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**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CHILD WELFARE:
TOWARD 'REAL CITIZEN POWER'**

by

Cindy Knott

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CHILD WELFARE:
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by

Cindy Knott

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
Master of Public Administration**

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PREFACE

This thesis assembles not only information obtained from the literature on citizen participation and the child welfare field, but also draws on my views, opinions, and professional experience. I have been employed in the child and family services system for approximately ten years as a front-line child protection social worker. This has allowed me to directly experience the impact of not only participating in decisions being made in the system, but also to observe, at times, the frustrations and detrimental effects to those clients being served. The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect those of other employees in the child welfare field.

This thesis is not meant to be a comprehensive study of citizen participation in child welfare and is not meant to draw conclusions on how the child welfare system should look in Winnipeg. Instead, it is intended as a way of looking at how the system has developed, the benefits that participation can bring to those involved, and how the system could continue to develop in the future.

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation. Government by the people. Involvement. Community control. Decentralization. These are the watchwords of a reaction to decades of government reform which has succeeded all too well in placing the delivery of governmental services in the hands of large bureaucracies and in centralizing the formal power and authority to decide (Skjei, 1973:1).

Involving people in decision making makes collective decisions more representative of people's needs. Citizen participation not only reduces the formal power and authority of large bureaucracies, but it also helps people to feel that they, and not some distant others, own their institutions (Tillotson, 1994). This thesis supports Tillotson's premise and the belief that if you bring people together in constructive ways, they will be able to address the shared concerns of families, organizations, or communities better than the institutions mandated to address those concerns.

The topic of this thesis is citizen participation. In particular, it will examine citizen participation in the child welfare field in the city of Winnipeg. At one time, if families encountered difficulty, they turned to their friends, their neighbours, the extended family, and even their community to find a support system to help them overcome the crisis. Without supports and under pressure, nuclear families have been disintegrating at an alarming rate (Zuckerman, 1983:2). Children and families should not be isolated from their supports, but with industrialization and urbanization, many of these informal supports have disappeared and have had to be replaced with more formal arrangements. The result is increasing dependency on

government for the care and well-being of children at risk and the task of protecting these children has grown beyond the ability of government alone to handle (Manitoba Family Services, 1996:1). This writer believes that although the primary responsibility for the health and well-being of children rests with the parents and family, the quality of family life and the well-being of children should be a shared community responsibility.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The welfare of children holds an exceptionally important place in public policy. Child welfare services fulfill the responsibility for ensuring that all children receive the parental care that is necessary to their growth and to their participation in society (Zuckerman, 1983:13). Traditional methods of service delivery, which in this writer's view are currently still practiced by many in the child welfare system, have tended to emphasize a *rescue* model. Children are often removed from the care of their parents or guardians. The professional is seen as the expert, defines the problems for the client, and imposes solutions. Historically, on the other hand, the state did not intervene at all in the lives of families and did not provide protection for children. What this thesis is trying to accomplish is to highlight the ways, through the inclusion of citizen participation, to bring about a balance to these two opposing ends of the continuum. The decisions made daily by child welfare authorities can have a profound impact on the lives of those affected and should not be taken lightly. Child welfare agencies have enormous powers. Those powers are delegated to those provided with the statutory authority to fulfill the agency's mandate. It is because of this profound impact that this writer believes in the importance of involving individuals in decisions in the field. It is those individuals that can best define what it

is that they require to meet their unique needs and issues.

The organizational structure of the formal system responsible for administering services in the child welfare field has been significantly altered over the years since the inception of children's aid societies in the 1920s. The original children's aid societies gave minimal recognition to the importance of citizen participation. However, after 1985, regionalization of the system in Winnipeg occurred with a strong emphasis placed on citizen participation. The amount of citizen involvement in the decision making process has also changed as a result. The most recent change in organizational structure in Winnipeg occurred in June of 1991. This resulted in a significant reduction in the direct control that citizens had in the child welfare field. Manitoba Family Services (1996:4) has since claimed that there is growing support for more significant involvement of the community in the delivery of services and that community organizations are anxious to play a more active and pro-active role in assisting Manitoba families. If true, then this thesis will argue that citizen participation in child welfare is an essential component for increasing the control of citizens to share in the decision making powers in the field of child welfare. However, the methods currently employed for citizen participation that are formally ingrained in the system, have only the potential to influence policy, practice, and service delivery. The system needs to develop new strategies, or improve on those already being used, in order to increase the power to citizens in decisions that are being made and ultimately allow them to share in the decision making authority.

The way this thesis goes about trying to prove this is by providing examples of some of the citizen participation efforts currently at work in the system and by analyzing them using three theorists outlined in Chapter 3. Also included are some techniques that utilize citizens in

decision making that have been, or are currently being experimented with, in the system. This emphasizes the failure of the current methods to provide power to citizens that would allow them to share in the making of decisions and effect the final outcomes.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Manitoba Family Services maintains statutory and financial authority over Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Historically, this department has not enabled citizens to participate in the process of establishing legislation. A legislative review that was recently undertaken included citizens. The traits of this process, however, did not appear to allow for a great deal of influence to occur. In addition, the Office of the Children's Advocate, as established by Manitoba Family Services, is another avenue for allowing those affected by the child welfare system to become involved in decisions being made. Again, the method of participation inherent in this Office does not seem to allow those affected to have any real power over the final outcomes.

The child welfare system in Winnipeg between 1986 and 1991, as arranged under the New Democratic Party, showed promise for real citizen participation to be realized. Under this regionalized system, the community had a significant impact on decisions. The decentralized structural arrangement of the time delegated power to the citizens of the community and afforded great opportunities for real citizen power. However, following the provincial election of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1990, the system that existed between 1986 and 1991 was disbanded. The decision to disband that arrangement, as will be seen, did not appear to have been practical in terms of citizen participation.

The 1980s was a period of phenomenal increases in referrals to child welfare agencies. Faced

with the same service challenges, the six agencies then extant in Winnipeg were increasingly strained in their efforts to meet the needs of families in the community, and were unable to provide the necessary services within the provincial government's allocated budget. Over the years, in what could be deemed the Conservative view, a subtle erosion of confidence in the child and family services agencies took place (Cooper, 1995:13 February). After several years of deficits, the decentralized system was dismantled in June of 1991 in favour of a centralized model with a mainly government-appointed board of directors and chief executive officer. The six smaller agencies were amalgamated into one large agency and divided into four geographical areas.

Under the current geographic structure, the opportunities for citizens to be involved in the decision making process appear to be mainly token opportunities. At this time, the child and family services system is again undergoing major reorganization. The system which began operation in June of 1991 is now in the process of being altered from a geographic model to a program model. Although efforts are being made to involve citizens in the renewal process, this involvement is, again, mainly of a token nature. Little authority has been delegated to those who are most affected by the decisions made in the field. Should these participation efforts continue, however, it is at least a positive attempt at obtaining information for those in positions of authority who will make the final decisions. This effort must continue, in addition to new participation techniques, in order to allow citizens the opportunity to have more power, and thus share, in the decision making process. Family Group Decision Making, now being piloted in Winnipeg, is one such technique that, if utilized according to philosophy, can enhance the opportunities for citizens to participate and have real power over the decisions being made in the

service delivery aspect of the child welfare field. This model will be examined, and its benefits as a participation technique which could be incorporated into the system, will be highlighted.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis will undertake a traditional review of the theoretical literature on the topics of citizen participation and child welfare. Some of the information assembled here includes personal interviews with agency staff from various levels of the bureaucracy, in addition to interviews with employees from the provincial department that oversees the child and family services system. Agency staff have been interviewed to provide their experiences and perceptions of the various participation methods used in the field. In addition, their input provides insight into the current organizational renewal process and how the technique of staff and stakeholder involvement in this process will impact on the changes. Staff from the provincial level have been interviewed to provide information on the goals of the public hearings utilized during the review of the *Child and Family Services Act* and to review the effectiveness of citizen participation through the use of Family Group Decision Making. Memos, letters, and reports distributed throughout the agency have been used as a means of analyzing the citizen participation process during the renewal of Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

Chapter 2 examines the citizen participation literature and provides a definition so as to establish an understanding of the topic area. The final section of Chapter 2 provides the reader with a definition of child welfare and will describe the child welfare field from its initial roots. Before undertaking an analysis of the current arena for citizen participation in the child welfare field, it is important to have an understanding of the field being studied and how the structural

arrangement of the child and family services agency affects the opportunities for citizen participation.

Chapter 3 analyzes the theoretical basis for citizen participation. It will begin with a brief discussion of democracy and the theory of participatory democracy. Models of citizen participation will then be presented. This will include Sherry Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation which depicted categorical terms for citizen power. Kenneth Bryden (1982) also puts forth models of participation. He distinguishes between a representation model of participation and a direct participation model where 'instrumental' participation is contrasted with 'consummative' participation. Finally, Orion White Jr. (1969) proposed an alternative to bureaucracy. The 'Dialectical Organization', as it was termed, will be presented as an alternative form of bureaucracy which includes the notion of involving citizens in the process. White identifies four dimensions which are useful tools for analyzing the uses of citizen participation strategies throughout the child welfare system. This alternative is being presented as an ideal type of organization for delivering child welfare services.

Chapter 4 examines the child welfare field at the provincial level. Winnipeg Child and Family Services reports to a board of directors who ultimately reports to the Minister of Family Services on matters pertaining to child welfare. Therefore, it is important to look at this area where legislation is developed. The Agency is entirely the creature of the province with respect to both statutory authority and finances. Because of this, the Agency has little ability to act on its own initiative (Reid, 1993:302).

A review of the *Child and Family Services Act*, the legislation that guides the child welfare field in Manitoba, was recently undertaken. The review involved the use of public hearings as a

means of gathering information from the public. This process of utilizing public hearings will be scrutinized.

Another procedure for involving citizens in the field can be found through the Office of the Children's Advocate. The Office is mandated through provincial legislation and reports to the legislative assembly. Through the Advocate, children who are involved in the child welfare system have the opportunity to become involved in plans and decisions that are being made by the Agency. The effectiveness of this arrangement will also be examined in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 examines the structural arrangement of the agency, or agencies, responsible for delivering child welfare services. It will be shown that the system existing in Winnipeg between 1986 and 1991, where the delivery of child welfare services was driven by the community, showed the most promise for real citizen power and most closely resembled White's dialectical organization. The restructuring that took place in June of 1991 reduced the potential for citizens to have direct control over the system despite the fact that new modes of involving citizens in the field were introduced. Finally, the current renewal process and its techniques for citizen participation will be discussed. The opportunities to participate in the renewal are numerous, however, their potential for influencing decisions appears to be limited.

Chapter 6 details a new model for delivering services in the child welfare field. Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), or Family Group Conferencing (FGC), as it has been termed is a new way of assisting families to become more involved in plans affecting them. It also allows the family and the community to influence the development of new resources. This model is currently being piloted in four sites across Manitoba within First Nations communities. FGDM will be reviewed with the intention of highlighting the potential for this model to allow citizens

to gain real power over decisions that are affecting them as a result of the interventions of child welfare authorities. This model leaves room not only for the client who is being directly impacted by these decisions to maintain power in his or her life, or the life of his or her family, but also for community members to have considerable influence and/or control over the outcomes. FGDM is being proposed as a new technique to allow citizens to gain real power in the service delivery component of the child welfare field. An agency utilizing this type of service delivery will closely resemble the alternative bureaucracy in White's analysis.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides a summary discussion of the thesis. Conclusions on the topic of citizen participation in child welfare will be drawn.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter a review of the citizen participation literature will be undertaken. In addition, a definition of child welfare will be provided with an outline of the historical context of the field of study. The development of the legislation will be detailed, the changing structure of the organization will be described, and the role of the child protection agency, along with its mandated services and prescribed duties, will be highlighted.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Since the 1960s, the concept of 'citizen participation' has gained momentum in the political field. The principle of participation is valued by disciplines of community development, health promotion, public health, community psychology, adult education, nursing, urban planning and social work, just to name a few (Wharf Higgins in Wharf and Clague, 1997:277). The concept can also be applied to the field of child welfare.

DEFINING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

There are many definitions of citizen participation found in the literature, making defining the term a complex task. Langton (1978:15-16) states that citizen participation in the 1960s was defined in terms of the characteristics of citizen power and control and that they excluded instances in which citizens participated to assist government or to carry out a valued social obligation. However, we can also face the opposite danger in instances where citizen participation is solely defined in terms of assisting and supporting administrative decision

making in government to the exclusion of instances in which citizens seek to exert influence and achieve power (Langton, 1978:16). Therefore, the definition selected for the purpose of this thesis encompasses a more inclusive definition of citizen participation. Kubiski (1992:1) defines citizen participation as the actions that citizens take to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the policies or administration of government. These actions may include:

- ▶ action taken in support of existing policies, authorities or structures, or toward changing any or all of these;
- ▶ a range of individual involvement from action toward a given goal, to passive participation in political events organized by others or simply paying attention to politics;
- ▶ a range of types of political action, from conventional political activities, such as involvement in elections or working with established groups, to less conventional activities such as protests (Kubiski, 1992:2).

This definition is preferred because it covers the various aspects of the child welfare field that will be examined throughout this thesis. These will include involvement in developing legislation, administering and delivering services, structuring the agency, developing policies, developing services, and a range of other activities. The analysis will focus on the varying degrees of influence that citizens have in the decision making process.

Mechanisms of citizen participation range from citizen surveys, to advisory bodies, to public hearings, to advisory groups (Milbrath, 1983). Many of these traditional methods have been used throughout the child welfare field. Each has its strengths and its weaknesses. As a particular method is examined in this thesis, those strengths and weaknesses will be scrutinized. Some non-traditional methods of participation are now being utilized throughout the system.

These range from workplace participation through work groups, to community participation, to client participation. Various attempts at involving citizens through these methods are being implemented and will also be scrutinized as they are presented.

Wharf Higgins (in Wharf and Clague, 1997:277) states that citizen participation is proposed as a means to foster self-determination of problems and solutions, as a strategy for redistributing power and equity, and as a means of empowerment. However, merely participating through some participation technique is not a guarantee that any of these goals will be met. There are design flaws in traditional participation techniques, including the economic and sociocultural barriers that make public forums inconvenient and inaccessible, the intimidation of citizen advisory meetings that require educational and financial resources, and an overreliance on superficial opinion surveys, that have failed to foster broad-based public input (Wharf Higgins in Wharf and Clague, 1997:278). In this writer's opinion, nowhere are the issues of economics, sociocultural barriers, education and finances more apparent than in the child welfare system. One fundamental characteristic of the child welfare system is that its clients are overwhelmingly drawn from the ranks of the poor (National Council of Welfare, 1979:2). In fact, according to Prairie Research Associates Inc. (1996:43), three basic factors in the client base for Winnipeg Child and Family Services are single parent, Aboriginal and low income. Issues of child care, language, transportation, knowledge and timing of participation events may be relevant to the ability of individuals to participate.

