

Shifting Perspectives of Adult Learners Through a Graduate-Level Parent-Child  
Interaction Course: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Investigation

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my first graduate adviser, Ruth Thomas. I will be forever grateful for your investment in my development, and my understanding of all you taught me (through carefully crafted questions, quiet moments, and practical experience) continues to evolve.

## **Abstract**

This post-intentional phenomenological study examined the phenomenon of shifting perspectives as it took shape for six adult learners through a graduate-level, online parent-child interaction course (Vagle, 2014a). Learning in adulthood is not a neutral endeavor, but rather a process involving the assimilation of new information to fit with prior knowledge, assumptions, and practices. Acquiring content expertise and developing proficiency in professional skills alone may transfer to practice, but in a manner that supports one's current frame of reference, which may perpetuate narrow minded and/or rigid beliefs (Kumashiro, 2002). Therefore, adult learners must be guided to critically examine preconceptions in order to recognize and revise faulty assumptions and narrow views, which may lead to the development of competencies that are more thoughtful, justified, and inclusive (Mezirow, 2012). Conceptual change and transformative learning theories provide useful frameworks for understanding and investigating how this type of learning may be promoted and investigated in higher education settings (Mezirow, 2000; Strike & Posner, 1985).

This study aimed to understand how shifting perspectives took shape for adult learners through a graduate-level, online parent-child interaction course designed to promote change and transformation with pre-service parent educators and others who plan to support families in a professional capacity. Additionally, this study explored the topics about which participants shifted their perspectives, and ways in which the learning environment may have contributed. Data was gathered retrospectively in the form of students' written participation in the online course Moodle site, and analyzed

using a whole-parts-whole phenomenological approach (Vagle, 2014a). Findings depict the phenomenon of shifting perspectives as taking shape through four tentative manifestations: *1) moving through multiple contexts and relationships, 2) distancing and taking ownership, 3) experiencing cognitive-affective conflict, and 4) broadening horizons*. Embedded in these dimensions are findings revealing that participants' shifted perspectives regarding topics related to parent-child interaction content and parent educator practice. Furthermore, shifting perspectives was supported by ongoing opportunities for both peer dialogue and personal reflection within a process-oriented learning environment that encouraged deep engagement in rich course material. Study implications inform pedagogical practices which may promote shifting perspectives with adult learners in higher education settings.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

*What* to teach is more often the question driving instruction rather than *how* to teach. However, how adults learn (and how we teach them) influences what they learn and how they transfer learning to professional practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Adult learners' prior knowledge, experiences, assumptions, and investments influence how they think, what they know or choose not to know (Kumashiro, 2002). It is therefore imperative that instructors guide adult learners to critically examine, challenge, and transform taken-for-granted beliefs and perspectives that may limit effectiveness in practice (Mezirow, 2000).

Traditionally, post-secondary preparation uses instrumental/technical approaches that: (a) teach skills and facts, (b) view learning from a deficit model, where new knowledge must be added to old (c) represent single, dominant realities, and (d) apply an expert model of teaching in which the instructor imparts knowledge onto the passive learner (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Lortie, 1975). Acquiring content expertise and developing proficiency in practice skills may promote transfer of learning, but in a manner that is unquestioning or uncritical. In some cases, this may promote narrow-mindedness or rigid beliefs. If adult learners' beliefs and perspectives are not critically reflected on as they process new material deeply, they will interpret new material in a way that supports their current frame of reference. A superficial acquisition of information may perpetuate hegemonic aspects of the dominant culture that do not support today's diverse, changing society (Kumashiro, 2002; Mezirow, 2000).

Today's world requires professionals to be adaptive in their thinking and problem solving (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; DragoSeverson, 2009; Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills [P21], 2010). The field of parent and family education has also acknowledged the need for parent educators to have competencies that allow them to be responsive to the changing and complex needs of today's families (Carter, 1996; Cooke, 2006; Walker, 2012; Walker, Cline, & Cooke, 2010). In response to this demand one required course offered through the University of Minnesota's Parent and Family Education program, *FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction*, incorporates course design and instructional approaches to promote transformative adult learning and conceptual change (Mezirow, 2000; Thomas, Cooke & Scott, 2006).

Learning environment features of the course include the use of videos to stimulate emotional engagement, open-ended questioning to promote critical reflection in peer dialogue and individual reflection, and process-oriented learning facilitated by the instructor through questioning, problem-posing, and clarifying misunderstandings (Walker et al., 2010). Informal observations of student learning indicate changes in beliefs and perspectives related to parent-child interaction content and professional practice in parent education that goes beyond mere comprehension of content. Although it has been clear to instructors that students are questioning and shifting their perspectives through this course, an empirical investigation is needed to understand more deeply this learning experience and the key course design elements that support it.

### **Identifying the Phenomenon of Interest**

Conceptual Change and Transformative Learning Theories inform the particular phenomenon of interest in this study (Mezirow, 2000; Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982). According to these theories, learning environments may be structured to promote deep processing of course material that encourages questioning, challenging, and critical reflection on beliefs and perspectives, and adult learners may come to new ways of knowing and understanding that influence development of the whole self. Therefore, acquired competencies become more stable, justified, and flexible (Mezirow, 2000). Research on change and transformative learning commonly use pre-post, self-report measures to evaluate the occurrence of conceptual change or transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). This information is valuable for identifying the conception or knowledge schema that is revised and how that revision may be promoted through structured learning environments. However, this study will approach the investigation of transformative learning in unique and valuable ways.

In this study I pursue an understanding of the lived-through experience of one's perspective as it is changing, or *shifting* (Vagle, 2014a). In this way I am respecting the dynamic, changing process of learning in adulthood (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). In order to open up change and transformation to allow for a complex, dynamic, nuanced process I use the term *shifting perspectives* as the phenomenon of interest in this study. I define shifting perspectives as the lived-through process of adjusting, revising, and/or re-thinking one's prior knowledge, beliefs, or practices. I place particular interest on the ways in which shifting perspectives may take shape – how it evolves and moves through the course.

Phenomenological philosophy calls for a fundamental commitment to openness in order to gain insight into and understand the phenomenon as it was lived and experienced (Vagle, 2014a; van Manen, 1990). Because of this emphasis on openness I do not explicitly outline the potential subjects of the shifting perspectives – or form hypotheses about which learners may shift perspectives. However, given the context of this specific course and my experience as course instructor, I expect that shifting perspectives may be related to the following dimensions: a) ways of thinking about and understanding the bi-directional nature of parent-child interactions, b) the professional role in helping parents to support their children’s development through the parent-child relationship, and c) ways of thinking about, understanding, or acting relevant to one’s personal experiences in parent-child interactions, as a parent or a child. The content of parent-child interaction is both personally and professionally relevant, as all students will have experience as children and many as parents. Using the deeply ingrained personal connection to the course content – instead of ignoring it, as in traditional approaches – allows learners to develop new cognitive, emotional, and experiential connections to the material, which leads to learning transfer and a deeper understanding of the content (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Ormrod, 2008; Thomas, Anderson, Getahun, & Cooke, 1992).

### **Overview of the Research Study**

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study is to better understand how the lived-through experience of shifting perspectives takes shape for adult learners through the context of a graduate-level, university course on parent-child interaction. The research questions guiding this investigation are:

Primary Question:

*1. How might the phenomenon of shifting perspectives take shape for adult learners through a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction?*

Secondary Questions:

*2. About which subjects might adult learners experience a shifting of perspective when studying parent-child interaction?*

*3. How might the elements of the learning environment and instructional design contribute to adult learners' experiences of a shifting perspective through a course on parent-child interaction?*

The first, and primary, research question seeks to gain deep insight into if, and how, shifting perspectives takes shape through the course context. This question seeks to understand how perspectives shift, what shifting perspectives looks like, and how it takes shape. The second question attends to the subject of the shifting perspectives. This question recognizes the context of a graduate-level course on the content of parent-child interaction and professional practice in parent education. The third research question explores pedagogical elements that may contribute to the occurrence of shifting perspectives within the parent-child interaction course.

Phenomenological philosophy and methodology will be used to guide an investigation of the research questions to more fully and deeply understand adult learners' lived-through experience of shifting perspectives in a parent-child interaction course. According to van Manen (1990), phenomenological research often involves the retrospective study of lived experience. Similarly, this study will retrospectively study

lived experience through student-generated written artifacts from a completed course on parent-child interaction. Vagle's (2014a) post-intentional phenomenology will frame this investigation through a systematic, five-component process for developing a phenomenological investigation, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings.

Insights gleaned from this research may inform pedagogy in higher education by increasing *pedagogical thoughtfulness* and designing for change. van Manen (1991) conducts phenomenological research to inform pedagogy, specifically as it relates to teacher education. Through his research, van Manen (1991) has developed the concept of pedagogical thoughtfulness, which relates to sensitivity toward or an attentive awareness of the dialogic, ambiguous, nuanced relationship of teaching and learning. By gaining a deeper understanding of adult learners' experiences with shifting perspectives through a course on parent-child interaction, I hope to enhance pedagogic thoughtfulness in post-secondary adult education (van Manen, 1991).

Additionally, understanding how the learning environment contributes to shifting perspectives may inform post-secondary course design. By focusing on how to teach in a way which promotes shifting perspectives, adult learners may be guided to deep, meaningful processing of course content leading to revisions of narrow preconceptions which are more inclusive and flexible. Adult learners who shift perspectives through professional practice may be better equipped to respond to the demand of 21<sup>st</sup> century professionals to be adaptive experts (Bransford et al., 1999; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; P21, 2010).

In the following chapters I discuss this post-intentional phenomenological study in more detail. In chapter two I review literature relevant to the professional preparation of adult learners in higher education settings. Conceptual change (Gregoire, 2003; Posner et al., 1982; Thomas, 1996) and transformative learning theories (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor & Cranton, 2012) frame the investigation the phenomenon of shifting perspectives through parent-child interaction content for pre-service parent educators. In chapter three I present the research design and data analysis, which outlines Vagle's (2014a) five-component process for conducting post-intentional phenomenology. Chapter four presents research findings in the form of tentative manifestations depicting how shifting perspectives takes shape through the parent-child interaction course. The final chapter reviews the study and discusses implications of the findings for promoting shifting perspectives in adult learners through post-secondary settings.



## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter is a review of literature and research informing professional preparation of adult learners calling for pedagogical approaches that promote change and transformation. The premise for these pedagogical approaches is based on recognition that learning in adulthood is not a neutral endeavor (Brookfield, 2013; Kumashiro, 2002). Adults bring to any learning environment a rich history of experiences and prior knowledge that influence the way in which new information is processed and transfers to practice (Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Paul, 1990). Acquiring content expertise and developing proficiency in professional skills alone may transfer to practice, but often in a manner that supports one's current frame of reference, which may perpetuate narrow minded and/or rigid beliefs (Bransford, et al., 1999; Kumashiro, 2002). Transformative learning, however, leads to beliefs and perspectives that broaden one's practice to be more inclusive and adaptive (Mezirow, 2012).

In a diverse and rapidly changing global society, professionals are expected to be adaptive experts, critical thinkers, innovative problem-solvers, as well as culturally responsive (Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; P21, 2010; Paul, 1990). These demands require 21<sup>st</sup> century professionals to be prepared in a way, which moves beyond expert-driven, direct instruction. Instead, adult learners must be guided to critically reflect on prior knowledge, assumptions, and practices in order to develop competencies that are more thoughtful, justified, and flexible (Brookfield, 2012; Mezirow, 2000; Paul, 1990). This learning experience may require substantial changes in one's beliefs, perspectives, and practices. Pedagogical approaches to preparing adult

learners for professional practices must support and promote transformative adult learning experience.

This study of shifting perspectives seeks to understand the possibilities of promoting and experiencing change and transformation through a structured learning environment. My research questions ask how change and transformation take shape (through the phenomenon of shifting perspectives), about which topics one may shift their perspectives, and how the learning environment contributes to perspective shifting. In this literature review I build a case for going beyond direct instruction to promote critical reflection and adult development and to build capacity to transfer these competencies to professional practice. Theories of conceptual change and transformative learning speak to the phenomenon under investigation and provide a conceptual grounding for the research questions.

### **Conceptual Change Theory**

Conceptual change theory is rooted in Kuhn's (1962) theory of paradigm shifts in scientific fields and Piaget's (1970) notion that learning occurs in one of two ways – through assimilation of new information to prior knowledge or an accommodation (or revision) of prior knowledge to make sense in light of new information. Conceptual change theory asserts that new ideas are not merely added to old ones; in the process of learning, conceptions are reorganized or transformed (Strike & Posner, 1985). Rather than transmitting knowledge from teacher to learner, reorganization is often promoted through constructivist pedagogies (Dole & Sinatra, 1998).

**Models of conceptual change.** A number of models have been proposed to capture the process of conceptual change and the factors that may promote or inhibit change. A full review of these models is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a brief overview of models that are relevant to this study follows. Posner et al. (1982) developed the first model of conceptual change as a way to promote accommodation through science education. The model included four conditions aimed at promoting changes in one's understanding of scientific concepts: (1) There must be dissatisfaction with existing conceptions, (2) A new conception must be intelligible, (3) A new conception must appear initially plausible, and (4) A new concept should suggest the possibility of a fruitful research program (Posner et al., 1982, p. 214). Most models of conceptual change in learning build on the original model (Vasniado, 2013).

The initial condition for conceptual change, dissatisfaction with existing conceptions, has received the most attention from researchers. Dissatisfaction is an internal condition that represents a dual process involving awareness of one's thoughts or perspective and seeing them as problematic (Posner et al., 1982; Thomas, 1996). Awareness of contradictions in one's thoughts or feelings may trigger cognitive and affective conflict (Limon, 2001; Sinatra, 2005), cognitive dissonance (Gregoire, 2003; Willink & Jacobs, 2011), or a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2000; Thomas, 1996). Triggering cognitive conflict has developed into a teaching strategy to promote conceptual change by providing opportunities to examine one's own conception in light of information presenting contradictory perspectives (Gregoire, 2003; Hewson & Hewson, 1984; Limon, 2001; Thomas, 1996). The remaining three conditions in the

original model assert that alternative or contradictory information must make sense to the learner in addition to being relevant and useful (Posner et al., 1982). Without such conditions dissatisfaction may not occur or be strong enough to motivate conceptual change (Gregoire, 2003; Cordova, Sinatra, Jones, Taasobshirazi & Lombardi, 2014).

A pivotal movement in the conceptual change fields is named the *warming trend* due to its emphasis on affective features like motivation, attitudes, and social context that may influence conceptual change (Dole & Sinatra, 1998; Gregoire, 2003; Sinatra, 2005). Conceptual change models that view change occurring through rational-cognitive factors were labeled as *cold* conceptual change models, as opposed to *hot* models that view conceptual change “as a complex and dynamic interaction of affective, motivation, and contextual factors” (Sinatra, 2005, p. 113). Recognizing that deep, meaningful learning engages the learner on more than a rational dimension aligns with research on learning in adulthood (Brookfield, 2013; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Although conceptual change is not considered an adult learning theory, it has been applied to adult learners through teacher education and parent education.

**Applications of conceptual change research and practice.** Much of the research on conceptual change focuses on children as the learner within structured educational settings around the subject areas of science, mathematics, and reading (Hewson & Hewson, 1984; McCrudden & Kendeou, 2014; Vasniado, Ioannides, Dimitrakopoulou, Papademetriou, 2001). However, this theory has more recently been applied to pre-service teacher education curriculum (Tanase & Wang, 2010), practicing teachers’ professional development workshops (Gregoire, 2003; Penlington, 2008), and

teaching in practice (Pugh, Linnenbrink-Garcia, Koskey, Stewart & Manzey, 2010). Research on promoting conceptual change with pre-service teachers emphasizes a change in teachers' epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning and assumes that teachers' beliefs regarding subject matter and pedagogy will influence their practices (Tanase & Wang, 2010). There exists a deliberate intention to change a teacher's pedagogical beliefs from an emphasis on direct instruction to a constructivist approach. While specific strategies vary, general conditions used to promote change included group discussion, critical reflection, and an emphasis on deep processing of and engagement in material over performance (Gregoire, 2003; Penlington, 2008; Pugh et al., 2010; Tanase & Wang, 2010).

Conceptual change research has also been applied to adult learners who are parents. Thomas (1996) applies cognitive science (Bransford, Vye, Kinzer, & Risko, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) and conceptual change theories (Hatano & Inagaki, 1992; Strike & Posner, 1985) to promote parent development (Newberger, 1980; Thomas, 1996) through parent education. The Reflective Dialogue Parent Education Design (RDPED) is framed by six conditions for promoting conceptual change that incorporate Strike & Posner's (1985) model, but also draws from a number of other educational scholars (Doll, 1977; Hatano & Inagaki, 1992; Thomas et al., 1992). These conditions include:

1. Awareness of one's current conceptions,
2. Dissatisfaction with one's current conceptions,
3. Support, understanding, respect, and caring from others,

4. Exposure to alternative ways of thinking, alternative conceptions, alternative meaning frames,
5. Opportunities for and encouragement of reflection on both one's own perspective and those of others, and
6. Valuing of deep understanding. (Thomas, 1996, p. 193)

Some of the key features of the RDPED include scaffolding, providing a range and depth of experiences through video and discussion, using videos to stimulate critical reflection and facilitate group dialogue through open-ended questioning (Thomas et al., 2006). These learning environment design elements “[emphasize] multiple perspectives, problems, and situations that reflect multiple perspectives and purposes” (Thomas et al., 1992, p. 19). Application of these teaching methods in parent education has resulted in changes in parental beliefs and perspectives representing increasingly complex and deep thinking about one's child, oneself as a parent, and one's parent-child relationship (Thomas, 1996). Conditions designed to promote conceptual change, such as dissatisfaction with one's perspective and reflecting on one's own and other's perspectives, are quite consistent with pedagogical practices designed to promote transformative learning in adulthood (Mezirow, 2000).

### **Transformative Learning Theory**

Developed by Jack Mezirow in 1981 as a theory of adult development, transformative learning theory describes a,

“Process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive,

discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 7)

The development of this theory was also influenced by Kuhn’s (1962) theory of paradigm shift, Habermas’ (1987) critical theory, and Freire’s (1970/2005) concept of conscientization. The focus of transformative learning theory is on how adult learners may question and challenge prior knowledge that was uncritically assimilated into one’s way of thinking and acting in order to develop greater ownership of one’s beliefs, values, and practices (Mezirow, 2000).

**Elements of perspective transformation.** Transformative learning originally conceptualized by Mezirow (1981) as a process consisting of 10 phases is often synthesized into the following four: a disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, validating discourse, and reflective action (Boyer, Maher & Kirkman, 2006; Herbers, 1998; Mezirow, 2000). The *disorienting dilemma* represents a triggering event or experience that challenges the learner’s current belief system (Boyer et al., 2006). This disruption may occur from one dramatic event or through a series of minor instances that lead the learner to become disoriented about his or her way of thinking, knowing, or acting. In response to this disorienting dilemma the learner works through an internal process of *critical reflection* and reevaluation of these beliefs and assumptions, as well as a social process of sharing his or her thoughts with others and seeking validation (*validating discourse*) for a change in these beliefs and perspectives through dialogue (Boyer et al., 2006). Ultimately, this new way of thinking becomes integrated into the learner’s

cognitive structure to the extent that ways of being or acting, or intentions to act, (*reflective action*) reflect this change as well (Mezirow, 2000).

**Applications of transformative learning research and practice.** In efforts to promote transformative learning in higher education, adult educators typically attempt to create learning environments and experiences that trigger a disorienting dilemma (Kasworm & Bowles, 2012). This is most commonly prompted through experiential learning (e.g., visiting the National Civil Rights Museum; Herbers, 1998) or critical reflection exercises (e.g., journal writing in response to critical questioning; Meyers, 2008). Numerous studies on transformative pedagogy validate the opportunity to facilitate transformative learning with adult learners in higher education settings (McCusker, 2013; Meyers, 2008; Ziegler, Paulus, & Woodside, 2006). Transformative learning has been prompted with pre-service teachers (Gliszinki, 2007) and practicing teachers through reflective journaling (Kitchenham, 2006). Additionally, the variety of teaching methods that have demonstrated effectiveness in promoting transformative learning informs instructional design for other instructors wishing to provide similar learning experiences, such as in the professional preparation of parent educators.

### **Need for Change and Transformation in Parent Educator Preparation**

The professional preparation of adult learners, such as parent educators, to work in fields that support families may benefit from application of conceptual change and transformative learning. The professional field of parent education in the United States is multidimensional and continuously evolving in response to family needs (Thomas & Lein, 2009) as well as the political, demographic, economic, and technological state of



the country (Walker, 2012). The purpose of parent education is “to strengthen families by providing relevant, effective education and support, and to encourage an optimal environment for the healthy growth and development of parents<sup>1</sup> and children” (National Parenting Education Network [NPEN], n.d.-a, para. 1).

Parent education programs serve families through community-based workshops or non-formal education groups and home-based, one-on-one settings (National Council on Family Relations [NCFR], 2009). Additional efforts include statewide programs like Minnesota’s Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and national efforts like Head Start and Extension Services (NPEN, n.d.-b). Aside from large-scale programs designed to support families, additional platforms for family education include print (e.g., parenting books, magazines, and newsletters), and electronic resources (e.g., websites and blogs; Walker, 2012). This range of service modes represents a dedication to meeting families where they are, and in a way that serves them. Parent education is a professional field with educators who experience a range of training programs (Cooke, 2006). However, practitioners in other fields such as medicine, therapy, or social work may provide elements of parent education as a part of their role (Jones, Stranik, Hart, Mcclintic & Wolf, 2013).

The professional field of parent and family education has acknowledged the need for parent educators to have competencies that equip them to be responsive to the changing and complex needs of today’s families (Carter, 1996; Cooke, 2006; Walker, 2012; Walker, Cline, & Cooke, 2010; Holmboe, 2014). National (i.e., Cooperative Extension System, USDA, National Council on Family Relations) and state-level

organizations and institutions (i.e., University of North Texas and the Texas Registry of Parent Educator Resources, Minnesota Department of Education, and the Minnesota Board of Teaching) have developed competency frameworks informing the professional development of parent educators (Cooke, 2006; Holmboe, 2014). Although some variation exists in the organization and emphasis areas of different parent educator competency frameworks, the essential components are quite consistent.

To be an effective parent educator one must be knowledgeable regarding (a) child and parent development, (b) theories and research on the parent-child relationship, parenting practices, and family systems and dynamics, and (c) cultural differences and specific populations such as children with special needs or parents with mental illness (Smith, Cudaback, Goddard & Myers-Walls, 1994). Parent educators must be able to develop, analyze, and evaluate curriculum, use effective teaching methods, and adapt teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse parents and families (DeBord et al., 2002; Minnesota State Board of Teaching, 2007a, 2007b) Additionally, parent educators must be ethical in their practice, critically examine their beliefs and assumptions pertaining to children, parents, families, and teaching and learning, and continue to develop as professionals (DeBord et al., 2002; Minnesota Council on Family Relations [MCFR], 2010).

Despite awareness of the required competencies of parent educators, there is less attention on how parent educators are prepared to develop content expertise and pedagogical skills in ways that are responsive to the complex population of participants in parent education (Walker, 2012). Preparing parent educators from a traditional

approach to teaching and learning perpetuates an expert model of teaching in which information is given from the teacher to the learner (Campbell & Palm, 2004; Thomas & Lien, 2009). Expert-driven instruction disregards the tendency for adult learners to assimilate new information to fit with prior, unquestioned knowledge. Therefore, parent educator preparation must go beyond traditional approaches to teaching which promote critical examination of one's prior knowledge, assumptions, and practice in light of new information.

**Parent-child interaction content in parent education.** Understanding the complex nature of parent-child relationships is a vital content area across all competency frameworks and standards of parent education practice because the core of parent education is the relationship between parents and children (Holmboe, 2014). There is overwhelming evidence for the influence of this early parent-child relationship on all areas of child development, including children's behavior (Reis, Collins & Berscheid, 2000), emotion regulation (Sroufe, Duggal, Weinfield & Carlson, 2000), social and academic competence (Raby, Roisman, Fraley & Simpson, 2014), and quality of peer relationships (Thompson, 2006). The parent-child relationship continues to influence children's development across the lifespan in areas such as physical health (Reis et al., 2000), psychological health (Sroufe, Coffino & Carlson, 2010), and qualities of romantic partnerships (Roisman, 2007).

Parent-child interactions, over time, are the building blocks of the parent-child relationship (Cooke, 2006). The bi-directional nature of parent-child interactions provides a context within which parents also grow and develop (Demick, 2002). Additionally,

parent development may be fostered in the parent education context (Cooke, 2006; Thomas et al., 2006). As parents develop they “have a wider repertoire for dealing with, and more complex ways of understanding their children, their parenting role, and their parent-child relationships than parents who have not reached these levels” (Thomas, 1996, p. 189). Parents are then better able to support their children’s development (Thomas, Cooke & Scott, 2005). Over time the quality of parent-child interactions has implications for parents’ development. This testifies to not only why this is the core of parent education and a critical content area of parent educator preparation, but to the value of supporting parents and their young children through parent education efforts.

**Teaching and learning about parent-child interaction.** While the content related to parent-child interaction is clearly important the process of teaching and learning about this material is equally important. Parent educators themselves are adult learners with previous lived experience in parent-child interactions; therefore, they are personally connected to the content. This lived experience and the accompanying beliefs, assumptions, and practices related to the content and pedagogy of parent-child interaction may influence how parent educators think and perceive, and what they know and choose not to know. van Manen (1991) summarizes this point well when he states, “As parents or teachers we never escape the influence of our own parents or teachers” (p. 22).

Parent educators, therefore, must be guided to become aware of and critically examine prior knowledge in order to recognize faulty assumptions, narrow views, and rigid practices (Lortie, 1975; Thomas & Lien, 2009). Through a critically reflective learning environment parent educators may be assisted to transform their perspectives

related to parent-child interaction content and pedagogy. Changes in perspective may equip parent educators to be more responsive to the complex, dynamic needs of today's families and to strengthen parent-child interaction quality by promoting parent development (Thomas et al., 2006). Professional preparation in other family service professions, such as therapists and social workers, may benefit from having a dual focus and critical lens on the content of parent-child interaction and educational processes for helping adult learners (e.g., parents) apply this content to their own lives. This study seeks to explore the paths through which adult learners shift their perspectives during a parent-child interaction course designed for parent educator professional preparation.

### **Shifting Perspectives Through a Parent-Child Interaction Course**

The context for this study is a 3-credit, 13-week, graduate-level, university course on parent-child interaction, *FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction*. In the course students “analyze and critique parent-child interaction theory and research, consider implications for parent-child relationships and parents’ and children’s development, and apply this course material to professional work with families and personal experience” (Cline, 2015, p. 2). The course is a requirement in the parent and family education program at the University of Minnesota, which offers coursework toward a post-baccalaureate teaching license, graduate certificate, and M.Ed. degree in parent and family education (Walker et al., 2010). The class is designed to prepare parent educators to understand the dynamic, bi-directional influence of parent-child interaction on children’s and parents’ development across the lifespan. Additionally, students prepare to help parents recognize the importance of this relationship, and to understand how parents may support their

children's development through their parent-child interactions. Content highlighted in the course is outlined in Appendix A (See p. 178).

The learning environment design and instructional approach in this parent-child interaction course reflects elements thought to promote conceptual change and transformative learning by providing opportunities for adult learners to deeply examine course material, engage in open, process-oriented dialogue, and critically reflect on their own and other's perspectives (Brookfield, 2012; Mezirow, 2000; Thomas, 1996). Each week new readings and videos offer a deep examination of concepts and expose learners to alternative perspectives (Thomas, 1996). Rather than delivering information, videos of parent-child interaction are deliberately used to trigger emotional reaction and help draw out one's beliefs and perspectives (Bransford et al., 1990; Thomas et al., 1992). Within asynchronous and synchronous discussion forums the instructor uses open-ended questions designed to create opportunities for students to articulate their own perspectives, and due to natural differences in perspective (prior knowledge), learners are often exposed to alternative conceptions (Meyers, 2008).

Additionally, the parent-child interaction course incorporates opportunities for individual reflection via bi-weekly reflection papers and three written assignments. These papers not only provide regular feedback to the instructor about student learning, they also encourage reflection on one's own and perspective and those held by others (Thomas, 1996). Reflective writing has been long recognized for promoting meta-cognition (Sinatra, 2005), critical reflection (Mezirow, 2000), and engagement (Pazurek-

Tork, 2013). van Manen (1990) also suggests that writing mediates reflection and action, which may be considered a bridge from conceptual change to new behavior.

