware that it may be necessary to loop back to previous stages is also important (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994; Littlefield et al., 1993).
Creativity in Conflict Resolution

Brainstorming (Maier, 1960; Osborn, 1963) has generated considerable attention and research. It includes suggesting as many creative options as possible for solving a problem (Burton, 1987), adding to the quantity and variety of ideas, encouraging flexibility, including solutions that may initially appear to be “way out” and ridiculous, which can lighten tension, and lead to more creative solutions. Furthermore insisting on the deferment of evaluation until they are all noted is useful, because premature evaluation inhibits further ideas (D’Zurilla, 1988). Coleman and Deutsch (2000) point out that creativity in problem solving needs time, suitable space and a certain amount of playfulness in suggesting solutions while yet remaining serious about the problem or conflict and finding an acceptable solution. It is important that all suggestions are encouraged, especially by facilitators, so that the self-confidence of less powerful participants is maximised. Nevertheless it must be recognised that participants focus both on the openness of creativity and the ability to arrive at closure by making a decision. One factor that is often overlooked in this process is the primary one of adequate problem definition (Coleman & Deutsch, 2000). Persistence is important, because there is a human tendency to opt for less satisfactory arrangements simply to finalise matters, but also because creativity is not as is sometimes supposed, a matter of sudden insight, but is generally encouraged by systematic steady work (Gruber, 2000).
Conflict Resolution Research

Styles of Conflict Resolution

Sternberg and Dobson (1987) investigated the stylistic consistency of individuals in interpersonal conflicts, and found that people showed strong preferences for particular styles of conflict resolution, that these were consistent over different relationships, and that the preferences shown in real relationships were similar to those found in research into hypothetical conflicts (Sternberg & Soriano, 1984). Sternberg and Dobson (1987) found four main factors in conflict styles: active/mitigating, passive /mitigating, active/intensifying and passive/intensifying. Individual style in another situation or with another person is the best predictor of an individual’s style in an interpersonal conflict, ahead of personality needs and intellectual ability.

In a study of the relationship of conflict resolution processes, value systems and level of conflict between adolescents and their parents, Pearson and Love (1999) focused on the four basic strategies of resolution: problem solving, contending, yielding and avoidance (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994), and on caring-based and justice-based value systems (Gilligan, 1982). It was found that where levels of family conflict were lower, adolescents preferred problem solving rather than contending, and that a care-value system was associated with lower levels of conflict, and interestingly, with being male. Contrary to expectation, a justice value-system, was not found to be directly associated with levels of conflict, but was associated with higher preferences for contending, which did relate to higher levels of conflict, and so had an indirect effect on the level of conflict (Pearson & Love, 1999). Gilligan (1982) points out that care values promote greater use of problem solving, willingness...
to take on the perspective of others, fostering pro-social relationships, and reducing
the perception of opposing interests. Pearson and Love (1999) conclude by
suggesting that fostering care values, and teaching communication skills to children
and adolescents are both important for reducing levels of family conflict, for
prevention of problems, and reduction of family stress.

The Effects of Training in Outcomes of Conflict Resolution

Feeney and Davidson (1996) evaluated the Conflict Resolution Model
(Littlefield et al., 1993) in a study in which half the participants had undergone three
hours per week of conflict resolution training for three weeks and half were untrained.
In a ten-minute videoed discussion each pair sought a win-win solution on an issue on
which they had polarised views. There were three conditions, trained/trained (n=6),
trained/untrained (n=12), and untrained/untrained (n=6). Results showed that
participants in the trained/trained condition attained the highest ratings for win-win
solutions, while both the trained/trained and trained/untrained conditions were rated
significantly better than the untrained/untrained condition, confirming the value of
training in using the model (Littlefield et al., 1993).

Even brief training in conflict resolution has been shown to have significant
positive effects on outcomes. Davidson and Versluys (1999) evaluated short periods
of training in cooperation and problem solving, two major components of the Conflict
Resolution Model (Littlefield et al., 1993). The study involved 40 experimental
participants, half of whom were trained. Twenty pairs, one of whom had undergone
training, interacted in a videotaped discussion of a subject upon which they held
opposing views, but had to make a joint recommendation. Results showed that
training in each component significantly improved success on the outcome and related
process measures, and generalised at least to some of the latter. However brainstorming was successful only in the group that had also received training in cooperation, which it was suggested might be necessary for implementation of brainstorming skills.

**Training School Children in Conflict Resolution**

Training school children in conflict resolution skills has been advocated as an important step in reducing social conflict (Coleman & Deutsch, 2001; Galtung & Tschudi, 2001; Gordon, 1974; Tidman, 1992). Tidman (1992) suggests that the school culture must teach conflict resolution experientially by operating cooperatively on every level. Nonetheless this is rare, since schools generally mirror society as it is rather than model desirable social change. Galtung and Tschudi (2001) pointed out that for nonviolent conflict resolution and problem solving to be successful in schools, every adult must be trained as well as the students.