There are both costs and benefits to citizen participation. In looking at the benefits, some research in community psychology suggests that participation in organizations is a means of engendering psychological empowerment (Chavis and Wandersman in Wharf and Clague,

1997:287). Participants in health planning groups, as described by Higgins Wharf (in Wharf and Clague, 1997:287) reported gaining skills, knowledge, experience, and personal insight as a result of their involvement. Furthermore, the strength of some traditional methods of participation are that they provide the opportunity for a thoughtful, insightful, and creative interchange between officials and citizens (Milbrath, 1981).

The costs, on the other hand, include personal time, effort, and relinquishing other obligations and pursuits, to those associated with group processes such as lack of a consensus over goals, personality conflicts, and a lack of progress (Higgins Wharf in Wharf and Clague, 1997:285). There are other deficiencies of traditional citizen participation methods. Some of these include:

- ▶ they can be manipulated easily by public officials to suit their own purpose;
- ▶ they are highly unrepresentative; and
- ▶ the uninterested but affected public does not participate (Milbrath, 1981).

As many of these traditional strategies for citizen participation have been, or are being implemented in the child welfare field, the analysis will include the costs and benefits of each method cited.

THE CHILD WELFARE FIELD

Our focus will now turn to the child welfare field. This will provide a background and an understanding of the field that is being studied in this thesis.

DEFINING CHILD WELFARE

Child welfare services are the institutionalized way by which society ensures that children

will have the care, protection and treatment they need when their parents, for any of a variety of reasons, are not able to provide these essentials (Reid in Shyne, 1979:15). McCall in Wharf (1993:13) perceives child welfare another way, defining it as a field of social service practice in which the state, operating specific statutory law, takes over “functions normally carried out by parents for their children.”

Many children face welfare problems such as poor physical environments, physical and/or sexual abuse, or neglect. Child abuse and child neglect are not new problems. However, our view as to what constitutes the welfare of children has changed dramatically.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It has not always been accepted that the state has a duty to protect children. The legal system of ancient Rome recognized the concept of *patria potestas* which gave the father complete authority over his children, including the lawful authority to sell them into slavery or even put them to death (Bala, 1991). Furthermore, early English law was strongly influenced by Roman law. English common law gave parents a licence to subject their children to harsh discipline and even to sell them into apprenticeship (Bala, 1991). Similarly, early American law grew out of English law. Initially, little formal protection was offered to children. While provision was gradually made to care for orphans, little was done to protect children in the care of a parent or guardian. Prompted by the work of such social critics as Charles Dickens, who described the fate of children in institutions in *Oliver Twist*, the 19th century was a period of social reform in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada (Bala, 1991). Childhood had begun to be seen as a unique stage of life and if the needs of the child could not be met by his or her own family, then

other ways had to be found, including enacting laws to protect and enhance the quality of life of children (Macintyre in Wharf, 1993:16).

The Canadian child welfare system grew out of social concern for orphaned, neglected, and delinquent children in the late 19th century, with its original roots in private philanthropy, volunteer efforts, and religious institutions. Child welfare services arose in response to a massive need for substitute care for these children (Zuckerman, 1983:3). Initially, the efforts of these organizations focused on helping to make the necessities of life available to the poor. Numerous charitable societies and agencies used volunteer middle-class home visitors to determine if help was really needed and if there was any doubt, the presence of children in the home often made the difference as to whether financial or other assistance was forthcoming (MacIntyre in Wharf, 1993:17). Many of the pioneers in the child welfare movement, as in other areas of social reform, were women. In addition, the churches were the most important social institution in Canada at the turn of the century with Women's Missionary Societies being concerned with issues at home, including the needs of women and children (MacIntyre in Wharf, 1993:17). These women and the churches played an important role in shaping the movement for social reform.

It has been as difficult for the child welfare field to define its activities and set its boundaries as it has been for the social work profession of which it is a part. Both developed out of the activities of a variety of charitable, religious, and humanitarian groups concerned with the conditions of the poor (Zuckerman, 1983:7). Reframing child neglect and abuse from a purely private family matter into a public issue requiring the intervention of society was the first and most formidable obstacle faced by these early social reformers (Wharf, 1992:98). As the

definition of child abuse and neglect has shifted over time, the struggle continues as to how and when the issue is public and how much input the family and society should have in the process.

Child protection agencies were established throughout Canada by the early years of this century, and child protection legislation was enacted in each province (Bala, 1991). This marked the beginning of the state's responsibility in ensuring the safety of children. Although child protection agencies emerged early in this century, it has only been in the last 30 years that there has been a significant growth in the child welfare field.

Until the 1960s, child abuse and child neglect remained largely hidden problems with relatively few abused or neglected children being reported to authorities (Besharov, 1988:49). Since the 1960s, however, many changes have occurred in the child protection field. One development was the identification of battered child syndrome in the early 1960s. As a result of professionals realizing that parents often lied about abuse by describing injuries that they inflicted as accidents, changes in reporting laws and a growing professional awareness came about (Bala, 1991). Child protection agencies also began dealing with the issue of child sexual abuse. The late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by the "discovery" of child sexual abuse, similar to the earlier uncovering of physical abuse (Bala, 1991). As a result of these two issues, child welfare agencies began to experience a significant increase in the number of cases being reported. Other social issues contributed to the increase in child welfare cases. These included the rising rate of divorce and single-parent families, the growth of multicultural communities, the increased number of women in the workforce, the recognition of violence against women and children, high unemployment and poverty, and mandatory reporting laws with regard to abuse (Burnside, 1995:3).

CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATION

The responsibility for establishing child welfare legislation in Canada is vested in the provincial ministries. The development of legislation was an inevitable result of the changing attitudes toward children and of altered social and economic conditions (Falconer, 1983:7). The emergence of child protection legislation was closely connected to the social stresses that accompanied industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Early legislation in Canada was enacted as a result of the large numbers of orphaned and abandoned children and was meant for the protection of those groups. Certain pieces of legislation were passed during the early years of settlement in Upper Canada but were fragmented and poorly enforced. During the last decade of the 19th century private children's aid societies were established in various Canadian municipalities with the objective of helping orphaned, abandoned and neglected children (Bala, 1991). However, for example, it wasn't until 1893 that the first major legislation was enacted in Ontario. This new and precedent-setting legislation - *An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty To and Better Protection of Children* - drew from both English and American experience and became the pattern of protective legislation in other provinces, establishing the basic framework for child welfare legislation used today (Falconer, 1983:9).

Other provinces began to pass legislation shortly thereafter, including Manitoba. In 1922, Manitoba passed an *Act Respecting the Welfare of Children* which provided for placement and guardianship of neglected children, care for children of unmarried mothers and care of handicapped and immigrant children (The Manitoba PC Caucus Home Page, 1996). New child welfare legislation was passed over the next several decades with each expanding definitions of a

child in need of protection and/or making changes which in turn expanded the duties of agencies responsible for child protection. Passed in 1954, *The Child Welfare Act* expanded the definition of neglected children to those who were being physically abused by parents, guardians or other persons responsible for the child's care (The Manitoba PC Caucus Home Page, 1996). The current legislation in Manitoba came into effect in 1986. The *Child and Family Services Act* (1985:36) identifies and defines the circumstances under which a child is in need of protective intervention, including a child:

- a) without adequate care, supervision or control;
- b) in the care of a person
 - (I) who is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care, supervision or control of the child, or
 - (ii) whose conduct endangers or may endanger the life, health, or emotional well-being of the child, or
 - (iii) who neglects or refuses to provide or obtain proper medical, surgical or other remedial care or treatment necessary for the health or well-being of the child or refuses to permit such care or treatment to be supplied to the child when it is recommended by a duly qualified medical practitioner;
- c) who is abused or is in danger of abuse;
- d) who is beyond the control of the person caring for him or her;
- e) who by his or her behaviour, condition, environment or association is likely to injure himself, herself or others;
- f) who refuses or is unable to provide adequately for the health needs of herself, or others;
- g) who, being under the age of 12 years, has been left unattended and without reasonable provision having been made for his or her supervision and safety; or
- h) who is the subject or is about to become the subject of an unlawful adoption or of an unlawful sale.

Furthermore, the federal *Criminal Code* can be used to prosecute those who harm children especially those more serious offences by parents against their children because more substantial penalties are provided under the *Code* than under most provincial legislation (Falconer, 1983:12).

STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENT

Prior to the passing of new child protection legislation in Manitoba in 1922, the first Manitoba law to include the issue of child abuse, children's aid societies were established to provide child welfare services (Burnside, 1995:3-4). Before 1985, three different child welfare service structures were active within the city of Winnipeg. Most of Winnipeg was served by the Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg, a private entity with its own board of directors, while the traditionally French-speaking neighbourhood of St. Boniface received services from the Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba, and in the western end of the City, child welfare staff were employed by the provincial Department of Community Services (Reid, 1993). Child welfare legislation at this time was contained in the *Child Welfare Act* which was passed in 1974 as a replacement to previous Acts.

Most public debate concerning child welfare in Manitoba at this time focused on the Winnipeg Children's Aid Society. Concerns were focused not only on aboriginal child welfare, but also in a variety of workplace problems (Reid, 1993). In 1983, the Manitoba government intervened to remove the Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Children's Aid Society, and initiated a process to restructure the delivery of child and family services in the city (McKenzie, 1991).

As mentioned earlier, the current *Child and Family Services Act* came into effect in 1986, but

not before the old Children's Aid Society system was disbanded and turned into six decentralized, community-based agencies, each with its own board of directors, to provide services for the city of Winnipeg. The New Democratic Party held office during this time and it emphasized the need to include citizens in the administration of the system in order to make government more accessible. The ideas of prevention, participation and accessibility were prominent at this time (Reid, 1993). This was contrary to the centralized system of the former Children's Aid Society.

The pressures upon the agencies mounted over the next few years. As already mentioned, Cooper (1995:13 February) stated that over the years of decentralization, there was a subtle erosion of confidence in the child and family services agencies. This was partially the result of revelations in the media concerning children who had been in contact with the child and family services system and subsequently died as victims of violence, combined with apparent inadequacies in the management of the system (Reid, 1993:202). Furthermore, as previously discussed, the decade of the 1980s was a period of phenomenal increases in caseloads, due in part to the societal identification and reporting of sexual abuse and other societal issues such as conflict between parents and adolescents, and domestic violence. Consequently, changes in public and professional awareness resulted in enormous increases in the rate of reporting of sexual abuse (Bala, 1991). As a result, the agencies were increasingly unable to provide the necessary services within the provincial government's allocated budget, having no control over the number of families requesting child protection services, while at the same time, community board members were strong and vocal advocates of these families (Burnside, 1995:4).

The system again underwent major reorganization under the current Progressive Conservative

government in 1991. Some decentralized service delivery was retained, ensuring community access. However, the structure now assumed a single administration with one board of directors to oversee the day-to-day functioning of the organization. The members of the Board were also largely appointed by government which reduced the opportunities for citizen input. This restructuring has resulted in a shift in the amount of influence that citizens have over the delivery of services and consequently resulted in new methods of citizen participation being implemented. A closer examination of the issue of centralization versus decentralization, and its impact on citizen participation, will be undertaken in Chapter 4. Finally, the child and family services system is currently undergoing further reorganization. A program-based model is being developed to replace the current geographic-based model. As the process unfolds, it appears that this reorganization is having an impact on the opportunities for citizen participation. The new techniques being introduced for involving citizens from various constituencies in the field will be questioned in terms of the impact they will have on the final decisions.

THE ROLE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION AGENCY

In every Canadian jurisdiction there is an agency which has legal responsibility for investigating reports that a child may be in need of protection and taking appropriate steps to protect that child from ill-treatment (Bala, 1991). In Winnipeg, Winnipeg Child and Family Services is responsible for providing mandated child welfare services as prescribed by the *Child and Family Services Act*. For example, a member of a family may apply to an agency for, and may receive from the agency counselling, guidance, supportive, educational and emergency shelter services in order to aid in the resolution of family matters which, if unresolved, may

create an environment not suitable for normal child development or in which a child may be at risk of abuse (Child and Family Services Act, 1985:23). Under *The Child and Family Services Act*, the Director of Child and Family Services of the Department of Family Services is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse or neglect and this responsibility is delegated to provincial child and family services agencies (Minister of Supply and Services, 1994:99). The *Act* lists the prescribed mandated services to families as follows:

Services to Families

9(1) A member of a family may apply to an agency for and may receive from the agency counselling, guidance, supportive, educational and emergency shelter services in order to aid in the resolution of family matters which, if unresolved, may create an environment not suitable for normal child development or in which a child may be at risk of abuse.

Services to minor parent

9(2) An agency on application by a minor parent shall provide services under this Part to establish a plan which is in the best interests of the parent and child.

Special needs services

10(1) An agency may provide or purchase such prescribed supportive and treatment services as may be required to prevent family disruption or restore family functioning.

Emergency assistance

10(2) An agency may provide prescribed emergency financial and material assistance to prevent family disruption.

Assistance to community groups

11(1) Any interested community group or individual may apply to an agency for assistance in resolving community problems which are affecting the ability of families to care adequately for their children.

Programs for volunteers

11(2) An agency may establish service programs to facilitate the participation of volunteers in the provision of ongoing services.

Day care service

12 Where it appears to an agency that a child is in need of care outside the home for varying periods of time during the day, the agency may, by agreement in a prescribed form with the parent or guardian of the child, place the child in a day care facility licensed under The Community Child Day Care Standards Act. . .

Homemaker service

13(1) Where it appears that there is temporarily no person able to care for a child in the child's home and the child needs such care, an agency may

- (a) with the consent of the parent or guardian; or
- (b) in the absence of the parent or guardian;

place a homemaker in the home to care for the child during that temporary period.

Voluntary placement agreement

14(1) An agency may enter into an agreement with a parent, guardian or other person who has actual care and control of a child, for the placing of the child without transfer of guardianship in any place which provides child care where that person is unable to make adequate provision for the care of that child . . .