Instructors scaffold adult learners' processing of material in deep, meaningful ways (Walker et al., 2010). Expectations for ongoing engagement in course dialogue and demonstration of deep thinking in written assignments is emphasized over rote memorization or assimilation to the instructor's philosophy (Walker, Cooke & Cline, 2009). This creates a safe learning environment that respects the constructive, meaning-making process of adult learners (Gragg, 1940; Pazurek-Tork, 2013). Learners who feel safe to explore and even challenge one's beliefs and perspective, which can be a messy and difficult experience, are more likely to take the risk and persist through a conceptual change (Strike & Posner, 1985; Thomas, 1996; Thomas et al., 1992). In part, this study will investigate the learning environment and instructional design elements that may contribute to shifting perspectives in adult learners through a parent-child interaction course.

### **Summary**

This literature review has built a case for going beyond direct, expert-driven, instruction in preparing adult learners for professional practice. Recognition of the influence one's prior knowledge and experience has on one's future learning and practice calls for professional preparation of adult learners that promotes critical examination and opportunities for change and transformation. Conceptual change and transformative learning theories provide useful frameworks for understanding and investigating how this type of learning may be promoted and investigated through the professional preparation

of adult learners. Parent educator preparation is a valuable application of this pedagogical approach in order to promote critical reflection and adult development and to build capacity to transfer these competencies to practice with parents as adult learners, particularly around the topic of parent-child interaction. My research questions contribute to scholarship on conceptual change and transformative learning theory by investigating how the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective might take shape for adult learners through a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction. Additionally, I pursue understanding about what subject matter adult learners may shift their perspectives and how the learning environment may contribute.



### Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to pursue greater understanding of the lived-through experience of shifting perspectives through the context of a graduate-level university course on parent-child interaction. Post-intentional phenomenology was used to examine the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

Primary Question:

1. *How might the phenomenon of shifting perspectives take shape for adult learners through a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction?*

Secondary Questions:

2. *About which subjects might adult learners experience a shifting of perspective when studying parent-child interaction?*
3. *How might the elements of the learning environment and instructional design contribute to adult learners' experiences of a shifting perspective through a course on parent-child interaction?*

To investigate these research questions I gathered retrospective data from adult learners who completed the course FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction. Student-generated text (online text written by students as course participants) archived in online course sites was gathered and analyzed using a post-intentional phenomenological research approach (Vagle, 2014a). The findings of this analysis are represented as *tentative manifestations*—fluid, complex, contextual meanings—of the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective through a parent-child interaction course (Vagle, 2014a). Put

simply, the findings shed light on ways in which a phenomenon manifests – or shows itself – through adult learners lived-through experience in a parent-child interaction course. From a post-intentional philosophy these manifestations, or dimensions, of the phenomenon are understood to be tentative, or partial, due to the contextual nature within which the phenomenon is manifested.

The post-intentional phenomenological approach consists of a five-component process for developing a phenomenological investigation, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings (Vagle, 2014a). A post-intentional approach to phenomenological research is framed by a post-structural philosophy asserting knowledge, or what we come to know and understand, is both always tentative and always in process (Vagle, 2010). Similarly, Vagle (2014a) is conceiving of *intentionality* through a Deleuze and Guattari (1987) post-structural philosophy to understand the relationship between persons and their lived-through world as always interconnected in complex, partial and fleeting ways. What comes to be known or understood through this study is always a tentative and contextual manifestation representing the “dynamic interrelationships that tie participants, the researcher, the produced text, and their positionalities together” (Vagle, 2014a, p. 30).

To respect this dynamic view of knowledge and intentionality as I investigated how shifting perspectives may take shape for adult learners through a parent-child interaction course, I worked to remain open to the nuanced ways in which this phenomenon would show itself (Dahlberg, Dahlberg & Nystrom, 2008, p. 112). My effort to remain open throughout this process took the form of keeping a post-reflexive

journal, which is described in detail beginning under component #2 (See p. 31). I did not confront this investigation with a predetermined hypothesis or theoretical model to test (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Instead, this study pursued an explication of how the phenomenon (shifting one's perspective) manifested itself through the lived experiences of my participants in rich, intricate detail.

Though a complete, absolute description of the phenomenon is unattainable as one can never untangle the complete experience of another's living through the world, I followed van Manen's (1990) philosophy that "rather than therefore giving up on human science altogether, we need to pursue its project with extra vigor" (p. 18). Through my own vigorous engagement with the adult learner's lived-through experiences, I worked toward elucidating the tentative and complex dimensions of shifting one's perspective as they were embedded in the context of a parent-child interaction course (van Manen, 1990).

### **The Research Design**

The five components of Vagle's (2014a) post-intentional phenomenological research design are as follows:

1. Identify a phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts.
2. Devise a clear, yet flexible process for gathering data appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation
3. Make a post-reflexion plan
4. Read and write your way through the data in a systematic, responsive manner

5. Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts (p. 121).

While this list did provide a systematic way to develop and conduct the phenomenological investigation post-intentionally it was not designed, nor did I proceed in a way for it to be followed in a rigid, linear progression. Instead, I weaved my way through these components in a cyclical pattern that honors the core phenomenological commitment to openness (Vagle, 2014a). In this chapter I address how I progressed through each of the five components and how this led to the findings presented in chapter four.

**Component #1: Identify the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts.** The first component addresses six elements that frame the development of a post-intentional phenomenological investigation. These elements suggest to:

1. Describe the research problem,
2. Conduct a partial review of the literature,
3. Clarify core philosophical commitments relevant to the research problem,
4. Identify the phenomenon and articulate the research questions,
5. Situate the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts, and
6. Make determinations about study participants (Vagle, 2014a, p. 122).

The research problem, relevant philosophical commitments, and research questions are articulated in chapter one and the initial pages of this chapter. The literature is reviewed in chapter two along with a description of contexts within which this phenomenon is

investigated. The final element, procedures for selecting and recruiting study participants, is described below.

***Participant Selection.*** This investigation of the phenomenon (shifting one's perspective) involves the context of adult learners who completed the course FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction (3 credits). The course is offered during fall and spring semesters each academic year. Students were recruited via email from six sections offered between Fall 2011 and Spring 2014 (See Appendix B for Recruitment Email, p. 180). Students were informed that their decision to participate had no consequence on his or her success in their program of study or reputation with the University of Minnesota (See Appendix C for Consent Form, p. 181). An incentive was not offered due to the minimal time required for study participation, which involved no additional participation beyond signing and returning the consent form.

The recruitment email was sent to 95 students. Eighteen students (17 female, 1 male) responded with interest and consented to participate. With the 18 participants a criterion-based purposive sampling technique was used to deliberately choose study participants whose digital course content provided rich descriptions of lived-through experience with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Vagle, 2014a).

***Purposive sampling.*** The unit of analysis in this study is the phenomenon of shifting perspectives through a parent-child interaction course. In order to explore this phenomenon it was important for me to look at and analyze different individual course participant's experiences. In order to provide a rich description of this lived-through experience in written form within an online course the student is making a conscious

effort to reflect on and share his or her experience. According to Mezirow (2012), critical reflection on one's experience and using discourse to validate or process this experience are two essential elements of transformative learning. van Manen (1990) also argues that "writing mediates reflection and action" (p. 124). Therefore, the ability to critically reflect on one's experiences of shifting perspectives in writing served as the bases of criteria for selecting study participants.

For this criterion bi-weekly learning reflection papers and final written assignments were used. Reflection papers ask students to respond to the following two questions based on material from the previous two modules: *1. What struck me the most on a personal and/or professional level about the concepts and learning? 2. Where have I been stretched by the concepts and learning?* The final assignment is an autobiographical case analysis paper that asks students to critically reflect on and examine their personal experiences (as a child in their family-of-origin or as a parent in their current family) in relation to course material (See Appendix D for original assignment description, p. 183).

Through initial levels of analysis of these reflective writing artifacts I paid particular attention to evidence of learning reflective of shifting or changing perspectives. This writing included direct references to the influence of the course on one's learning or understanding, or questioning of one's own understanding in light of new information or alternative perspectives. From the initial 18 students I selected six participants whose reflective writing articulated lived-experiences of shifting perspectives. The process of identifying the final six participants necessitated three levels of data collection and three

phases of analysis. Specific processes are detailed in later sections of this chapter, under research components two and five (See pp. 31 and 50 respectively).

***Participants.*** Each of the six participants was female. Four were married, mothers in their 30s to 40s. The remaining two were in their 20s, one of whom was married and the other single. Despite gender homogeneity this sample is fairly representative of the female-dominated fields of family and early education (Jerpbak, 2005) as well as enrollment trends in this program (Walker & Hardman, 2008). Five of them were enrolled in one of the family education programs (M.Ed., teaching license, and/or graduate certificate), and the sixth was completing her bachelor's degree in Child Psychology. Each participant is introduced further in the findings chapter.

Careful considerations were made in the reporting of data to uphold the anonymity of study participants as well as non-participants. All study participants were assigned pseudonyms in an effort to protect their identity. I have also chosen to not associate the term of enrollment with the participant for this same reason. Additionally, access has been removed from all course websites available to students at the time they were enrolled in the course. Each of the six participants was contacted via email to express gratitude for granting me access to their lived experiences of learning, and to notify them of the inclusion of their data in the analysis and report of findings. The text box below is an excerpt from my post-reflexion journal to illustrate the development of this decision.

### **Post-reflexion journal entry – 2.8.15**

The decision of whether or not to reach out to participants before I make my findings public has been nagging at me for some time. This is primarily due to the ongoing pedagogical relationship I have with some of them. They have entrusted me with their personal lived experience documented through the online course, and I have attempted to craft their stories in a way that protects their identity, honors their unique and meaningful learning experiences, and sheds light on the phenomenon of shifting perspectives. However, due to the sometimes disoriented and personal nature of their journeys, I fear they will be uncomfortable with how their stories are told through my eyes. Through a personal communication with M. Vagle (February 4, 2015) I have come to recognize that my positionality as researcher, teacher, and adviser has led to a heightened sensitivity to participants' lived experience and to my relationship with them. This awareness has allowed me to clarify the importance of honoring these intentional relationships by communicating my gratitude to each participant and opening up the possibilities of dialogue.

### **Component #2: Devise a clear, yet flexible process for collecting data**

**appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation.** This study followed a *post-intentional phenomenological* approach to gathering data in the form of rich descriptive text of the lived experience of perspective shifting through a course on parent-child interaction. *Parent-Child Interaction* is a 3-credit, 13-week, graduate-level course offered online through the Family Social Science department, in the College of Education and Human Development, at the University of Minnesota. In this course students “analyze and critique parent-child interaction theory and research, consider implications for parent-child relationships and parents’ and children’s development, and apply this course material to professional work with families, and deepen self-awareness through applying parent-child interaction theories to one’s own situation” (Cline, 2015, p. 2-3).

Phenomenological studies most commonly utilize unstructured, face-to-face interviews in order to gain access to a description of lived experience (Giorgi, 1931/2009;



Vagle, 2014a). However, there is consensus among phenomenological scholars that the phenomenon should drive the data gathering methods (Vagle, 2014a; Dahlberg et al., 2008; van Manen, 1990). In other words it is recommended that types and methods of data gathering (or collection) is governed by “the nature of the phenomenon; the research question in its context; and the aim to go to the things themselves—to the phenomenon of study” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 176). Alternative approaches to data collection methods for phenomenological research include the Lived Experience Description (LED) (van Manen, 1990), field observation (Dahlberg et al., 2008), and art-based methods such as photo-storying (Vagle, 2014a). With the increase of web-based dialogue (e.g., public internet forums, online courses in higher education and other contexts) there is an increase in textual analysis of a phenomenon as it was lived out or lived through via web-based contexts (Pazurek-Tork, 2013; Rodham, McCabe, & Blake, 2009).

This study uses a number of data sources from the online learning environment that include student-generated text originally written for a class, without intention for empirical investigation (See Appendix D for more detailed descriptions of these data sources, p. 183). The goal was to deeply understand and clearly articulate the lived-through experience of the phenomenon of shifting perspectives. I practiced the phenomenological commitment to *openness* (van Manen, 1990) to unique experiences and to the possibility of *threads of intentionality* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012) that may connect those experiences in a way that enhances our understanding of the phenomenon of shifting one’s perspective. Therefore, my purpose for drawing out the phenomenon through the online learning environment was to explicate the experienced perspective

shifts as they were lived-through by each participant (Dahlberg, et al., 2008).

In order to “go to the phenomenon,” I sought out the lived-through experiences of learning. The lived-through experiences were documented via text format from the web-based learning course site hosted by Moodle ([www.moodle.umn.edu](http://www.moodle.umn.edu)) (See Figure 1 for screenshot of course page, p. 176). This online learning platform allowed students to communicate with each other, and with the instructor, through a variety of modes including asynchronous discussion (not at the same time), synchronous chat (live dialogue), and written reflections on learning (bi-weekly reflection papers and three written assignments) (See Appendix D, p. 183). All course communication in this online learning environment was documented, saved, and archived, making it a rich data source for examining lived-through experiences. The other source of data includes the *researcher’s post-reflexion journal*, which has documented my ongoing process of inquiry and guided the critical examination of my beliefs, assumptions, reactions, and interpretations (Vagle, 2014a) (See component #3, p. 36).

***Data collection plan.*** Data was gathered through four levels that led me progressively deeper into the lived-through experiences of my participants. With each level I discovered greater nuanced complexities of the phenomenon (shifting one’s perspective) through the temporal context of a parent-child interaction class. This series of levels was integrated with the multiple phases of analysis discussed further under component # 4 (p. 39)—where the focus was on reading and writing my way through the data in a systematic, responsive manner (Vagle, 2014a).

*Level 1.* The grading rubric for the final written assignment (case analysis

integration paper) was used as the first criterion for purposefully selecting participants who demonstrated an ability to write reflectively (See section on purposive sampling, p. 28). I initially created one “Assignment Three” electronic folder where I saved final papers with grading rubrics as Microsoft Word documents for all 18 participants (using their pseudonym) after downloading them from the Moodle course websites.

*Level 2.* All 18 participants demonstrated an ability to write reflectively so I entered into the beginning phases of a whole-parts-whole data analysis process using the assignment three case analysis integration paper as data from each participant (See component #4, p. 39). I copied the assignment three written papers into folders labeled with each participant’s pseudonym. Based on initial insights gleaned from a preliminary analysis of each learner’s assignment three paper I selected participants with whom to move into further phases of analysis.

Thirteen participants were selected based on their ability to articulate, in writing, their lived-through experiences of shifting perspectives in this course. It was not expected that all experiences of the phenomenon would be described in the final written assignment. However, this assignment requires and accounts for the greatest degree of depth of critical self-reflection. Therefore, the content and form of writing in this assignment provided a helpful indication of what type of cognitive processing may have occurred in the class. It was important, though, for me to remain open to the insights and meanings that showed themselves throughout all other student-generated artifacts. Writing in my post-reflexion journal aided me in practicing this degree of openness.

*Level 3.* Within each remaining participant’s folder I saved a new Word document

where all data could be gathered. With six of these participants I gathered only the seven bi-weekly reflection papers across the 13 weeks. Data collection ended here with these seven participants after determining through early phases of analysis that descriptions of lived experiences of shifting perspectives were not clearly articulated.

*Level 4.* With the remaining seven participants I gathered all artifacts generated during each module and pasted them in one long thread as they occurred in the course. For each participant these artifacts include 13 weeks of discussion forum threads, 10 synchronous chat transcripts, 7 bi-weekly reflection papers, Assignment #1, Assignment #2, Assignment #3 (the copy that was already saved during level two), and any additional instructor-student communication via email or student-generated communication in the general course forums. The Moodle site reports run on participation by an individual student, and are organized in chronological order. This report includes the text from general forums, online discussion forums, and reflection papers. It includes only a link to online chat transcripts and written assignments. I pasted this report into each participant's "Data" Word document and then pulled and pasted the chat transcripts and written assignments where they occurred in the course.

Forum posts and other digital content was at times pulled from non-participant students in order to situate the data within the context in which it occurred. This was important because learning does not occur in isolation. For example, in some cases it was helpful to understand a question or comment posted by a peer that may have triggered a participant's response. A primary element of transformative learning, according to Mezirow (2000), is *validating discourse*—that is, communication with others in an effort

to justify perspective change. Additionally, the learning context was important to answer the third research question that asks about influences on the phenomenon (shifting one's perspective). This contextual information was marked clearly in the thread of data and is never quoted directly in order to honor them as students rather than participants. Further details will be provided under component #4 regarding how this data was organized and further analyzed (See p. 39).

**Component #3: Make a post-reflexion plan.** Post-reflexion is a concept that pushes the boundaries of qualitative practices of researcher *reflexivity* (Daly, 2007), phenomenological practices of bracketing (Giorgi, 1931/2009) and bridling (Dahlberg et al., 2008), and encompasses a post-structural philosophy recognizing the always interconnected intentional relationship of the researcher with the research (Vagle, 2014a). A post-reflexion plan is used as a guide for the researcher to interrogate prior beliefs and assumptions, as well as ongoing interpretations of the data in an effort to elucidate the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014a).

There exists a long history in phenomenology of systematically removing, or minimizing, the researcher's influence on the data. Traditionally, the researcher makes attempts to *bracket*, or set aside, any and all pre-understandings of the phenomenon in order to describe the phenomenon "precisely as it is given" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 240). More recently, however, phenomenological scholars are recognizing the undeniable interconnectedness of the research with his or her research. Dahlberg et al. (2008) suggest that "researchers, as all other living persons, are embedded in meaning and have a lifeworld, which is an inescapable context for all research" (p. 125). Phenomenological

researchers, therefore, “must learn how to problematize the natural attitude” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 125) in order to see “what frames our seeing” (Lather, 1993, p. 675). In other words, it was important for me to acknowledge and investigate my own frame of reference in order to see what framed my way of seeing the data.

***Create a post-reflexion journal.*** For my post-reflexion journal I used Evernote (<https://evernote.com/>). Every time I worked on this research in some capacity (e.g., data collection, data analysis, taking notes as I read through a text, or writing session) I documented this work in a new “note” (saved by date) within a Dissertation “notebook” in Evernote. Evernote allows one to capture notes via text, audio recording, pictures, etc. Throughout my research I used all of these features, but relied primarily on typed notes. However, since this application is synched to all devices I was able to quickly audio-record my ideas when I was not near my computer. This relates to van Manen’s (2014) thoughts on “active passivity” (p. 346). He suggests that writing does not always happen when one is deliberately sitting down for a writing session. Instead, new insights often come to us when we are going about our daily lives. For me, this occurred while driving, running, or getting ready for my day and I was able to grab my phone and audio-record my thoughts directly into an Evernote “note” immediately.

***Write an initial post-reflexion statement.*** From an interpretive research paradigm I recognize that I bring my own frame of reference (or intentional relationship) to this study. As stated previously, in addition to being the researcher of this study I was also (in some cases) the instructor of the classes under investigation (as well as other courses in the family education program). This frame of reference includes my previous experience

with each participant as well as the content of the class. I am a parent educator and adult educator who believes in transformative teaching and learning. As the instructor I experienced and observed the shifting perspectives in students as they were empowered to critically reflect upon, and take ownership of, their thoughts, assumptions, and practices. Through this research, I aim to give voice to this powerful learning experience. However, I must engage in a process of post-reflexivity in order to critically monitor and understand my role in shaping this research (Vagle, 2014a).

Through my post-reflexion practice I worked to constantly interrogate my pre-understanding and developing insights into the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014a, p. 132). This is in contrast to the traditional practice of bracketing, or completely setting aside any pre-understanding in an (impossible) effort to remove all possible influence I may have had on the data as I moved through data collection and analysis (Giorgi, 1931/2009). Dahlberg et al. (2008) suggest that “as human science researchers we must understand ourselves as historical beings, always connected with the past. We are always part of history and can never find a position outside of it. Consequently, tradition and historicity is part of our lifeworld” (p. 77). Because of this, rather than claiming to set aside my history or intentional relationship with my lifeworld, post-reflexion allowed me to shine a light on the relational and knowledge-based frames that may have influenced how I read and responded to the data.

***Post-reflex as you gather and analyze data.*** As I practiced post-reflexivity through all phases of research I attended to moments during which I felt connected to or disconnected from the experiences in which I was immersed (Vagle, 2014a). I also noted

my own assumptions about and reacted to my participants and their documented learning. The greatest challenge was listening to and honoring individual experience distinct from other participants and my theoretical pre-understanding of transformative learning and conceptual change. It was important to allow each story to speak for itself in order to then uncover the nuances and connectedness of my data. The post-reflexion journal afforded me a space to articulate connections I was making to theory or other participants in order to interrogate or challenge these perceptions based on the data itself. This allowed me to always return to the data for clarity (van Manen, 2014). As previously demonstrated, pertinent post-reflexive notes are woven into the final three chapters as a way to uphold the integrity of the research process.

**Component #4: Read and write your way through your data in a systematic, responsive manner.** As Vagle (2014a) clearly states, these research components were not designed in an ordered format to be followed numerically. Rather, this approach to phenomenological research is a cyclical and spiraling process that moves through and returns to each component. The procedures of this study required this flexible, fluid, and spiraling process as the analysis worked through several phases of gathering and analyzing specific data followed by gathering and analyzing further. Therefore, discussion of data collection and analysis are woven throughout the respective sections of this chapter. A flow-chart also provides a visual depiction of the data collection and analysis procedures (See Figure 2, p. 177).

*Whole-parts-whole* is a common approach to phenomenological data analysis regardless of whether the approached is considered descriptive (Giorgi, 1931/2009),



interpretive (van Manen, 1990), reflective lifeworld research (Dahlberg et al., 2008) or post-intentional (Vagle, 2014a). Vagle (2014a) outlines a systematic, yet flexible protocol for working through data following a whole-parts-whole framework. Each of the six steps outlined by Vagle (2014a) will be described below as they are first encountered in my analysis protocol. Descriptions are also provided for adaptations to this protocol in order to be responsive to emerging insights as the analysis progresses. The protocol played out in a spiraling pattern through four phases of analysis rather than flowing in a straight line. These spiraling-through processes gradually led me toward deeper and more complex explications of the phenomenon.

***Phase 1: Final written assignment.*** I began my analysis with the final written assignment because it provides the most comprehensive opportunity for reflective writing in this course. The length of pages required (6-8) gives students adequate space to explore the thoughts, questions, and learning that occurred throughout the semester. Also, because this is a reflective writing assignment, students have the opportunity to reflect on how they perceived their own learning, growth, and change throughout the course. Reflective writing assignments are a common approach to promote critical reflection and transformative learning, as discussed previously in the literature review (van Manen, 1990; Brookfield, 2012; Mezirow, 2000). The final written assignment, therefore, provided a good starting point for analysis to gain insight into participants' lived-through experiences with the phenomenon that occurred throughout the course as well as some indication of the topics or subjects about which perspectives were shifting. While it was important to remain open to perspective shifting in ways not mentioned in the final

assignment, beginning here served as a guidepost to examine remaining artifacts.

*Step 1: Holistic reading of entire text.* The first step in nearly all phenomenological data analysis procedures is to read through the entire text without taking notes or marking segments (Dahlberg et al., 2008). The purpose of this is to get a sense of the whole before focusing in on its parts (Vagle, 2014a). Therefore, I began my analysis by reading through each of the 18 final papers, one at a time. Four participants stood out during this first step as demonstrating meaningful connections between course concepts and one's personal parent-child relationships. However, it was clear each of them had engaged in significant degrees of critical reflection on their experiences and perspectives before the course, and therefore, did not experience a shifting of perspective through this course.

Some of who had participated in parent education (i.e., Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education program) as parents came to new levels of awareness and insight at that time. For others, it was a major life event like a parents' death, for example, that prompted deep examination of their parent-child relationship. In all four cases thoughtful reflection was apparent. However, evidence of seeing in new ways or experiencing some wobble around their previously held beliefs, assumptions or practices was not present. With these four participants I stopped the data analysis process at this initial step.

I also stopped analysis with a fifth participant at this point. Due to taking an incomplete during her initial enrollment, she completed several elements of the class through independent work rather than engaging in continuous dialogue with the same

group of peers and instructor all 13 weeks. Additionally, her final reflective writing in the case analysis paper was not compelling enough to suggest a shifting of perspective warranting further exploration of her data. Therefore, step one of phase one concluded with the elimination of five participants, leaving 13 remaining for step two.

*Step 2: First line-by-line reading.* After getting acquainted with the first case analysis paper of the 13 remaining participants I re-read the papers line-by-line. During this careful, systematic reading I marked sections (ranging from one line to full paragraphs) that appeared to reflect the phenomenon by highlighting or adding comments in the margins (Vagle, 2010, p. 18). During this read-through I added questions to seek more information on the context (i.e., *who (or what) was she responding to here?*) and observation notes of potential meanings (e.g., *Comment about the benefit of stepping back and thinking. This may relate to her comments in her final assignment about needing to be more reflective as a parent.*). In every phase of analysis I turned to my post-reflexion journal to monitor, examine, and question my thoughts and responses to the data. I used this space to clarify my thoughts and reactions and I was then able to “interrogate how they might influence the analysis” (Vagle, 2010, p. 19).

*Phase 2: All student-generated artifacts.* I began phase two with 13 participants who articulated learning in the final paper that called for further exploration. This second phase took the longest to work through and involved several spiraling returns through steps one and two of Vagle’s (2014a) data analysis protocol. This phase involved moving into level three of data gathering, which meant a return to the archived course sites to pull more student-generated digital artifacts from throughout the course.

With seven of the participants I was confident that the data from the final paper qualified for a full read-through of all remaining data. With the other six participants I was skeptical yet open about the presence of shifting perspectives evidenced in their data. There was clear evidence speaking to meaningful learning and new insights from participation in the class. However, I was not clear on whether or not the experience of shifting one's perspective was present and thoroughly articulated through the data. For these participants I pulled each of the seven (bi-weekly) learning reflection papers rather than committing to a comprehensive read-through of all data. For some, I moved through steps one and two, and for others a holistic read-through was enough to confirm that the data was not rich enough to proceed further.

This is where it became important for me to be clear about whether data was speaking to learning and powerful feedback on the course, or the specific phenomenon under investigation. Throughout the data and in my post-reflexion journal I would ask, "is this learning or is this shifting?" It was difficult to let go of the learning because, as an instructor, I wanted to highlight how valuable each participant found the class. However, I used the post-reflexion journal to remind myself of the purpose of this study and the specific phenomenon under investigation. Here is an excerpt from my journal that reflects this challenge:

**Post-reflexion journal entry – 10.4.14**

I don't want to miss capturing those moments of learning when the person deepened an understanding about something not far off from where they already were. It is a shift but not toward a different perspective. Instead, it is a shift toward a deeper understanding within the same lens or perspective.

Often, it was enough for me to write out my thoughts in order to see the problem, or in this case, to see the biased motivation as an instructor to shed light on and celebrate all learning that was meaningful for participants.

With the remaining seven participants all digital artifacts were gathered and organized in chronological order. I worked through the first two steps of analysis (holistic read-through and first line-by-line) with the data in chronological order, one participant at a time. For example, with the first participant I began with a holistic read-through of the online discussion forum and chat posts, reflection papers, and written assignments as they occurred through the course. Then, I worked through this data line-by-line, highlighting, taking notes and marking segments. I proceeded this way through each artifact, in chronological order, until I worked through all student-generated artifacts from one participant. With this participant I then moved to phase three of the data analysis. At the same time I began working my way through steps one and two of whole-parts-whole analysis with the student-generated artifacts of the next participant. I continued this cycle until I worked through all data for each of the seven participant's student-generated data.

***Phase 3: Categorizing and organizing. Step 3: Question Revision.*** According to Vagle (2014a), I was ready to move to step three of the data analysis protocol: *Follow up questions*. This step involves designing questions to ask participants as a way “to clarify intentional meanings that one predicts...might be important to describe/interpret/respect the phenomenon” (Vagle, 2014a, p. 99). At this point, my primary research question read like any other phenomenological question of lived experience – *What was it like for adult*

*learners to experience a shifting of perspective through a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction?*

I originally sought to analyze the data from online courses (as I have done here) and subsequently interview or seek a lived experience description from my participants to dig more deeply into elements, experiences, and/or moments captured in their online course data. This was and would still be a perfectly valuable phenomenological investigation. However, as I began to sink into the data I became quite fascinated by how this phenomenon of shifting perspectives seemed to show up and evolve over several weeks. I began to see a pattern or journey across the course that often culminated in the final case analysis paper, which I read first. Therefore, I had the final paper in my mind as I read through the rest of the data in chronological order. I consistently found myself asking questions of the data such as, *did she say something about this in her final paper? Or, doesn't she use these exact words in her final paper to describe her own experience? Or, she is now connecting this same concept here and here and here... throughout the course.*

As I naturally gravitated toward illuminating this journey of shifting perspectives I began to experience my own turmoil about what it would mean for my study if I interviewed participants about their experience in these specific moments. I felt pressure to interview because said method is established as a credible data collection technique in phenomenological studies. However, as Vagle (2014a) suggests, rigid procedures may “stultify the creativity necessary to craft high-amplitude phenomenological texts” (p. 98).