Sandy and Cochran (2000) point out that poor grades and dropping out of school can often be traced to lack of socio-emotional skills including conflict resolution, which is important for both children and adults. Moreover they emphasise that the converging evidence from education, neuroscience and psychology shows that early childhood is the time when the crucial foundations of all later development and intellectual growth are set down. Cooperative discipline, based on mutual affection and trust between teachers, parents and children, can be taught and implemented at age appropriate stages to children in school. It involves teaching the child to understand her own feelings and those of other people, and the consequences of her actions rather than simply teaching obedience. The goal is to promote internalisation of standards of right and wrong.
Davidson and Versluys (2000) evaluated a training based on the Conflict Resolution Model (Littlefield et al, 1993) within a school setting. They found that compared with untrained participants, the students who had undergone twelve hours of conflict resolution training over three weeks recorded skill gains in active listening, assertiveness, mapping the conflict and designing options in conflict situations. Moreover it was found that these skills could be elicited in an untrained participant by interaction with one who had been trained.

Training school children in conflict resolution skills using both constructive conflict resolution and cooperative learning was shown by Zhang (1994) to lead to higher self-esteem, more positive attitudes to life, less depression or anxiety, and enhanced locus of control. These in turn, contributed to greater academic achievement. Johnson and Johnson (1996) found similar results over five years of research between 1988 and 1994. Students were found to learn the conflict resolution procedures taught, retain their knowledge throughout the school year, and apply it in actual conflicts. Their skills generalised across school and nonschool settings, including family, and the students engaged in problem solving rather than win-lose negotiations following training.

Sarason and Sarason (1981) showed the benefits of modelling and role-playing in teaching social skills to high school students in a school with high rates of delinquency and drop-out. The trained students were able to approach problem solving more adaptively than controls, and in a one-year follow-up showed fewer absences, less tardiness and fewer behaviour referrals. The results pointed to a useful and cost-effective approach for prevention of behavioural problems.
Gender Differences in Conflict Resolution Style

A number of studies have found that females generally have more conflict resolution skills than males. Osterman, Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, Landau, Fraczek and Pastorelli (1997) reported a cross-cultural study of non-violent conflict resolution (n=2094) over three age groups in four different countries. They found that girls tended to make use of dyadic constructive conflict resolution and third-party mediation more than boys did. These results were consistent with earlier results such as those of Miller, Danaher and Forbes (1986) who in a study of 5 and 7 year-olds, found that in a conflict situation boys used threats and physical force more than girls who more often attempted to mitigate the conflicts. However girls use indirect aggression more than boys do (Osterman et al., 1997). Since girls mature faster than boys (Kohn, 1991) they may be better at conflict resolution than boys in adolescence, and they may still have an advantage in adulthood, where females show a preference for negotiation and males more frequently use threats (Gire & Carment, 1993).

Osterman et al. (1997) cite a number of findings which show gender differences in conflict resolution style. Watson and Kasten (1989) and Miller (1991) both showed that where conflicts are perceived as win-lose situations, males are more effective than females, because the latter tend to prefer problem solving without sacrificing relationships. In a study by Weingarten and Douvain (1985) males were shown to be task-oriented as mediators, looking for short-term solutions, and trying to direct or control negotiations. In contrast, Wall and Dewhurst (1991) found that females were more comprehensive, tried to get to underlying problems, and clarify what was said by the disputants, all of which tended to lead to more satisfactory, lasting solutions. Stamato (1992) points out that females are good negotiators, and warns that negotiation training often ignores this, encouraging women to adopt a more
masculine style (all cited in Osterman et al., 1997). Women emphasise relationship building, reconciliation, cooperation, networking and both interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. This gendered thinking is often ignored in scholarship and practice (McKay & Mazurana, 2001).

Conflict Resolution and the PET Program

Gordon's (1976) six-step process of problem solving and conflict resolution, so central to PET, derives from the work of philosopher and educationalist John Dewey (1933, 1938). For Dewey, the process of inquiry was itself experimental (Geiger, 1958), and successful inquiry had to follow a pattern (Thayer, 1952). In How We Think (Dewey, 1933) five steps are suggested to settle a problem, and in Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (Dewey, 1938) there are six steps. Basically the process calls for examination of the possibilities for solving a problem situation, and the ultimate choice of one that is suitable. In PET creativity through "brainstorming" is emphasised, and all the skills learnt in the course, including empathic listening, understanding of each person's needs, assertiveness, problem solving and mutual respect are brought into play for the resolution of conflict.