Voluntary surrender of guardianship by parents

16(1) The parents of a child or the surviving parent may, by agreement on a prescribed form, surrender guardianship of the child to any agency (The Child and Family Services Act, 1985:23-27).

In addition, there are several duties which the Agency is expected to carry out. These duties as also prescribed by the *Act*, are to:

- A) work with other human service systems to resolve problems in the social and community environment likely to place children and families at risk;
- B) provide family counselling, guidance and other services to families for the prevention of circumstances requiring the placement of children in protective care or in treatment programs;
- C) provide family guidance, counselling, supervision and other services to families for the protection of children;
- D) investigate allegations or evidence that children may be in need of protection;
- E) protect children;
- F) develop and provide services which will assist families in reestablishing their

- ability to care for their children;
- G) provide care for children in its care;
- H) develop permanency plans for all children in its care with a view to establish a normal family life for these children;
- I) provide adoption services where appropriate for children in its permanent care;
- J) provide post-adoption services to families and adults;
- K) provide parenting education and other supportive services and assistance to children who are parents, with a view to ensuring a stable and workable plan for them and their children;
- L) develop and maintain child care resources;
- M) provide services which respect the cultural and linguistic heritage of families and children;
- N) provide such reports as the director may require;
- O) take reasonable measures to make known in the community the services the agency provides;
- P) conform to a written directive of the director;
- Q) maintain such records as are required for the administration or enforcement of any provision of this Act or the regulations;
- R) provide any other services and perform any other duties given to it by this Act or by the director in accordance with this Act (The Child and Family Services Act, 1985:19-21).

As seen by the list of duties, not only is the Agency responsible for the traditional role of protection, but is also responsible for providing a full range of support services. With respect to the welfare of Canadian children, the process of protecting children involves a mediation between two strongly held beliefs: that parents have the right to choose how their children are to

be brought up; and that the state has the right to protect from harm the relatively weaker and more defenceless members of society (Falconer, 1983:15). These are the two beliefs with which the child protection field struggles every day.

SUMMARY

Chapter 2 has identified and defined the issue of citizen participation as a means of introducing an understanding of the topic. A definition of child welfare was provided with a detailed outline of the historical context of the child welfare field. With citizen participation being defined and a background of the child welfare field being provided we can now turn to our analysis of citizen participation in child welfare.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This chapter will provide a theoretical framework for our analysis. The principles of democracy will be applied along with the use of some basic models of citizen participation. The discussion will begin with a look at some of the literature on citizen participation and democracy as a foundation for applying these principles. Following, an examination of some theories of participation will be undertaken, which will provide some concepts to aid in the study of involving citizens in the field of child welfare.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Effective citizen participation is the lifeblood of a democratic society as it provides a nourishing flow of ideas, insight and direction from the citizenry to the leadership (Kubiski, 1992:14). Canada has what is termed an *indirect* or *representative* form of democratic government, as distinct from *direct* democratic government which was practiced by some of the Greek city states more than 2,000 years ago and which in more recent times was practiced in North America under the rubric of *town-hall democracy* (Adie and Thomas, 1987:560). There is a distinction between these two types of democracy. Direct democracy implies that the people rule, whereas representative democracy implies that those who qualify elect representatives who then gather together and after sufficient discussion determine what is to be law (Adie and Thomas, 1987:560). While the main argument in favour of direct democracy is that those who are to be affected by government policies should have a direct, meaningful voice in their determination, the argument against representative democracy is that it is essentially

unrepresentative and leads to elitism (Adie and Thomas, 1987:560). An elite refers to a small group of people who have power over a larger group of which they are part, usually without direct responsibility to that larger group, and often without their knowledge or consent (Freeman, 1972). What happens with elitism is that often those who are most affected by policies are not represented. Relying on a repertoire of participation techniques that demand attendance at public forums and meetings will only make sense for, and be relevant to, a select few (Wharf Higgins in Wharf and Clague, 1997:292). What happens to those citizens who are affected by the economics and sociocultural barriers that make public forums inconvenient and inaccessible, and the intimidation of attending advisory meetings that require resources to attend? However, to achieve a truly direct democracy would require citizens having to go to the polls daily to vote for one complex matter after another (Adie and Thomas, 1987:560). Although it seems impractical to advocate for a direct democracy in ruling a nation state, this is not to say, however, that we cannot argue for a direct democracy with regard to a specific field.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Rousseau might be called the theorist *par excellence* of participation, and an understanding of the political system that he describes in *The Social Contract* is vital for the theory of participatory democracy (Pateman, 1970:22). Rousseau's theory of participatory democracy will assist in the understanding of the effectiveness of the types of participation being analyzed throughout this thesis. His entire theory hinges on the individual participation of each citizen in political decision making and in his theory that participation is much more than a protective adjunct to a set of institutional arrangements; it also has a psychological effect on the

participants, ensuring that there is a continuing interrelationship between the working of institutions and the psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals interacting within them (Pateman, 1970:22). Rousseau thought that there was an ideal situation for decision making. This was one where no organized groups were present, just individuals, because the former might be able to make their 'particular wills' prevail (Pateman, 1970:24). This later idea is characteristic of a representative democracy, where elitism is prevalent, as opposed to a participatory democracy, where the individual participates in decision making. If it is impossible to avoid organized associations within the community then, such as defined above, Rousseau argues, these organized associations should be as numerous and as equal in political power as possible (Pateman, 1970:24). Rousseau saw three aspects of the role of participation in his theory:

The central function of participation is an educative one designed to develop responsible, individual social and political action; secondly, the role of participation is the close connection between participation and control and this is bound up with his notion of freedom to the individual by enabling him to be (and remain) his own master; thirdly, participation has an integrative function in that it increases the feeling among individual citizens that they 'belong' in their community (Pateman, 1970:24-27).

The following is a general definition of participatory democracy as drawn from three theorists on the subject - Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and G.D.H. Cole:

The theory of participatory democracy is built round the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another. The existence of representative institutions at the national level is not sufficient for democracy; for maximum participation by all the people at that level socialisation, or 'social training', for democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed. This development takes place through the process of participation itself (Pateman, 1970:42).

The individual's actual, as well as his sense of, freedom is increased through participation in decision making because it gives them a very real degree of control over the course of their life and the structure of their environment (Pateman, 1970:26). If individuals are to exercise the maximum amount of control over their own lives and environment then authority structures in these areas must be so organized that individuals can participate in decision making (Pateman, 1970:43). French, Israel and Aas define 'participation' as "a process in which two or more parties influence each other in making plans, policies or decisions. It is restricted to decisions that have future effects on all those making the decisions and on those represented by them." (Pateman, 1970:68). This definition makes clear that participation must be participation in something. In this case it is participation in decision making. For French, Israel, and Aas, what is important is that the term 'participation' refers not just to a method of decision making, but also covers techniques used to persuade employees to accept decisions that have already been made by the management (Pateman, 1970:68). This thesis does not support the notion of persuasion being a means of participation, however. Persuading employees to accept decisions may in fact be a type of participation. However, as will be discussed, it is seen here as a form of non-participation. The concentration of attention in this thesis is on fostering participation in the child welfare field and this can be done by applying the idea of participatory democracy taking place specifically in this authority structure. If we apply the idea of participatory democracy and French, Israel and Aas' definition of participation within the theory to the child welfare system, citizens should have an opportunity to participate in decisions being made at all levels of the bureaucracy: legislative, organizational structure, service delivery, practice, and so on. Decisions made at any one of these levels will affect an individual's life or the lives of those

around him or her. In this sense we are talking about citizens participating not only in decisions that contribute to solving problems for the general interest, but also those decisions that solve problems in their own interest.

MODELS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The following discussion will provide three authors' perspectives on citizen participation. The first is a typology of citizen participation which provides categorical terms for varying degrees of participation. The second author provides two different models of citizen participation which help in understanding the nature of participation and what type of impact it will have on those in positions of power. Finally, an alternative to traditional bureaucracy is provided that describes different dimensions of bureaucracies and the dialectical opposite to each with the involvement of citizens being paramount to this alternative.

A Ladder of Citizen Participation

Thirty years ago, Sherry Arnstein (1969) described citizen participation as a categorical term for citizen power and defined it as the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. Her eight-rung ladder begins with no citizen participation and concludes with citizen control. This typology is useful for analyzing the various types of participation which are being, or have been, implemented in the child welfare field. Arnstein claimed that there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having real power needed to affect the outcome of the process.

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) *Manipulation* and (2) *Therapy*. Their real

objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to “educate” or “cure” the participants. They are really forms of non-participation. Rungs (3) *Informing* and (4) *Consultation*, when proffered by power holders as the total extent of participation, may indeed allow citizens to hear or be heard. These two rungs offer degrees of tokenism but when participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow through, hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) *Placation*, is simply a higher level of tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the power holders the continued right to decide. Rung (6) *Partnership*, enables citizens to negotiate and engage in trade-offs by increasing the degree of decision making clout. At the topmost rungs, (7) *Delegated Power* and (8) *Citizen Control*, have-nots obtain the majority of decision making seats, or full managerial power (Arnstein, 1969).

Figure 1 provides an illustration of Arnstein’s typology.

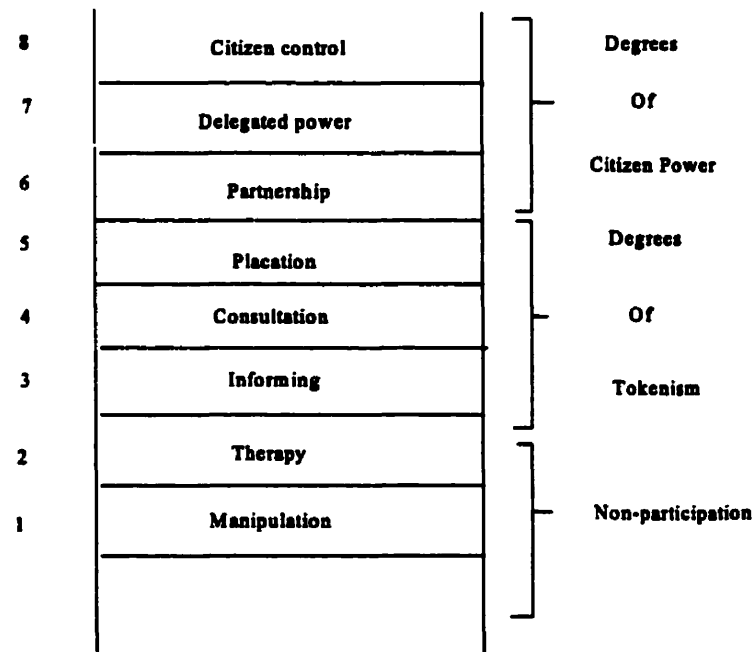


Figure 1: Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation. (from Arnstein, 1969.)

Limitations of the Typology

This typology is not without its shortcomings. Citizen participation is seen as the redistribution of power that enables the “have-not” citizens to be included in the future (Arnstein,

1969). The issues of the weaknesses of participation events such as language, timing, accessibility, etc., that were mentioned in Chapter 2, and that tend to exclude the disadvantaged groups from participation activities, remain an issue. What this typology also fails to recognize is that the “haves”, or the powerful, can still participate through the same efforts and that these powerful groups can still dominate the process. In addition, the ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them, whereas, in actuality, neither the powerless nor the power holders are homogeneous blocs (Arnstein, 1969). There would be opposing views, beliefs, opinions, and interests, even within each of these two groups. Arnstein’s typology does not recognize the reality of subgroups of the two larger groups being in existence.

In spite of these inherent weaknesses, the ladder remains a useful tool for illustrating the varying degrees of participation to be analyzed. We will see that much of what is currently being called citizen participation in the child and family services system is actually forms of tokenism. The methods being utilized do not promote any degree of decision making clout. Some past attempts came closer to the higher rungs of the ladder and some of the new initiatives in the system may make these higher rungs attainable.

Representation versus Direct Participation

Kenneth Bryden (1982) puts forth two models of participation. These are the representation model and the direct participation model which are derived from the two basic models of democratic government earlier discussed: representative democracy and direct democracy. Using Bryden’s models of participation to analyze citizen participation in child welfare

highlights that much of what is happening is what he calls 'instrumental' rather than 'consummative' participation.

Instrumental and Consummative Participation

The representation model involves only 'instrumental' participation which is designed to advance self interest and is based on the notion of taking part in political life in order to protect and advance one's individual interest (Bryden, 1982). The essential characteristic of this model is that public input occurs preeminently through popularly elected representatives. The fact that employees of Winnipeg Child and Family Services are not elected does not vitiate this model because for the most part the policies are creatures of the *Child and Family Services Act* which is created by elected officials. Agency employees merely administer the services. Although this model is becoming increasingly inadequate with the growing complexity of society, it remains a fact that most of the citizen participation in child welfare is a means of helping to provide information to policy developers and to administrators of service delivery rather than a way of directly participating in the activities of policy development and service delivery.

Participation as an end in itself involves sharing in a community by cooperating for a common good, thereby fostering the participants' development and self-realization (Bryden, 1982). Proponents of the direct participation model deny that the representation model is genuine participation at all. They claim that direct participation requires 'consummative' participation for fully effective public input as it fosters the individual's personal development through involvement in building the community and that the community needs power jointly, not merely influence, for direct participation to be realized (Bryden, 1982). Even though participants

in the child welfare field are being involved in decisions that will help build the community, the joint power is not always evident in the current techniques.

Bryden's two models of participation are not mutually exclusive. The representation model provides a base from which the direct participation model can be developed. While improvements in the former are desirable in themselves, their full potential will only be realized within the framework of the latter (Bryden, 1982). Advancements are being made in the child and family services system in the area of citizen participation. During decentralization, as will be seen, those advancements were more toward the direct participation model. The Family Group Decision Making model is also moving toward consummative participation. However, many of the other participation techniques appear to be largely in the realm of instrumental participation and the results tend to be representative of the more powerful groups.

Limitations of the Models

As mentioned, the representation model of participation is becoming increasingly inadequate with the growing complexity of society. It considers the essential characteristic to be that public input occurs pre-eminently through popularly elected representatives. However, in reality the public service is in fact involved in policy-making intimately and continuously (Bryden, 1982).