A personal communication with M. Vagle (September 18, 2014) provided a pivotal moment in my dissertation journey. I was able to articulate, for the first time, my fear that if I interview participants about their lived experience it would become my data. The interview data would overshadow the online course data, which I thought was fascinating and had a story of its own. M. Vagle agreed and we both had a moment of our own *shifting perspective* where we conceived of investigating lived-through experience in a new way – in a way that examines how a phenomenon *takes shape* rather than is experienced according to *ex post facto* descriptions.

M. Vagle offered a comparative example of the phenomenon of falling in love. One could imagine observing the phenomenon of love taking shape. This would be different, though no less interesting and informative, than asking the person who is living this "falling in love" phenomenon what it is like for him or her. The research question is different, the data is collected differently, and the findings shed light on the phenomenon differently. However, both are examples of possible research endeavors that would be considered phenomenological. Phenomenology is the study of human experience, and in both cases, this goal would be upheld (van Manen, 1990).

Post-intentional phenomenology seeks to investigate and open up the *lived-throughtness* of human experience with a phenomenon. Therefore, a study of how a phenomenon takes shape through multiple and varied contexts seemed a natural fit. Through this conversation my revised primary research question was born to illuminate how the phenomenon of shifting perspectives “takes shape” through the parent-child

interaction course. Here is an excerpt of my post-reflexion journal following this meeting that further illuminates my conception of this phenomenon:

**Post-reflexion journal entry – 9.18.14**

I am interested in what the phenomenon of shifting perspectives looks like, how it plays out, how it takes shape, and how it is manifested through the parent-child interaction course. I am less interested in describing and understanding what the experience felt like or was like for the participants to live through. That could be a worthy investigation; however, I believe the data I have offers an insightful and innovative view into the unfolding of a phenomenon as it was lived. My data captured the phenomenon at work through the context of an online learning environment. Now I am looking back at this data and seeing rich journeys of perspective shifting that occurs over time through this 13-week course. This phenomenon moves through relationships, in class with other peers and the instructor and the self, and outside of class with children, parents, co-workers, strangers, friends, and relatives. The phenomenon also moves through readings, videos, dialogue, and reflection.

Once the primary research question was revised and the use of student-generated artifacts was clarified, I was ready to begin categorizing and organizing the relevant data in ways that helped me begin to elucidate the patterns associated with the phenomenon.

*Step 4: Second line-by-line reading.* This is a vital reading during which all marked text, margin notes, and the researcher's journal are used to articulate meanings of the segmented text. Each piece of data deemed relevant to the phenomenon was copied from the original text and pasted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This data spreadsheet (one for each individual participant) contained all potential parts thought to contribute to the phenomenological text (Vagle, 2014a, p. 99). All pertinent contextual information (background information, peer comment, instructor question, etc.) was carried over into this new document as well.



*Step 5: Third line-by-line reading.* During this read-through of the Excel spreadsheet housing all segmented text for each participant my goal was to articulate my analytic thoughts about each segment (Vagle, 2014a). As Pazurek-Tork (2013) found in her post-intentional investigation of engagement in online learning, my analytic thoughts will begin to articulate the dialogic process of coming to meaning through the research participants' lived-through experience and my own post-intentional relationship with the research. This step involved categorizing each segment of text by the subject about which the shifting perspective seemed to be focused. Naturally there was overlap among these areas, which is discussed further in the findings chapter. However, once I felt satisfied with the topic areas about which the segmented text was referencing, I sorted the data by these categories. Rather than all data residing in one spreadsheet in chronological order, I moved data into separate tabs by topic. Within each tab, data remained in chronological order and distinguished by course activity (discussion, chat, reflection paper, etc). This allowed me to see how one's perspective shifted through the course in each specific subject area and through the elements of the learning environment.

It was in this phase when I ended the analysis process with one more participant. After organizing and categorizing her data in a spreadsheet, the data did not illustrate a clear and compelling story of how shifting perspectives took shape through the course. While she did articulate deep meaningful learning her data did not reflect movement (or shifting) in her way of seeing, knowing, or thinking about course material to qualify as shifting perspectives. I moved into the final phase of analysis with six participants.

*Phase 4: Bring it all together. Step 6: Subsequent readings.* This final phase of data analysis focused on understanding the experience of shifting one's perspective. Vagle (2014a) labels his sixth step "Subsequent readings." While this step is ultimately about "reading across individual participants' data" to identify tentative manifestations, I began this step in a manner I believe reflects the component of reading and writing my way through the data (Vagle, 2014a, p. 99). van Manen (2014) emphasizes writing as analyzing when he says, "Writing is a reflective component of phenomenological method. To write is to reflect; to reflect is to research. And in writing we may deepen and change ourselves in ways we cannot predict" (p.19).

I practiced this process through writing individual reports on each of the six participants, telling each of their stories of how their shifting perspectives took shape for them through the parent-child interaction course. At this point tentative manifestations began to emerge. Throughout this process of writing individual reports, crafting individual stories of shifting one's perspective, I wrote extensively in my post-reflexion journal.

I naturally began to see patterns or threads that seemed to capture dimensions of individual experiences and connected across participants. I had to constantly interrogate these threads in order to respect the nuances of each experience rather than project my "seeing" from one participant to another (Lather, 1993). Here is an excerpt from my post-reflexion journal that illustrates this process:

**Post-reflexion journal entry – 12.11.14**

I think there is something here where I can talk about this range in dissonance. This may be a tentative manifestation in which shifting perspectives may take shape in all cases but the level of dissonance between one's current conceptual schema and the new one may influence the process.

Through subsequent readings across data reports and continued writing that weaves into component #5, I arrived at four tentative manifestations (or dimensions) of the phenomenon. These tentative manifestations are similar to what van Manen (1990) calls *themes*; Dahlberg et al. (2008) calls *patterns of meaning*; and Giorgi (1931/2009) calls *meaning units* and then *invariant structures*. However, the term “tentative manifestations” reflects the dynamic, partial, contextual nature of research findings approached through a post-structural framework (Vagle, 2014a).

These four dimensions of the phenomenon, or ways in which shifting one’s perspective which were manifested through these six participants’ lived-through experiences through the parent-child interaction class include: 1) Moving through multiple contexts and relationships within and outside the course, 2) distancing and taking ownership of one’s perspective, 3) cognitive-affective conflict, and 4) broadening horizons. These dimensions and the nuanced, dynamic ways in which they manifested themselves through each participant’s experience are introduced in the final section of this chapter, and delineated further in the chapters that follow.

**Component #5: Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts.** The fifth and final component of Vagle’s (2014a) research design is focused on crafting a text that captures

the tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts. In phenomenological research, writing is considered an analytic process (Vagle, 2014a; van Manen, 2014). Therefore, the final phase of data analysis (component #4) is woven throughout the crafting process of this final component.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I reiterated the three research questions framing this post-intentional phenomenological investigation of adult learners' lived-through experience of shifting perspectives through a parent-child interaction course. This investigation was guided through six research components developed by Vagle (2014a), three of which became the focus of this chapter. Initially, 18 students who had completed FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction between Fall 2011 and Spring 2014 consented to participate in the study. Through data collection (component #2) and analysis (component #4), along with the parallel process of researcher post-reflexion (component #3), six participants were selected to move through all four phases of data analysis. This whole-parts-whole process of reading and writing my way through the data resulted in four tentative manifestations of the phenomenon. I use the next chapter to delineate these dimensions of the phenomenon in their multiple, partial and varied contexts (component #5) (Vagle, 2014a).

## Chapter Four: Findings

Presented in this chapter are the findings of a post-intentional phenomenological investigation of shifting perspectives through a parent-child interaction course. The proposition “through” within this phenomenon suggests movement and represents the “journey of taking shape” that is the focus of the primary research question. The findings address each research question and are presented in the form of tentative manifestations, or dimensions, of shifting perspectives through the parent-child interaction class. Put simply, I present findings to illustrate how each dimension manifests itself through my participants’ experience of shifting perspectives through a parent-child interaction course. These tentative manifestations include shifting perspectives through: *a) multiple contexts and relationships, b) distancing and taking ownership of one’s perspective and experience, c) experiencing cognitive-affective conflict, and d) broadening one’s horizon.*

This chapter is divided into four main sections. First, I introduce each of the four tentative manifestations. This will serve as a description of how I am conceiving of each dimension of this phenomenon. Second, I briefly re-state the multiple and varied contexts within which my phenomenon is situated (Vagle, 2014a). In this section I review the contexts of shifting perspectives, adult learners, and the parent-child interaction class that serves as the platform through which my participants shift their perspectives. Next, I introduce each of the six participants and their stories of shifting perspectives. A full report of each journey is beyond the scope of this document. Instead, I present an abbreviated overview of each participant’s journey in each area of shifting. The final section encompasses the heart of this chapter as it tells the nuanced, dynamic story of

four tentative manifestations of the phenomenon of shifting perspectives as it takes shape for the six participants through the course.

### **Tentative Manifestations Overview**

The following section introduces the four tentative manifestations, or dimensions, of shifting perspectives.

**Multiple contexts and relationships within and outside the course.** While crafting the *through-ness* of how shifting perspectives took shape through a parent-child interaction course, I found myself “chasing intentionalities and their various possibilities as they take complicated shape in multiple, sometimes competing contexts” (Vagle, 2014a, p. 41). By this, I mean that I followed participants’ lived experiences of processing the perspectives they were shifting through multiple contexts within the course (i.e., discussion, chat, reflection papers, and written assignments), and outside the boundaries of the structured learning environment (including recent events, memories of the past, and anticipations for the future). These contexts involved a relational, dialogic dimension as well (Pazurek-Tork, 2013).

These relationships included other students in the class (as well as the instructor) and relationships outside of the class such as parents, children, parenting partners, and families with whom participants’ already do (or plan to) work. This dimension illuminates the social nature of a phenomenological experience. Vagle (2014a) suggests that individuals do not experience a phenomenon in isolation or in a vacuum, which is manifested here through the dimension of moving through contexts and relationships.

**Distancing toward taking ownership.** Vagle (2014b) describes the tendency to use distancing or “othering” language when we don’t personally identify with whatever (or whomever) we are talking about (or when we don’t want to admit to this personal identification). Use of “othering” language is often associated with examinations of classism, racism, sexism, etc. in schools but I noticed the presence of distancing as I was chasing this phenomenon through multiple contexts and relationships. Distancing language is most commonly signified by the use of third person pronouns such as *he, she, they, those, them*, etc. Another signifier used by participants was in reference to the noun *parents*, as in *parents should...* or *parents want to...*

To take ownership is to acknowledge or confront one’s positionality with the subject about which one is shifting their perspective. When taking ownership pronouns change to first person such as *I, me, we, us, our*, etc. The journey of distancing and taking ownership manifests itself uniquely for each participant. Some participants distance their connection to a subject in one activity (e.g., discussion forum) while taking ownership of their intimate connection with that subject in another (e.g., reflection paper) in the same week. Others consistently use distancing language through the entire course only to take ownership when writing the final paper.

**Cognitive-affective conflict.** Cognitive-affective conflict is manifested through the experience of inner conflict (turmoil, unrest, agitation, or disruption) that may be experienced on a cognitive (thinking, mental processes) and/or affective (emotional, physiological) level. In all cases, there is a level of conflict within oneself between one’s prior beliefs and assumptions (perspective) and an alternative perspective presented by

material, a peer, or the instructor). Variability resides within the degree of intensity experienced at an emotional or physiological level in response to conflicting perspectives. Rather than reflecting a mind-body dualism, the dimension of cognitive-affective conflict depicts the phenomenon of shifting perspectives as an embodied experience (Mearleu-Ponty, 1945/2012). Using a post-structural frame, cognitive-affective conflict is an embodied experience that lives in and through one's self and is permeated by the social world – or relationships within and outside the course (Vagle, 2014a).

**Broadening horizons.** The final dimension of the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective through a parent-child interaction class is a broadening horizon. For all participants this reflects movement from a previously narrow, unquestioned perspective toward a more open viewpoint where perspectives are more complex, dynamic, and reasoned. This shifting reflects the way in which Mezirow (2000) defines adult development (or transformative learning) as a meaning-making process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, and reflective, which generates beliefs and opinions that may prove more true or justified to guide actions. Though all participants' perspectives were stretched and opened in new ways, this experience seemed to manifest itself through two approaches that participants took to examine course material related to their area of shifting perspective. For some, this broadening horizon occurs through a new understanding of bi-directionality in parent-child interaction or in parent educator-parent interaction. For others, this process occurs by challenging conventional norms, or conceptual scripts they held for parent-child relationships or parent educator practice.



*Bi-directionality.* The parent-child interaction course material emphasizes bi-lateral influence between parent and child. This is an expanded view compared to a uni-lateral view focused largely on how parents influence children with limited consideration for children as agentic beings who are capable of individual thought, motivation, and action (Kuczynski, 2003b). Perspectives were also shifted toward a more bi-lateral philosophy of practice in parent education, or parent educator-parent interaction.

*Challenging scripts.* The second way in which broadening horizons were manifested through the parent-child interaction course occurred by challenging one's script. A script can be understood as "a pre-determined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation" (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 41). In the contexts of the parent-child interaction course, participants challenged the scripts they had developed about parenting and parent educator practice. They broadened their horizons by challenging, questioning, and recognizing alternative possibilities for their perspectives. Broadening horizons through expanding one's understanding of bi-directionality or challenging scripts (along with each of the dimensions introduced in this section) are distinctly situated within multiple and varied contexts.

### **Multiple and Varied Contexts**

In this section I revisit contextual features encompassing the research findings (Vagle, 2014a). As described in chapter three, by responding to the question of how this phenomenon "takes shape" I was attempting to illuminate the manner in which shifting perspective unfolds, evolves, or manifests itself as it was lived and captured through the online learning environment. The phenomenon of shifting perspectives is one that

embraces adult learning as a transformative process during which we bring our prior knowledge as a working framework to bear on a new learning environment (Mezirow, 2000). Often simple, direct learning may allow new information to be added to existing knowledge in an automatic, unconscious process (Guberman & Greenfield, 1991). For example, this is an excerpt from Kristen's module one reflection paper in which she is discussing her learning from online chat earlier that evening. She says, "*we used the word 'flexible' in chat tonight and it really made sense to me. For good parent child interaction to take place parents and children need to be flexible in their interactions with each other*" (K-M1R-2). Here, Kristen seamlessly assimilates new information to her prior knowledge because it made sense to her; it did not disrupt her prior knowledge but rather enhanced her current belief system about parenting (Vasniado, 2013).

To count as a shifting perspective for this study, I noticed that participants' beliefs, assumptions, and practices experienced some movement, some wobble, some shifting. This may have come in the form of questioning or challenging one's existing knowledge with movement toward a new way of thinking or acting (even if the change is not fully formed through the course). In other cases, there was a completely new perspective added to one's knowledge where there wasn't already a framework to support this (Strike & Posner, 1985). These examples will be developed through the presentation of my findings.

The other important contexts of this research question that are important to revisit are that my students were adult learners and I was investigating this phenomenon through a specific graduate-level course on parent-child interaction. As adult learners, my

participants held extensive personal experience and already established perspectives on parent-child interaction that they brought with them to their learning in this course.

Therefore, there were opportunities to shift the perspectives they already held (Strike & Posner, 1985). As adults they were also capable of critically examining their perspective and experiences in response to course material (Mezirow, 2000).

The learning environment through which participants shifted their perspectives is graduate-level course on parent-child interaction. This class covered a number of specific concepts such as agency, parenting styles, and overindulgence. Additionally, this class was uniquely designed to prepare parent and family educators or other family professionals. Therefore, students were asked to draw professional implications as they processed concepts related to parent-child interaction. The specific concepts, topics, or subjects about which participants shift perspectives are delineated throughout this chapter.

The design of this learning environment is another important consideration. Instructors employ a social-constructivist pedagogy positing that learning is made more powerful and meaningful when learners are in charge of and able to make sense of new knowledge in their own way (Thomas et al., 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, direct instruction in the form of lectures was limited, and no tests or other demonstrations of rote memorization were required. Instead, learners were encouraged to explore their thoughts, questions and insights through dialogue with each other (and the instructor) as well as personal reflection and application to relevant life experiences (Walker et al., 2010).

The following four dimensions of how shifting perspectives take shape truly holds up to Vagle's (2014a) definition of tentative manifestations. Although there are four dimensions to discuss, my participants' experiences or journeys through this phenomenon include all dimensions in such a way that discussing them separately would dampen the power of each of their stories and would not adequately represent the phenomenon of shifting perspectives. Therefore, I have crafted this presentation of findings in a way that highlights one dimension through a particular journey of shifting perspectives while also acknowledging the other existing dimensions. Under each heading – representing each of the four tentative manifestations – I discuss the experience of one or two participants' experiences of shifting perspectives.

### **Participant Introductions**

In this section I introduce the six participants who experienced unique journeys of shifting perspective that, when taken together, tell a story of how shifting one's perspective takes shape through a parent-child interaction course. Each participant is introduced in alphabetical order by her study pseudonym. Each participant shifted their perspective around a different number of topics (ranging from one to five) for a total of 14 overlapping experiences (10 non-duplicated topics). Half of these topics are related to specific concepts discussed in class around parent-child interaction topics (i.e., agency, balance of autonomy and structure, goal-compatibility, overindulgence, and parenting roles and styles).

The other five subject areas relate to professional practice in parent education, which was deliberately challenged in this course in terms of the inadequacies of

traditional approaches to teaching. Unsurprisingly then, these five subject areas include moving beyond information-giving, the role of the parent educator, seeking answers, respecting multiple perspectives, and promoting parent growth and development. How participants shifted their perspectives about these subject areas is far more complicated and overlapping than two distinct categories regarding parent-child interaction concepts and parent educator practice. In this chapter, each topic area is explicated as they show themselves through participants' experiences.

**Brianna.** Brianna is a married mother of two who was working with families in a one-on-one, home visiting, setting. This course was taken during Brianna's first semester in her family education graduate program. Brianna shifts her perspective in two main areas through the parent-child interaction course. This shifting relates to herself as a parent, a child, and a parent educator.

*Promoting children's agency.* One area in which Brianna shifted her perspective is regarding promoting children's agency. Agency is a key concept introduced in module one woven throughout the course, and emphasized during modules 09 through 11. The concept of agency can be related to nearly all topic areas about which participants shifted their perspective. However, this concept took center stage for Brianna (and Laura) as they examined ways to promote children's agency as a parent and how agency influences the parent-child relationship (respectively). Immediately the concept of children's agency stood out to Brianna. It is clear that she had not considered this concept in terms of her parenting before. However, the assimilation of this concept into her current frame of

reference seems to have been fairly smooth. This is a new perspective but it made sense to her immediately, as evidenced in module 01 online discussion:

There were a lot of concepts that stood out to me in this chapter because this is my first class in this program. There were a lot of "big" words that were used to describe what I experience and see every day as a parent and interacting with other parents. I think that agency construction was a concept that stood out to me the most. I know that we all learn from our experiences, so it is important as a parent to make those experiences meaningful and help my children understand those interactions with me and make them meaningful. So, now I will be more intentional and ask myself, "Have they made healthy meanings from this interaction that just took place? What did I learn from this interaction?" Every interaction we have with our children makes an impression on them. (B-M1D-1)

Module nine is the next time that the concept of agency takes center stage in the class even though agency may be applied throughout the entire course – as seen in Laura’s journey. Brianna shares a story in her module nine reflection paper about how she had a “light bulb moment” during her parenting. She had an epiphany as others discuss where she was able to step back and connect this moment to her learning in the course and then to step back into that parenting moment enacting her new perspective on promoting agency in children:

This module's topic has made me be more conscientious with my own interactions with my children. My 8 year old son's teacher has been concerned with his penmanship. So, we sat down at the table and I said that he needs to practice more at home. I told him that he needs to rewrite some sentences from school work that was sent home. Needless to say, that did not work well. He said OK at first, but when he started to write, he just shut down and didn't want to do it. The light bulb went off in my head and I stepped back and realized that he felt no power during this interaction. Then, I explained why he needed to practice and I asked him to come up with some ideas on how to practice. He came up with some great ideas and finally chose to write letters to family members. I was so proud of him. He has started one letter and is doing great. Since starting this class, I have been more conscientious of my interactions with my own children and the families that I work with. There is so much more than just communicating during an interaction. (B-M9R-1)

During the final chat, Brianna shares with a peer a new goal she has as a parent based on her learning in this course. Here, she is validating her new perspective on promoting children's agency, which emphasizes *bi-directionality* – considering a balance of agency between parent and child (Mezirow, 2000): *My new goal as a parent is to be more aware of achieving equal agency (B-M13C-1)*. In her final assignment three – case analysis integration paper – Brianna reiterates the newness of this concept of agency and continues to connect this to her parenting in terms of bi-directionality:

I never thought about power and equal agency as I interacted with my children before. However, I find myself, now, thinking about agency and whether or not it is equal in my interactions with my children. When I know that I need to talk to one of my sons for whatever reason, I am more aware of making sure that equal agency is happening. (B-A3-3)

***Parental growth and development.*** Brianna also shifted her perspective in the area of parental growth and change. This was a multi-dimensional shifting that involved her desire to understand how she and the parents' with whom she works can make changes that help them become better parents:

When analyzing the film clips, I thought about some of the families that I work with every week. I didn't know the terms agency, communion, and bidirectional in the context of parent/child interactions. I found myself analyzing my family and the families that I work with and placing them in Wiggins quadrant. Now, I would like to know more about how we can move throughout the quadrant and become better parents. (B-M1R-1)

The film clips to which she is referring are from the movie *Dead Poet's Society* (Haft, Witt, Thomas & Weir, 1989) and a TV series *Once and Again* (Herskovitz, 1999).

Sections from these videos are used to stimulate conversation (in online chat) regarding the concepts of agency and communion in parent-child interactions. The Wiggins quadrant is a visual depiction of the relationship between balance of agency (ranging

from power and mastery to passivity and submission) and communion (ranging from communion and intimacy to dissociation and hostility (Wiggins, 1991).

Throughout this shifting perspective Brianna reveals a deep desire for parents with whom she works to experience change. She also grows in her understanding of how to promote this as an educator. In module three we discuss the concept of parent-child attachment, or the motivational system of an infant to seek proximity to his or her primary caregiver (Siegel, 1999). Students study a number of written scenarios that describe three main types of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-resistant (or anxious). In this reflection paper Brianna discusses wanting to learn more about this concept as well as how to help parents with whom she works to relate this concept to their own parent-child relationships:

In the past few years since I have been doing home visiting, I have seen many children who have major attachment issues. I knew about attachment and the importance of a secure attachment, but I didn't put that knowledge to use because I didn't know how. I still don't know how, because I am new to this program, but I am hoping to figure out a way to help the parents that I work with. In the past week, I have thought about the families that I work with and try to figure what kind of attachment their children have with them. This module has put a new perspective on understanding behaviors in children and how much a secure attachment plays a role in their development. I wish there was a quick fix for insecure attachments, but that is asking too much I suppose. I hope that I will learn more about attachment and parent/child interactions and what I can do to help them. (B-M3R-1)

By module 11, Brianna appears to have a clear idea of how to go about promoting change in the parents with whom she works:

As a professional, I have to start by gaining a positive relationship with the parents and learn about their parenting history. I need to ask questions that will get parents to think about themselves as parents and where they want to be. (B-M11R-1)



The notion of promoting change through parent education was introduced in module 10, through a learning experience that proved powerful for nearly all participants. Primarily this involved watching a video interview with Ruth Thomas (Cooke & Thomas, 2008), the creator of RDPED, who spoke about the difficulty of changing one's parenting behavior due to parenting scripts learned in childhood (Schank & Abelson, 1977). She also spoke about conditions that promote conceptual change (which is part of the framework applied to this research) among other things, which will be discussed through participants' experiences.

Paired with this video was an opportunity to experience how RDPED uses contrasting video scenes to stimulate dialogue. In this case, the topic was goal-compatibility and the videos were of a mother-son and mother-daughter dyad playing with an animal puzzle. Through the peer dialogue around these videos, learners are able to experience some of the conditions for conceptual change (e.g., exposure to multiple perspectives), which will be discussed in more detail through this chapter. As it relates to Brianna's experience, she recognizes the value of establishing a trusting relationship and posing thought-provoking questions to help parents self-reflect as she is doing throughout this class.

Brianna also reflects on her own areas for growth and change as a parent through the topics of parenting adolescents and goal-compatibility. In module seven we discussed parent-adolescent interactions. Among other factors that may influence interaction during this phase of the parent-child relationship, one factor we discuss is the contrast of the burgeoning, youthful adolescent development and the often mid-life stage of parent

development. Brianna had another “light-bulb” moment when reflecting on her own parents’ experiences when she was an adolescent. This module helped Brianna understand her parents’ lived experience in a new way. She also shifted toward a more confident perspective on parenting her own children as they become adolescents and working with parents to prepare for their parent-adolescent relationships.

Brianna ends the class with a more confident perspective on her ability to grow as a parent and her capacity to support parental growth with the parents in her work as a home visitor:

Learning about parent-child interactions more in-depth has made me want to change and grow as a parent. Thomas (1996) stated that in order for conceptual change we have to be open to other perspectives, aware of other perspectives, aware of our own perspective, have inner conflict with emotional involvement, a desire to change, and working through to make the change (pg. 193). I am more aware of my own perspectives on parenting as I gained experience as a parent and as a professional. (B-A3-10)

**Hannah.** Hannah is halfway through her coursework in the family education program. She is single and does not have children of her own, though she currently works with school-aged children. Hannah also shifted her perspective in two interrelated ways that, for her, connect to her relationship with her parents as a child and now as an adult, as well her vision of herself as a future parent and parent educator. Both her philosophy of practice and perspective of parenting roles and styles are shifted as she challenges her previous scripts of a “normal” family and the role of the parent educator in helping others reflect on their own family of origin.

*Philosophy of practice.* Hannah experiences a shifting of perspective through the simultaneous contrast of developing a lesson plan, reflecting on this plan, and viewing

the interview with Ruth Thomas about promoting parent development through parent education (Cooke & Thomas, 2008). In the interview, Thomas mentions six conditions for conceptual change, something Hannah was reading about, experiencing, and discussing explicitly during module 10 (See p.12 for conditions). The assignment two lesson plan was developed sometime between modules seven and eight. Students then went through a peer review process. Students were required to submit their original plan along with a reflection paper focused on what they learned and how they might change or improve their lesson based on this learning. The reflection paper was due in Module 10.

In her lesson plan, Hannah includes an objective that supports parents in *“reflecting on their family of origin in order to make changes to their parenting as needed”* (H-A2L-3). However, she later recognizes that she did not create adequate space for reflection. This, she connects to her previous script of *“what the role of an educator looks like:”*

An area that I realized I failed to address was the reflective element of the lesson. I almost wish I would have been able to watch the Ruth Thomas interview before approaching this assignment, because her words really resonated with me. As I was watching this interview I realized that my own learning experiences have influenced my understanding of what the role of an educator looks like (the teacher bestowing knowledge onto the student). I noticed my lesson plans tended to take on that framework and more importantly did not allow for an opportunity for parents to consider their own upbringing and how that may have shaped or influenced their parenting practices. I think it is so powerful what Ruth said about encouraging parents to see with their mind, not just with their eyes. I realized this lesson was not very conducive to encouraging parents to see with their mind and to consider how these new insights align with or challenge their prior experiences and notions (H-A2R-7)

Hannah’s expressed preference for watching the interview with Ruth Thomas before developing her lesson is not an uncommon reaction (Cooke & Thomas, 2008). In

fact, another participant (Megan) shares the same sentiment. It is important to note here that this is an intentional instructional design decision. Developing a lesson plan based on one's natural inclination (which is as Hannah initially recognized – the teacher bestowing knowledge onto the learner) serves as a contrast to the message by Ruth Thomas, thereby highlighting the differences more powerfully and creating some possible dissatisfaction with or wobble around their previous approach to and philosophy of teaching and learning (Gregoire, 2003). This is also discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

Through module 10, Hannah engages in dialogue with her peers during discussion and chat about challenging her script of an educator:

This is why I am so excited to gain field experience through student teaching, because hopefully this will help me see new ways of educating others that are new to and challenge to my subconscious "script" of the educator as one that bestows knowledge onto the learner. I also like that Ruth acknowledged that we all have something to teach to and learn from others, and that parents contribute to the learning. (H-DM10-6)

And moving toward an approach during which she can encourage parents to reflect on their family of origin: *This [Ruth Thomas] interview really showed me how important it is for parents to understand and reflect upon their own experiences growing up, and how that has formed or contributed to the parent that they are today (H-CM10-2)*. Hannah's response to this question reflects her understanding of these scripts and the importance of helping parents reflect on their past through parent education.