Gordon's PET program, including the six-step method of problem solving was first published in 1970, eight years after he began teaching it. The idea of breaking down the method needed for the successful resolution of conflict into learnable and manageable steps had considerable appeal. Several similar problem-solving techniques using sequential steps were subsequently developed, for example, Brammer (1973) using ten steps; D'Zurilla and Goldfried (1971) with five steps, later given the acronym SOLVE; and Janis and Mann, (1977) with seven steps. The Harvard Negotiation Project (Fisher & Ury, 1983) suggested five steps for use in the
public arena and internationally. The same sort of system was recommended in psychotherapy by Egan (1986), who acknowledged Gordon’s work.

The several-step techniques all suggest examination of possible alternatives—"brainstorming". D’Zurilla and Goldfried (1971) and Egan (1986) regard goal setting as part of the process of resolving conflict, while Fisher and Ury (1983) suggest "focusing on interests, not positions". The same stand is taken by McKay, Davis and Fanning (1985) who also propose negotiating in five steps. Janis and Mann (1977) mention "essential requirements". Brammer (1973) includes clarifying the values underlying a personal choice, stating that helpees must know what they need and desire, and their priorities.

Gordon (1976) believes that looking at the problem in terms of the needs of all parties is fundamental. Doing this brings interpersonal skills into play, thus setting the stage for cooperation rather than competition. This calls for self-control on the part of all concerned. In such a situation, participants have to employ listening skills, to practise assertiveness and openness, to trust and show themselves trustworthy. There is no room for any hidden agenda (Gordon, 1977a).

Success in the PET form of conflict resolution depends on several factors. Most important is the understanding that no party to the dispute is going to impose a solution. Mutual agreement must be reached. Parents often feel threatened, initially, at the mere thought of such an apparent abrogation of authority, but in fact they are safeguarded by the fact that neither side must ever agree to a solution that is not honestly found to be truly acceptable. Mutual decision-making rather than the use of power is the embodiment of Gordon’s last three principles in his (1970) theory of personal relationships.
Communication Skills and Social Competence

Developmental research has shown that the qualities which parents need to foster in their children so that they become competent members of society include positive emotional control, persistence and flexibility (Baumrind, 1980; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Prior et al., 2000; Pryor & Woodward, 1998). These qualities provide resilience and encourage adjustment in adversity (Maughan & McCarthy, 1997; Pryor & Woodward, 1998). They are fostered by teaching cooperative skills, using empathy and appropriate assertiveness, and encouraging responsibility (Gottman, 1997; Prior et al., 2000). Children raised in this way present fewer behavioural problems (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Patient training by parents of children's social skills and problem solving skills promote their self-efficacy and self-esteem, which can be built up from infancy onward (Halberstadt, 1991), as can the essential nonverbal skills (De Paulo, 1991). These all need continual training, practice and refinement through to adolescence and later.

The strengths which nurture all family members have also been established, including mutual respect, positive and affirming communication, commitment to each other and to mutual problem solving without coercion. Strong families provide opportunities for teaching negotiation and conflict resolution (Galtung & Tschudi, 2001; Kostelny & Garbarino, 2001) as well as for creative problem solving (De Bono, 1993; Sanson & Bretherton, 2001; Seligman, 1995).

Social Competence and the PET Program

Current understanding emphasises the importance of training children to acquire empathic competence, to be persistent, to use appropriate assertiveness, to
seek honest problem solving, to be flexible and look for creative ways of solving conflicts. The PET course is tailored to fulfil those needs for parents.

The PET model for empathic listening has been acknowledged, applied and widely disseminated in the literature (Bolton, 1993; Egan, 1986; McKay, Davis & Fanning, 1985; Nelson-Jones, 1986), as has its approach to appropriate assertiveness using openness, honesty and genuineness (Alberti & Emmons, 1998; Jakubowski & Lange, 1978; Nelson-Jones, 1986). In conflict resolution, Gordon’s model, affirming openness, creativity, a commitment to eschew coercion, and seeking to reach agreement rather than control, is used in a structured parenting program for couples and families (L’Abate & Weinstein, 1987). It continues to be influential and is currently advocated in studies of peace and conflict (Sanson & Bretherton, 2001).

The requirements for effective empathic parenting have been established in research (Gottman & Silver 1997; Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997; Prior et al., 2000). They are provided in PET through intensive training of parents in affirming communication, empathic listening, awareness of feelings, congruent self-disclosure, appropriate assertiveness for confrontation of unacceptable behaviours, creative problem solving skills and cooperative conflict resolution. Focusing on the actual language used, PET provides templates for active listening and assertiveness, while at the same time suggesting that parents apply them in their own family’s verbal style. Problem solving and conflict resolution are tackled, using role-play cards and working through parents’ real life situations. Over eight weeks, the trained instructor coaches the parents, who also participate in group discussions, role-plays and re-enactments of problematic family interactions from the previous week. Throughout the course, PET parents learn to preserve and enhance their relationship with the child who is encouraged at the same time in responsible self-efficacy.