With regard to the direct participation model, Bryden (1982) states that it is necessary to involve more people more regularly in actual policy decisions. It is suggested that this can be done in part through the methods discussed above. However, taking part in decisions at the neighbourhood level or at the workplace level, again, do not address the issues of the weaknesses of participation events. Timing, accessibility, language, intimidation of such activities, and so

on, can all can pose barriers to participation. Some may also be concerned about the threat to efficiency in decision making when we consider the time that it takes to bring people together in such a way to make decisions. Delegating decision making power to staff is a lengthy and difficult process requiring sustained commitment from all levels of the organization and a transformation in the thinking of the members of the organization (Kernaghan, 1992). The same can be said for delegating decision making authority to the community.

The Dialectical Organization

The 'Dialectical Organization', as it was termed by Orion White Jr. (1969), proposes an alternative to bureaucracy which largely includes the idea of citizen involvement and the principles of participatory democracy. The analysis includes observational data from an agency White calls the Wesley Agency, a small clientele-centered organization. The data are directly relevant in that the organization was attempting to operate with a structure that was antithetical to the traditional bureaucratic type (White, 1969). Four dimensions are used in his dialectical analysis, all of which involve citizens participating in decisions in various aspects of the organization. The four dimensions are: (1) *Client Relations*; (2) *Administrative Structure*; (3) *Organizational Ideology*; and (4) *Organizational Mentality*. All of these dimensions are useful for our study of citizen participation in child welfare and provide an example of what a counter-bureaucratic model of organization would look like.

Dimension I: Client Relations

The client relations dimension describes a type of client relation which is dialectically opposite to the traditional bureaucratic type. The Wesley Agency displayed a commitment to

client service where the client was seen as an equal in the process, thereby fostering citizen involvement. A non-bureaucratic organization sees the client as a total person, stresses personal involvement by its workers, and has a total commitment to client service which is unequivocal (White, 1969). A traditional bureaucracy, on the other hand, tends to see the client as a subordinate, treats problems as segmental, advocates the status quo to the client, ensures objectivity, and operates under the norm of efficiency (White, 1969). As stated in the personnel orientation materials discussing the service orientation of the Wesley Agency, the implications of the base for service to clients were as follows:

1. Service is not at a distance - it means personal involvement with people.
2. No person or problem is beyond our concern or attention. In fact we are obligated to seek out the "outcasts".
3. Our motivation for service cannot be the possibility of success or any other condition that might be associated with the receiver of the service. We can never really give up on a person.
4. Our own interests or personal feelings are not of any importance as we serve. We may not personally like the person.
5. We must individually assume that we are responsible when others do not live up to their responsibility, and thus try our best to make a difference (White, 1969).

These conditions of client interaction in the dialectical organization can be realized in Winnipeg Child and Family Services through the Family Group Decision Making model to be presented in the sixth chapter. Family Group Decision Making will be presented as a viable alternative to the traditional methods of involving citizens in the child welfare system. The philosophy of this model closely matches the philosophical base for service to clients in the Wesley Agency.

Dimension II: Administrative Structure

The administrative structure dimension also includes citizen involvement. Instead of allowing the consideration of the structural integrity of the agency to dictate the mode of client interaction, the agency's conceptualization of the proper client-organization prevailed and the administrative structure was fitted to this (White, 1969). This dimension refers to the basic principle of hierarchy which entails strictly defined roles articulated in terms of layers of authority and is evident in traditional bureaucratic structures. The dialectical organization would be non-hierarchical and would include setting policy in a "balance of power" fashion by laterally related groups instead of "at the top" (White, 1969). When we begin to examine the reorganization currently taking place in Winnipeg Child and Family Services, this dimension of White's bureaucratic alternative will be applied. Not only are staff being included in decisions being made during the renewal process, but an attempt is being made to involve staff from various levels and with distinct skills and experience. At the Wesley Agency, policy was fluid and was set by "several bodies [executive staff, area staff, total program staff, and total staff] to ensure flexibility and some balance of power within the staff" (White, 1969). Some of these conditions are evident at Winnipeg Child and Family Services as the agency renewal unfolds.

Dimension III: Organizational Ideology

One way of conceptualizing organizational ideologies is in terms of an Apollonian-Dionysian continuum (White, 1969). The Apollonians, named after the Greek God of moderation, were unable to confront the reality of death and hence were oriented toward moderation and longevity (White, 1969). The Dionysians, after the Greek God of the full life, use themselves up in the

process of life, as those people do who, through a stronger ego are able to confront death without fear (White, 1969). The Apollonians were characteristic of the traditional bureaucratic form of organization where self-preservation as an organizational structure was stressed, even at the complete expense of its goals (White, 1969). Moderation and longevity would be the qualities found in these traditional bureaucracies. The Dionysians, on the other hand, stressed the attainment of its purposes or goals and are characteristic of the dialectical organization (White, 1969). Risk and innovation would be qualities of this type of organization.

There is evidence of the Dionysian ideology developing within Winnipeg Child and Family Services during the renewal process. In addition, the development of a new mission statement and new guiding principles point to an organization which is prepared to take risks and develop innovative techniques in working toward changing the way the Agency delivers services.

Dimension IV: Organizational Mentality

This dimension differentiates between a primary type of organizational mentality and a secondary type of mentality. The “mentality” of traditional bureaucratic structures has been characterized as “primary” in nature (White, 1969). In contrast, the dialectical organizational mentality was of a “secondary” type. The primary mentality emphasized the individual seeing himself as separated from the rest of the world by his skin and to provide what his internal environment needed he competed with other individuals for the scarce resources available in the external environment (White, 1969). The current organizational mentality within Winnipeg Child and Family Services can be described as possessing a primary mentality where the relations between people are not always cooperative and competition for resources seems

evident. The organizational renewal appears to be striving toward developing a secondary mentality, however. The secondary mentality stressed non-exploitative interpersonal relations, collaboration, consensus and a commitment to the superordinate goal of service (White, 1969). The development of a new ideology which makes use of innovative techniques for involving citizens should help pave the way to a mentality which is more secondary in nature.

Limitations of the Dialectical Organization

There are some shortcomings inherent in White's analysis. For example, orienting professional workers toward clients in the fashion proposed could create some problems for the agency. A great deal of strain is introduced into the service role when a person who has undergone long and arduous professional education and training must relate to the client as a peer and thereby, for example, allow the client to judge the success of the professional's effort to help (White, 1969). With respect to the personnel orientation where no person or problem is seen to be beyond the concern or attention of the Wesley Agency, there could be some difficulties as well. It is highly frustrating to work on really tough cases, with little hope of success and no possibility of simply "giving up" (White, 1969).

In recalling the administrative structure of a dialectical organization, a non-hierarchical organization could pose the problem of expense. The flexibility, freedom, and equalitarian nature could prove to be costly administrative techniques (White, 1969). Furthermore, conflict and dissention could occur because of the diversity of those in the organization. However, White (1969) suggested that conflict was used and valued for the constant stimulation it provided to the organization and was productively structured.

White (1969) saw that the only problem that existed because of the Agency's Dionysian organizational ideology existed as a matter of definition. It would only be those who possessed a more Apollonian perspective that would criticize such an ideology. Those who value risk, innovation, and attaining the goals of an organization, would presumably support the ideology of a non-bureaucratic agency.

Finally, there could be some difficulties in orienting staff into a secondary type of mentality such as that of the Wesley Agency. Staff who have worked within a traditional bureaucracy may have difficulty in working in a collaborative fashion with clients and community members when the traditional practice has been to compete for resources. An individual who has been trained to bargain for resources may find it equally as difficult to make decisions based on consensus. However, White (1969) believed that people could be trained into the secondary mentality. This task could prove to be easier with training new staff into a secondary mentality rather than with those who have worked for the organization for a lengthy period of time and who may have been "trained" into a primary mentality.

To summarize, a counter-bureaucratic organization can possess many limitations. There may not be enough time for both democratic decision making and accomplishment of an organization's tasks; often there is insufficient homogeneity of interests and outlooks for consensus to emerge from any participatory process; often the level of conflict inherent in participatory decision processes exceeds people's capacity to manage stress; and often, external forces, particularly other organizations, are often hostile toward alternative organizations, where no single individual is identified as clearly in charge (Blau and Meyer, 1987:189-190). Despite these obstacles to an alternative form of bureaucracy, Blau and Meyer (1987:190) claim that

traditional authority has also not been able to cope successfully with deep and enduring differences in people's beliefs and interests as these are endemic in modern societies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

White's dialectical organization adopted the principles of participatory democracy. Clients and staff were clearly involved in decisions made in this organization and thereby, their sense of control over their lives and their environment would have been enhanced. By supporting White's idea of removing bureaucratic controls, the underlying assumption in this thesis is that people are essentially good and can be trusted to make good decisions when granted the power.

In relating this type of organization to Arnstein's typology we can see the higher rungs of her ladder of participation being attained with varying degrees of control. Partnerships were being formed with clients where they were viewed as equals in the decision making process. Furthermore, staff were seen as partners with regards to decisions made in the agency. This is indicative of Arnstein's sixth rung of the ladder where power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Clients and staff were able to negotiate, in the Wesley Agency, with the organization's power holders when decisions were being made. Finally, decisions within the agency were often delegated to staff. White (1969) stated that supervisory or management positions were periodically assigned by total staff decision. This type of decision making is characteristic of the seventh and eighth levels of Arnstein's typology where the have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision making seats. Figure 2 summarizes the four dimensions of White's analysis. It depicts the characteristics of a traditional bureaucracy and contrasts them with the dialectical organizations' opposites.

	Traditional Bureaucracy	Dialectical Organization
Dimension I:		
Client Relations	Client as subordinate Client treated segmentally Advocates status quo Objective involvement Limited help/resources	Client as peer Client as total person Advocates change Personal involvement Commitment unequivocal
Dimension II:		
Administrative Structure	Hierarchical - homogeneity - conformity	Non-hierarchical - heterogeneity - diversity
Dimension III:		
Organizational Ideology	Apollonian - moderation - longevity	Dionysian - risk - innovation
Dimension IV:		
Organizational Mentality	Primary Mentality - competition - coercion/compromise	Secondary Mentality - collaboration - consensus

Figure 2: Dimensions of a Traditional Bureaucracy and a Dialectically Opposite Organization.
(from White, 1969.)

The Wesley Agency was also characteristic of Bryden's direct participation model. The concept of worker participation and the devolution of authority is considered to be consummative participation (Bryden, 1982). Worker participation and the devolution of authority were largely being proposed as a part of White's non-traditional bureaucratic organization.

Many of the principles of participatory democracy and the roles of Rousseau's theory of

participatory democracy could be found at work in the Wesley Agency. Firstly, with regard to the client relations dimension, the client was seen as a peer and was viewed in terms of a total person with a total commitment to involving the client in the decision making process. These characteristics approximate a participatory theory of democracy in that clients were participating in decision making and that there were no organized groups able to make their 'particular wills' prevail. There was a close connection between client participation and the control that individuals had over the outcomes of decisions, thereby increasing the value of the freedom of individuals. As clients were able to define the problem with the professional in the organization, this enabled the individual to be his or her own master and thereby maintain a sense of control over his or her own life.

A traditional bureaucracy, by White's analysis, would be more indicative of a representative model of participation where conformity to a comprehensive and rather a strictly defined set of norms was a primary characteristic (White, 1969). On the other hand, the administrative structure of a non-traditional bureaucracy, where heterogeneity was evident and there was a direct organizational cognizance of various perspectives, would point toward a participatory model of democracy. Several bodies were involved in setting agency policy and the principle of "non-dominance" was prevalent thereby not allowing individuals to possess or develop truly authoritative positions in the agency (White, 1969). This supported the notion of individual freedom and ran counter to the idea of elitism existing within the organization.

The organizational ideology in the dialectical organization stressed involvement of staff and neighbourhood organizations where each individual's or organization's civil right to participate in a controversial issue was supported (White, 1969). These individuals would have felt that

they 'belonged' to their community by virtue of the fact that they could volunteer to become involved in issues and be supported by the agency. The decision of whether to participate was left up to the worker, thereby supporting the notion of freedom and control. Furthermore, becoming involved in controversial issues would serve an educational function as it would help to develop responsible, individual action through learning more about other individuals' views. During the process of education the individual learns that the word 'each' must be applied to him or herself; that is to say, they find that they have to take into account wider matters than their own immediate private interests if they are to gain cooperation from others (Pateman, 1970:25). This learning would occur through the process of participating in controversial issues.

Finally, the organizational mentality of the dialectical agency supported the idea of participation having a psychological effect on the participants. If we recall, the secondary mentality assumes that individuals can have more than instrumental meaning for one another, and that personal development, well being, and self actualization are the products of interpersonal relations (White, 1969).

SUMMARY

The concepts from the models presented in this chapter will aid in the examination of the various techniques of citizen participation to be presented in the following chapters. White's dialectical organization will form the basis of the analysis. His Wesley Agency will be viewed as an ideal participatory system, one which will be used in analyzing the child and family services system in Winnipeg. This is not to say that the child welfare field has realized a non-traditional bureaucratic form of organization, however, some approximations can be noted.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Over the years, laws and practices have changed steadily in the child welfare field. In the 1920s, Manitoba's early child welfare legislation, *An Act Respecting the Welfare of Children*, focused on a narrow range of children's rights and needs. Subsequent Acts expanded definitions, services, and duties until the passing of the current *Child and Family Services Act*. Though minor amendments have been passed since 1985, further renewal must occur if our laws are to continue to deal effectively with the most important issues facing Manitoba children and their families today (Manitoba Family Services, 1996a:10).

This chapter will examine citizen participation at the provincial level of the child welfare system. As mentioned, Winnipeg Child and Family Services is entirely the creature of the province with respect to both statutory authority and finances and, because of this, it has little ability to act on its own initiative (Reid, 1993). If the system is to be representative of the needs and interests of all those affected, it is imperative that participation techniques are employed when making policy and practice decisions. According to Clague (1971), planning in government is fragmented and parcelled by jurisdictions that do not or cannot consider the interdependency of contemporary issues and there is no overall planning process that links these issues with social need. Citizen participation should be included in the shaping of the proposals by all interested parties, with formal legitimization occurring in the legislature (Clague, 1971).

Given these statements, citizen participation is required in the development of policies and practices that are passed by the Provincial government. In fact, some vehicles have been put in

place to include citizens at the provincial level. The most recent review of *The Child and Family Services Act* included the technique of using public hearings for involving citizens in the process.

It is the contention in this thesis, however, that this was no more than a form of tokenism which did not have a great influence on the final outcome of the changes to the legislation.