In the next reflection paper opportunity following the Ruth Thomas interview in module 10, Hannah speaks directly and profoundly regarding her shifting perspective related to the role of parent education in helping parents reflect on their past and become more self-aware. She challenges her previous assumptions about those topics of the past

not being appropriate to discuss in parent education. She then validates her new perspective by discussing the importance of reflecting on and understanding one's past in order to understand present parenting actions. Finally, Hannah makes a statement of intention for new action regarding her role as a future parent educator being one that challenges parents to consider how their own childhood influences current parenting practices:

How can I as a future parent educator or professional working with parents in some role go beyond simply giving information and teaching skills to help parents become more self-aware, thoughtful, and reflective about their parenting? The Ruth Thomas video opened my eyes to some assumptions I had regarding the appropriateness of our own personal stories and narratives in parent education groups. Up until last week's module, I tended to think that discussing the details and experiences of one's past and childhood was more appropriate for one-on-one and therapy settings. I suppose I assumingly associated therapy with "dealing with the past", and parent education as "dealing with the present and future." The insight shared by Ruth Thomas in the video really challenged my thinking and made me realize that having an awareness of our past experiences is necessary in understanding our subconscious, present-day parental tendencies. Much of how we approach the parenting role is inherited - it takes a deep understanding of why we are prone to certain actions and behaviors to be able to recognize and be conscious of those tendencies in the moment, and demonstrate the cognitive ability to adapt in order to produce a more desirable outcome. As a future parent educator, I intend on challenging my parent participants to consider the impact of their own childhood experiences on their current parenting practices. (H-RM11-2)

Hannah also reflects on a new awareness of the role of parent education in exposing parents to diverse perspectives on parenting and family life. This realization may relate to her shifting perspective on the role of parent education as well as her own childhood. Hannah speaks in her final paper (H-A3-2; 3; 4) about how she viewed her family as "normal" prior to viewing this interview and was then guided to examine things more deeply in her case analysis paper. This excerpt however focuses solely on her

practice as a parent educator and again she makes a statement of intention for new action regarding her plan to expose parents to diverse perspectives on family:

The Ruth Thomas video also opened my eyes to how unknowing and isolated many of us are when it comes to exposure to outside familial structures. Because we are all members of a family, and have been since birth – we are inclined to believe that the way our family lives is the primary and preferred way other families live. As a future parent educator, I intend on exposing my parent participants to varied approaches and perspectives that will broaden their minds and paint a new picture of what a family “looks like.” (H-RM11-3)

***Parenting roles and styles.*** Hannah also experiences a shifting of perspectives around gender stereotyped parenting roles and styles. This occurs through her processing of her own childhood – her parents’ gender stereotyped roles and the connection between these roles and parenting styles (authoritative versus authoritarian). She also recognizes and reflects on how she learned scripts of parenting in her own childhood.

From modules two through five, Hannah engages in extensive dialogue with her peers about socially constructed gendered parenting roles (mother as primary caregiver, father as bread-winner) that lead to a father being “*more absent from the child rearing process*” (H-M2C-1b). She also sees how the mother may influence father involvement, which we discuss in module three. Finally, Hannah connects these traditional roles to associated parenting styles, with the father being authoritarian and the mother being more authoritative. *Authoritarian* is considered more demanding and lower in responsiveness and *authoritative* is associated with a balance of warmth and structure (Baumrind, 1978). In addition to these common styles, Baumrind (1978) labels *permissive* (or indulgent) as involving limited structure with high degrees of freedom and *indifferent* (or neglectful) as neither demanding nor responsive.

Through all of this discussion she does not identify her personal connection to this material until she analyzes the movie *Everybody's Fine* (Gori & Jones, 2009) for assignment two, which was submitted in module five. Even then, the assignment is shared only with the instructor and the connection is brief. Through this assignment and nearly every remaining module, Hannah continues to discuss gendered parenting roles and styles objectively but in ways that directly mirror her personal experience. It is only during a module eight discussion on the topic of ambivalence (or contradicting emotions or attitudes) that she suggests being able to personally relate to the mixed feelings that traditional (and very distinct) gendered parenting roles may cause (Pillemer & Luscher, 2004). She provides further detail about this personal connection in module 13 when asked to share part of her final paper in online discussion:

I feel that one unique perspective I have from my childhood that I discuss in my case analysis integration paper is experiencing the effect of very gendered parent roles and differing parenting styles and the effect on the parent-child relationship into adulthood. Growing up my parents themselves assumed very traditional roles in the household (mother as the caretaker/home maker, and my father as the breadwinner and disciplinarian). My mother took on an authoritative parenting style, while my father – a more militant man, took on an authoritarian style.

Throughout my life, this dynamic and difference in each of my parents' individual parenting styles as resulted in my mother taking on a more expressive role – I call her just to “chat” or for emotional support, while my father serves as more of an instrumental role – I call him with career advice and how to “fix” something. (H-DM13-3)

Hannah's final paper is a deep and thorough examination of her own relationship with her parents during her childhood and how their roles and styles (particularly her father) have influenced her current relationship with them. She also connects this to her development and draws implications for her future family. What is fascinating is that

despite discussing these subjects across the entire course, Hannah mentions “*finding herself very stuck*” when she began this final written assignment because she felt that her childhood was “*quite normal*” (H-A3-2). However, she draws on her learning in module 10, from watching the Ruth Thomas interview about how the experiences we acquire during childhood are familiar and therefore may be perceived as “normal” (Cooke & Thomas, 2008). She is then able to critically examine her family of origin through a new lens that leads her to new insights as she describes here:

It wasn't until I broke down the parental pair and considered and compared each separate and individual relationship I have with both my mother and father, that I realized that I wasn't too sure that this social convention and my understanding of what is “normal” is necessarily the optimal outcome for children, nor was my “normal” experience necessarily what I would want for my own children – there are some aspects that I would change. (H-A3-4)

Throughout this findings chapter, Hannah's experiences will be connected to her transition to taking ownership of her experiences and her efforts to challenge scripts about the role of the parent educator and her family of origin – all while moving through multiple contexts and relationships within, and outside of the course.

**Kristen.** Kristen is taking this course near the end of her family education program. She is married, has three children, and currently works as a parent educator. Kristen shifted her perspective in two areas, both of which related heavily to herself as a mother with a degree of professional application. These areas include the topic of overindulgence and goal-compatibility in parent-child interaction.

***Overindulgence.*** The most striking shift for Kristen centered on the topic of overindulgence, which was introduced in module six as we explored the parent-child relationship with school-aged children. The concept of overindulgence has to do with the



obvious form of giving too much, but it is also related to not providing enough structure - being too soft, and over-nurturing – doing things for children that they are capable of doing for themselves (Clarke, Dawson & Bredehoft, 2014). Kristen immediately gravitated toward the latter.

When reading through her data, I was first exposed to the idea of distancing. Vagle (2014b) discusses ways in which we distance “other” our language when we don’t personally identify with a person, group or idea. He was speaking about this in relation to classism, racism, sexism, etc. in schools though I immediately noticed the presence of distancing in Kristen’s data (and later discovered this as a common practice among my participants).

Kristen writes about over-nurture and its consequences in terms of children developing learned helplessness and how this practice works against a parent’s efforts and goals to raise responsible, self-regulating children. She finds this material “eye-opening” (K-RM7-2) but only writes about this in a distancing manner “*parents think they are doing a good thing for their child but the consequences can be huge*” (K-M6C-3a). She even purchased a book, attended a professional workshop, and taught a lesson in her parent education class on overindulgence between weeks 06 and 09.

Not until module nine does Kristen publically identify with over-nurture as a parent, revealing in online discussion “*I have often found myself doing things for my children that they need and should be doing themselves*” (K-DM9-4). In Kristen’s reflection paper that week, she shared a story of how this material about learned helplessness (concept presented in module nine) and overindulgence (her own

connection) “*really hit home*” when she found herself getting up and making toast upon request for her 10-year-old boy. In that moment, she “*stopped and thought, ‘what am I doing?’*” In that moment, Kristen shifted gears and helped her son make his own toast. This was “*an eye-opening experience*” (K-DM-4) for Kristen that sticks with her as she continues to process her parenting beliefs and practices related to over-nurture through the remaining weeks.

In module 13 she reveals some “*inner struggle*” (K-DM13-1) with this topic because she wants her children “*to be independent*” (K-DM13-1) but she also views her role as a mom “*to take care of my children*” (K-DM13-2). This cognitive-affective conflict (or mental and emotional turmoil) is prevalent through her final case analysis paper and she concludes with an acknowledgement that she “*can see how I need to step back and allow my children to be more [sic] independent in some areas of their life*” (K-A3-7K). As is clear, this area of shifting perspectives for Kristen connects to all tentative manifestations of this phenomenon.

***Goal-compatibility in parent-child interaction.*** During module 10, Kristen experienced another area of shifting perspective related to goal-compatibility in parent-child interactions and allowing children to take the lead. During online discussion that week, students view a contrast set of parent-child interaction that is part of the RDPED – as discussed in Brianna’s experience of promoting parenting growth and change. In these videos, a mother and child play with an animal puzzle. In both scenes, mother and child display a loving relationship. However, nuanced differences reflect parent-direct (scene

one) versus child-directed (scene two) play. Additionally, the compatibility between parent and child goals is greater in scene two than scene one.

During the first part of the discussion, the class was split into two groups with half discussing scene one (Kristen's group) and the other half focused on scene two. Later, the whole group comes together to discuss and reflect on what they learned through this exercise. This learning experience plays a distinct role in the development of this study as the reactions and insights that occur during this particular online discussion are fascinating as they draw multiple perspectives and challenge students to see in new ways. This module plays a significant role in five of six participants' experiences of shifting perspectives, though for most of them this relates to parent educator practice.

In course discussion regarding the contrasting videos, students are asked to examine parent and child actions, goals and feelings, consider the compatibility of these and then draw implications for this in the long-term parent-child relationship. Students are not provided any frame of reference from which to interpret the video scenes aside from a reading on goal-compatibility suggesting that when parent and child goals are compatible, perceptions emotions and behavior "tend to be mutually supportive and cooperative" (Dix & Branca, 2003, p. 169).

Kristen's initial assessment of the first scene is overwhelmingly positive. She even reports that "*the mother seemed to be in tune with her son and was letting him take the lead*" (K-DM10-1) by allowing the son to decide which animal to name next. Her original views were validated by some peers and differed from others. The instructor also offered a few insights as a way to interject alternative perspectives when the group view

was largely homogenous (Thomas et al., 2005). Initially, Kristen appreciated these different ideas but continued to applaud the mother for taking “*advantage of a teachable moment*” (K-DM10-5).

One of her peers then made a comment about how the son may have felt a little frustrated because his mother seemed to be more focused on teaching than playing. This seemed to trigger an awareness in Kristen about parents feeling pressure to “*make each interaction educational*” (K-DM10-6). Kristen proceeds to reflect on, critically examine, and challenge this notion through modules 10 and 11, as well as in her final case analysis paper. She comes to recognize that she learned the script of this education-oriented way of interacting during her own childhood through interactions with her parents; both teachers. She is now a teacher herself and sees how she is “*always teaching*” (K-DM10-7). She identifies this online discussion as “*one of the biggest learning moments*” (K-A3-8a) of this class. She came to a new realization and goal to “*sometimes as parents we need to step back and allow the child to take the lead*” (K-A3-9e).

**Laura.** Laura is in her third semester of her family education program. She works with young children, is single, and does not have children. Laura shifts her perspective in one major area, and like Brianna, it is related to agency in the parent-child relationship. For Laura, though, she uses this opportunity to examine her agency as a child and then young adult and how this influenced her relationship with her mother. She also comes to a better understanding of her mother’s experience as a young mom who lost her own mother shortly after giving birth, with whom she was quite close.

As an early childhood educator, Laura was already familiar with the concept of agency before it was introduced in module 01. However, she admits to being “*challenged by this week’s exercises*” (L-M1R-1a). She also recognizes from the first week that she is “*on a journey to gaining a deeper understanding and more holistic view on agency*” (L-M1R-1b). Like Hannah, Laura discusses her area of shifting – child and parent agency, and the bi-directional influence of individual agency on the relationship – in nearly every module throughout the course in ways that parallel her personal experience. For example, during online discussion in module five, in response to a peer’s questions about what happens when a parent doesn’t support a child’s expression of agency, Laura says:

[Peer]- such interesting thoughts! My gut is telling me that it's complicated [smile emoji]. I think at some point it is up to the child to exert his/her agency and use the tools that the parents put in place for them. However, I think personality and psyche play a huge role in this on both the parent and child sides. When there are so many factors involved, I think it takes time to tease it apart...I love your food for thought questions though! What are your thoughts or anyone else's? (L-M13D-3)

In her final paper Laura examines her personal journey from a child whose “*opportunities to exercise agency were limited*” (L-A3-8) to a discovery of her agency while away at college:

‘Leaving the nest,’ so to speak, forced me to discover my sense of self. I had to take control of my situations and go get what I wanted because my mom wasn’t there to hold my hand through the whole process. (L-A3-11).

This led to high conflict in her relationship with her mother when she returned from college and “*forced opportunities for her to express her newfound agency*” (L-A3-12).

Through this presentation of findings, I will continue to examine how Laura distanced her shifting perspective and how she comes to insightful understandings of bi-directionality in parent-child interactions.

**Megan.** Megan is just beginning her family education program, and does not currently work in the field. She is married and has two children. What is interesting about Megan's journey is that she often talks about how she likes things "*straight and narrow*" and children are "*curvy and twisty*" (M-M2D-1). This is ironic, as her shifting perspectives are the epitome of "curvy and twisty". There were numerous areas of shifting for Megan throughout this course that seem to relate to, overlap with, and contribute to each other. Megan struggles with finding a balance between supporting children's autonomy (independence) and maintaining structure (limits); seeking answers or best practices for parenting (largely related to balance of autonomy and structure) and to be a "good" parent educator. As she questions her need to know the "right" way, Megan is challenged to consider the inadequacies of parent education practice focused on providing parents with pertinent information. Therefore, she also experiences a shifting of perspective around moving beyond information-giving, which is shared with Stacy as well. Seeking to "*crack the code*" on parenting while being confronted with multiple perspectives was another "*eye-opening*" layer of experience for her. All of this seemed to bring out her low self-efficacy, or low sense of confidence in her ability to be effective, that lead her to reflect on her childhood and her own parenting in terms of parent-child attachment, levels of parental awareness and children's agency (in addition to the

aforementioned area of balancing autonomy & structure). Each of these concepts will be detailed further throughout the presentation of findings.

These subjects of shifting perspectives blended and connected across every module and every learning platform. Throughout, there was a great deal of cognitive-affective conflict as her perspective was challenged and she was exposed to other ways of thinking and acting (as both a parent and parent educator). Megan's self-awareness and ability to critically examine her perspective was very high, however her low self-efficacy often stood in the way of moving from awareness toward change as is depicted in this series of statements from Megan's data.

Across two modules (10 and 11), as Megan experiences the same learning activity described in Kristen's journey, she is finding that the experience is "*blowing me away*" (M-M10D-15) and she "*appreciates hearing the other opinions about the scene which have opened her eyes to other possibilities*" (M-M10D-6). This appreciation, however, is immediately followed by a question for the instructor: "*could [you] give us your opinion of what's happening here?*" (M-M10D-7) This, of course, is the opposite of the purpose of this activity. She recognizes this pattern that she "*wants to know what 'really' happened in the two scenes*" and that this may mean she is "*stuck on the conventional level of parenting.*" She questions where her "*need to know*" comes from as she has a "*huge desire to help her kids grow up to be happy and health*" (unlike her own childhood). She concludes this discussion post by stating "*I know we can't be perfect, but I still want to do it 'right' for my kids' sake*" (M-M10D-10).

The following two online chat posts regarding her experience during module 10 discussion seem to reflect shifting perspectives around her philosophy and practice of parent education that is steeped in cognitive-affective conflict related to her low self-efficacy and desire to determine best practice (seeking answers):

*[Instructor]: How does this, and anything else covered in the interview, challenge your beliefs and perspectives on your role as a parent educator?*

*[Megan]: It challenges many of my beliefs to the point of now not being sure I fully understand what I am to do when leading a class... (M-M10C-9a)*

*[Megan]: I'm still stuck on best practices - is that no longer important (if it is done in a nonjudgemental [sic] and kind way?) (M-M10C-9b)*

Megan's data depicts my purpose for selecting the phenomenon of "shifting perspectives." As discussed in chapter one, I intentionally opened up notions of "change" and "transformation" in order to allow for growth, learning, change, and transformation to be "curvy and twisty." I wanted to capture the journey as it was happening rather than report on change that has *successfully* occurred. I wanted to open up the context of this change to give it permission to move *through* this parent-child interaction course rather than be contained within it (Vagle, 2014a).

I do not have concrete evidence of Megan's perspective being transformed. However, I do have evidence of her perspective being considerably shaken. Megan was working through some deeply rooted beliefs that stem from her childhood which relate to the value of parent education. It would be unrealistic and unfair of me to discount the movement that occurred through this class just because I couldn't wrap it up with a nice, neat bow in the end or to say that the class was a success because she has changed. Instead, in this research I choose to honor the complex, interconnected, in-process nature



of Megan's personal journey of development as a person, adult child, parent, and future parent educator. I believe this serves as the ultimate model for how I hope she is able to one day embrace and support the curvy and twisty journey of her children's growth and the parents' with whom she works, and ultimately her own growth as well.

**Post-reflexion moment: Reading through Megan's data**

There were many moments while working through this data when I just wanted to reach into the computer and shake Megan. I desperately wanted to tell her, "*Megan, give yourself some credit! Don't you see how much you already know? Why must you constantly seek validation after every insightful comment you make? Why must you allow that cloud of self-doubt to cover every glimmer of confidence? You are a good mom, and you are smart, and you are wise, and the only thing getting in the way is your own fear.*"

I vented a lot about Megan in my post-reflexion journal. On numerous occasions I wasn't sure if I could go through with her as a participant because of my own emotional (and visceral) response to her spinning, questioning journey. I am grateful in the end that her perspective shifting was undeniable because she reminded me that change is hard. She reminded me that 'wisdom can't be told' (Gragg, 1940). And I am grateful for these reminders because as an educator who plays a miniscule part of someone's journey through life, I can and will do my best to create an environment that sparks thought, that creates wonder and wobble, and that honors exploration. The rest, though, is up to the individual on their journey. Sometimes I will see change clearly, and other times I will see only wobble. But to be a part of that journey, I am forever grateful.

**Stacy.** With Stacy, it is important to consider her context as a learner. Stacy is an undergraduate Child Psychology major who took this class as an elective. She is recently married and she reveals that she is pregnant only to her instructor in her final case analysis paper. Throughout this course, Stacy shifts her perspective related to gendered parenting roles (similar to Hannah), as well as moving beyond information-giving and

recognizing the value of multiple perspectives on parenting (both of which are shared by Megan).

**Gendered parenting roles.** During module four, Stacy is introduced to the notion of mother as gatekeeper of a father-child relationship, which was something she “*never had thought of before*” (S-M4D-3). She also examines the many benefits of father involvement in this module which, as she reveals in her module five reflection paper, was not the view of fathers she was exposed to in her other classes:

Throughout these past two weeks, what has struck me the most on a personal level would be learning about mother's perspectives on fathers and the information gained from the video “To Be a Father.” I found this fascinating and really intriguing. In past child psychology classes, we've talked a lot about outcomes of children from single parent households with single mothers and the effects that happen as a result. We would talk a lot about how these children are more likely to become teen parents and go to jail, but what wasn't mentioned was the less spoken of positive effects that happen as the result of a father being present and engaged. It was really interesting to go more in depth on this (S-M5R-1).

This topic of mother as gatekeeper to father involvement stuck with her as she applied these concepts in her movie analysis paper to the film *Mrs. Doubtfire* (Radcliffe, Williams, Williams & Columbus, 1993) and her assignment two professional practice plan, which she titled “Understanding the role of the father” (S-A2L-1), within which she addresses “Maternal Gatekeeping/Mother’s Perspectives on Fathers” (S-A2L-2). She also uses much of her final case analysis paper to reflect on how her new perspective will allow her to recognize gatekeeping in herself, which she wants to avoid because she now also understands the value of father involvement.

**Beyond information-giving.** Throughout the course, Stacy makes her perspective on education pretty clear when she says, “knowledge is power” (S-M6D-1) and talks

about “*arming mothers with information.*” (S-A2L-3). Then, reflecting on the interview in module 10 with Ruth Thomas (Cooke & Thomas, 2008), Stacy says “*I’ve heard that people tend to become their experiences and parent like their parents did but I never realized that arming them with information isn’t enough to produce change*” (S-M10D-5). She continues to examine this new perspective in the next reflection paper during module 11. She was “*surprised to learn that you can give someone information about something, and they may remember it, but that doesn’t mean they will use the information to their benefit*” (S-M11R-1). Without background in parent education, Stacy is able to articulate how she would move beyond information giving:

I think it would be important to hear parents reflections on their parenting and how they were parented, then how they don't want to parent along with how they want to parent. When parents are able to reflect and see the different ways things can be done – they can begin to realize consciously that there are different perspectives and that having an open mind is ideal. From here, the conversation can progress, the parent can become aware of their perspective- which is key to changing it if they are unhappy with it and experience inner-conflict. Through going through processes like this, the parents won't be simply receiving information- they will become more self-aware, thoughtful and reflective about their parenting. (S-M11R-2).

**Multiple perspectives.** While Stacy makes a couple of comments related to multiple perspectives earlier in the course, it is her experience in module 13 that triggers her shifting in this area. For discussion, the class views a video of three parent-child interaction scenes that depict culturally diverse meal-time practices grounded in different values of independence and interdependence. During discussion Stacy reveals that the differences were surprising and she realized that there may be a message behind behavior and that is easy to overlook and just judge based on your own perspective:

I found it surprising how vastly different the approaches were in regards to meal time by the two families. You [peer] make a great point by your statement "this is why as parent educators we must always be open to differences on how families raise their children and respect their values and morals". I could see how it may be easy to miss the message the parents are teaching to their children when they do things the way they do, and therefore view it as a negative thing- when in reality it is simply a different, but important message that is being learned. (S-M13D-3)

She shares that this experience was “*eye-opening*” (S-M13D-5) and that it has “*broadened her horizon*” (S-M13C-1). Stacy continues to reflect on her shifting perspective in her final paper and comes to the realization that she must respect and understand that there are “*underlying reasons for why parents do the things they do*” (S-A3-16). She concludes with an insightful summary of her learning throughout the course that reflects this shifting perspective:

All in all, through this course I was able to not only look at my own views on a deeper level, but I was also able to realize that there are many different views, perspectives and approaches people have when working with children, and some may be very different from my interactions, but nonetheless- they still are valuable and are teaching a lesson. (S-A3-17)

Throughout the findings chapter, I examine how Stacy took ownership of her shifting perspectives and challenged scripts.

### **Tentative Manifestations of Shifting Perspectives**

The following section presents the findings associated with the phenomenon of shifting one’s perspective through a parent-child interaction class. This experience of “shifting through” reflects a process that takes shape or unfolds through the learning environment. These findings are presented in the form of four tentative manifestations, or dimensions of this phenomenon: a) shifting through multiple contexts and relationship, b) distancing or taking ownership of one’s perspective, c) experiencing cognitive-affective

conflict, and d) broadening one's horizon. In order to elucidate each of these dimensions I weave descriptions of the data with contextual detail where appropriate and excerpts of my participants' words that capture and illuminate the phenomenon. Due to the nature of something taking shape over a course, the description requires extensive detail.

Therefore, one participant's experience in each of the four dimensions will be showcased in order to illuminate fully how "taking shape" manifests itself. One or two additional participants' experiences may be used to expand the nuanced meanings of the dimension, or to offer another way in which the dimension manifested itself through other participants' experiences. At the conclusion of each section, brief statements will be made regarding how all other participants' experienced the dimension. Connections to the overlapping and interconnected manner of these dimensions are also made with each participant's experience.

**Shifting perspectives through multiple contexts and relationships.** One of the most apparent dimensions of shifting perspectives was how it moved through different elements of the course (i.e., discussion, chat, reflection papers, and written assignments), connected to contexts outside of the course (including recent events, memories of the past, and anticipations for the future). In addition to moving through contexts, these shifting perspectives involved a relational dimension. These relationships included other students in the class (as well as the instructor) and relationships outside of the class such as parents, children, parenting partners, and families with whom participants' already do (or plan to) work. This section delves into and illuminates how participants shifted their perspectives through these contexts and relationships. These contexts and relationships

were so intricately interwoven through participants' data that parsing them out (e.g., speaking about contexts outside of the class and then contexts within the class and then relationships outside of the class and then relationships within the class) would not do justice to representing participants' experience, or the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective. Therefore, what ensues is a discussion of these four domains (in-context, outside context, inside relationships and outside relationships) as they appear through one participant's experiences of shifting perspectives.

I choose to tell Hannah's story for a couple of reasons. As discussed in Hannah's participant introduction, she shifted her perspective in two ways – one of which was a complex, interconnected shifting related to parenting roles and styles and the influence of these on the parent-child relationship. She was particularly interested in examining and challenging scripts associated with traditional gender-stereotyped roles such as father as bread-winner, mother as homemaker and the association between these roles and Baumrind's (1978) authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles (respectively). She also came to challenge the script of norms associated with one's family of origin, and the appropriateness of supporting parents to reflect on their own family of origin within parent education. When considering this interconnected data as a whole, Hannah touched on at least one of these topics in all but one module (12), and in all three written assignments. This thorough examination moved through dialogue with peers (discussion and chat), personal reflection papers (submitted to instructor), a movie analysis, a professional lesson plan, and a final personal investigation into how this subject connected to her family of origin.

A fascinating aspect of this comprehensive exploration is that the personal nature of the subjects about which Hannah shifts her perspective is not revealed until her final paper. Additionally, she seems to truly uncover (or shift her perspective toward) this personal connection when sitting down to write the paper. However, when viewing Hannah's course-related writing as a whole, there are numerous connections between what she discusses throughout the 13 weeks in a general, abstract way, and her personal story shared in assignment three (due the final week of class). In this sense, we also see how the dimension of "distancing and taking ownership" manifests itself through Hannah's experience.

We begin with Hannah's story during the module two online chat where she is in dialogue with her peers. As a quick review, online chat is synchronous – or live. This is the closest thing to a "class time" that occurs during the course as students and instructor are all in the same online space at the same time. Online chat always takes place on day six of each weekly module so it falls between online discussion (days 2-5) and bi-weekly reflection papers (day 7). Hannah's peer is talking about the role mothers play in fathers' involvement – that mothers typically take on the primary caregiver role and they need to allow fathers to develop a relationship with their children. Hannah responds as follows: *[Peer]... having a supportive mother that encourages a strong father role and presence is key (H-CM2-1a)*. Another peer offers maturity as a factor and Hannah responds to this with the notion that cultural norms are at play as well. Here she suggests that a cultural norm involves fathers as breadwinners and less involved in the parenting process: *[2<sup>nd</sup>*

*Peer], cultural norms seem to place fathers in roles of the breadwinner and more absent from the child rearing process (H-CM2-1b).*

In module three, the focus is on parent-child attachment. Here Hannah engages in dialogue with a peer during online discussion as she draws a connection between attachment type and gendered parenting roles:

[Peer], I too, began to consider that as well. I think it is possible for the child to have a secure attachment with one parent, while at the same time an insecure attachment with the other.