Furthermore, in 1993, the provincial government developed the Office of the Children's Advocate to allow children who are receiving services from the system a means of involvement in the decisions that are affecting them. Advocacy is another means of citizen participation. Again, its effectiveness as a method of increasing the power of those children involved to affect the outcome of decisions will be questioned in the analysis.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

According to Clague (1971), citizen input is required in both reviewing existing legislation and in developing new proposals for enactment. The Progressive Conservative government undertook a review of *The Child and Family Services Act* beginning on July 25, 1996 and involved citizens in the process. It was claimed that an undertaking of this magnitude could not be accomplished by government alone and that the process of renewal would only succeed if all Manitobans who cared about the future of children came forward and participated in thoughtful discussions (Manitoba Family Services, 1996a:10). Prior to this review, the last review of the legislation guiding the field took place between 1982 and 1985. A committee to review the then existing *Child Welfare Act* was established to recommend changes needed to update child welfare legislation in line with present-day philosophy and to improve other legislative provisions (Manitoba Community Services, 1984:3). The committee was composed of five

officials from Manitoba Community Services, the department responsible for the child welfare field at the time; five representatives from non-government child care agencies; three officials from the Attorney General's Department; and one representative of the First Nations Confederacy. Legislation from other provinces was reviewed, and more than 50 written submissions from interested parties were solicited and considered (Manitoba Community Services, 1984). This review included little outside participation. Once the committee report was released, the Minister invited written comments on the committee's proposals, and suggestions for alternatives, from all interested individuals and groups (Manitoba Community Services, 1984:4). However, in this writer's opinion, there would have been little guarantee that any of these comments would have influenced the new legislation as this request came after the committee report had already been released. It seems unlikely that changes would have been made at that point.

Some progress has been made since the review of *The Child Welfare Act*. Prior to the most recent review, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, Minister of Family Services, announced that Manitoba Family Services would embark on a province-wide community consultation process to undertake to identify areas of *The Act* where changes might be required in order to better serve Manitobans. This consultation process marked the first time that *The Child and Family Services Act* was made available for public input, discussion and debate in Manitoba (Zuefle, 1997:1). The rationale for the consultation process was twofold: the Minister of Family Services decided to take a new direction to support children and families in Manitoba by looking for more information from the people; and it was also in part due to the mistrust that the government had of the bureaucracy responsible for delivering child welfare services (Unfried, 1997:11 March).

Furthermore, the Minister declared that now was the time to develop new partnerships with communities to discover new and innovative ways to strengthen and support families in their most important work of raising children and developing strong, healthy, and safe communities (Manitoba Family Services, 1996:i).

To begin the review, the Minister appointed 14 members to the Child and Family Services Act Review Committee. Committee members represented communities from across the province who brought with them varied and valuable experience in family services provision, child welfare, education and training, health and justice (Zuefle, 1997:1). For example, one committee member came from Adoption Options in Winnipeg, one was the former head of the Winnipeg Police Service Child Abuse Unit, one was the president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, and some were former school teachers or lawyers from rural areas (Manitoba Family Services, 1996:31).

The mandate of the committee was to undertake an extensive community consultation process regarding possible legislative changes to *The Act* and thereafter, to make recommendations to the Minister of Family Services in light of this process (Manitoba Family Services, 1996:31). As a result, community hearings were scheduled throughout the province as a means of involving citizens and of gathering the information necessary to make the recommendations.

Public Hearings

In this section we will examine the use and effectiveness of public hearings as a means of citizen participation. This writer contends that this type of participation technique is merely a form of tokenism as described in Arnstein's typology.

Public hearings are among the most traditional methods for citizen participation and are commonly viewed as a way for citizens to express their views and influence policies and plans of government agencies (Checkoway, 1981:566-67). Unfried (1997: 11 March) stated that he believed the government would listen to the public and that through the process of public hearings changes to the *Act* would come about. In the speech from the throne on March 3, 1997, the Government appeared to present this belief in the following statement:

In the area of child and family services, our efforts have emphasized and will continue to emphasize child protection and development. My ministers have engaged the community in dialogue on how to best provide support to families in difficulty. During the past year, my ministers have initiated a review of the child welfare system and sought community input in the process. Amendments to *The Child and Family Services Act* based on these consultations will be submitted for consideration (Province of Manitoba, 1997:10).

The key word in this statement is 'consideration'. In the view of this writer, the consideration given to the consultations was perfunctory, at best, and probably changed little, if anything, that was already decided on. In fact, research on the subject of public hearings indicates several shortcomings of public hearings as a participation method (Checkoway, 1981:567).

When discussing prehearing procedures, prior to the consultation process commencing, two documents, "*Families First: New Directions for Strengthening the Partnership*", and "*A Consultation Workbook on the Child and Family Services Act*", were developed and published by Manitoba Family Services and, together with letters of invitation and a tentative schedule of hearing dates, they were distributed to more than 2,000 individuals, groups, community leaders, organizations and stakeholders in the system throughout the province (Zuefle, 1997:2-3). While this procedure must have been time consuming and thoughtful, one might question how many citizens from the 2,000 sites where information was distributed, and who might be significantly

or directly affected by the child welfare system, actually received the information about the review and the hearings. Even where the information was received, the entire process of public hearings may be intimidating to many participants. Some would-be participants will not be able to take part in the consultation process, either because they lack the means to do so or because they do not feel comfortable, thus practically excluding individuals from many areas and with different backgrounds (Canadian Study of Parliament Group, 1996:15). Low-income and minority citizens may have difficulty with the language of the information received, while the presence of an audience may infringe upon the ability of even experienced citizens to speak freely (Checkoway, 1981).

Another issue to consider in evaluating the effectiveness and meaningfulness of community consultations is how representative are the citizens who present at hearings of the affected population? Wilson and Mullins (1978) state that when the term 'representative' is used in politics, it usually refers to one who acts as an agent or spokesman for someone else and the styles of performance as representative are dictated by what the constituents desire or seem to desire. Hearings are often dominated by those whose economic stake is large enough to warrant the investment required to make a significant contribution, affected groups do not always participate making the views presented not always representative of the general community, and agency officials often depend on outside sources of information and support and respond to the most powerful input they receive (Wilson and Mullins, 1978).

Finally, the provincial government would have been quite able to pick and choose whatever information it wanted from the hearings. Smith [pseud.], an employee of Winnipeg Child and Family Services (1997:12 March), believes that the government had already chosen a direction.

For example, in the area of adoptions, the “*Consultation Workbook*” issued before the hearings, included discussion about licensing of private practitioners for adoption services, consent to adoption by birth parents less than 18 years of age being changed, and changes about notification of known birth fathers in adoption, just to name a few. The new *Adoption Act* handbook coincidentally addresses all of these issues, among others (Manitoba Family Services, 1999:1-5). This seems to point to the fact that there were predetermined decisions prior to the consultation process. Those individuals or groups who may have been in attendance at hearings in support of privatization of adoptions would believe that they were heard. In determining the effectiveness of a public consultation process, the process can be potentially relevant, but their relevance really depends on whether decisions are being made before or after consultation (Canadian Study of Parliament Group, 1996:11). It is felt by some that appearances before committees serve only to legitimate decisions already taken by the government (Canadian Study of Parliament Group, 1996:19). It seems clear that some decisions regarding changes to child welfare legislation were made before the hearings took place.

There is little research evidence to indicate that hearings have influence on agency decisions; in fact, evidence indicates that agency officials may either give cursory consideration to or ignore altogether certain views expressed in hearings (Checkoway, 1981). For example, one submission to the review committee, amongst other recommendations, suggested that *The Child and Family Services Act* be amended to include the addition of alternative methods of dispute resolution including family group conferencing and mediation (McKenzie and Hudson, 1996:12).

Although this item is in the report of recommendations (Zuefle, 1997:16), it is not included in the proposed Child and Family Services regulations (Manitoba Family Services, 1999a). It is

impossible to think that all the submissions could have a direct impact on the legislative changes, although, some may have had some influence. In this writer's opinion, the public hearing process was merely an act of tokenism that mainly served to pacify those citizens who might otherwise have publicly criticized the government's amendments to the *Act*.

This consultation process may be interpreted in many ways. At its worst, consultation may simply be a cloak for manipulation (Baetz and Tanguay, 1998). The bottom rung of Arnstein's ladder - manipulation - signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by power holders (Arnstein, 1969). Instead, it is actually a form of non-participation that is intended to "educate" or "cure" the participants (Arnstein, 1969). The public hearing process may have been held as a way for the Province to legitimate the decisions they wanted to make, to allow the people to become more educated on the topic of child welfare, or to cure them from criticizing the government about decisions being made.

Arnstein's typology could support the notion of the consultation process being a form of token participation. In fact, Zuefle (1997:3) stated that the workbook, in particular, was designed to spur discussion and debate and was not meant to be restrictive or limiting in any fashion. 'Discussion' and 'debate' can be seen on the third rung of Arnstein's ladder - information. Arnstein (1969) claimed that informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options can be the most important steps toward legitimate citizen participation. However, too frequently the emphasis is on a one-way flow of information - from officials to citizens - with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation. There was a channel for feedback provided in the form of public hearings, in this case. However, the hearings were not presented in a format where there was opportunity to negotiate change to the legislation.

At best, the public hearings could be placed on Arnstein's fourth rung - consultation. Inviting citizens' opinions, like informing them, can be a legitimate step toward their full participation, but if consulting them is not combined with other modes of participation, this rung of the ladder is still a sham since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account (Arnstein, 1969). As previously discussed, the mandate of the committee responsible for overseeing the review was to undertake an extensive community consultation process regarding possible legislative changes and, thereafter, to make recommendations in light of this process (Zuefle, 1997:2). The process was restricted to the public hearings. Citizens were not included in the process of making the recommendations once the consultations were completed.

When power holders restrict the input of citizens' ideas solely to this level, participation remains just a window-dressing ritual. People are primarily perceived as statistical abstractions, and participation is measured by how many come to meetings . . . What citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have "participated in participation." And what power holders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving "those people" (Arnstein, 1969).

The consultation process restricted involvement by citizens to public hearings. Beyond that, the recommendations were left to the committee members who came with "varied and valuable" experience. The final decisions were left to those in power - government officials.

If we refer back to Figure 1, rungs 3 and 4 are seen on Arnstein's ladder as degrees of tokenism. Under these conditions citizens lack the power to ensure that their views will be *heeded* by the powerful (Arnstein, 1969). The Minister's declaration of forming new partnerships, in the sense of Arnstein's notion of partnership, where power is, in fact, redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders, was not attained through the strategy of public hearings. There was no power of negotiation evident, therefore, no degree

of citizen power could be realized.

In relating the Provincial government's attempt to involve citizens in the legislative process to Bryden's models of participation, the representation model would describe adequately the method used. Considering the representation model in its pure form, its essential characteristic is that public input occurs preeminently through popularly elected representatives (Bryden, 1982). One method of doing this is through the work of parliamentary committees to provide interested groups with regular access. There is no question that a technique such as the Child and Family Services Act Review Committee opened up the policy process to public input. It is doubtful, however, that these types of devices reduce significantly the elitist character of the policy process (Bryden, 1982). Instrumental participation, as characterized by the representation model, merely refers to participation directed to the achievement of other ends. The key consideration with representative democracy is whether one is an accurate reflection or likeness of those who are represented; it is assumed that if this is the case, the representative will do what they would do if they were in the represented's place (Wilson and Mullins, 1978). In the case of the review of child welfare legislation it would be difficult to assume that those who were represented at the public hearings were, in fact, a representative sample of the majority of constituents affected by the child welfare field. It is possible that the government was striving to legitimate the decisions made in changing legislation and by including citizens in public hearings this end might have been achieved. The process was not one that characterizes participatory democracy. In participatory theory, 'participation' refers to equal participation in the making of decisions, and 'political equality' refers to equality of power in determining the outcome of decisions (Pateman, 1970:43). The participants in the legislative review process, even if they were representative of

the constituents affected by the child welfare field, which is doubtful, clearly did not have equality in power in determining the outcome of the changes to *The Child and Family Services Act*.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION THROUGH ADVOCACY

Advocacy organizations are another avenue for involving citizens in decisions made in the child welfare field.

In *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills identifies what he considers to be the ultimate threat to freedom. This is the problem of the "Cheerful Robot" - the individual who fears decision making responsibilities, who feels powerless and insignificant in the face of choices, who believes that he is incapable of understanding, let alone influencing the economic, political, and social issues affecting his life (Kasperson and Breitbart, 1974:41).

When one feels powerless and insignificant as well as unable to influence decisions affecting his or her life, advocacy can be a technique to help those citizens become empowered. Instead of responding to problems as determined, creative agents, citizens can summon "experts" or professionals to interpret and decide issues for them (Kasperson and Breitbart, 1974:41).

The following definition of advocacy was selected for illustrative purposes.

Advocacy is the act of speaking in support of human concerns or needs. Where people have their own voice, advocacy means making sure they are heard; where they have difficulty in speaking, it means providing help; where they have no voice, it means speaking for them (Family and Children's Services, 1992:49).

The Children's Advocate

The Provincial government has established a method for involving citizens in the decisions in the child welfare field that affect their lives. In 1993, the Office of the Children's Advocate was

established as a new part of Manitoba's child welfare system. The Office reports directly to the legislative assembly. According to the *Child and Family Services Act* (1999:21), the Children's Advocate exists to:

- ▶ Represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of children receiving or entitled to receive services under *The Child and Family Services Act*;
- ▶ Review and investigate complaints with respect to children receiving child welfare services and to provide recommendations for change. This includes advocacy on behalf of an individual child and/or groups of children.
- ▶ Advise the Minister on matters relating to the welfare and interests of children as well as matters relating to children under *The Child and Family Services Act*.

This notion of advocacy is founded on the assumption that all children have specific rights and needs, and that prevailing circumstances require that they be given support to ensure access to entitlements, benefits, and services. Such support may involve influencing workers or agencies to be more responsive to a specific child's needs, or seeking changes to the system that will affect classes or groups of children over time (Manitoba Family Services, Undated:4). The system we are referring to here is the child and family services system.

In theory, the concept of advocacy in the case of the Children's Advocate promotes the idea of involving children in decisions that affect their lives. Advocacy asserts that the child has rights as an individual, separate and apart from the right to be protected from abuse and neglect, including the right to be informed of, and involved in, decisions which affect his or her life (Manitoba Family Services, 1993/94:4). *The First Annual Report of the Children's Advocate* opens with this quotation:

“Empowerment is a priority for young people in care. It must be recognized that the best care is not necessarily that solely endowed upon us from above or that done for us; rather, the best care should be viewed as a process in which both service providers and service receivers share the decision making and the responsibility involved. We must become more involved in the design, implementation, operation, and evaluation of the services which affect our lives. Without this, the child welfare system becomes paternalistic, dependency inducing, and ultimately inefficient.”