I wonder too, if this is associated with gendered parental roles. What I mean by that is: traditionally, the mother is usually the primary caregiver, and the father assumes the role of the absentee provider/breadwinner. I wonder if there is any correlation in families such as these in which the parental roles are so distinctly separated that the child automatically tends to have a more secure attachment with the stay at home parent (which is commonly the mother). Anyone have any thoughts? (H-DM3-4)

During module four online discussion, Hannah is responding to a peer's comment about parents serving in complimentary roles as they each support their children's development. Notable about what Hannah writes here is that the perspective she expresses, in support of complimentary roles as long as parents are in communication with each other, is contradictory to her later writing. This initial comment may reflect her prior, unquestioned perspective:

[Peer], I like that you mentioned that parents can complement one another with what they can offer their child in terms of development. One parenting style is not necessarily better than the other (i.e. a gentle nurturing style vs. a rough housing, high energy style) - but what each parent offers can help shape a part of the child.

I think what's most important is parental communication and getting on the same page. While our parenting styles may differ in how we approach the role, parents should make sure they are consistent with expectations and guidance. I feel that aspect has a bigger change of negatively impacting development. (H-DM4-9)



So far, we see the dimension of shifting perspective through multiple context and relationships manifest itself primarily through peer dialogue within the contexts of chat and discussion. Now we move on to the contexts of a written assignment and the film she chooses as a way to analyze concepts she has learned about so far in the class. Hannah chose to analyze the film *Everybody's Fine* (Gori & Jones, 2009) about a father's relationships with his adult children. Hannah's analysis of the interactions in this film parallels her later discussion about her own childhood and father-child relationship. She makes only a minimal statement of personal connection when describing why she chose to examine this film: *For this assignment, I chose to analyze my favorite movie - one that really hits home with my own family experiences and I find myself relating to on multiple levels (H-A1-1).*

Hannah begins by describing the structure of the family that seems to represent the one she describes in her case analysis paper of her own family of origin – with the exception of the mother's passing in this movie (her mother is still alive).

While the story of the Goode Family is initially told during the children's adulthood and following the passing of the mother, moments of flashbacks and reminiscing dialogues between the characters slowly reveal "snapshots" of the family's past experiences together. The viewer quickly learns that there were very distinct and separate parental roles within the family. The mother was the stay-at-home caretaker, while Frank was the absentee breadwinner of the family. As Frank Goode visits each of his children throughout the movie, the widower begins to realize his only connection to his family was through his wife. (H-A1-2)

Hannah continues to analyze the father-child relationships in this film in a way that closely reflects her own experiences as a child and adult daughter. A particular moment she mentions from the film is about Jack (the father) handing the phone off to his wife whenever the kids called.

Frank's wife was the one who was more involved and hands-on in the emotional and social development of the children. She was described as the mother that the children felt comfortable telling anything and everything. Frank even joked at one point in the movie that if he answered the phone when the kids called, they would immediately ask to speak to mom. (H-A1-3)

Interestingly, Hannah shares a similar experience with her parents in her case analysis paper (H-A3-13) (See p. 95).

Every two weeks, students are asked to reflect in a short paper on the following two questions: 1) *what struck me the most on a personal and/or professional level about the concepts and learning this week?* 2) *Where have I been stretched by the concepts and learning this week?* This paper is intended to be an informal space for processing material shared only with the instructor. In her module seven reflection paper, Hannah connects the topic of parenting styles (which is explicitly covered in module six) to a video used in module seven to stimulate discuss around the topic of parent-adolescent interaction.

The video is one of 30 used throughout the 13-week class designed to stimulate an emotional and cognitive response, to contribute to one's imagic store (mental images of parent-child interaction), and provide a visual representation of the concept(s) to promote deeper connections and easier recall (Bransford, Vye & Sherwood, 1986). These videos are not used in a traditional sense of teaching, though some do provide information. The purpose, however, is not to deliver information, but to stimulate reflection and dialogue (Thomas et al., 1992). The power of the visual used in this way for promoting transfer of learning has long been recognized as an innovative and powerful learning tool (Bransford et al., 1986).

While watching the "Friday Night Lights" clips, I noticed how inconsistent the parents were in their parenting styles, and that each parent was demonstrating a

different parenting style most of the time (father – authoritarian, and mother – authoritative). I got the impression that the teenage daughter was walking on eggshells, because she did not know what kind of response to expect from her parents. It wasn't until both parents sat down and were able to discuss how they were going to adjust to this transition that the daughter seemed to feel secure disclosing details of her social and dating life. This is why co-parenting is so important during this stage. Whenever a family is experiencing disequilibrium, it can feel like - as the parents in "Friday Night Lights" put it – "winging it." Nothing can cause a greater strain on the parent-child relationship (and on the parents' relationship) than mixed messages and conflicting expectations between the parents. (H-RM7-1)

While this speaks more to the dimension of *distancing and taking ownership* it is important to note that Hannah's initial post to the module eight discussion on ambivalence in parent-adult-child interaction is the first time she shares publicly about her personal connection to traditional gendered parenting roles:

One example of ambivalence that a child could experience is the mixed feelings of growing up with working parents countered with the need for economic support. As fathers have traditionally been socially influenced to take on the role of the breadwinner of the family, and mothers are increasingly gaining a presence in the workforce, this trend is posing dual working parent families. While I can personally relate to the ambivalence this could pose for the child: mixed feeling of childhood experiences in desiring a stronger father presence, but at the same time, acknowledging the intent behind work consumption as a means to provide greater opportunities. As an adult, the child could be irritated due to feeling slighted of a stronger relationship or missed opportunities with their working parent(s), but at the same time feel appreciative and proud that their hard work has allowed them to live a better life. (H-DM8-1)

Hannah also connects this area of shifting perspectives to a professional application. For assignment two (due in module 10), students create a parent education lesson plan that connects to one or more concepts covered in the class. Hannah (like many others including Kristen) creates a lesson on the topic of overindulgence, about which they learn in module six. Notable in her lesson as it pertains to the area of parenting roles and styles (and her personal connection to the subjects in her family or

origin) is her use of two indicators of progress from the Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework (PECCF) (Minnesota Association of Family and Early Educators [MNAFEE], 2011). The use of this document is encouraged but not required of students for this assignment. Hannah includes the following two indicators that complete the statement, parents support their child's development when they... *understand the impact of their parenting style on their children's behavior (H-A2L-2)* and *reflect on how their family-of-origin experiences affect them as parents, identifying and making changes in their parenting as needed (H-A2L-3)*.

Along with Hannah's challenge of traditional gendered parenting roles and styles, she also comes to challenge the script of family norms. In other words, this is the idea that we often perceive our family or childhood as "normal" because it is familiar. Hannah relates this to the personal processing she does in her final paper as well as her other area of shifting perspective around her philosophy of practice as a future parent educator. This excerpt from Hannah's module 11 reflection paper gives us an indication of how powerful this new learning was for her (from watching an interview with Ruth Thomas) and serves to foreshadow what is to come in her final paper, due two weeks later:

The Ruth Thomas video also opened my eyes to how unknowing and isolated many of us are when it comes to exposure to outside familial structures. Because we are all members of a family, and have been since birth – we are inclined to believe that the way our family lives is the primary and preferred way other families live. As a future parent educator, I intend on exposing my parent participants to varied approaches and perspectives that will broaden their minds and paint a new picture of what a family "looks like." (H-RM11-3)

As shared in Hannah's introduction, the first time she takes ownership of by sharing details of her personal connection to gendered parenting roles and styles with her

peers is in the final discussion forum. In this case, she was asked directly to share a piece of her final paper, which is rich with personal connection to these course concepts. The final assignment asks students to conduct a critical examination of the concepts they have learned in the course as they relate to their own relationships as a parent and/ or child. This final paper blends all of the above as Hannah reflects on her own relationship with her mother and father, from childhood and now as an adult. She primarily focuses on parenting styles and roles that represent her parents and how she is trying to change the script she learned as a child so that her parenting and her expectations of the father of her future children create a different family to the one in which she grew up.

Interestingly, after all of her discussion throughout the course about the father-child relationship (in particular) she talks here about how she found herself “stuck” when attempting to begin this written assignment asking students to connect the material from the course to their own personal experience. This seems like an interesting moment involved in her shifting of perspectives around her understanding and construction of her childhood. She has been critiquing authoritarian parenting, father as breadwinner, mother as gatekeeper, etc. all along in the course and does offer a couple generic connections between the material and her personal experience. However, it is only in her final paper that she takes ownership of her personal experience with these concepts.

When I first began this assignment, I found myself very stuck. I felt that my childhood experiences and family life were quite “normal”: I came from a middle-class, suburban, two-parent home with siblings; my father the primary breadwinner, and my mother a stay-at-home-mom - hardly anything noteworthy or unusual. I wouldn't associate any negative outcomes with the way in which my parents raised me; I am very content, as well as appreciative with the collective job my parents did in raising me. (H-A3-2)

The interview with Ruth Thomas (Cooke & Thomas, 2008) helped her to recognize that what is familiar often seems normal and that upon further examination, “normal” may not seem so “normal,” as in something you wish to perpetuate: *But as Ruth Thomas’s [sic] argues, our cognitions and perspectives have been acquired in the contexts in which we have been embedded – making them seem familiar, comfortable, and “normal” (H-A3-3).* Through this paper where she is asked to connect course material with her personal experience and to critically examine these interactions and relationships, Hannah was able to challenge her notion of a “normal” childhood when she looked at her relationship with each of her parents on an individual level, separate from the big picture of her family life.

She was then able to recognize traditional gender-stereotyped parental roles in her own family and connect this to a course reading on father involvement from module four:

Traditionally sex-stereotyped roles have created families in which, “fathers are consistently notable for their lack of involvement in caretaking,” (Lamb, 2002, p. 102). Growing up my parents were no exception to this. They assumed very traditional gender roles in the household (mother as the caretaker/home maker, and my father as the breadwinner and disciplinarian). (H-A3-5)

Hannah goes on to explain her father’s work and how this affected his parenting role:

My father’s work with the government was both demanding and stressful: we moved often, my father occasionally had to work holidays and travel, he worked long hours, and had a terribly long daily commute. By the time he got home we had little time to spend with our father, and he wasn’t always in the best of moods, as his work stress occasionally would ‘spill over’ to our home life. (H-A3-6)

Here, Hannah describes her individual parents’ styles just as she did throughout the course, including her movie analysis assignment. She even gives an example of how her

father would say “because I said so!” which is an exact example she gave for an authoritarian parent in a module five discussion post:

Based on Baumrind’s parenting styles, I would say that my father took on an authoritarian parenting style, while my mother was more of an authoritative parent. When it comes to guidance and discipline: my father would be the one to order me to my room, and my mother would be the quiet knock on my bedroom door – checking up on me, talking it through, and hearing me out. Rules and expectations were applied consistently and understood, and the last thing any of us children wanted was for my mother to tell my father about any challenging behaviors after his long, tiring day at work. We knew my dad had very little patience for that when just walking into the door, which result in short tempered explanations such as, “...because I’m the parent!” or “...because I said so!” (H-A3-9)

At this point, Hannah begins to reflect on her family life in a complex way and she begins to consider how she wants to raise her own future family differently than how she was raised. She recognizes that, taken all together, her needs were met. However, she connects the concept of ambivalence from module eight regarding her specific connection to her father. Even though her emotional needs were met through her family as a whole (because her mother served in this role) she still wishes her father were more present and emotionally connected to her. Her first public verbalization of her personal connection to father’s lack of involvement was in module eight when we discussed ambivalence and she provided an example that clearly parallels her own experience.

Hannah now has the perspective that each parent should meet the economic, physical and emotional needs of a child otherwise responding to these needs become very compartmentalized. This differs from what she said in module four about how parents’ roles can compliment each other and that the most important thing is communication between the two parents (H-DM4-9):

Acknowledging the gendered parental roles, influences, and styles at work, I can say that collectively my parents were able to meet both our economic, physical, and emotional needs in a way that resulted in fairly healthy development. However, I cannot help but look back and wish that my father was more present and emotionally connected - probably creating the most ambivalence for me. When considering how I would want to raise my own family, I think that I would be more deliberate about how both parents can meet the economic and physical, and emotional needs with more balance. Without balance, the roles seem so compartmentalized. I would want these roles to be shared, not divided, and ideally for each parent to be able to feel the fulfillment of being able to support and be involved with both forms of need and dependence. (H-A3-12)

Hannah then shares a story of a recent phone conversation with her mother and father that further validates these distinct parenting roles. She connects this experience to the course material from module two about how past experiences and anticipations of the future influence present interactions. In her movie analysis paper Hannah discussed the expected pattern of the father handing the phone off to his wife when the kids call (H-A1-3) (See p. 89). In this story below Hannah reflects on a very similar experience she had with her parents:

I considered a recent phone conversation that shows that “parental behaviors from previous interactions influence children’s expectations of their parents’ future behavior, and these expectations, in turn, influence children’s behavior in future interactions with their parents,” (Kuczynski, 2003[a], p.94). I realized through this recent phone conversation I had with my parents that this separate-role dynamics are still at work – even in my adulthood. This was one of the rare occurrences when I initially asked to speak with my father, usually – even if my father answers, I always ask for mom. As I was experiencing the process of moving and selling my first house just months ago, I turned to his knowledge and experience in order to learn what to expect from the real estate process. In discussing details and conditions of the purchase agreement, an overwhelming wave of mixed emotions came over me: stress from the whole process, nostalgia from my history and the memories in the house setting in, and uncertainty of the next big change in my life. As if switching in a stunt double, I find my mother’s



voice on the other end of the phone once my sobs took the place of the conversation. (H-A3-13)

Here Hannah considers her mother's role in her father-child interactions:

However, that exact phone conversation makes me wonder, did my father hand the phone off to my mother, or did my mother interfere and take the reins of the dialogue? I recall from my childhood that often times if things got a little out of hand, my mother would quickly intervene, and sometimes the opposite would occur: my father would occasionally call for her to diffuse a situation. I now recognize that my mother must have had a strong sense of self-efficacy – she felt comfortable addressing any and every parenting challenge. But often times this may have disempowered my father, when she would intervene prematurely. (H-A3-14)

She then takes her father's perspective and considers how our society might contribute to a father's low sense of self-efficacy in parenting:

Perhaps too, my father may have felt a lower sense of self-efficacy in addressing this more demanding side of parenting based on traditional gendered conventions regarding a father's parenting competency. Fathers who identify with a more traditional gendered parenting role may be at a disadvantage by exuding less confidence due to the popular belief that: men are (by nature) insensitive and inattentive toward children, or fathers don't know as much as mothers do. (H-A3-15)

Hannah continues to recognize the influence of the mother and society on father involvement and she acknowledges the effort it will take to create a different family dynamic for herself in the future:

Growing up with this disparity in self-efficacy between my mother and father, I have gained a deeper awareness of the ways in which mothers can sometimes serve as a barrier to, or inhibit father involvement, and the social influences that make fathers feel inadequate to handle the parenting role. When considering how I would want to raise my own family, I think that I would make a huge effort to break down these barriers, encourage involvement from the start, and continue to empower and support the father throughout the parenting journey. (H-A3-16)

At the end of her paper, Hannah recognizes that through this critical examination of her individual relationships with her parents within the context of this course, she was able to question and challenge her previous perspective on her so-called “normal” childhood and realize that this norm is socially constructed (Brookfield, 2012):

Through application of these course concepts to my own childhood experiences, I have realized that the social conventions and personal assumptions of what is “normal” in terms of gendered parenting roles and dynamics certainly do not result in optimal outcomes for each individual parent-child relationship. We rarely question the norm, and it becomes so deeply ingrained in our subconscious attitudes and behaviors that we assume we are doing what we were born to do and that the roles we take on are only “natural.” How my parents approached child rearing seems only normal and natural to me, however when I consider each individual relationship I have had with both my mother and father, I realize that they look very different. (H-A3-19)

Hannah concludes her paper with a statement of her new philosophy or her new vision for her future family based on what she learned in terms of her relationship with her individual parents. This may be considered a statement of intent to act in new ways that reflects her shifting perspective (Mezirow, 2000):

When I think of my own attachment hierarchy, my mother is the one I seek and prefer when in need of emotional support and connection – she plays the expressive role. In terms of assistance in making something happen or task-based help, I turn to my father – playing more of an instrumental role. So how can indicate an overall preference of one over the other when it depends on the circumstance. This is what I would like to change for my children when I am a parent: I would like them to be able to turn to either parent for any need – regardless of circumstance, and especially for emotional support. It is important to me that the father of my children will be more involved in the social/emotional needs than societal expectations or my own prior experiences or conceptual schema suggest. (H-A3-20)

Hannah’s journey of shifting perspectives about parenting roles and styles took shape through engaging in multiple contexts and relationships both within and outside the

course. She made connections to this topic throughout the course as we discussed attachment, overindulgence, ambivalence, and self-efficacy. She did this through dialogue with peers in discussion and chat, through reflective writing in bi-weekly reflection papers and assignments, and through reflection on and interactions with her parents.

Along this journey, Hannah challenged traditional gendered parenting roles as well as her own taken-for-granted view of her “normal” family of origin (Kumashiro, 2002). Though Hannah used distancing language for much of the course, she took full ownership of her experience in her final paper and was able to come to a new understanding of her parents, her childhood, her relationship with each parent, and her values and beliefs about parent-child relationships she wishes to enact in her future family.

Like Hannah, Laura and Megan both made connections to their area of shifting perspectives in nearly every module throughout the course. For one or more of their areas of shifting perspectives, Kristen, Stacy, and Brianna made connections to their area of shifting perspectives in several modules. In other subject areas the processing was concentrated to just two or three modules. Kristen, for example, experienced a shifting of perspective around goal-compatibility through the module 10 videos, discussion and chat and module 11 reflection paper. In nearly all cases, the areas of shifting perspectives were reflected on in the final case analysis paper.

In terms of moving through relationships, all participants engaged in dialogue with their peers and instructor in the course. Table 2 provides a visual of how shifting

perspectives moved through course modules for each participant and area of shifting perspectives (See p. 175). The environment for this interaction welcomed open communication in ways that are meaningful to each learner (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). Like Hannah, all participants made connections to relationships outside of the class. Laura and Megan also reflected on their childhoods, while Stacy drew implications to her anticipated future parenting experience. Kristen, Megan, and Brianna transferred their learning in class to interactions with their children and shared these stories as ways to process and articulate their shifting perspectives. Through the multiple contexts and relationships, participants shifted their perspectives by distancing and taking ownership, as is described in the following section.

**Through distancing toward taking ownership.** Distancing or “othering” language is often used when we don’t personally identify with whatever (or whomever) we are talking about (or when we don’t want to admit to this personal identification) (Vagle, 2014b). Distancing or “othering” language is most commonly signified by the use of third person pronouns such as “he, she, they, those, them, etc.” Another signifier found in participants’ writing was to refer to the noun “parents” as in “parents should ...” or “parents want to....” I noticed participants using distancing language in some contexts (e.g., online discussion) and personally identifying with the same point in another context (e.g., reflection paper) or at another time in the course (e.g., distancing in module one and taking ownership in module nine discussion). I illustrate this dimension of shifting perspectives with Kristen’s story around the subject of overindulgence.

Kristen's story of distancing and taking ownership regarding overindulgence is particularly interesting as part of her approach to distancing was to draw professional connections to the course material. It is only later that we discover Kristen's deep personal connection to overindulgence that also relates to the cognitive-affective conflict dimension of how shifting perspectives took shape for her around over-nurture in her own parenting through the parent-child interaction class. Kristen's story moves through contexts within the course (videos, discussion, chat, reflection papers, and assignments), and outside the course (her job and her home), and relationships within (peers) and outside the class (children, parents with whom she works).

As was mentioned in Kristen's introduction, she experienced some perspective shifting around the topic of overindulgence (specifically over-nurture). This began in module six when the concept was introduced through a video interview with the author of a book on this topic, Jean Illsley Clarke (Cline & Clarke, 2008). It is clear from the beginning that this was a powerful topic for Kristen and one about which she held a strong perspective. When asked in online chat toward the end of the week (day six) what was most striking about the Jean Illsley Clarke interview, Kristen shares the following five separate and consecutive responses:

That overindulgence usually comes from a good heart but it really can hurt a child (K-CM6-3). Parents think they are doing a good thing for their child but the consequences can be huge (K-CM6-3a). That over nurturing is the most harmful overindulgence (K-CM6-3b). When a child is overindulged it is only going one way. The parent is giving to many gifts, resources, lessons, toys, doing things for the child (K-CM6-3c). It is not about making the parents feel bad it is about when you know better you do better. This is something I tell all my parenting groups (K-CM6-3d).

In these five statements Kristen used the following distancing identifiers: “*parents*” and “*the parent*” and “*my parenting groups*” (nouns), “*they*” and “*their*” (third-person pronoun), “*you*” (second-person pronoun). By statements made during an online chat session, Kristen displays important information about her immediate beliefs, assumptions, and feelings about parenting characterized as over-nurture. She understands this type of parenting is well-meaning by the parent but potentially harmful for children’s development. She also makes the connection to the larger framework of this class by stating that overindulgence moves in one direction, parent to child, which represents a uni-directional framework, one we are working to move away from in this class to understand parent-child interaction as bi-directional. Additionally, we note that Kristen has some stake in this concept as a parent educator – this concept holds professional relevance for her.

In the next reflection paper Kristen primarily focuses on her learning related to overindulgence. She begins by exclaiming that the interview we watched by Jean Illsley Clarke was so “eye-opening” that she went out and bought the book. However, Kristen continues to focus on how she will use this material in her work as a parent educator:

In week six watching the Jean Illsley Clark sessions was really eye opening. I have begun learning about the topic of overindulgence and since watching the clips I have gotten her book about this topic and have begun to read it. One of the things that she talked about was how most times overindulgence "comes from a good place". Meaning that parents are trying to do their best or think what they are doing will not have a negative effect on their children, however this is not always the case. Her discussion of the three types of overindulgence and the effects was really interesting. As a parent educator I plan on continuing to explore this topic and teach it in my parent education classes. (K-RM7-2)

This reflection wouldn't be alarming except that while reading this, I knew she worked through a deeply personal processing of how over-nurture shows up in her own parent-child interactions, first revealed two weeks later in module nine.

Even more fascinating is how Kristen distances and takes ownership of her personal experience with over-nurture as a parent within the same online discussion thread. The topic of module nine is *Children as Agents in Parent-Child Interaction*, which addresses objectives related to differentiating children's agentic action and felt agency as well as understanding learned helplessness and mastery orientation. One question students were asked to respond to and discuss together reads as follows:

Children develop beliefs about their agency through attributions of effort and ability. These agency beliefs influence children's views of themselves as "helpless" or "mastery-oriented."

- a. What kinds of parent-child interactions might be associated with learned helplessness?
- b. What can parents do, what kinds of interactions might be helpful, to foster a sense of agency and a mastery orientation in their children and avoid a learned helpless pattern?

Kristen is the first student to post a response to this question in her group. In her initial post where, in response to part a, she speaks about how "parents" over-nurture and that "they" need to "step back" (look for this phase later) and teach "their" children to try new things. Then, Kristen proceeds to share an example (for part b) of how she teaches her children chores as a way to promote mastery orientation:

- a) One type of overindulgence is when parents or caregiver do things for their children that they should be doing themselves. This causes children to miss out on learning important skills about life and themselves. This often times comes from a loving place that parents view this as their "job" however, children often get the message that "I can't" or "i [*sic*] not good enough". Parents need to step back and play the role of the teacher and teach their children to try new things. They need

to show them how to tie their shoes and set the table. They need to encourage them and tell them that they are capable to do anything.

b) Chores can be a great way to encourage these skills. I recently had my 8 year old daughters begin to clean the bathrooms. The first time I helped them and showed them what needed to be done. The second time I was there with reminder and encouragement. Now they know what to do and feel a sense of mastery-oriented when the job is finished. They know that what they did not only helped their mom, but also helped to keep the house clean. (K-DM9-2)

Here we see a competent mother who is quite intentional about how she raises her children in a way that, based on her post, is really the opposite of over-nurture because she is teaching her children to do things of which she knows they are capable.

After several comments from her peers that largely validate overindulgence as a good example and confirm that this practice comes from a good place, Kristen adds another post to this thread. Here, *for the first time*, Kristen takes ownership of her personal connection to this concept of over-nurture in her own parenting:

As a mother of three children I have often found myself doing things for my children that they need and should be doing themselves. Sometimes it is easier and other times I run out of time. This chapter is a good reminder that as parents our job it to teach our children the skills that they need to be successful in the world. Giving them a sense of high agency is a gift. (K-DM9-4)

Interestingly, her personal confession stirred a long thread of posts from her peers sharing how they also do things for their children (or new co-workers) that they can and should be learning to do for themselves.

As it turns out, this is just the beginning of Kristen's examination of how she sees over-nurture play out in her own parenting. In fact, she shares a story in her module nine reflection paper (private, shared only with instructor) about a recent interaction with her son that illustrates a pivotal moment in taking ownership of her shifting perspective. In



this interaction with her son she was not only able to see over-nurture in her parenting but she stepped back and adjusted her parental action:

This past week looking at “learned helplessness” and overindulgence was very insightful. We want to encourage our children to try new things, and to be able to take care of themselves. As a mother this form of overindulgence, over nurturing, where you do things for your children that they need to be doing themselves, was something that really hit home to me this past week. When I look at my son I often find myself doing things for him that I know he needs to do himself. The other day he wanted me to make him a piece of peanut butter toast. He was at the table watching TV so I started in. Then I stopped and thought “what am I doing”? This is a 10 year old boy he should be able to make toast. So I stepped back and told him to go ahead and do it. With a little push back, and a few questions he did it, but it was an eye opening experience for me. My child was exhibiting “learned helplessness” behaviors. For all these years I have been doing these types of tasks, things that he needs to start doing on his own. After he ate the toast we sat down and talked about how I would like him to start making his own toast in the morning, or when he is hungry. It is a start and we will see how it goes. (K-RM9-3)

Kristen appears to experience an “aha” moment that influenced a change in her parenting behavior. However, the final statement suggests a hint of hesitancy regarding her future success implementing this type of change. In module 13 we catch a glimpse into where this hesitancy may be stemming from.

This doesn’t mean, however, that the topic does not show up in Kristen’s writing in the meantime. In fact, Kristen attends a professional workshop on overindulgence (K-M9C-1), creates a lesson plan on this topic for assignment two (K-A2-1), and connects overindulgence to a peer’s discussion post in module 11. In all of these cases, Kristen’s approach is one of distancing again as demonstrated in this module 11 discussion post about how parents’ with high self-efficacy (module 11 topic) may be more likely to encourage their children to learn to tie their shoes themselves rather than just doing it for them:

[Peer]- thanks for the great example of the shoes tie. Your example also ties into the idea of overindulgence. When parents do for their child when they should be doing it for themselves. These children can also have learned helplessness. These parents are often doing this with a loving heart but it can back fire and cause children to feel helpless. (K-DM11-2)

In module 13, students view and discuss a video illustrating three very different parent-child interactions representing how cultural values (e.g., collectivist values of interdependence versus Western values of independence) play out in how parents approach meal-time with their toddlers. Kristen makes a personal connection to the material here that illuminates some “inner turmoil” or cognitive-affective conflict between her beliefs about her role as a mother and her goals for her children’s development. Although she doesn’t name overindulgence, we see the common statement she makes about over-nurture in terms of doing things for children that they can do for themselves. She makes nearly identical statements here, one in response to a peer’s post:

[Peer] as I viewed both of the clips I could see some of my parenting and my goals in both parents. I want my children to be independent however, at times I too want to do more for them because "they are so young" or "I am the mom". It can be a challenge and an inner struggle with myself. (K-DM13-1)

This excerpt comes at the end of a description of what she viewed in each of the three clips and how they illustrate the ways in which cultural context and values influence parent-child interactions and the meanings they have:

I could see my parenting in both of these clips. There are times when as a mother I do for my children when they should do for themselves. I view this as "my job" to take care of my children. When in reality I could be working on their independence. When I reflect on this I think that I do for my children because I like to be needed and helping others. So taking care of my children makes me feel good and useful. (K-DM13-2)

In her case analysis integration paper, Kristen critically examined these contradictory beliefs regarding her role as a mother and her goals for her children's development. Kristen takes complete ownership in this process and how her prior beliefs have been contributing to over-nurture behavior. In her final paper, we can see the dissonance between Kristen's logical understanding of the type of parent she wants to be and the emotional pull she feels to care for her children. The cognitive-affective conflict dimension of this phenomenon is manifested in the following statements from Kristen's final paper:

As a mother I want my children to grow up to be people who can take care of themselves. I also want them to feel good about themselves, and their abilities (K-A3-7a). My job is to allow them to make decisions and mistakes to learn the skills needed to be a productive member of society (K-A3-7b). However, often times I find myself doing the exact opposite (K-A3-7c). For example my ten year old asks for toast for breakfast and I quickly go and make him some. My eight year old asks me to pack her school bag, and I promptly move forward with making sure she has everything needed for a good day. (K-A3-7d)

In my mind I view this as being a good mother. I am taking care of my children and meeting their needs (K-A3-7e).