“... all youth in care must be encouraged to ‘speak out’ on their behalf. A higher quality and more efficient child welfare system will be the end result” (Manitoba Family Services, 1993/94:ii).

In practice, however, it is questionable how much influence this involvement through the Children’s Advocate actually has over the final outcome and how much power children are granted to share in decisions being made.

The mandate of the Children’s Advocate requires that the operations of this Office be bound by the “best interests” of children and youth as defined in *The Act* which in reality means that the Children’s Advocate is not a truly independent voice for children and youth as it is required to make subjective decisions which may be contrary to their views and preferences (Manitoba Family Services, 1994/95:2). Furthermore, the power and authority that the Office enjoys is limited to that of persuasion and recommendation and agencies are not obligated to implement any recommendation which the Office may advance with respect to any particular matter (Manitoba Family Services, 1994/95:2). The child and family services agency involved retains all decision making authority.

There is a distinction between two types of advocacy - informal and formal. Informal advocacy occurs on a voluntary and relatively unstructured basis by a family member or other relative, friend, neighbour, volunteer or staff (Riverview Hospital, 1998). Formal advocacy

programs, on the other hand, are structured and have a governance body, identified goals, financial support that is independent of the organization being served, and may be mandated by provincial legislation (Riverview Hospital, 1998). The Office of the Children's Advocate would be considered a formal advocacy program according to this definition. As already mentioned, The Advocate provides service for both group issues and individual issues. Individual advocacy is on behalf of a particular individual and involves assisting that person in realizing his or her wishes through the client being an active participant who articulates the problems and defines the action to be taken (Riverview Hospital, 1998). If we use this definition of individual advocacy one might be led to believe that on Arnstein's ladder of participation we would see a partnership developing between the client as citizen and the agency where the client is able to negotiate with the agency representative. Here, on the sixth rung, citizens as clients, and power holders as the agency, agree to share planning and decision making responsibilities through various structures, including mechanisms for resolving impasses (Arnstein, 1969). This would provide the citizen some degree of power. However, given that the Office does not have the power and authority to implement change, this form of involving citizens in the system may be no more than a form of placation. There is no actual sharing taking place. Placation remains a degree of token participation where the citizen has the power merely to advise on what he or she feels is needed, but the power holder, the agency in this situation, has the continued right to make the final decision. Neither the child, nor the Office of the Children's Advocate, hold any power beyond that of persuasion or recommendation.

Manitoba Family Services (1994/95:2) states that other child advocacy programs across Canada are not limited by best interests, as is the Children's Advocate, and therefore operate as

true advocates in advancing the position of children and youth they serve. If this were the case in Manitoba, the client relations dimension of White's dialectical organization would be in operation. If the client was truly able to be an active participant in defining the actions to be taken by the child and family services agency, then he or she would be perceived as an equal. Again, this is not occurring under the current mandate of the Office thereby rendering the system one that possesses the characteristics of a traditional bureaucracy. The client here is clearly treated as a subordinate while the agency retains all decision making authority.

Probably no system can be entirely fair. This reality, and the fact that the government is more powerful than any individual, is what makes advocacy necessary as it provides people with ways to redress the imbalance of power between themselves and the government (Family and Children's Services, 1992:48). However, the mandate of the Office of the Children's Advocate as legislated by the Manitoba government, limits the possibility for advocacy to be a meaningful way of advancing citizen participation. The Office, as it operates, maintains the image of a traditional bureaucracy and merely serves as a method of placating those who utilize its services.

SUMMARY

Although in the provincial context of the child welfare field we have seen some effort toward involving citizens, the methods being employed are not effective means. The technique of using public hearings to review *The Act* was merely a form of tokenism and those citizens who involved themselves in the process were not provided the power to affect the final outcome. This process was characteristic of a representative model of democracy where the interests, values, and attitudes of the elite were brought forth to the exclusion of those most affected by the system.

Furthermore, those individuals who chose to participate in the public hearings were not a part of the final decisions. Decisions were left in the hands of the government.

This is also true in the case of the Children's Advocate. This Office does not hold the power to negotiate decisions through the advice of the client. The fact remains that those who are in the position of power - agency representatives - retain the decision making authority. Clients are not seen as equals, but as subordinates in the process. Again, the development of the Office of the Children's Advocate was simply a token gesture on the part of the Provincial government.

CHAPTER 5

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

This chapter reviews means of citizen participation according to the structural organization of the child and family services agency. The first section will examine the structural arrangement of the child and family services system that existed in Winnipeg between 1986 and 1991. This regionalized system involved a major transition of staff and services from the highly centralized Children's Aid Society to six autonomous agencies throughout the city. Although this arrangement no longer exists, it warrants attention because it was under this system that the opportunities for citizen participation, and ultimately greater degrees of control, could be realized. In fact, according to Wharf (1993:99), community governance structures, such as the decentralized community-based agencies, have the most potential to influence policy and practice.

The commitment to decentralized community-based services showed some promise for a non-traditional bureaucracy for the delivery of child welfare services. Many of the characteristics of White's dialectical organization can be identified by examining child and family services during that time. In addition, examples of higher levels of Arnstein's typology of citizen participation can be seen and characteristics of Bryden's consummative participation are evident.

The second section of Chapter 5 focuses on the strategy adopted for involving citizens by Winnipeg Child and Family Services upon the dismantling of the six agencies in 1991 when local agencies were centralized. The Agency is again being overseen by a single administration. Under this centralized system, Area Councils have been devised as new forums for citizens to

participate in child and family services. This technique resulted in a reduction in the amount of control citizens have over the outcome of decisions. It moved the Agency back and away from White's dialectical organization. It also changed the degree of power to the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder of participation and returned to a more instrumental form of participation as described by Bryden.

The final section of this Chapter highlights the changes currently taking place within Winnipeg Child and Family Services. The agency renewal process, as it will be termed, adopted some new forms of citizen participation which show some progress in terms of opportunities for citizens to become involved in decisions being made. Some characteristics of White's dialectical organization can be identified, but again, the methods used are mainly of a token nature.

DECENTRALIZATION

The image of the wealthy ministering to the poor through rigid, hierarchical institutions is highly offensive to many clients, workers, and board members within these institutions, and has been the focus of considerable pressure for change. The demands emerging from this activity have emphasized the need for more horizontal administrative structures and increased participation by clients and staff in the decision making of social services organizations particularly within their board of directors (Reid, 1993).

The pressure and demands mentioned in the above statement were realized in the 1980s within the child welfare system. Interest group pressure resulted in a major structural reform in 1986 of the agency administering child welfare services. When the New Democratic Party held office in Manitoba between 1981 and 1988, it emphasized the need to include citizens in the administration of the system to make government more accessible; the ideas of prevention, participation and accessibility were prominent at this time (Reid:1993). The NDP set out to

create comparatively small local child and family services organizations. The early Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg was disbanded in 1985 in favour of six agencies, each with its own board of directors to provide child welfare services for the city of Winnipeg. A community-based approach to service delivery, stressing early intervention and prevention, had already been established by the Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba (McKenzie, 1991). This Agency was included as one of the six agencies. Figure 3 depicts the organizational structure of one of the six agencies.

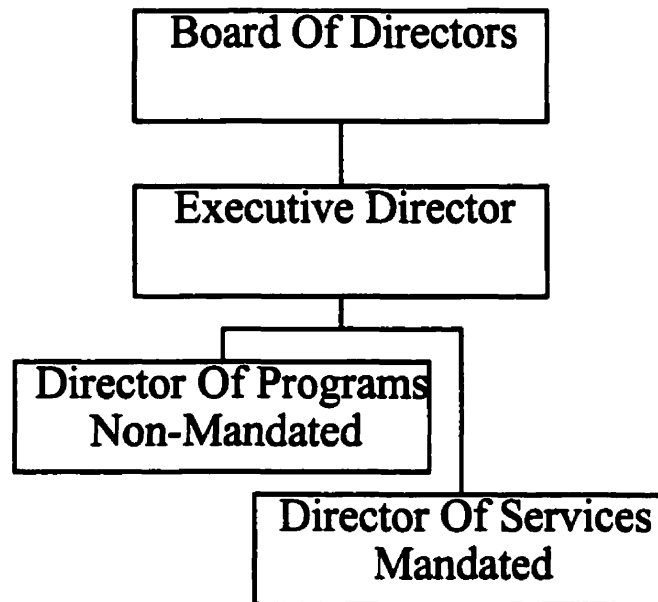


Figure 3: Decentralized Administrative Structure. (from Smith [pseud.], 1997.)

The consistent feature of this organizational structure that ran through all six agencies was that each agency had its own Board of Directors, its own Executive Director, and a similar level in the hierarchy to that which Figure 3 calls the Director of Programs and the Director of Services. Furthermore, each agency was comprised of several neighbourhood offices to deliver child and

family services. Each of these sites was overseen by a supervisor who reported to the Director of Services in the respective agency's area. The emphasis in this new system was on participatory democracy with increased accountability to the community and involving clients and community members in defining community needs, and in influencing program development. Participation by citizens in decisions seemed evident.

Decentralization occurs when government actors possessing authorities are willing to grant discretion, delegate authorities, or share responsibilities with other actors, inside or outside the government and its public service, in order to accomplish certain tasks (Lindquist, 1994).

Various approaches to, and understandings of, decentralized governance have been developed.

Rein (1972) identifies three forms of decentralization as relevant to the social services:

1. political decentralization involves the efforts of local officials to redistribute political power and policy-making authority through the creation of new subunits of government;
2. territorial decentralization ranges from a dispersal of local facilities to ease access by bringing government physically closer to people, to efforts to facilitate by proximity the expression of resident wishes and preferences; and
3. administrative decentralization calls for the delegation of decision making authority to subordinate officials who operate public services in neighbourhood areas. They are decentralized outposts of a more centralized public bureaucracy.

The child welfare system being analyzed here that existed between 1986 and 1991 in Winnipeg, involved a high degree of territorial decentralization with the establishment of numerous neighbourhood offices within each region. Not only were the regions geographically specific, but each neighbourhood office was even more specifically located in a smaller community.

Regionalization involved only some degree of administrative decentralization, however. Each

of the six areas was headed by a board of 12 to 15 members elected by the general membership of the agency (consisting of all persons living or working in the catchment area who applied for membership) (Reid, 1993). Three board members were appointed by the provincial government and one representative came from the staff of the agency. Each agency also had its own Executive Director.

There was only a partial commitment to political decentralization as well. Powers related to legislation and policy formulation, the provision of financial resources and accountability standards, were retained by the province. These limited the extent to which the agencies were, in fact, politically and administratively decentralized (McKenzie, 1991).

Citizen participation and decentralization are presumed to be closely interrelated strategies, each reinforcing a common commitment to discover local preferences and to transform them into specific programs (Rein, 1972). There is considerable support in the literature for decentralization. Wharf (1993:224), speaking of child welfare in particular, summarizes the advantages of community governance:

The first advantage of community governance is that it provides an opportunity for social learning - for citizens to gain some understanding of the complexities of child neglect and abuse and some appreciation of the impact of factors such as poverty and the lack of affordable housing. Second, community governance requires that communities *own* child welfare. Rather than being seen as the exclusive responsibility of a provincial bureaucracy that is supposed to solve all problems and is subject to severe criticism when it fails to do so, child welfare becomes a community concern and challenge. Third, community governance allows for the possibility of tuning services to meet local needs, for experimenting with local innovations, and for involving citizens in a variety of voluntary activities. Fourth, community governance spells the end of large and cumbersome provincial bureaucracies.

In addition, the empowerment of communities such as in this form of governance not only changes the expectations and instills confidence - it usually provides far better solutions to their

problems than normal public services because communities have more commitment to their members than service delivery systems have to their clients and because communities understand their problems better than do service professionals (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992:65-66).

Furthermore, where significant levels of popular participation are associated with decentralization, there may be a decrease in feelings of alienation, distance and remoteness from government programs, an improved sense of self-esteem at the local level, a greater capacity to tap local resources and a greater degree of local commitment to and support of activities (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, 1984:44).

There are also some problems associated with decentralization. The disadvantages may include a slower decision making process, politicization and bifurcation of the local community and increased pressure on local staff by citizens (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, 1984:44). Conversely, the argument for centralization is that it creates a critical mass of expertise, equalizes disparities across component units, and provides another level of accountability and control (Lindquist, 1994). Decentralization can create problems of accountability and the problem of service coordination (McKenzie, 1991). Many of the benefits mentioned above were seen during regionalization, although this structural arrangement was also not without its problems.

With respect to the benefits of regionalization in the child welfare field, involving citizens in decisive ways and enhancing participation was realized to some extent during regionalization. The adoption of a community work approach through neighbourhood offices meant that the staff of these offices involved consumers and residents in developing programs to support families. In the first two years, the new agencies initiated more than 300 new community prevention

programs involving more than 17,000 residents (McKenzie, 1994). The consequences of increased accessibility became evident in the increase in the use of services (Wharf, 1993:114). Decentralization improved the accessibility of services to local neighbourhoods, and this led to an increase in self-referrals from families experiencing child welfare problems, and increased identification of abuse and neglect by other services organizations (McKenzie, 1991). Other major developments during regionalization are cited by McKenzie (1994:103):

There was also evidence of fewer adversarial relationships between parents and social workers. Services improved particularly in terms of accessibility, community involvement, responsiveness to the community, volunteer participation, prevention, and early intervention. Community boards helped democratize child and family services and became advocates for local agencies.

In the case of regionalization in Winnipeg, boards were instrumental in influencing service innovation and in pressing for the necessary resources to meet new service demands (McKenzie, 1991).

During regionalization, there were some similarities to White's dialectical organization and to theories of participatory democracy. With regards to the client interaction, clearly by involving more than 17,000 residents in the development of community prevention programs the characteristics of the client as equal, involved, and committed, were evident. Community members were being viewed as peers and being involved in the development of new programs. In addition, there appeared to be a great, if not total, commitment to client service by involving citizens in the development of these programs. One of the implications of the service orientation of the Wesley Agency was that service was not at a distance (White, 1969). Being community-based through neighbourhood offices ensured that service was brought closer to the client. Furthermore, it was stated that social workers in a dialectical organization were to interact with

representatives of the community institutions in an effort to build goodwill or “credit” with them which could then be used to the benefit of the client (White, 1969). As mentioned earlier, community involvement was one of the characteristics of decentralization, with a clear commitment by the agencies to interact with community organizations.

This type of involvement by the community is indicative of the sixth rung of Arnstein’s participation ladder. The agencies obviously formed partnerships with the community in identifying and developing prevention programs. This gave community residents the power to negotiate with the agency around the development of programs. The fact that such a large number of prevention programs were developed, involving a significantly larger number of residents, points to the success of these partnerships. According to Kernaghan (1993), this type of partnership supports the notion that the best experts are the people who have to live with the consequences of their decisions.

Some of the characteristics of the administrative structure of White’s dialectical organization are also indicated in decentralization. Although the agencies remained relatively hierarchical, with policies being set at the top and being transmitted down, some decisions were being made by laterally related groups - in this case the boards of directors. Given that some members of the boards were elected from the general membership of the agency and were community members, and that one member on each board was from the staff of the agency, the agency-specific policies were being devised by several bodies.

Another characteristic of White’s dialectical organization was that while there were job descriptions, they were general in nature (White, 1969). Social work services under regionalization were delivered through a generalist approach. This was in contrast to specialists

who delivered social work services under the former Children's Aid Society. Furthermore, the dialectical organization stressed diversity and heterogeneity. Services were being implemented according to community need. With each community being unique, the concepts of diversity and heterogeneity are supported by decentralized agencies providing services.

In relating the administrative structure to Arnstein's typology, her seventh and eighth rungs on the participation ladder can be identified. The power to make decisions with regards to a particular community-based agency was delegated to the Board of Directors. Those citizens, as Board members, achieved decision making authority in that respect. Arnstein (1969) describes a model of delegated power which provides for citizen veto. The fact that Board members were able to vote on decisions meant that this type of citizen power was realized.

Bryden identifies the devolution of authority as characteristic of consummative participation. Schumacher, a proponent of participatory democracy, was convinced that the 'large-scale organization was here to stay' and argued that smaller working units using local labour and resources would have substantial autonomy within the larger organization (Bryden, 1982). This was precisely the case with decentralization. Although the Provincial government maintained authority with respect to statutes and finances, the six smaller agencies were granted autonomy with respect to the delivery of services and agency-specific policies.

The ideology of decentralization supports the notion of a non-bureaucratic organization. The development of prevention initiatives was distinctly risky and innovative, characteristics of a dialectical organization. Another quality of a dialectical organization, or Dionysian ideology, was a commitment to the attainment of its goals (White, 1969). The agencies did not seem concerned with self-preservation, as an Apollonian ideology would maintain, but showed a

commitment to their goal of providing service to all those who requested or required it. This was evident in the enormous increase in the use of services, as cited. In fact, as a result of community pressure and advocacy by the community boards for more resources, the Progressive Conservative government eventually stepped in, discharged the community boards, and developed a centralized administrative structure for these six agencies (McKenzie, 1994).

With an ideology that stressed risk and innovation, the organizational mentality during regionalization showed some features of a secondary mentality as described by White. Although there was likely competition for resources between agencies, a characteristic of a primary mentality, there was a commitment to collaboration as evidenced in the community involvement. White (1969) states that the secondary type of mentality emphasized consensual decisions in policy formulation. There was support for this consensual decision making in the makeup of the boards of directors and involvement of the community.

Finally, theories of participatory democracy adequately describe territorial decentralization. In Wharf's summary of community governance (1993:224), it is stated that community governance provides an opportunity for social learning - for citizens to gain some understanding of the complexities of child neglect and abuse and an appreciation of the impact of factors such as poverty. Rousseau's theory of participation claims that the central function of participation is an educative one. Community governance, such as afforded by decentralization, does serve this function according to Wharf. In addition, the theory of participatory democracy is built round the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another. Decentralization served the purpose of bringing citizens closer to the child welfare system through involvement, and also likely served to make those individuals feel that they

'belonged' in their community. Rousseau claimed that this was another function of participatory democracy.

Despite the efforts and the promise to democratize the child and family services system through decentralization, this arrangement was abandoned by the province's Conservative government in June of 1991. Armitage (1996:104) claims reasons for this failure to follow community government values appear to be connected to the problems of bureaucratic organization and political control of the larger social service organizations. Those who believed that the six agencies were effective claimed that the funding was inadequate and that the demand for their services increased at a greater rate than their budgets (Reid, 1993). There were many benefits to decentralization in terms of citizen participation and increased power to citizens, but there were also many problems. Opponents of the system claimed that the boards were not in control of their organizations and that agency managers were unwilling and/or unable to manage their staff and resources properly (Reid, 1993). Bryden (1982) states that since such experiments involve face-to-face interaction and general involvement in decisions that provide the optimal atmosphere for public input, the challenge now should be to find ways of making them work better.

This argument is not to say that child welfare should be completely controlled by communities. Rather, the provincial government must remain responsible for establishing legislation, setting budgets, and allocating funds to community agencies. However, the contention here supports Wharf (1993:121), when he states that the responsibility for providing services and contributing to policy and legislation on the basis of knowledge and experience gained by delivering services should be delegated to agencies located in and governed by

communities. Community governance also lends the experience and knowledge of those who receive and work in conjunction, with, those services. These individuals must also be afforded the opportunity to contribute to policy and legislation. Had the New Democratic Party been willing to take the final step and adequately fund the system that existed during this time, the success of this community-based structure, as a means of increasing the control the community had over the system, could have been realized to its fullest potential.

CENTRALIZATION

As discussed in the previous section, the six decentralized agencies were dissolved and consolidated into the Winnipeg Child and Family Services Agency. They were replaced by a highly centralized and restrictive method of funding, and agencies had to adopt a more residual and crisis-oriented approach to services (McKenzie, 1994). The organization's intent was to increase coordination and standardization of service, restructure and streamline administration, and maintain fiscal control (Prairie Research Associates, Inc., 1997:2). A commitment to neighbourhood offices was maintained while the agency was divided into four service delivery areas. This formed the basis of the current geographically-based model of service delivery with a central reporting structure. The four Areas of Winnipeg Child and Family Services currently are: Central, Northwest, Southwest, and East. Each has an Area Director who now reports to the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency. There is one board of directors to oversee Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Figure 4 shows the organizational chart for this geographically-based model.

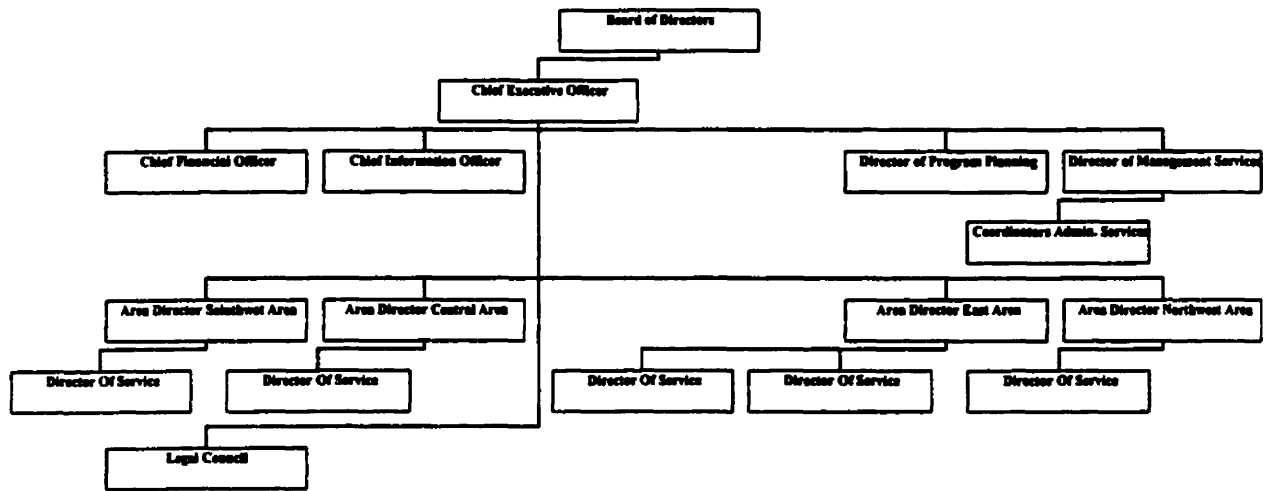


Figure 4: Centralized Administration: Geographically-Based Model of Service Delivery. (from Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1993.)

A centralized organization, such as is the current structure, can maintain a comparatively simple administrative structure because of its unitary line of authority, but the benefits tend to be more apparent than real (Reid, 1993). The larger the organization, the greater the detachment of the board of directors from the work that is carried out. The current Board of Directors consists of 13 members and four ex-officio members. Nine individual Board members are appointed by the Provincial government and one member is elected by the members of the Agency resident in each of the four service delivery areas. The four ex-officio members are also elected by the members of the Agency resident in each of the four Areas. The duties of the Board are to direct the management of the business and affairs of the Agency such as finances, personnel, planning, policies and public relations, but are not limited by this generality (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1993:41). One board for a large organization which covers various areas of the City can only result in a great distance between the Board and the daily work of staff. This further results in a greater difficulty for the Board members to understand the realities experienced by

staff and clients (Reid, 1993). Virtually few of the benefits of citizen participation enjoyed by regionalization appear to be present in this organizational structure. The introduction of new participation initiatives would increase the level of citizen power. These types of initiatives could serve to decrease the distance of the Board from the day-to-day delivery of services by staff to clients.

Citizen Participation in the Community

In creating the Agency in 1991, the government clearly wanted to terminate semi-independent agencies. Prairie Research Associates, Inc. were commissioned by the Department of Family Services in 1996 to conduct an operational review of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. The research group claims that important approaches have been developed to deliver services to neighbourhoods and that some of the well managed units serve as potential models of local delivery (Prairie Research Associates, 1997:98). Since local delivery during regionalization meant increased citizen participation and control, the maintenance of neighbourhood offices in the current structure does not automatically mean citizen involvement in decisions. The Agency, therefore, adopted a new mode of citizen participation to ensure the involvement of local citizens would be maintained. This next section examines the new method.

Area Councils

Area Councils are the new forums for citizens concerned about the well-being of families and children to work on issues with the Winnipeg Child and Family Services in their community area. It was recognized that the need for the different communities in Winnipeg to be involved in child and family services was imperative and the role of Area Councils in coordinating this

involvement has been crucial (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1996/97:12). Given that there are four service delivery areas under the current Agency, there are four Area Councils to work with their respective community. Each operates somewhat differently reflecting the varying needs and goals of the local areas (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1996/97:12). Area Councils began with the inception of the reorganization in June of 1991 and continue to present day. This participation mechanism will likely change with the pending shift to a program-based model of service delivery.

Initially, a working group was set up to look at the role of advisory committees and to propose roles and functions for the new forums for citizen participation. This working group was comprised of volunteer citizen representatives from the former agencies' boards along with some staff. These volunteers became representatives on the Area Councils.

Area Councils were introduced as a result of the working group. They are the major means of citizen participation in the delivery of child and family services to communities and individuals in Winnipeg. According to Wharf (1993:99), the governmental landscape is littered with advisory councils and at the municipal level, city and village councils have a long tradition of enlisting citizens to provide advice on the complex issues that beset municipal governments. There is no reason, then, that Winnipeg Child and Family Services should not enlist the aid of an advisory council. Working in partnership with Area staff and as a standing committee of the central Board of the Agency, Area Councils are accountable for:

- ▶ seeking out community participation in identifying and articulating community needs and problems affecting the interests of children and families in their Area;
- ▶ proposing strategies for addressing community needs, including agency

initiatives, advocacy and collaboration with other human services and citizen groups in the Area;

- ▶ proposing implications for policy, organizational and human resource planning within the agency; and
- ▶ being the formal means in the agency for reporting on and sustaining community development and planning activities in the Area, in partnership with the Management and Board of the agency (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992).

The rationale for Area advisory councils relates to a number of areas in *The Child and Family Services Act*, particularly Principle 10 of the preamble which reads that communities have a responsibility to promote the best interests of their children and families and have a right to participate in services to their families and children (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992). The intent is to incorporate citizen participation into the service decisions about the best interests of children and families. There are other portions of *The Act* that deal with citizen participation. In particular, *The Act* provides the Winnipeg Child and Family Services Agency with a mandate for the development of community-based strategies and initiatives in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. If we refer back to the duties of the Agency cited in Chapter 2, we find provisions for community and prevention-based services. Finally, in terms of access to related Agency services, Section 11.1 of *The Act* (1985:25) states that any interested community group or individual may apply to an agency for assistance in resolving community problems which are affecting the ability of families to care adequately for their children.

The way citizen participation can be maximized through Area Councils is through ‘community development’, where the process is to increase the problem-solving skills of local citizens so that they may help influence conditions in their communities affecting the best

interests of children and families (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992). For example, Councils may meet with and encourage citizen groups or individuals to provide the needed services or to initiate the development of required resources. This might include group support systems such as child care, food clubs, clothing depots, etc. The Council focuses on encouraging and developing such community services for the neighbourhood but is not involved in the aspects of services defined by *The Child and Family Services Act* (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992). As such, Councils are the vehicles for citizens in each Area to formally get involved in the policy and planning process of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. The Board of Directors has been given the mandate under *The Act* to provide services which protect children and also strengthen and preserve families in various communities found throughout Winnipeg. Councils elect members to the Board of Directors which sets overall policies for the Agency (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992).

Area Councils may take on different characteristics and sizes in each of the four Areas of Winnipeg served by the Agency. This is decided by citizens coming together to develop their unique way of representing the different cultures or neighbourhood communities in their area (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992). For example, the East Area Council is the community partner of Winnipeg Child and Family Services - East, providing a bridge between community, represented by Regional Committees, and the staff, management and Board of Directors of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Its mission statement affirms that community involvement is an essential element in raising healthy, adaptive children, and asserts that prevention supports and empowers communities and families' ability to act on their own behalf (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1996/97:2). This mission statement and the use of

Regional Committees are unique to East Area. Within each Area, however, the Bylaw calls for five citizens to be elected to represent and give direction to the duties and responsibilities of an Area Council. An equal number of 'stakeholders', or other service delivery representatives, are appointed by the Board of the Agency. Under no circumstances should there be less than a two-to-one ratio of resident versus stakeholder representation on a Council to preserve the citizen participation intent (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992). This group of 10 members of the Area Council are constituted a 'Standing Committee' of the Board of Directors and as such, they will be responsible to the Board for giving advice and planning assistance about needs and service development in their area (Winnipeg Child and Family Service, 1996). The two members of the Area Council's Standing Committee are elected as members of the Board to participate in overall policy decision making of the Agency for the City. While each acts as an individual member of the Board, the Bylaw will only allow one of those elected members to have a vote. The other member is to be on the Board as an ex-officio acting as back-up to the voting member. Their primary responsibility is to advocate and vote on behalf of their respective Area Council when dealing with matters pertinent to the duties and responsibilities of Area Councils. Figure 5 shows the schematic for the Area Councils.