On the other hand I question am I overindulging my children or teaching them learned helpless (K-A3-7f)?

Cummings and Schermerhorn talk about learned helpless children who "avoid challenge and diminish their effort in response to challenge." They go on to say the "Mastery-oriented children seek challenges and endeavor to perform well even on challenging tasks. These children generally achieve greater performance than learned helpless children. (K-A3-7g)

When I look at this there is no doubt in my mind that I want my children to be mastery-oriented. I want them to work hard and strive to be their best. I want them to feel capable and have a high sense of agency (K-A3-7h). As I stated earlier this learned helpless fits into what Jean Illsley Clark calls overindulgence. One of the three overindulgences is doing for our children what they should be doing for themselves (K-A3-7i).

In the end, we see justified, systematic reasoning shift her toward a perspective on her role as mother that is more reflective, allows her children to be more independent, and takes greater initiative to teach her children skills that work toward her ultimate goal for them to be mastery-oriented:

At times our children do need us to help them, however if this is your main style of parenting you may need to step back and reflect on your goals for your child. What is this teaching them? How is this making them feel? (K-A3-7j)

The information in module nine has caused me to reflect on my parenting in many ways. I can see how I need to step back and allow my children to be more independent in some area of their life. I also need to be more willingly the interested in teaching skills to my children so that they can feel mastery and successful. (K-A3-7k)

This description of how Kristen shifted her perspective through a parent-child interaction course – around the topic of overindulgence – serves to illustrate how the dimensions of distancing and taking ownership and cognitive-affective conflict manifested through her experience. What was less explicitly delineated but equally as present in Kristen’s journey was how her shifting perspective moved through contexts and relationships within and outside the course through videos, peer dialogue (discussion and chat), reflective writing (bi-weekly reflection papers and written assignments), attending a professional workshop, and through an interactions with her children. This movement through contexts and relationships spanned eight weeks of the 13-week course.

In each dimension thus far, the dimension of distancing and taking ownership has manifested itself through Hannah and Kristen’s’ experiences of shifting perspectives. Throughout the remaining sections of this chapter, the ways in which this dimension

manifests itself through Megan and Laura's' experiences will also be delineated. Brianna and Stacy did not shift their perspectives through distancing like the other four participants. Instead, they took ownership and made personal applications from the beginning and throughout their experiences of shifting perspectives. Another way in which shifting perspectives manifested itself to varying degrees is the experience of cognitive-affective conflict. This dimension is detailed in the following section.

**Cognitive-affective conflict.** The experience of cognitive-affective conflict was illustrated briefly in Kristen's story under the dimension of *distancing and taking ownership*. Kristen's exclamation of "inner turmoil" seems a fitting expression to reflect the clear manifestation of this experience. Like Kristen, some participants' data depicts an uncomfortable, emotionally difficult experience. For others, a feeling of discomfort, or emotional conflict, was not present in the data.

Stacy, for example, found this new perspective on father involvement – including the idea that mothers could act as gatekeepers to father-child interaction – "fascinating" and "really intriguing" (S-M5R-1). Although Stacy had "*definitely seen*" instances of mother's gatekeeping before this class (S-A3-5), she had "*never recognized it as maternal gatekeeping or realized that their were negative repercussion...*" (S-A3-6). Still, for Stacy this was "*eye-opening*" (S-A3-4) and something she intends on applying to her own life so that, as she says, "*I may be able to recognize it in myself if it happens. I could then reflect on why its happening so I can change it*" (S-A3-7). In Stacy's experience we can see that she is shifting her prior perspective about mother's influence on father-child interaction, and that although this new way of seeing and understanding

the dynamic between parenting partners was unexpected for her, we don't notice much hesitation, conflict or turmoil as we read through her experience of shifting her perspective.

In contrast to Stacy's experience, Megan seems to experience "inner turmoil," much like Kristen. Megan experiences shifting her perspectives around the role of the parent educator (or philosophy of practice), which for Megan relates to moving beyond information-giving and the desire to seek answers or best practices (See Megan's story for more details, p. 77). Much of Megan's turmoil was experienced through module 10 in response to viewing and discussing a video-taped interview with Ruth Thomas (Cooke & Thomas, 2008) – conducted specifically for this course and for the purpose of troubling the information-giving script held by many educators are discussed – where the inadequacies of simply giving information to parents due to the difficulty of changing one's prior parenting script often learned in childhood.

Leading up to this interview, we catch glimpses of Megan's prior perspective on the role of the parent educator. Beginning in module one, and throughout the entire course, Megan is "*on a crusade*" to determine how to balance encouraging children's expression of autonomy while maintaining consistent and appropriate structure and boundaries. The topic of balancing autonomy and structure is closely related to the previous section as autonomy is one part of agency. As a reminder, agency is a person's capacity for individual thought and action. Autonomy is the part of agency that represents "a universal motive for self-determination and self-protection" (Kuczynski, 2003b, p. 9). We can all easily come up with an image of a toddler exclaiming, "No. I do it!" The

statement itself is an expression of agency, or agentic *action*. However, the motivation for feeling competence, having control over one's environment, or protecting oneself is all driven by autonomy. From module one Megan discusses her struggle to find balance and expresses her desire to "*have the knowledge and confidence to help other families with all this [finding balance]!*"

During the module six online discussion, Megan focuses her processing of balancing responsiveness and firmness in parenting on teaching methods – on how to help parents with this challenge:

Integrating this concept into work with parents: Talking to parents about the research findings in a way that can translate this information to parents so that they can understand it would be helpful. Using examples is also important. Role playing or case studies could also help parents understand this concept. Providing the research study about the positive outcomes children of divorced mothers showed after the mothers were trained in effective parenting principles (Collins et al., 2002) is also a powerful example. I think I would also need to do some more research on these principles so that I could give more examples to parents. It is easy to say "be responsive" but a parent might not know what that means or what language to use in different situations. A parent might need help with balancing responsiveness with firmness. This discussion could come up in discussions about parenting styles or about compliance among others. (M-M6D-1)

Here we see a number of indicators related to her prior beliefs about teaching such as, a) needing to translate and share research with parents, b) offer examples to parents, and c) use of role play or case studies. We also see that Megan realizes it may not be enough to tell parents to "be responsive" and that she may need to help them to understand and apply this to their lives. One might wonder what is wrong with her approach. She seems to have good ideas that include a variety of strategies to help parents apply this material to their lives. The difference between this viewpoint and the one Megan is confronted with is delineated below.

In Megan's module nine reflection paper, she clarifies her assumptions about teaching and learning even further – the educator should hold the answer and it is the educator's job to help parents to know what the educator knows:

I feel that it is important for me to be able to help parents find the balance – and that I should know what is appropriate – before I can start as a parent educator. Again, I know there is no formula (as much as I would like there to be!), but I'm curious what else I need to learn to help me figure out and guide others through the balance. I think it is important that parents know how important it is for them to give their children autonomy and agency. I think it is also important for other parents to know how important it is to provide structure and boundaries. If I am to guide a parent who tends to one side of the continuum toward the center, then I need to have a general sense of where the balance lies. I think knowing what is developmentally appropriate would be helpful. I need to take a good child development class! So much to learn! (M-M9R-4)

This is a common philosophy of practice, one learned in childhood and throughout our educational careers (Lortie, 1975). Hannah also shifted her perspective related to her philosophy of practice, and I illustrate how she recognized and challenged her scripts for teaching and learning throughout this course.

Moving into Megan's journey through module 10, we see her prior beliefs challenged and the cognitive-affective conflict she experiences in response. This begins with online discussion in which students discuss two contrasting sets of parent-child interaction (as described in Kristen's story of *distancing*, p. 105). Both parent-child dyads are playing with an animal puzzle, but there are nuanced differences in parental action. Students are asked to examine and discuss parent and child actions, goals and feelings as well and potential outcomes should this type of interaction be reflective of their overall relationship. These videos are meant to trigger reactions and do not represent distinct



right and wrong, which as we see below, is fascinating though difficult for Megan to accept.

Initially, Megan finds it interesting that there were such differing perspectives:

[1<sup>st</sup> Peer] - I think it's interesting how many of us have come up with slightly different takes on this scene. Many of us seem to agree on some points, but we also have different ideas as well. (M-M10D-1)

In this stream of thoughts, all part of the same discussion post, we begin to see the inner turmoil. Megan moves from appreciation of multiple perspectives along with recognition that their experience opened her eyes to alternative perspectives, to asking the instructor for the one right answer:

As I mentioned in [Peer's] post, I find it very interesting that we can have so many interpretations of this scene. We all seemed to tease out things that were slightly different from each other. Part of this is that some of us noticed some things that others may not have (M-M10D-4). I appreciate hearing the other opinions about this scene, which have opened my eyes to other possibilities! (M-M10D-6) Because we have so many subtle and more obvious differences in our thoughts about this scene, [Instructor], I am wondering if you could give us your opinion of what is happening here? Thanks!! (M-M10D-7)

In another discussion post Megan relates the power of being exposed to multiple perspectives to recognizing and critically examining her desire to know “the right answer,” and then seeks more information about how to go beyond information-giving in the way she has just learned. Interestingly, she wants to know how to do this and where to get these videos. Meanwhile, she has been discussing these exact videos through a series of questions posed by the instructor that mirrors the hourglass questioning approach used in the RDPED that Thomas designed and refers to in her interview:

I learned that there is power to seeing things from other's perspectives - not only because others have different points of view and ideas, but also because some of us noticed things others didn't - using all of our eyes together, we saw more of the

complete picture. Ruth Thomas talks about this in her video - how so much more learning can happen when we view interactions and learn from perspectives other than our own - and how seeing other perspectives can help us change. (M-M10D-9)

It is so interesting to me. I want to know what "really" happened in the two scenes. I want to know what the "right answer" is - especially in scene 2 which my group discussed, and where we had a great discussion about differences of opinion in what the mother's goals were. I wonder if I am stuck on the conventional level of parenting, which focuses on, as Ruth Thomas says, "are my strategies right?... am I disciplining this child the right way". I don't know whether my need to want to know the "right" answer comes from a conventional level or if it stems from my huge desire to help my kids grow up to be happy and healthy in a way that they do not endure the personal struggles I have had in my life. I know we can't be perfect, but I still want to do it "right" for my kids' sake - or at least the best I can so I don't pass down to them what was passed down to me.... (M-M10D-10)

Ruth Thomas points out that parent educators need to be so much more than just information givers - that we need to "stir deep levels of self analysis", promote a parent's critical thinking. I left watching this video with a hunger to learn more about this aspect. How do we go about doing this? Can we get access to video clips of authentic parent-child interactions that, as Ruth Thomas pointed out, are so powerful in inspiring deep levels of thinking about our own parenting and that of others? In the lesson plan I developed for Assignment 2, I tried to create situations that would allow for deep parental thought, but I did this in a way that was organized around a concept that I wanted to inform parents about. How do we plan lessons that are not focused around giving information, but where the information comes as needed during times of self analysis? (M-M10D-11)

Through a series of posts during this discussion, Megan asks a number of questions and seeks advice in ways that highlight her experience of cognitive and affective conflict despite motivation to shift her perspective toward this new philosophy and practice of parent education.

[1<sup>st</sup> Peer] - Also... if a parent comes to us with their challenges surrounding a particular behavior, we may interpret there [*sic*] behavior as well as the parent's reaction differently than the parent does. Even though we may have more experience in ideas surrounding parent-child interactions, they have more experience in their own homes. How do we know we are not leading them astray given our potentially different interpretations? Would it be appropriate to open up

individual situations to the entire group (as long as everyone agrees) to get input and the perspectives of the entire group? Are we then not seen so much as experts but as facilitators (which would be fine)? and what if the group or the parent comes to a perspective that is quite different from what we may think of as "best practice"? (M-M10D-13)

[2<sup>nd</sup> Peer] - I think you really well addressed some of the questions I brought up in response to [3<sup>rd</sup> Peer] post. What kind of lessons do we plan that can incite reflections that come from the individual first, that might also be based on best practices or bring about the best outcomes for the child? It is such a great idea!... (or maybe I need to stop worrying about best practices??) and I think you've phrased it really well. Your post also helps me in thinking about my approaches that I fear might come across as presumptuous or perfectionistic [*sic*] or preachy. All of this is pretty new to me, and I think it's great! I need some time to digest it all! I also appreciate [1<sup>st</sup> Peer] and [3<sup>rd</sup> Peer] responses to your post. (M-M10D-14)

Megan demonstrates her awareness of her own shifting perspectives when she

says:

I'm not sure where to post this, but I have to say that all the learning from this Module is somewhat blowing me away. It is so different from the way I have been thinking about parenting education, and it is so great to learn about. It may be bringing about a cognitive change of my own [emoji smile]. I really value learning from all of you and from the readings. I wish I could sit down with a bunch of you for a week! Thanks everyone for opening my eyes! (M-M10D-15)

Despite this awareness, Megan continues to struggle with how this new perspective on teaching and learning is challenging her prior beliefs and assumptions:

I'm not sure being solely a facilitator will make them lean in at first. Once I get them in the door, and once they get some of the information they want, then yes, likely they will want more of that facilitator role. But at first, I think parents are looking for tangible "strategies" they can take home and use within their families to bring more harmony into their homes. I may be wrong, but this is what I've heard with the few parents I've talked to here. (M-M10D-16)

[1<sup>st</sup> Peer] - you say: " I would also want parents to use information in the way that best suits their own needs." and [3<sup>rd</sup> Peer] - you go on to further this idea. I have been thinking about that a lot over the last few weeks - about how parents may not agree with what I think is best, and how my ideas may not work for their families.... Thanks for all your perspectives! I know I still have many hang ups

about wanting to parent the "right" and "best" way - to provide the "best" outcomes for my kids - and I know this comes from the baggage I have carried from my childhood into my adult life.... (M-M10D-17)

She even reveals an underlying fear of offending parents that seems to be contributing to the cognitive-affective conflict she is experiencing, and a reason for why this shifting of perspective is difficult for Megan to fully embrace. This post is in response to the instructor's discussion with other students about how this approach to parent education may stir inner conflict for parents and that, by creating a safe space, parent educators may be able to facilitate reflective dialogue within the group to support parents working through this turmoil.

[Instructor] - that seems hard to me - if I am understanding you correctly - or perhaps I'm bringing up another idea. To get a parent to see a different perspective, might we have to challenge their perspective at times, and might that be seen as judgmental or demeaning? Or is there another way to do it? In becoming a PE (parent educator), one of my fears is of offending parents, and this fear may make me walk on glass to some extent... (M-M10D-18)

We then move into online chat, which takes place on day six of each week.

In this module, students read about the conditions for conceptual change (as well as hear Thomas speak about them in her interview) (Cooke & Thomas, 2008). When asked how students might have experienced any of these conditions during online discussion that week, Megan says, "*lots of them! open to new perspectives, awareness of other's perspectives, inner conflict - many of them came up for me!*" (M-M10C-1). When asked how professionals can support parents in experiencing conditions for conceptual change, Megan says, "*offering scenarios that portray many different perspectives*" (M-M10C-3). *It may take some time to develop a relationship but having open discussions where everyone speaks EVERYTHING on their mind*" (M-M10C-4).

When asked what kind of atmosphere is conducive to the occurrence of conceptual change, Megan suggests, “*trust; realization that no one is perfect and that we all mess up sometimes*” (M-M10C-5). When a peer mentions a parent educator needing to let down some of their guard, Megan reinforces her point by saying, “*PE doesnt [sic] have to act like the expert*” (M-M10C-6). In response to this instructor’s summary statement, “*It is a platform that often parents don’t feel or experience and that they truly value. And, it is an atmosphere that encourages growth and self-awareness,*” Megan says to the instructor, “*I feel like that takes practice and is so important*” (M-M10C-7).

When asked how this material challenged students’ beliefs and perspectives on their role as a parent educator, Megan says, “*It challenges many of my beliefs to the point of now not being sure I fully understand what I am to do when leading a class... (M-M10C-9a). I’m still stuck on best practices - is that no longer important (if it is done in a nonjudgemental [sic] and kind way?)*” (M-M10C-9b).

Finally, in the bi-weekly reflection paper during module 11 (not due in module 10), Megan continues to critically examine her experience and reaction to module 10:

I was really challenged and stretched by Module 10’s learning activities. Thinking about conceptual change and how to facilitate that through parenting education has made me think quite a bit, and is beginning to reframe my thoughts about parenting education. (M-M11R-1)

The idea of allowing parents to come to their need for change on their own, the fact that parents may not learn so much when they are being given information on best practices, the thought that hearing many different perspectives on a particular situation can help lead to change – all of these have greatly changed my ideas about parenting education and are making me wonder how to reframe this potential conceptual change I am having about parenting education. (M-M11R-2)

In her introduction, Hannah makes a similar statement to Megan’s below (H-A2R-7):

I also think about how these ideas, that are new to me, fit within the lesson plan I created for Assignment 2. I would have liked to have learned some of this information from Module 10 before creating my lesson plan so that I could have incorporated it. These ideas are so new to me, that I'm not sure how they would be incorporated into a lesson plan. I tried, in my lesson plan, to create situations that would foster deep levels of parental thought – meta-parenting, perhaps – but I'm not quite sure I reached the level that Ruth Thomas and my classmates have discussed (M-M11R-3)

In this final section of Megan's module 11 reflection paper, she attempts to connect her shifting perspective around parent education practice to the topic of self-efficacy – that week's class topic. She recognizes that helping parents change their beliefs and behavior may be related to helping them move through levels of parental awareness. This is a cognitive-developmental theory of parent development introduced in module two suggesting that parents beliefs and perspectives on their child, themselves as parents, and their parent-child relationships may influence parental behavior (Newberger, 1980). Parents are thought to be orientated toward four levels of awareness including *egoistic* – self-oriented, *conventional* – norms oriented, *individualistic* – seeing their child as unique, and *analytic* – systems oriented (Newberger, 1980). These levels move from a rigid, narrow view of parenting to one that embraces the complex and dynamic factors influencing parenting. Perhaps not surprisingly, the RDPED was created as a way to promote parents' development through these levels of parental awareness. Here is an excerpt from Megan's reflection paper where she draws these multiple connections, and begins to reflect an understanding of how parental change may require more than information-giving – though not without some self-doubt:

The Kuczynski text writes, “self-efficacy beliefs are either enhanced by success or impaired by failure” (p. 221). Thus as parent educators, we need to find ways to help parents have more successes with their children. We need to give them

strategies that they can use to help them in times of conflict with their children. In order for them to have successes, we must also help parents learn that being sensitive to a child's needs is imperative in being an effective parent. This could be a mind shift for some parents and can take time – a conceptual change may need to occur. It is not enough to tell parents that they need to be sensitive to their children's needs and sense of agency. We need to help parents change their behaviors and beliefs from ones that may be deeply engrained and that may come automatically. We need to help parents move away from egoistic levels of parenting (and how do we do this – I'm not quite there yet!), and help them toward individualistic and analytic levels. (I suppose conventional levels would be OK, if that is all we can do, and if the convention is to parent with sensitivity). This will also require that a parent learn to step back before they react; that they understand from where their child's behavior is coming; and to take into consideration the child's needs. Having an understanding of what is developmentally appropriate for the child would also aid in this process. This process will not come quickly, nor without hard work and practice. I don't know if I am on the right track here, or whether this is even possible for a parent educator to facilitate. I would love to hear some feedback. I do think that all that I have written is at the root of firmly establishing higher levels of self-efficacy in a parent. I also think this will take time, and I wonder if it is possible for a parent educator to facilitate this in a six-week class session? (M-M11R-8)

As we can see (and feel) when reading through Megan's processing in module 10 (and 11), she is experiencing conflict or turmoil on both cognitive and affective levels. Megan demonstrates her mental capacity to critically examine her own and this new perspective on the role of the parent educator. She "sees" value in this new perspective, and she desperately wants to know how to do this (we still see her desire for answers, which she recognizes). Unfortunately, this class serves as an introduction to this philosophy of practice and does not allow for the opportunity to delve deeply with Megan in the way she desires in terms of implementation of this approach in parent education. However, this experience has (for Megan and many others) served to trigger some kind of disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2000) that appears to, at the very least, introduce

some dissatisfaction with students' own philosophy of practice and curiosity to learn more.

This section looked in detail at Megan's experience of cognitive-affective conflict as she shifted her perspective through this parent-child interaction course around the subject of her philosophy of practice as a parent educator. Kristen and Hannah both experienced clear cognitive-affective conflict as they shifted their perspectives through this parent-child interaction course. Laura, Brianna and Stacy seem to articulate little conflict or inner turmoil as they shifted their perspectives, as far as their data reveals. In other words, half of the data revealed pronounced discomfort about shifting their perspectives while the other half illuminates a more comfortable, smooth transition through a shifting perspective. The reasons for this difference are further examined in the discussion chapter. Despite differences in how each of the six participants' experiences of shifting perspectives have manifested through multiple contexts and relationships, other and taking ownership, and cognitive-affective conflict, all participants shifted their perspectives in ways that expanding their perspective, or broadened their horizons.

**Broadening horizons.** The final dimension of the phenomenon of shifting one's perspective through a parent-child interaction class is a broadening horizon. For all participants this reflects movement from a previously narrow, unquestioned perspective toward a more open view point where perspectives are more complex, dynamic, and reasoned. This shifting reflects the way in which Mezirow (2000) defines adult development (or transformative learning) as a meaning-making process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive,



discerning, and reflective, which generates beliefs and opinions that may prove more true or justified to guide actions. Though all participants' perspectives were stretched and opened in new ways, this experience seemed to manifest itself through two approaches that participants took to examine course material related to their area of shifting perspective. For some, this broadening horizon occurred through a new understanding of bi-directionality in parent-child interaction (or in parent education, between instructor and learner). For others, this process occurred by challenging conventional norms, or conceptual scripts they held for parent-child relationships or parent educator practice.

***Bi-directionality.*** The parent-child interaction course material emphasizes the bi-lateral influence between parent and child. This is an expanded view compared to a uni-lateral view focused largely on how parents influence children with limited consideration for children as agentic beings who are capable of individual thought, motivation, and action (Kuczynski, 2003b). While it may be easy to claim a bi-lateral framework, understanding how this plays out in parent-child interaction may be less obvious. Several participants shifted their perspective toward an expanded view that reflects bi-directionality. They applied this new thinking to better understanding their relationships with their own parents (Laura) as well as their children (Brianna, Kristen and Megan).

It may also be argued that participants shifted their perspective toward a more bi-lateral philosophy of practice in parent education (Stacy, Hannah, Brianna and Megan). This expanded perspective begins to understand education as more than "*the teacher bestowing knowledge on the learner,*" as Hannah suggests to one that respects parents as experts of their own family who are capable of critical reflection and change. Although

many stories could be told here to illustrate how bi-directionality manifests itself through participants' experiences, Brianna and Laura's stories will serve this purpose.

Brianna and Laura's data suggest that they both broadened their horizons through a new understanding of agency in the parent-child relationship. They each expanded their focus to include child agency in a way that reflects a more bi-directional framework. Brianna shifted her perspective regarding agency in module one. She made a connection between what she had been seeing in her world, both as a parent and as a home visitor working with other parents. Brianna was particularly drawn to the aspect of agency referring to how we each construct our own meanings through experience (Kuczynski, 2003b) (B-M1D-1) (See p. 61). This motivated Brianna to consider how her children are making sense of their experiences, or the meanings they are forming through their parent-child interactions.

For Brianna, the shifting perspective came when she was in a parenting moment during that same week, and trying to help her son work on penmanship. While she grasped and may have assimilated this new knowledge of agency easily, it did not immediately transfer to her parental action (Thomas et al., 1992). Brianna then experienced an "aha" moment where "the light bulb went off" (B-M9R-1) (See p. 62). In the middle of that parenting moment she was able to make a connection to her learning in the class and apply new knowledge to adjust her parental action in the moment. This is an incredibly powerful example of transfer of learning that Brianna self-directed (Gragg, 1940). The connection of this instance to learning theory is discussed in more detail in the final discussion chapter.

Brianna shares another story in her final case analysis paper of how she intentionally approached an interaction with her younger son from a bi-directional view of agency:

Just the other day, my 7 year old son had written, “I hate my brother” on the sidewalk. Lately, he has been talking in opposites and writing things that mean the opposite, so I knew that he meant that he loved his brother. However, he should have not written that on the sidewalk. Before I spoke to him about the issue, I thought about how I wanted to handle it. I asked him to come over and sit down because I needed to talk to him. I asked him what he had written and what he meant when he wrote it. He didn’t answer right away so I explained to him that what he wrote was not nice. Then he said that he didn’t mean that he hated him. He then went on to explain what he was thinking when he wrote it. I listened and understood what he was saying. Then, I explained to him that, even though he meant that he loved his brother, he should not have written that on the sidewalk. Then, I asked him what he should have written instead. He said that he should apologize to his brother and clean off the sidewalk. The next day, he wrote, “I love my brother” on the sidewalk. (B-A3-4)

After sharing the story, Brianna draws connections to course material to analyze (and possibly validate) her new perspective on fostering equal agency, or creating a space that allows for both parent and child to feel and express their agency:

Kuczynski (2003[b]) stated, “agency means considering individuals as actors with the ability to make sense of the environment, initiate change, and make choices”(p. 9). Both my son and I were trying to understand the situation by asking questions and listening to each other. My son made a choice to clean up the chalk and change what it said. We learned from this experience and were able to get through the situation positively, which will effect our relationship and future interactions. This is just one interaction that ended according to my plan because I was more aware of achieving equal agency. However, I am still learning about equal agency and trying to achieve it. (B-A3-5)

Laura shifted her perspective about agency as well, though her application was as the child – understanding how agency has influenced her relationship with her mother. For Laura, agency was a familiar concept, however, her knowledge and use of it was siloed in her work as an early childhood teacher. Examining the complex dimensions of

agency (i.e., construction, autonomy, and action) was new to her, as was the consideration of how power dynamics influence how agency is expressed. A bi-lateral framework on parent-child interaction recognizes that both parent and child may hold sources of power, which influence the other within this dyad (Kuczynski, 2003b). Though it may be easy to recognize the power that a parent may have, thinking of the influence a smiling baby or a toddler having a tantrum may have on a parent helps us recognize bi-directionality in parent-child interaction.

In module one, students view several videos to discuss agency and communion in both discussion and chat. In the excerpt below, Laura refers to a video called *Veggies* from the Family Effectiveness Training Program (FET) (Gordon, 2000), which displays a scripted interaction between a mother and son as they negotiate what types of vegetables the son will eat for dinner. This video is discussed in terms of how agency and accommodation show themselves in this interaction as well as the potential long-term impact of this type of interaction on the relationship. The other video, *Once and Again* is from the first episode of the television series (Herskovitz, 1999). This clip involves an interaction between a mother and her teen daughter, who expresses strong emotion due to her low self-esteem and hesitancy about attending a party. As discussed in Brianna's introduction, this clip was used to identify the level of agency and communion of both parent and child as well as the balance of these elements within the relationship.

In processing the material through the class Laura makes an insightful observation about the bi-directionality of agency within the parent-child relationship:

To think about agency in conjunction with communion was a helpful way in thinking about the interactions that occur to create and/or influence agency.

Though agency is something that is independent, it is also something that is dependent on various circumstances. The videos we watched this week acted as a great exercise in labeling high/low agency/communion. Each video offered a different visual of agency and communion. Though this was extremely helpful, it also illuminated the complexity of agency. What became clear to me throughout this week's readings was that agency can never fully stand alone (i.e. how independent is agency?). It seems as though agency is a reaction to or a response to someone or something. In the "veggies" and "once and again" videos, both children were displaying agency as a response to disliking vegetables and being insecure about attending a party, respectfully. Both children are displaying high agency in that they are expressing their feelings; however, if the situation were different, I cannot say their expression of agency would be the same. That being said, by discussing agency and communion together, highlights the various relationships agency holds. (L-M1R-2)

She continued to draw out the bi-directionality of agency throughout the class as illustrated through this module five online discussion post and module six chat post:

I think this quote alludes to the agency of both parents and children and the bi-directionality their interactions are during the toddler stage. (L-M5D-1)

The relationship is bidirectional and there is a lot of overlap (i.e. parents actions affect children, vice versa) (L-M6C-2)

Module seven is focused on parent-adolescent interaction, and includes a series of clips from the TV series *Friday Night Lights* (Berg, 2009). Laura's interpretation of the parent-child interactions in these scenes seems to parallel her experience with her mother upon returning from college, which she discusses in her final case analysis paper:

[Peer]: It shows a readjustment period between the parent and child that arises during conflict. They are trying to negotiate how to control her/back off and the daughter is starting to figure out how to be independent while still living under her parents' rules (L-M7C-1)

Laura's processing of agency represents the dimension of *distancing and taking ownership* as discussed under research question one. She relates agency to nearly every module across the 13 weeks of class, but it is not until the final online discussion, when

explicitly asked to share part of her final paper, that Laura shares publicly about how agency manifested itself through her childhood relationship with her mother.

My mother lost her mother right before I was born and I always wondered how that impacted my relationship with her. In order to understand this impact I looked at her parental development throughout my childhood and how that impacted my relationships. Without the guidance of my grandmother, my mom was forced to figure things out on her own and had little support from my other grandmother. She often used memories of how she was parented as a sounding board, redeveloping her family culture. Because my father's family took over how our family developed, my mother used her own culture as she raised me (my father was always working when I was growing up so the job was left to my mother). This is how she was able to express her agency. Often my paternal grandmother and my mom would argue over how I was being raised and my mom took this opportunity to express her agency and parent on her own without taking any advice from her. This was my only model of parent-child relationships growing up so I often modeled how my paternal grandmother and mother interacted when I chose to interact with my mom (often mimicking more of the conflict than the compromises). (L-M13D-3)

However, when reading through her final paper, it is clear that what she shared with her peers is only part of the full story. In this post and throughout her final paper, she does come to a greater understanding of how the concept of agency influenced her mother's actions within their relationship. Additionally, in her final paper she conducts an extensive examination of her own agency as a child, how this changed as a young adult, and how each of these phases were influenced by and influenced her interactions with her mother as well as her own development. Here, Laura is reflecting on how her mother's own development, her level of parental awareness (a theory discussed in module two) influenced her parenting, which affected Laura's opportunities to express her agency and ultimately her sense of agency:

Though I felt my mother was supportive, I did not feel a strong sense of agency until I left for college. Because I was parented in the conventional phase, I believe that my opportunities to exercise my agency were limited. The limited

opportunities could be because of my developmental level, noting the bidirectionality of agency. Kuczynski notes, “the extent and form of bidirectionality in parent-child interactions are affected by children’s developmental level,” (p. 95). However, though I know my opportunities increased once I got older, my sense of agency did not emerge until much later, highlighting the separation and disconnect between the two forms of agency (Kuczynski, 2003[a], p.95). This affected my sense of self. I was not aware of the control I had over my cognitions and behavior, leaving me dependent on my mother. (L-A3-8)

Laura discovered her agency when she went to college – she began to realize that she was in charge of her own thoughts and behavior and she embraced this new-found sense of agency and the many opportunities college provided her to express this agency.

This change also affected Laura’s perspective of her mother:

My college experience taught me how to be more critical about my surrounding environments, and so I began to question everything my mother did (Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002, p. 80). This, of course, did not support her then-current parenting phase, and because my agency and her parenting did not align at this time, conflict arose constantly. (L-A3-15)

When she came home from college for the summer there was a great deal of conflict present in their interactions. Here you see a brief mention of this along with a description of the adjustments in agency that both parent and child made to create a more harmonious relationship:

I left little room for her to share her thoughts because I felt as though it was my time to “be me” without the pressure to please her. However, after realizing we weren’t getting anywhere with our relationship, my mother moved back into the individualistic stage, and I calmed down since I was able to see opportunities for expression. (L-A3-16a)

As Laura states here, it was through her reflection in this class that gave her a broader understanding of how she enacted the script of agentic action she had learned as a child:

After some reflection, I realized that I approached my relationship with my mother the same way she did with me: I limited her opportunities to express her agency by ignoring her opinions. This limiting of opportunities on both ends greatly impacted our relationship as we both felt our needs were not being met. (L-A3-16b)

She also came to understand “that the sense of bi-directionality in parent-child relationships is important” (L-A3-18).

***Challenging scripts.*** Challenging one’s taken-for-granted script or perspective has been previously discussed. In the first dimension of moving through multiple contexts and relationships, Hannah challenged the conventional script of gendered parenting roles – of father as breadwinner, mother as homemaker. Through this process, Hannah also challenged the script she held of her “normal” family of origin. She came to a fuller understanding of her own relationship with each of her parents and shifted toward a new, broader perspective of how she envisions her future family – one where both mother and father are involved in their children’s lives.

Additionally, Hannah recognized and challenged her teacher script. As stated in her introduction, Hannah realized she had learned a script for teaching that reflected a philosophy of “*the teacher bestowing knowledge onto the learner.*” She was able to challenge this script and connect this to her new understanding of how we learn scripts concerning parenting from our family of origin as well. Hannah expanded her philosophy of practice to include opportunities for parents to reflect on their own families of origin.

Stacy challenged scripts in a similar fashion, as did Hannah. Stacy was struck by what she learned in module four about the benefits of father involvement and the tendency for mothers to act as gatekeepers to, or mediators of, father-child interaction. In



this module, students read about the benefits of involved fathers on children's development (Lamb, 2002), viewed a video on father involvement that addresses the influence of mothers' on father-child interaction (Reiner, 2005), and discussed a handout with quotes from mother representing a variety of perspectives on fathers. In this discussion post, Stacy challenged societal norms that may perpetuate the role of mother as gatekeeper:

I also loved the video on to be a father, it was really interesting, engaging and had a lot of good information. Fathers are definitely just as important as the mother - i [*sic*] think society tends to forget that being that the mother is the one who carries the baby, breastfeeds and takes a leave from work. I think looking at research in regards to what happens when a father is not present in a child's life is very telling - they are more likely to become a teen parent, become incarcerated and much more. This clearly shows just how important fathers are in their childrens [*sic*] lives. (S-M4D-4)

Stacy discussed this topic extensively in module four, and in the module five reflection paper. She also applied this topic to all three written assignments. In her final case analysis paper, Stacy reflected on instances in which she had previously observed this notion of mothers as gatekeepers, only to gain a new perspective on the possible underlying motivations and consequences of this practice:

This is something I have definitely seen, but never acknowledged what it was or the effects it has. For example, I've seen a dad go to put shoes on his little girl, but the mother insisted on doing it herself rather than letting him do it. She took over the task while the dad stood back. (S-A3-5)

Before, seeing this scenario, I never recognized it as maternal gatekeeping or realized that there were negative repercussions of the mother doing this and that her reasoning for doing so may be along the lines of thinking the father isn't as capable as her. (S-A3-6)

Through her broadened horizon, Stacy feels able to recognize maternal gatekeeping in observations of others as well as reflections on herself in her future parenting role:

Now, being aware of what maternal gatekeeping is and the ability to relate it to real life examples, I will be able to recognize not only when it happens with others, but I may be able to recognize it in myself if I unknowingly begin to be a maternal gatekeeper. By understanding and acknowledging what maternal gatekeeping is- I hope in the future that I will indeed be able to recognize it in myself if it happens. I could then reflect on why it is happening so I can change it. The last thing I would want to do is maternal gatekeep, given that we've learned about the importance of an involved father in children's lives. Fathers interact with children in a different way than mothers do and both types of interactions are just as important. An involved father can lead to better academic achievement on the child's part along with a plethora of other positive things that come as a result of having an involved father. (S-A3-7)

As discussed briefly in Kristen's introduction, she initially responded quite positively to the mother-son interaction viewed in module 10. She reveals her previous perspective involving a strong preference toward parents taking advantage of teachable moments:

I agree with you that although the mother continued to encourage the child to name other animals she did it in a fun and respectful way. She took this wonderful learning moment and encouraged her child to continue working on skills such as naming the animals and talking about all the animals in the puzzle. If the mother would not have continued to encourage her child she may have missed a valuable learning moment. (K-DM10-3)

Through continued dialogue with peers and the instructor that offered a variety of perspectives on this interaction, Kristen begins to trouble her perspective by acknowledging how conventional norms in society may contribute to her previously unquestioned – and previously celebrated – perspective:

[Peer] thank you for your post- This mother and son did seem to be enjoying their time together. I often think as parents we want and feel we need to make each interaction "educational" for our children, because we have recieved [*sic*] the message that, this is what a good parent does". This is a good reminder that sometimes we need to step back and allow the child to take the lead and learning will come naturally. (K-DM10-6)

Kristen goes on to explain the process of how her shifting perspective in this area took shape through viewing the videos and engaging in open dialogue with peers that revealed alternative perspectives. She concludes by reflecting on her own script (or imagic store) for parent-child interaction and where that may stem from:

I found the discussion really interesting. As I watched the two videos I thought that both interactions were great. Both mothers were engaged with their child and enjoying an experience. As I read through the discussion I become more aware of how in clip one the mother was using her goals in guide the interaction. I looked at this as a mother taking advantage of a "'teachable moment'" and helping her son expand her vocabulary. I appreciated the discussion because from my "'im-magic'" [*sic*] store this type of interaction is what I know and what I do with my children. I'm not sure if it is because I am a teacher and my parents were both teachers, so we are always "'teaching'" new things to our children and looking for ways to incorporate new information. This discussion has given me a new perspective and it has been interesting looking at how others have viewed this same set of videos. (K-DM10-7)

In another post she speaks directly about this challenged script:

In the Ruth Thomas interview she talked about the parent child script. As a child when we have parent interaction we learned both the child, and the parent script. Than when we become parents and are in the parent role we have a script that we have learned and the cycle of interaction is repeated. This made sense to me and could explain why I looked at the interaction in video clip 1 as so natural and normal. As I stated above my parents were educators and probably had "'an agenda or goal'" when they were interacting with me. This is the script that I learned and have carried it on to my own parenting and through the lens that I look through it seems natural. This class and discussion has given me a chance to be open to other perspective, and to take a closer look at my own perspective both of these Ruth Thomas talked about as steps in the process of making changes. (K-DM10-8)

She continues to examine her script through module 10 and 11. In her final case analysis paper she recognizes this experience as "one of the biggest learning moments" (K-A3-8a). In the following statements, Kristen acknowledges her previous script, where it originated from, and how it plays out in her own parenting:

I viewed this clip as a mother enjoying time with her son, helping him expand his vocabulary, and taking an advantage of a teachable moment (K-A3-8d). Both of my parents were teachers, and I am a teacher myself so this type of play is what my experience has been made up of (K-A3-8e). As I read the posts and thought about this in terms of the child's goals and parents goals, I had a new appreciation for this interaction (K-A3-8f).

Through further examination of her shifting perspective in terms of course material and peer dialogue, Kristen concludes with the following two statements that reflect shifting perspectives toward a broader, more nuanced understanding of parent-child interactions she intends to apply to her own parenting as well as her work in parent education:

As a parent and parent educator, I really found this information helpful and informational. Sometimes as parents we need to step back and allow the child to take the lead and we need to listen, and move along with them. This is a chance for you to learn something new about your child, or yourself. As Dr. Ruth Thomas stated, "once you have an aha moment you never go back." (K-A3-9e)

This course has opened my eye to the many different facets of parent-child relationship and interactions. I have not only been able to take many pieces away to enhance my relationships with my children, but I have been able to learn new information which I will be able to pass along to the families that I encounter in Early Child Family Education. (K-A3-10)

## **Summary**

This chapter presented findings of a post-intentional study on how shifting perspectives takes shape for adult learners through a graduate-level parent-child interaction course. I have introduced six participants and their unique, yet shared experiences of shifting perspectives around 10 topics related to parent-child interaction and professional practice in parent education. These stories were used to capture and articulate four dimensions of this phenomenon. The dimensions of moving through multiple contexts and relationships, distancing and taking ownership, cognitive-affective

conflict, and broadening horizons were described as manifested through participants' experiences. The final chapter will explore the theoretical applications to these findings and draw implications of these findings for pedagogy in higher education, and future research.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter I first provide a brief overview of the study and summarize findings within the framework of the primary research questions. Then, I discuss implications of the research findings with the intention of understanding perspective shift of adult learners in general, and specifically through the professional preparation of parent educators. The chapter concludes by noting limitations of the study, suggesting future directions for conducting phenomenological research, and investigating connections between shifting perspectives and professional development.

### **Brief Overview of Research Study**

In this study I used Vagle's (2014a) post-intentional phenomenology to examine adult learners' lived-through experiences of shifting perspectives through a university, graduate-level parent-child interaction course. Shifting one's perspective represents a dynamic and nuanced process of changing or transforming one's beliefs, assumptions, or actions to be more inclusive, thoughtful and justified (Mezirow, 2000). The aim for studying shifting perspectives phenomenologically was to better understand how the process took shape for adult learners through an important aspect of professional preparation. Results inform recommendations for learning environment design and pedagogy aimed towards promoting shifting perspectives in adult learners in higher education settings.

**Research questions.** The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to pursue greater understanding of the lived-through experience of shifting perspectives through the context of a graduate-level, university course on parent-child interaction.

Specifically, one primary and two secondary research questions guide this study, and are as follows: (1) *How might the phenomenon of shifting perspectives take shape for adult learners through a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction?* (2) *About which subjects might adult learners experience a shifting of perspective when studying parent-child interaction?* (3) *How might the elements of the learning environment and instructional design contribute to adult learners' experiences of a shifting perspective through a course on parent-child interaction?*

**Research context.** Shifting perspectives was investigated within the context of a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction offered online at the University of Minnesota. In *FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction*, students “analyze and critique parent-child interaction theory and research, consider implications for and apply course material to professional work and personal experience” (Cline, 2015, p. 1). In this course adult students encounter design elements common to online pedagogy intended to promote conceptual change and transformative learning. Elements included readings, videos, live and ongoing class discussion, bi-weekly reflection papers and three written assignments. Rather than transmitting information directly to students through lectures and other presentations, the instructor serves as more of a facilitator, scaffolding students’ processing of material by “participating in online discussion, posting thought-provoking questions, posing problems or scenarios for applied understanding, and occasionally correcting misinformation” (Walker et al., 2010, p. 74).

**Research design.** In this study I employed Vagle’s (2014a) post-intentional phenomenological approach, which consists of a five-component process for developing

a phenomenological investigation, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting the findings. I frame this study with a post-structural philosophy asserting that knowledge, or what we come to know and understand, is always tentative, and always in process (Vagle, 2010). Similarly, I understand the intentional relationship between persons and their lived-through world as always interconnected in complex, partial and fleeting ways (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). A whole-parts-whole phenomenological approach framed four phases of data analysis (Vagle, 2014a). What comes to be known or understood through this study is a tentative and contextual manifestation representing the “dynamic interrelationships that tie participants, the researcher, the produced text, and their positionalities together” (Vagle, 2014a, p. 30). In this study I use Vagle’s (2014a) post-intentional approach to better understand the lived experience of adult learners’ shifting perspectives during a key component of parent education professional practice (e.g., parent-child interaction course).

**Research findings.** A whole-parts-whole phenomenological data analysis resulted in four tentative manifestations of how shifting perspectives took shape through a parent-child interaction course (Vagle, 2014a). In other words, adult learners’ experiences of shifting perspectives through a parent-child interaction course were manifested through: a) *multiple contexts and relationships within and outside the course*, b) *distancing and taking ownership of one’s perspective and experience*, c) *experiencing cognitive-affective conflict*, and d) *broadening one’s horizon*. These four dimensions directly address the primary research question – how shifting perspectives takes shape. The two secondary research questions (i.e., subjects about which adult learners shift



perspectives, pedagogical elements contributing to shifting perspectives) are addressed by findings embedded within each dimension. The findings responding to each of the three research questions are discussed below.

***Research question one: How might the phenomenon of shifting perspectives take shape for adult learners through a graduate-level course on parent-child***

***interaction?*** The primary research question was answered in the form of four tentative manifestations depicting how shifting perspectives took shape through the parent-child interaction course. They are as follows:

*Multiple contexts and relationships within and outside the course.* Participants processed their shifting perspectives across multiple contexts within the course (i.e., discussion, chat, reflection papers, and written assignments) and outside the boundaries of the structured learning environment (e.g., recent events, memories of the past, anticipations for the future). Processing also moved through relationships with other students in the course (as well as the instructor) and outside the course such as parents, children, parenting partners, and families with whom participants already do (or plan to) work. Hannah, for example, processed her shifting perspective regarding parenting roles and styles in activities and assignments in nearly every module throughout the course. Additionally, Hannah connected this processing to her own family-of-origin. As with other participants, Hannah's experience illustrates how lived-through experiences in contexts and relationships from outside the course interact with course material to construct new and relevant understanding leading to shifting perspectives.

The particular movement through these contexts and relationships reflect Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) post-structural conception of *lines of flight* in which all things that explode or take off in nuanced and unpredictable lines of flight are understood as fluid and changing. Similarly, the phenomenon of shifting perspectives manifests itself in intricate, dynamic, and fleeting lines of flight that moves through multiple contexts and relationships. In teacher education it is common to design learning experiences that promote transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom environment and teaching experience (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Thomas et al., 1992). Using Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy of the rhizomatic – or unbounded – nature of knowledge and learning (or change) suggests a re-imagining of transfer from a unidirectional (preparation to practice) to a more multi-directional, socially negotiated, process that may take lines of flight through multiple contexts and relationships within and outside the structured learning environment.

*Distancing and taking ownership of one's perspective and experience.* The second tentative manifestation describes ways in which participants moved from distancing one's self from the subject area toward personal identification by taking ownership of one's perspective and experience. By writing about one's perspective in a detached way the topic about which one was shifting perspectives was held at a distance. Engagement with the subject (or concept) occurred, but it remained an intellectual, impersonal endeavor.

For each participant distancing and taking ownership manifested itself in unique lines of flight through course contexts by distancing their connections to a subject in one context (e.g., discussion forum) and taking ownership of their intimate positionality (i.e.,

connection) with that subject in another context (e.g., reflection paper) in the same week (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). At other times there was a more linear progression throughout the course that moved from distancing to taking ownership, or a consistent distancing positionality through the entire course until the final paper when ownership (or identifying with) the subject was taken up. The embodied dimension of distancing and taking ownership may be represented by the third tentative manifestation, experiencing cognitive-affective conflict.

*Experiencing cognitive-affective conflict.* Inner conflict (as in turmoil, unrest, agitation, or disruption) may be experienced on a cognitive and/or affective level. Participants reported experiencing inner conflicts on cognitive and/or affective levels. Inner conflict is present when a degree of conflict exists between one's prior beliefs and assumptions (perspective) and an alternative perspective that has been presented (through material, a peer, or instructor). For example, Megan experienced inner conflict between her desire to seek answers and alternative perspectives exposed through course material presenting a constructivist approach to parent education practice.

The inner conflict dimension experienced by participants takes many names in the literature but is present in most theories of change and transformation. One of the original conditions for conceptual change is dissatisfaction with one's own conception (Posner et al., 1982). Additional theories of conceptual change involve synonymous appraisals of stress, threat, or challenge embedded in the change process (Gregoire, 2003). Similarly, transformative learning theory emphasizes the disorienting dilemma as a core triggering mechanism for perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000). In all cases change and

transformation is understood to be an emotionally difficult task involving risk and vulnerability related to challenging and adjusting one's prior ways of thinking and being in the world (Mezirow, 2000; Thomas, 1996).

Participants depicted the lived-through experience of conflict, turmoil, or dissonance in their tangled, fleeting, and raw forms. Kristen's story of shifting perspectives regarding overindulging her children powerfully illuminates how deeply rooted and emotionally charged parenting beliefs can be and how difficult they may be to change, even for parent education professionals. Kristen's story, like many other participants, suggests that pre-service parent education preparation must design opportunities for learners to critically examine their own beliefs and perspectives related to the topics and concepts they are learning (Pazurek-Tork, 2013). Although Kristen does not directly discuss the influence of this shifting perspective on her professional practice as a parent educator, we have evidence that she teaches around overindulgence. We are able to consider how Kristen's journey of shifting perspectives may have afforded her greater empathy and pedagogical thoughtfulness when working with this topic specifically, or in general, as she supports other parents who may experience cognitive-affective conflict while shifting perspectives (van Manen, 1991).

*Broadening horizons.* The fourth tentative manifestation reflects movement from a previously narrow, unquestioned perspective toward a more open viewpoint where perspectives are more complex, dynamic, and reasoned. For some, this broadening horizon occurred through a new understanding of bi-directionality in parent-child interaction or in parent educator-parent interaction. Central to the course is an

examination of child and parent as independent, agentic beings, capable of influencing the other and the relationship (Kuczynski, 2003b, p. 9). Several participants shifted perspectives from a superficial acceptance of bi-directionality toward an expanded understanding of how it applies to and/or may be fostered in their own parent-child relationships. Perspectives were also shifted toward a more bi-lateral philosophy of practice in parent education, or parent educator-parent interaction. This expanded perspective begins to understand education as moving beyond direct information-giving to one that respects parents as experts of their own family who are capable of critical reflection and change (Jackson, 1986; Thomas et al., 1992).

For others, this process occurred by challenging previously held scripts for parent-child relationships or parent educator practice. Parenting scripts are learned as a child and teaching scripts as a student (Lortie, 1975; Siegel, 1999; van Manen, 1991). Each script represents a stereotyped perspective based on individual experiences (Schank & Abelson, 1977). In this study, participants challenged those taken-for-granted scripts by critically examining their own assumptions in light of alternative perspectives offered through course material and classmates. In response, participants shifted perspectives from a previously narrow viewpoint toward a broader, more inclusive frame of reference on parent-child interaction or parent educator practice.

***Research question two: About which subjects might adult learners experience a shifting of perspective when studying parent-child interaction?*** Shifting perspectives is only possible when perspectives are directed toward something, such as a topic or subject. According to the six participants, there were approximately 10 subjects about

which adult learners shifted their perspectives through the parent-child interaction course. While interconnected in nuanced ways, the topics may be distinguished between concepts taught in the class related to parent-child interaction and considerations of one's professional practice as a parent educator. Subject areas related to parent-child interaction concepts included: *Agency in parent-child interaction, parenting roles, overindulgence, goal-compatibility in parent-child interaction, and balance of autonomy and structure.* Pedagogy-oriented subject areas included: *parent educator role, promoting parental growth and development, seeking answers, moving beyond information, and recognizing multiple perspectives.* Table 1 lists each participant and the subjects about which they shifted perspectives, organized under the two categories of parent-child interaction and parent educator practice (See p. 174).

Among the six participants Kristin and Laura were the only two who shifted their perspectives exclusively in areas related to parent-child interaction. However, both drew connections to concepts related to parent-child interaction to professional practice. Therefore, within all participants there was a dual and connected focus on content knowledge and pedagogical practice. A long-standing challenge in the field of teacher education has been bridging the divide between learning about a subject and learning how to teach that subject (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Teacher education programs today are responding to this challenge by beginning field experience earlier so teacher candidates may consider content in context. Although the participants in this study were not required to participate in a parallel field experience, findings demonstrated that participants did consider content in several contexts. These contexts

included professional practice settings as well as personal relationships with children and parents. For example, Brianna applied her new understanding of children's agency to foster her children's problem-solving skills. These findings highlight the importance of providing opportunities for adult learners to make sense of course material in a way that is relevant and meaningful to their lived experience (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

***Research question three: How might the elements of the learning environment and instructional design contribute to adult learners' experiences of a shifting perspective through a course on parent-child interaction?*** The third research question pursued an understanding of the ways in which elements of the learning environment and instruction practice may have contributed to or facilitated participants' experiences of shifting perspectives. Course content, learning activities, and assignments were deliberately designed to promote conditions for conceptual change (Thomas, 1996) and perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000). The findings provide validity that these elements were successful in contributing to participants' shifting perspectives.

*Learning environment design elements.* The use of readings and videos offered stimulating material used to guide learners through critical examination of their own and others' perspectives. Participants found the use of videos to provide a particularly striking contribution to their shifting perspectives. Participants regularly referenced appreciation for the ways in which viewing and discussing videos of parent-child interaction triggered new ways of understanding course material. Videos and other visual media are used to promote conceptual change by triggering an emotional reaction that helps draw out a person's beliefs and perspectives (Bransford et al., 1990; Thomas et al., 1992). Open-

ended discussions of these videos are facilitated to guide learners through reflections on their own perspective and group dialogue that reveals multiple perspectives (Thomas et al., 2006).

Through peer dialogue in the form of weekly asynchronous discussions and synchronous chat, participants had opportunities to recognize similarities and differences in perspectives among classmates (Meyers, 2008). The diversity of perspectives was often surprising to participants, and this diversity sometimes sparked cognitive-affective conflict with their own perspectives. Some participants used discussion and chat to reflect on the dissonance they were experiencing, or to discuss and/or validate the perspective they were shifting toward (Mezirow, 2000). Through individual reflective writing opportunities in bi-weekly reflection papers and written assignments, participants examined their own and others' perspectives even more deeply, challenged their current beliefs, and discussed shifting perspectives as they were taking place (Sinatra, 2005; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Participants often recognized the occurring changes in their ways of thinking about parent-child interaction and professional practice, which was regularly reflected in the individual writing assignments.

*Instructional practice.* In the parent-child interaction course instructors facilitate learning to allow adult learners to work through and make sense of the material in a way that is meaningful to them (Pazurek-Tork, 2013; Strike & Posner, 1985; Thomas et al., 1992). Expectations for ongoing engagement in course dialogue and demonstration of deep thinking in written assignments is emphasized over rote memorization or assimilation to the instructor's philosophy (Gragg, 1940; Walker et al., 2009). For study



participants shifting perspectives required an environment that supported cognitive processing over time and through multiple contexts and relationships. Instructors pose open-ended, reflective questions to generate group discussion and personal reflection (Walker et al., 2010).

Participant data suggests students felt safe to explore and even challenge their beliefs and perspective, which was at times an uncomfortable and difficult experience. However, through this safe and respectful environment, participants took the risk and persisted through their shifting perspectives (Strike & Posner, 1985; Thomas, 1996; Thomas et al., 1992). Megan's data illustrates her feeling of security that encouraged her expression of struggles to make sense of new ideas regarding the complexity of parenting and parent educator practice – that there may not be one right answer to parenting challenges that can be provided by an expert parent educator.

### **Implications for Promoting Shifting Perspectives Through the Professional Preparation of Adult Learners**

The findings of this study speak directly to how the process of shifting perspectives takes shape through a structured learning environment designed to foster change and transformation. While the findings bring us closer to understanding how the phenomenon is experienced, they also indicate learning environment design elements that may contribute to shifting perspectives. Embedded within each dimension are expectations for the learner's role and engagement in the environment that may foster perspective shifting. Three dimensions (course design, instructional practice, and learner

expectations) for promoting perspective shifting with adult learners in higher education are discussed below.

**Implications for course design.** When implementing an educational goal of perspective shifting an instructor must consider the activities, assignments and environment through which learners' may shift their perspectives. Research on conditions that may foster transformative learning and conceptual change primarily emphasize four complementary elements of the learning environment that also emerged in this study's findings: peer dialogue, personal reflection, meaningful learning, and engaging material (Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Vasniado, 2013). Participant data supports the value of creating opportunities for dual social and individual dimensions of processing material.

Giving learners ongoing opportunities to discuss their own perspective and critically examine material through *peer dialogue* exposes learners to alternative perspectives (Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Sinatra, 2005). A common response in the data presented in this study was, "I had never thought of it like that before." Exposure to multiple perspectives can occur in a variety of activities such as collaborative projects, problem solving case scenarios, etc. In this study small group discussions were guided by open-ended questions to prompt critical examination of course material. The important takeaway is that the purpose of this peer dialogue is inquiry-based rather than product-driven (Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Vasniado, 2013). In other words, thoughtful questions, consideration, and insights should be the expectation for peer dialogue by instructors and students rather than demonstrations of knowledge acquisition.

Initially, students who are used to performance learning may feel pressure to present the correct answer, which we saw with Megan. When this occurs students like Megan look to the instructor for validation. The open-dialogue process can feel initially uncomfortable for students who have been socialized in performance-based pedagogy. These learners may need encouragement for their insights and analysis. Over time they may feel empowered to share and examine their own voice as they gain trust in this new way of learning. Comfort in a constructive, process-oriented learning environment may create opportunities to critically examine and shift previously unquestioned perspectives.

*Individual reflection.* By giving parallel opportunities for private meta-cognitive reflection – or reflection on one’s learning – students may reveal any struggle they are experiencing with their role as a learner. The individual reflection creates another medium for the instructor to validate process over product. Having regular opportunities to reflect on one’s learning provides a space for learners to examine one’s own perspective, consider alternatives to which they have been exposed through peer dialogue, and process any disorientation or cognitive-affective conflict they may be experiencing (Thomas, 1996). This individual reflection is mutually beneficial as it provides a space for learners to work through their learning and it reveals to the instructor where each learner is being challenged, how they are learning, what concepts are sticking with them, and how they are transferring this to their own contexts (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

In transformative pedagogy opportunities for individual reflection have been offered through journals, blogs, and other cultural media (Kasworm & Bowles, 2012). In

this study students submitted seven bi-weekly reflection papers, each in response open-ended questions regarding personal and/or professional connections they are making and areas in which students are feeling stretched in their learning. It was striking to see differences between how learners processed material through peer dialogue (asynchronous discussion and synchronous chat) and individual reflection papers. These differences emerged for many participants in the ways distancing and taking ownership took shape through the course. This finding suggests that students may benefit from a space to practice ownership privately before claiming it in a public dimension.

Two other important aspects of fostering shifting perspectives with adults include making learning meaningful and engaging. Learners are unlikely to engage in a way that challenges one's prior knowledge unless it is personally relevant and triggers an emotional reaction. These dimensions can be facilitated through a number of routes. For example, sometimes facilitation is as straightforward as inviting learners to participate. Because adult learners naturally bring their prior beliefs to the learning environment, they simply need to be invited to consider personal relevance and implications. When students are only asked to process material for comprehension they are likely to assimilate this information unconsciously to fit with their prior beliefs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). A performance-based learning environment may cause learners to memorize facts to perform well on a test, only to discard this knowledge afterward, or to interpret the information in a way that perpetuates their prior frame of reference rather than questioning it. In both cases learning does not impact the learner in a meaningful way that leads to improved practice. Instead, when learners are encouraged to draw connections to

their preconceptions and to their personal and/or professional contexts and relationships (as they did in this study), they may be more invested in the learning in a way that could trigger shifting perspectives.

One strategy to promote personal connections is the use of art, literature, film and drama (Kasworm & Bowles, 2012). These mediums may trigger emotional reactions by exposing representations of the material that connects to or contradict one's own perspective. Through peer dialogue stimulated by material presented through engaging mediums, learners may share their own reaction and be exposed to alternative perspectives. In this study video clips of parent-child interaction were used regularly to spark emotional reactions and to stimulate rich dialogue, thereby uncovering multiple perspectives (Bransford et al., 1999). The data revealed several instances where learners were surprised by the number of distinct interpretations of the same video. The differences in perspective within a group of learners who share a commitment to strengthening families helped learners recognize the complexity of perspectives on parenting that they may encounter in their work with families.

**Implications for pedagogy.**

Fostering transformative learning is much more than implementing a series of instructional strategies with adult learners. It is first and foremost about educating from a particular educational philosophy, with its own assumptions about the purpose of education, the role of the educator, and the nature of knowledge.

(Cranton & Taylor, 2012, p. 15)

Implementing the strategies presented in the previous section with the intention of fostering shifting perspectives must be done from a pedagogical philosophy that supports change and transformation. A transformative pedagogy may require an epistemological shift for educators. Similar to study participants, a shift would be required for those who adhere to an expert-driven, didactic approach to teaching. Several philosophies of practice have been associated with conceptual change and transformative learning; in the next paragraphs, I will focus on three philosophies that complement the findings presented in this study.

First, a teaching philosophy must acknowledge that learning changes learners – and that true learning encompasses the learner’s past, present, and future. A *constructivist* epistemology asserts that learning is a process in which new information is combined with prior knowledge to form a new understanding reflecting a revision of the old into a synthesis of new and old (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Vasniado, 2013). Approaching instruction from a constructivist epistemology creates space for adult learners to make sense of material in personally meaningful ways (Bruner, Goodnow & Austin, 1986). In this study participants explicitly discuss the benefit of drawing personally relevant connections to contexts and relationships outside the course. Applying course material to personal and professional lives aided participants in understanding how abstract concepts transfer to actual parent-child interaction and parent education practice. Pairing a process-oriented pedagogy with learning activities that include promoting critical examination may provide space for questioning, challenging, and shifting one’s perspective.

Second, findings presented in this study support the need for democratic instruction that facilitates respectful, open class discussion and invites multiple perspectives (Brookfield, 2013). A democratic classroom attends to the power dynamic between instructor and learner, and among all learners. Teaching democratically, therefore, requires the instructor to recede some of her control over what and how students learn. Empowering learners to direct the process of exploring her own and others' perspectives through peer dialogue, personal reflection, and other activities, may open learners up to new ways of thinking. As illustrated through the tentative manifestation of cognitive-affective conflict, shifting one's perspective may involve some vulnerability and emotional turmoil. Facilitating a democratic learning environment was imperative for participants to feel safe to question their prior knowledge and take the emotional risk of shifting perspectives (Mezirow, 2000; Thomas, 1996).

Finally, the third philosophy that may guide one's teaching in a way that fosters shifting perspectives is *pedagogical tact*. van Manen (1991) describes a way of teaching that encompasses sensitivity to the learner as a developing being. Teaching with tact means to touch the lives of learners through thoughtful responses in pedagogical moments. Other educational texts highlight the need for teachers to be adaptive in their expertise and to be able to enact one's knowledge and skills through the unpredictable nature of teachable moments (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). This proficiency as an educator requires knowledge of the learner, awareness of the goals and context, and an understanding of the self in relation to the learner. Similarly, pedagogical tact is the

enactment of thoughtful reflective practice oriented to the developing learner (van Manen, 1991).

Teaching with tact may foster shifting perspectives simply by creating a respectful atmosphere. Adult learners who feel respected may be motivated to fully engage in the learning environment with their full selves rather than as reservoirs to gather or regurgitate information. Pedagogical tact is essentially good teaching that may inspire authentic engagement through the learning environment, which could create opportunities for growth. In this study participants were continuously encouraged to engage intimately in their learning environment by considering how course material applied to their personal and professional lives. Part of practicing pedagogical tact is thoughtfulness about educational goals, or rather, expectations held for the learner's role.

*Implications for learners.* Bi-directionality exists in the instructor-learner relationship in a similar manner to the parent-child relationship. Shifting perspectives are promoted through course design and instruction yet learners must also be ready to engage in ways that facilitate their own transformative journeys. Learners come to the learning environment with preconceptions about the subject as well as roles of teacher and learner (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The strength or coherence of one's prior knowledge as well as one's commitment to said knowledge might influence openness to critically examining their own perspective and considering alternatives (Dole & Sinatra, 1998). Highly engaged learners – characterized by deep processing and significant meta-cognitive reflection – may be the most capable of examining one's own and others' perspectives in ways that lead to change (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Dole &



Sinatra, 1998). Motivation to engage at this level is also important, which may be related to how dissatisfied the learner is with his or her existing ideas, the personal relevance of information, one's interest in deep thinking, and influences within the social learning environment (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Dole & Sinatra, 1998; Weimer, 2012).

Kristen, for example, held a strong belief about her role as a mother to care for her children that limited her openness in acknowledging her tendency to over-nurture. However, Kristen's interest in helping parents with whom she worked understand the negative consequences of overindulgence paired with her striking experience of seeing over-nurture in her own parenting motivated her to critically examine the beliefs underlying her over-nurturing tendencies. By deeply processing material on overindulgence through multiple contexts and relationships within and outside the course, Kristen began shifting her perspectives toward a new understanding of her role as a mother that emphasized teaching her children important skills to care for themselves. In summary, course design and instructional approaches must invite learners "to think, to be, and to act in new and enhanced ways" and learners must be or become open, engaged, and motivated to move through the process of shifting perspectives (Kasworm & Bowles, 2012, p. 390).

### **Limitations**

The specific context and unique participants in this phenomenological investigation of shifting perspectives may be considered limitations of a broader understanding of the phenomenon. A phenomenological investigation seeks to understand

lived experience of a phenomenon and, in order to do so, goes to individuals who may have experienced said phenomenon (Vagle, 2014a). The ability to capture the whole of a phenomenon through selected participants' lived experience is not feasible, nor is it the goal of phenomenology (van Manen, 2014). By investigating the phenomenon of shifting perspectives through the lived experience of six female adult learners, I have captured a glimpse into this phenomenon. Additional research may be needed to gain a broader picture of this phenomenon through investigations that include male participants. It is also important to recognize that this phenomenon was focused on the adult learner's experience, and may not be transferable to children's learning experiences.

The context of this study is another important consideration when accounting for the findings. This phenomenon was investigated through participation in one particular course, offered entirely online. Online instruction was not emphasized in this investigation, though one study of transformative pedagogy highlighted factors unique to the online learning environment. Meyers (2008) suggests that engaging in dialogue over several days in asynchronous discussion may create a beneficial space for exposure to and critical reflection on multiple perspectives. Additionally, Meyers (2008) notes that greater anonymity in online learning may encourage greater disclosure of personal information. Despite these unique elements of online learning, I believe the implications of the findings may be useful to other course design formats (i.e., offline/classroom) since use of readings, videos, small and large discussion, and reflective writing are not unique to online experiences. Additional research may be needed to investigate how shifting perspectives takes shape in face-to-face classroom settings.

Another consideration is the lens I used to investigate the phenomenon of shifting perspectives. In chapter three I detail a deliberate choice to focus on the evolution of shifting perspectives via participants' course participation (in the form of digital text) (See phase four of data analysis, p. 44). I did not pursue descriptions of lived experience of the phenomenon directly from participants in the form of interviews or lived experience descriptions (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, I cannot directly report on how participants might describe a lived-experience of shifting perspectives. Interest in understanding what it is like for adult learners to experience shifting perspectives may require additional research using alternative research questions and data sources (e.g., participant interview).

### **Future Directions**

Future directions for this line of inquiry include further exploration into the promotion of shifting perspective in post-secondary settings as a way to prepare adult learners for professional preparation. Shifting perspectives were found to take shape with adult learners through a graduate-level course on parent-child interaction, but future research may guide similar investigations of how the phenomenon takes shape through other post-secondary coursework. For example, the course context may be one less deeply rooted in personal connections than parent-child interaction in order to understand how shifting perspectives may take shape in courses focused on curriculum design or teaching methods.

Additionally, questions remain regarding the connection between shifting one's perspective and acquiring core competencies established by a professional field. Research

on learning transfer suggests meaningful learning is more likely to be applied in professional practice than learning that is superficially acquired (Thomas et al., 1992). The demand for professionals to adapt knowledge and skills to changing, unpredictable needs calls for competencies to be deeply and meaningfully integrated into professional practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). When learners are expected to process material deeply, and in ways that lead to change and transformation, new ways of knowing become deeply embedded and embodied within the learner (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). The demand and benefits associated with meaningful, transformative learning warrants investigation into the ways in which shifting perspectives may connect and contribute to competency development. Future investigations of promoting shifting perspectives with adult learners may be relevantly applied to a number of contexts, content areas, and specific audiences.

## **Conclusion**

Learning in adulthood is not a neutral endeavor. Adult learners approach new learning with beliefs and perspectives that frame what is learned, how new information is processed, and how learning is transferred to practice. Therefore, post-secondary professional preparation must guide adult learners to become aware of and critically examine prior knowledge in order to recognize and revise faulty assumptions, narrow views, and rigid beliefs. Conceptual change and transformative learning theories are aptly applied to a course of study designed for the professional preparation of adult learners in higher education settings. This study delved into the processes of change and transformation to investigate the ways in which shifting perspectives take shape for adult

learners through a graduate-level parent-child interaction course. Findings suggest that shifting perspectives is manifested through multiple contexts and relationships, distancing and taking ownership, cognitive-affective conflict, and broadening horizons. Using post-intentional phenomenology these dimensions are understood to be tentative, dynamic, partial and contextually framed. Further investigation may inform the usefulness of understanding and promoting shifting perspectives in other contexts and with other audiences. However, findings suggest that shifting perspectives may be facilitated through course design and instructional practice.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> For NPEN, the term — “parents” includes key persons who play the central parenting role in a child's life.

## Tables

Table 1

*Subjects about which participants shifted perspectives*

Participant	Parent-Child Interaction	Parent Educator Practice
Brianna	Agency in parent-child interaction	Promoting parental growth and development
Hannah	Parenting roles	Parent educator philosophy & practice
Kristen	Overindulgence; Goal-compatibility in parent-child interaction	
Laura	Agency in parent-child Interaction	
Megan	Balance of autonomy and structure.	Parent educator philosophy & practice; Seeking answers; Recognizing multiple perspectives; Moving beyond information
Stacy	Parenting roles	Recognizing multiple perspectives

Table 2

*Data points representing shifting perspectives across 13 modules*

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	A1	M6	M7	M8	M9	A2	M10	M11	M12	M13	A3	General Forum
<b>Brianna</b>																	
Parent-Child Agency	X									X					X	X	
Parental Growth	X	X			X		X	X				X	X				X
<b>Hannah</b>																	
Parental Role & Styles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Philosophy of Practice											X	X	X				
<b>Kristen</b>																	
Overindulgence							X	X		X	X		X		X	X	
Goal-Compatibility												X	X				X
<b>Laura</b>																	
Parent-Child Agency	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X		X	X	
<b>Megan</b>																	
Autonomy & Structure Parent Educator Practice	X	X			X		X	X		X	X		X	X			X
Seeking Answers	X	X	X	X					X			X			X	X	
Multiple Perspectives Beyond Information												X			X		
<b>Stacy</b>																	
Beyond Info Parental Role							X				X	X	X				X
Multiple Perspectives	X			X	X	X							X		X	X	



## Figures

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### FSOS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction (sec 001) Spring 2013

Home ► My courses ►

#### Settings

- Course administration
  - Grades
- Switch role to...
  - Return to my normal role
- My profile settings

#### Quick links for students

- Watch online orientation
- User guides
- Student support forums
- Email: moodle@umn.edu

- News forum
- FSoS 5937 Syllabus
- eReserve (Password: 5tu7akz)
- Assignment One: Movie Analysis
- Assignment Two Description: Professional Practice
- Assignment Two: Criteria and Feedback for Professional Practice
- Assignment Three Description: Case Analysis Integration Paper
- Assignment Three: Guided Journaling

**1** **Module 1: Overview and Perspectives on Parent-Child Interaction**  
**Saturday, January 26th – Friday, February 1st**

- Module 1: Overview and Perspectives on Parent-Child Interaction
- Self-Introductions
- Module 1: Breeze script
- Breeze Presentation\_Introduction
- Module 1: Breeze Presentation-Part 1
- Module 1: Breeze Presentation - Part 2
- Module 1: Introduction
- Module 1: Breeze Presentation - Part 1
- Module 1: Breeze Presentation - Part 2
- Scene from "Dead Poets Society"
- "Veggies" from Family Effectiveness Training by Thomas Gordon
- Scene from pilot of television series "Once and Again"
- Module 1: Online Discussion
- Module 1: Chat Session
- Module 1: Wiggins-Agency/Communion Handout
- Module 1: Learning Reflection

Figure 1. Screenshot of home page of the Moodle course site used for the course, FSOS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction.

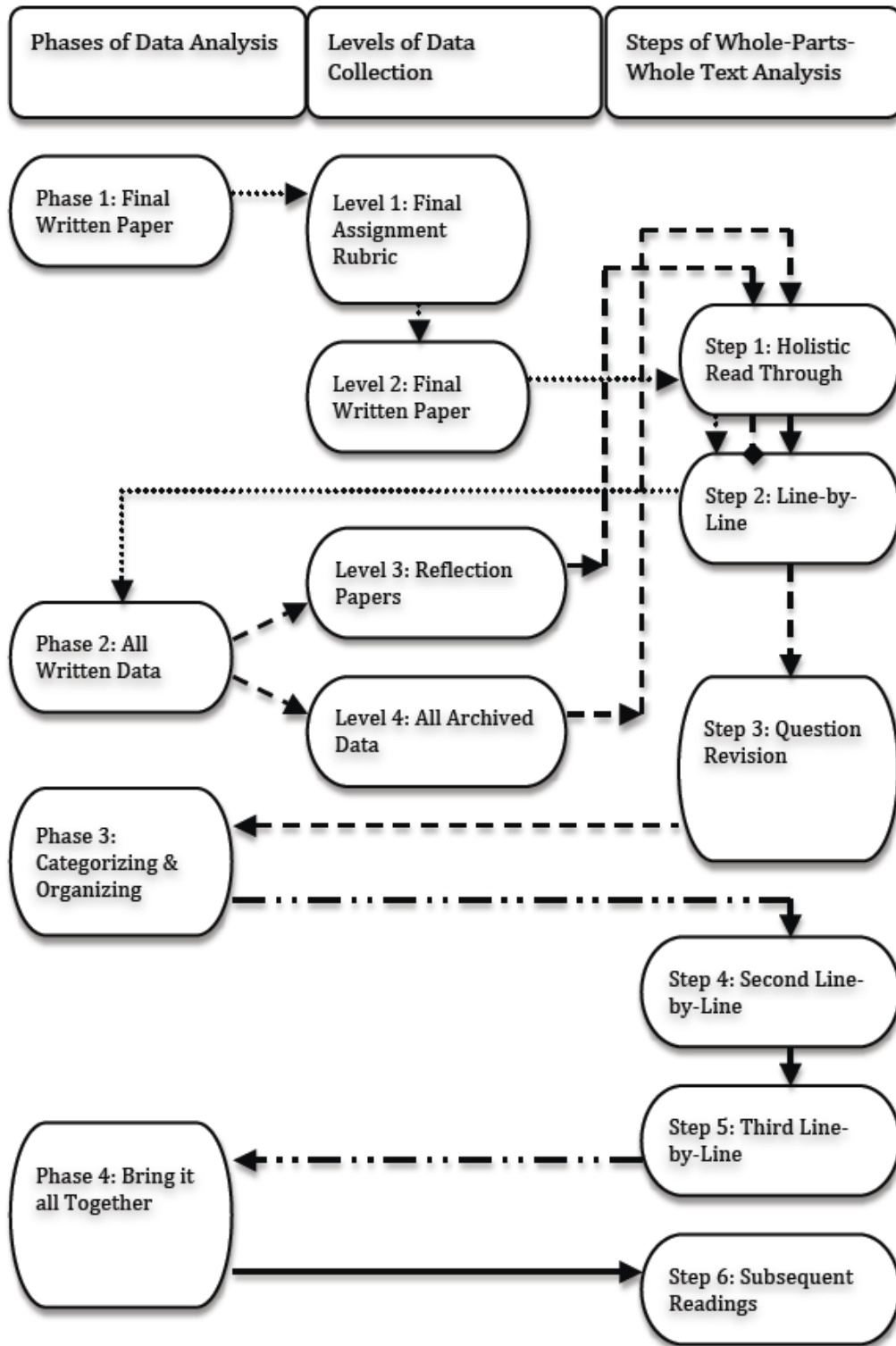


Figure 2. Flow chart of procedures for data collection and analysis.

## Appendix A

### FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction Course: 13 Module Topics

#### **Module 1: Overview and Perspectives on Parent-Child Interaction**

- Getting acquainted with fellow classmates and focus of the course
- History of the study of parent-child interaction and relationships including the shift from uni-directional to bi-directional/multi-directional thinking
- Functioning of agency, power, and communion and their interrelationships in parent-child interaction

#### **Module 2: Parenting as a Developmental Context for Parents and the Influence of the Past and the Future in Present Parent-Child Relationships**

- Parenting as an opportunity for parents to develop as persons as well as parents
- Carolyn Newberger's theory of parental social-cognitive awareness to understanding parent development
- Influence of time, reflected in past, present, and future parent-child interaction, on the dynamics of parent-child relationships

#### **Module 3. Developmental Neuroscience and Attachment**

- Developmental neuroscience perspective of parenting and parent-child interaction
- Patterns of attachment and their implications for parent-child interaction and children's development
- Encourage and constrain development theme clusters and their implications for parent-child interaction and child development

#### **Module 4: Mother-Child Father-Child Interactions and Attachment**

- Similarities & differences in (and factors influencing) mother-child and father-child interactions in infancy and early childhood
- Relationships between attachment and temperament
- Effects of the broader ecology on attachment security

#### **Module 5: Early Childhood Parent-Child Interactions**

- Development of toddlers and young children and their interactions with their parents
- Role of parent-child interaction in the development of toddlers and young children
- Cross-cultural perspective on toddler and young children's development and parent-child interaction.

#### **Module 6: School-Age Parent-Child Interactions**

- Normative changes that occur for the child and the parent-child relationship during middle childhood
- Parental roles during this stage of development
- Parenting styles how they affect the child and the parent-child relationship

#### **Module 7: Adolescent Parent-Child Interactions**

- Changes that take place during the adolescent stage of development
- Parents' role during this stage and how parents impact parent-child interactions

- Contextual factors indirectly influence the parent-child relationship because of their direct influence on one or more of the family members

**Module 8: Adult Child-Parent Interactions**

- Ambivalence in adult child-parent interactions and relationships
- An intergenerational family systems approach to adult child-parent relationships
- Changing nature of early adulthood and the implications for parent-child interaction.

**Module 9: Children as Agents in Parent-Child Interaction**

- Children's exercise of agency, the cognitive construction of agency, and the difference between the exercise of agency and felt agency
- Learned helplessness and a mastery orientation in children
- Role of children as active social agents in their families and society/culture

**Module 10: Parents as Agents in Parent-Child Interaction**

- Parenting as a goal regulation process
- Goal compatibility and incompatibility between parents and children
- Forces and conditions underlying change and continuity in parenting behaviors

**Module 11: Parents as Agents in Parent-Child Interaction (Continued)**

- Role of parental cognitions in effective child socialization
- Variables affecting children's response to parents' socialization tactics
- Impact of parenting cognitions involving their beliefs about their ability to be effective caregivers on parent-child interaction

**Module 12: Families as Agents in Their Environments**

- Parents influence on their children as managers, organizers, facilitators and gatekeepers of social opportunities outside the family
- Role of parental monitoring in managing their family environments
- Challenges to parent-child interaction for families living in high-risk communities

**Module 13: Culture as a Context for Parent-Child Interaction and Implications for Understandings About Parent-Child Interaction for Professional Practice**

- Children's exercise of agency, the cognitive construction of agency, and the difference between the exercise of agency and felt agency
- Differences between effort and ability attributions
- Sociological perspectives on children's agency

Adapted from Cline, H. (2015, Spring). *FSoS 5937: Parent-Child Interaction syllabus*. Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN.

## Appendix B

### Email Request for Participation in Research Study

Greetings students,

I hope this message finds you well. You have received this message because you completed the course CI (or FSoS) 5937 Parent-Child Interaction with me as your instructor. As you think back on your learning experience in this course, do you recall moments when your perspective was shifted or changed through your interactions and learning in this course?

If so, I would like to invite you to participate in a study about your experiences in 5937. Your participation in this study requires minimal to no additional interaction. As you know, this course occurred in the online learning environment, Moodle. Therefore, all of your course participation is archived in text-form, including online discussion posts, reflection papers, and course assignments.

Your agreement to participate in this study will primarily allow me to access your archived course-related written content. This permission is important so that I may learn more about how learners experience perspective changes through the course parent-child interaction. Additionally, you may be asked to participate in a follow up interview or to write an additional description of your learning experiences to address any additional or new questions that arise from my review of your documented learning experience. The interview may be conducted in person at a location convenient and comfortable for you, online by video chat, or by phone. Your written description of your learning experience may be sent to me via email.

If you have any questions about the study you can contact me by email [cline048@umn.edu](mailto:cline048@umn.edu) or phone (612) 695-1899, or the Research Subjects' Advocate Line at the University of Minnesota at (612) 625-1650.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please respond accordingly to this email. Thank you for your consideration in supporting this important investigation. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,  
Heather Cline

--

Heather Cline, M.A.  
Teaching Specialist/Coordinator, Parent Education  
Department of Family Social Science  
Doctoral Candidate, Curriculum & Instruction  
University of Minnesota  
[cline048@umn.edu](mailto:cline048@umn.edu)

**Appendix C**  
Consent Form

**A phenomenological investigation of shifting perspectives through a parent-child interaction course**

You are invited to be in a research study of how adult learners experience a change in beliefs or perspectives about parent-child interaction. You were selected as a possible participant because You have completed the course FSoS/CI 5937 Parent-Child Interaction. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Heather Cline, Curriculum & Instruction, University of Minnesota

**Background Information**

The purpose of this study is: To understand what it is like to come to a new way of thinking or understanding about parent-child interactions or professional practice in parent education through a graduate-level, university course. This study hopes to gain insight into this learning process, and the teaching methods that may have contributed to this experience.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1. Agree to allow the researcher access to your discussion postings, reflection papers, written papers, and any other course submissions or contributions during the FSoS/CI 5937 Parent-Child Interaction course offered online at the University of Minnesota.
2. Participate in one of the following:
  - a. An interview about your experience shifting perspectives through the parent-child interaction course. This interview will be audio taped and will last approximately one hour. It may be conducted in several ways according to what is convenient and comfortable for you. It may be conducted in person at a location convenient and comfortable for you, online by video chat, or by phone.
  - b. A written description detailing your experiences with shifting perspectives in FSoS/CI 5937. You will be provided with prompts pertaining to elements and times in which you indicate experiences with shifting perspectives in your course material.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with this study. Several measures will be taken to assure the privacy and confidentiality of your comments and written statements. These are described in detail in the next section of this form entitled "Confidentiality."

There are no anticipated direct benefits to study participation. However, your participation will help in the design and implementation of teaching approaches that foster transformative learning in pre-service parent education courses.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality.

Audio recordings will be transcribed and statements you make may be included, confidentially, in published reports of the study findings. However, your name or specific affiliation will not be associated with any statements you make and will not be included in any report or publication of the study findings. Furthermore, the online data collection mechanisms (online course components) are secure, thus further assuring privacy and confidentiality of your information. All data will be kept by the researcher for two years following the time of data collection. At that time they will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or with the family education program. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researchers conducting this study is Heather Cline, a doctoral student in Family Education in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Minnesota. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Heather Cline by email at [cline048@umn.edu](mailto:cline048@umn.edu). You may also contact her academic adviser, Dr. Susan Walker, by email at [skwalker@umn.edu](mailto:skwalker@umn.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650. ***You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.***

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Description of FSoS 5937 Parent-Child Interaction course elements and data sources

Course Element	Element Description	Data Source (per participant)
Asynchronous Discussion	Students participate in an asynchronous (i.e., not at the same time) discussion over four days throughout each weekly module. At the beginning of each discussion, students are required to post one original response to open-ended questions pertaining to the reading and other materials required to prepare for the module topic. Students are also required to read and respond to at least four peers' posts creating numerous threads of dialogue on one or more topics over several days.	Multiple forum posts across 13 weekly modules
Synchronous Chat	Students participate in a "live" synchronous discussion as a whole class one time per week, for 10 of 13 modules. This is a fast-paced discussion facilitated by an instructor who poses approximately 6-10 open-ended questions regarding course material.	Chat transcripts from 10 sessions
Bi-Weekly Reflection Papers	<p>Students write informal reflection papers during half of the weeks in response to two questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What struck me the most on a personal and/or professional level about the concepts and learning?</i></li> <li>2. <i>Where have I been stretched by the concepts and learning?</i></li> </ol> <p>The final paper includes a unique set of course-evaluation questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What are your reactions about taking this course online?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What did you like about it? What would you change?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What other suggestions do you have for improving this course?</i></li> </ol>	Seven (1-2 page) papers
Assignment One: Move Analysis Paper	Students are asked to view a film or television episode of their choosing, and then to write a paper identify concepts related to parent-child interaction theory and research in the film portraying significant parent-child interaction.	One (4-5 page) paper
Assignment Two:	Students are asked to develop a lesson plan for their own current or anticipated professional practice that	Lesson plan, handouts, peer



Professional Practice Plan	<p>reflects parent-child interaction theories and research and will help students consider how what they are learning in this course might contribute to their professional practice.</p> <p>A peer review process requires students to give and receive feedback on the lesson plan.</p> <p>Students complete this assignment by writing a reflective analysis regarding the original lesson plan and how they would (or not) improve the lesson based on peer review feedback.</p>	review feedback & 2-3 page reflective analysis paper
Assignment Three: Case Analysis Integration Paper	Students are asked to apply course material in coming to a deeper understanding of parent-child interactions in their own life (in their family-of-origin or life as a parent with children, or both) and their implications for professional practice.	One (6-8 page) paper
Other	Student-generated posts in general course forum, including student introductions.	Variable amount of forum posts