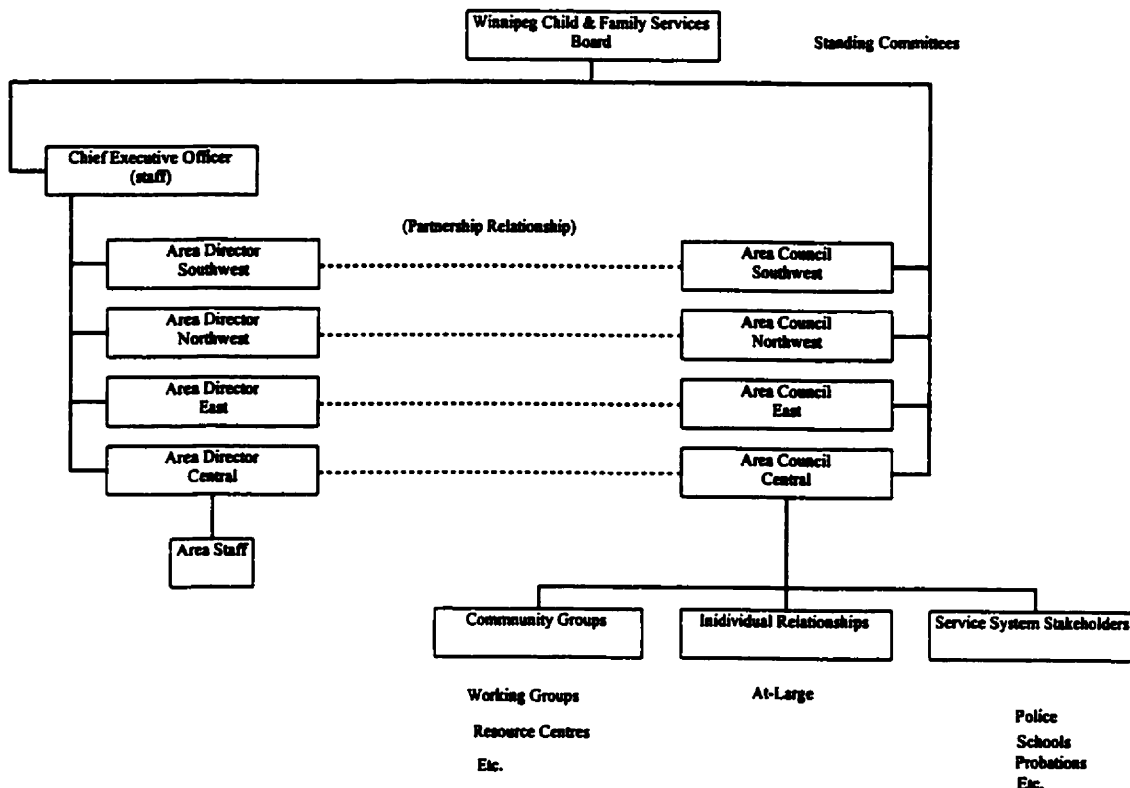


Figure 5: Schematic for Area Councils. (from Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1992.)

In theory, the roles and functions of the Area Councils seem to provide for a significant amount of citizen participation at the service delivery level of child welfare policy. However, in practice, this system calls into question the amount of control that citizen participation is asserting on policy and program development. Advisory councils, such as the Area Councils developed by Winnipeg Child and Family Services, have considerable potential as a constituency for child welfare. They provide a window into the world of child welfare through which citizens who would not ordinarily have an opportunity can learn about the public issues and private troubles that surround and confound child welfare (Wharf, 1993:101). In addition, a citizen council that is intensely interested in the topic, that stays with the topic long enough to become

well informed, can provide an excellent sounding board and could even provide creative policy development if the public officials chose to (Milbrath, 1981). Advisory councils can also review policy and practice. As already mentioned, however, it is questionable how much influence they really have, and how much of their advice is really considered. In fact, some observers have suggested that governments' use entities such as advisory agencies simply as a means of legitimizing an expansion of powers and it is questioned whether the advice that is tendered, and whether the worth of these advisory agencies, is carried over into administrative results (Brown-John, 1979). The Area Councils as mandated by Winnipeg Child and Family Services are truly an influence model as opposed to the former agencies' decision making model. In the former agencies' model, citizens of each of the six agencies were members of the Board of Directors. They had voting powers and, therefore, the power to make decisions. Under the current system, on the other hand, citizens who are members of the Area Councils merely have advisory powers. They have no significant role other than as a linkage to the community and the advice that is heeded may be dependent on how the Area Director of a particular Area incorporates that information into his or her agenda (Smith, 1997:12 March). Although the Chairperson of each Area Council is a Board member, and therefore has voting powers, he or she is only one of 13 members who has the power to vote on a decision. The one member from each Area who is an ex-officio, again can advocate for a particular initiative, but does not have the power to vote on a particular matter. Furthermore, the functions of the Councils are restricted to preventative initiatives. As earlier pointed out, Councils do not become involved in aspects of those services defined in *The Child and Family Services Act* which really limits the amount of influence they have on all aspects of the field. The current system has weakened the linkage between citizens

and the influence they have on child welfare service delivery policies (Smith, 1997: 12 March).

This is consistent with Wharf's contention (1993:100) that the crucial issue for all advisory councils is whether their advice is heeded.

It appears by the lack of ability to directly participate in decisions that this mechanism of citizen involvement can be viewed as what Arnstein describes as token participation.

Communication and consultation are occurring, as on her fourth rung of participation. A partnership has also been developed between the Area Councils and the Agency via the Area Directors, as is characterized by Arnstein's sixth rung and as depicted in Figure 5. This should mean that some degree of power is held by citizens. However, although the Area Council members are in the position to negotiate, power to vote on final decisions is limited by the ratio of Board members who are not Area Council members to the number of Area Council members who are Board members. It is only those who are Board members who have voting powers. In a partnership, power is shared and these partnerships work most effectively when there is an organized power-base in the community to which the citizen leaders are accountable (Arnstein, 1969). Certainly this is occurring with the Area Councils, however, the power holders cannot be held accountable to those citizens in the community. The powers of the Area Councils are restricted to negotiating powers, but no real control over the decisions being made is directly in the hands of the Councils. Instead, this type of a technique for including citizens is consistent with Arnstein's fifth rung - placation. It is at this level that citizens begin to have some degree of influence though tokenism is still apparent. She cites some examples of advisory councils as a placation strategy. It is claimed that advisory and planning committees allow citizens to advise or plan *ad infinitum* but retain for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of

the advice (Arnstein, 1969). The power holders in this situation are the entire Board of Directors who themselves don't have very much power when we consider that the Provincial government still maintains fiscal and legislative responsibility for the system.

In recalling Kenneth Bryden's models of representative and direct participation, it seems clear that the Area Councils' opportunities for participation are mainly of an instrumental nature. Although there is some indication that consummative participation is taking place in terms of sharing in the community via the Area Councils, this sharing may not necessarily result in new or changed policies. If we recall, the Area Councils do not become involved in the aspects of services identified by *The Act*. Although briefs were submitted by the membership of Area Councils to the Child and Family Services Review Committee during the public hearing process (Winnipeg Child and Family Services: 1996/97:13), there was seemingly no guarantee, as previously discussed, that the concerns outlined in the briefs would have been addressed. The services mandated by *The Act* do affect the community, and yet there is little, if any, influence at all on them via the Councils. This alone demonstrates that direct participation is not occurring. Those areas where citizen participation is having an impact are the preventative services. This is not to negate their importance, but it does demonstrate the limits of the powers of citizens involved in, and through, the Area Councils.

There are some aspects of participatory democracy and White's dialectical organization evident in the Area Councils. For example, Area Councils do invite personal involvement, a quality of the client relations dimension, from the community. However, the specialized roles of Area Council members run counter to the more generalist roles of a non-traditional bureaucracy. In addition, several bodies, as characterized in a dialectical organization's administrative

structure, are responsible through the Councils for coming together with regards to non-mandated services and making decisions. However, the fact that an Area Council is made up of members who are not only Council members, but also Board members, would cause one to believe that the ideas being presented may not be representative of the community as a whole. Area Councils are organized groups. If we recall Rousseau's remarks about groups, he believed that the presence of organized groups might result in 'particular wills' prevailing (Patemen, 1970:24). This issue runs counter to a non-traditional, dialectical organization, by White's definition.

One quality of the Wesley Agency was its involvement of staff and neighbourhoods in controversial issues. Although the Area Councils do involve staff and neighbourhoods in controversial issues, as issues in the child welfare field are controversial, there is no guarantee that their input is supported. New programs and services have been developed as a result of the Councils' work and this could mean that the organization supports innovation as the Dionysians did by incorporating ideas from community members.

With respect to the organizational mentality, Area Councils seem to value collaboration and consensus as stressed in the secondary mentality of the Wesley Agency. It is through this collaboration that non-mandated services have been established in communities. However, this mentality does not necessarily carry over to the larger organization. The Area Councils remain only a small piece of the child and family services system in Winnipeg.

Given that the reorganized, centralized Child and Family Services system reduced the opportunities for citizens to have control over decisions, it seems that the only hope for greater influence to occur through citizen participation via Area Councils is to examine how to increase

the power of the Councils. It is doubtful that this will involve the inclusion of those services that are defined by *The Act*. Despite the popularity of advisory councils, no provincial government has formed a council with the specific purpose of advising its ministry on statutory child welfare services (Wharf, 1993:99). In fact, over a quarter century ago, Clague (1971) suggested that one way to strengthen consultative devices, such as public hearings, was through the inclusion of concerned citizens as advisory members of legislative committees. Again, however, as advisory councils have mainly an advisory role, there is no guarantee that any changes resulting from this influence will be adopted.

The process of increasing the powers of the Area Councils may pose challenges for the Provincial government since it involves decision making at local levels, far removed both physically, and in mind set, from the seats of centralized power. The Government tries, through the work of its staff and the leverage of funding, to impose solutions for child welfare problems. Not only is this not effective, but it negates the very concept of citizen participation in which problem definition comes from the community itself (Family and Children's Services, 1992:23). We need to emphasize that citizen participation should mean more than community consultation. It must be more than instrumental or token participation. It must involve direct participation and the ability to be decision makers, not merely advisors or information gatherers.

As it stands, if the Area Councils are to influence policy, their advice may possibly need to fit with the priorities and ideologies of the Agency. If such a fit occurs, the essential contribution of the advisory council is one of support, and while in some instances support can be valuable, the question can be raised, as Wharf poses (1993:100), why bother with an advisory council that simply confirms existing or proposed directions? On the other hand, if the Council proffers

advice that challenges the firmly established views of the Area Director of a particular Area, it may be dismissed.

It becomes evident from this discussion that although advisory councils do have some potential to influence child welfare policy and practice through the involvement of citizens, the former system of decentralization had greater potential for allowing citizens to share in decisions. Under the decentralized system, the Agencies, in their entirety, closely resembled White's dialectical organization. Bryden (1982), among other recommendations, suggests that devolution of authority in large organizations is one way of enhancing the influence of citizen participation. The Area Councils, as merely a small part of the entire organization, are not afforded this authority.

Community Relations Committee

A Community Relations Committee has been established with specific objectives in relation to the Area Councils. It is to foster and enhance lines of communication between the Board of Directors and Area Councils, to provide a forum for discussing matters touching on the goals and objectives of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, and to develop strategic communication plans and make recommendations to the Board of Directors to improve or strengthen the image of Child and Family Services in the community (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1993a). Several functions have been assigned to this Committee, including a liaison role between the Board and the community, advising the Board on all community relations matters, advocating to the Board on behalf of the community, reviewing the role of the Area Councils, and promoting a positive image of the Agency within the community. While this Committee appears to have

mainly a supportive role for the Area Councils, it is made up of the chair people from the four Area Councils: Central, Southwest, East, Northwest, and representatives of the Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1997/98:6). The membership appears, then, to be an elite - chair persons and Board members. This type of Committee would form the basis of a model of representative democracy where the views of the elite would be presented. It would not necessarily ensure that the views are representative of those people in the communities who are most affected by the child welfare system. In Bryden's words (1982), ironically, the makeup of the Committee would have the effect of increasing the opportunities of those who already have disproportionate influence in the policy process, and in Rousseau's words (Pateman, 1970:24), these organized groups might be able to make their 'particular wills' prevail.

AGENCY RENEWAL PROCESS

In the summer of 1997, a new Chief Executive Officer was hired by the Board of Directors to oversee the functioning of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. By January of 1998, through the inclusion of staff in what was termed Awareness Days, it became apparent that the Agency intended to undergo a renewal process. This renewal would include a transition from a geographically-based model of service delivery to a program-based model of delivering child welfare services in the city of Winnipeg. There will remain, however, a commitment to delivering some services through community-based offices. This renewal process has resulted in the introduction of new methods of participation in the Agency.

A strategic planning process was embarked upon with the announcement of the renewal. The

intent was to include those who were going to be affected by the decisions. This included stakeholders, staff, consumers, and Board members (Tarrant, 1998:22 January). Decisions regarding the renewal were to be made in large meetings. The rationale for the decision to involve these groups of citizens was that these individuals would be the creators of the new Agency by being involved in the process which would inevitably result in collective decisions (Tarrant, 1998:22 January). The basic planning principles for this process were distributed to staff by Winnipeg Child and Family Services (1998) and read as follows:

- ▶ Our planning process will be based on open, interactive and forthright communication among all staff and stakeholders;
- ▶ Change within the organization must better meet client needs;
- ▶ We will secure active stakeholder involvement in setting goals and direction for the future of our organization; and
- ▶ Our planning process will encourage and promote innovation and creativity.

To begin the strategic planning process, a steering committee was established comprising of staff from various levels of the Agency and two Board members. In addition, Strategic Planning Task Groups were developed by selecting from those staff who volunteered at the Awareness Days. Staff were selected from across service areas to ensure a mix of perspectives, skills and experience (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:23 February). The Task Groups were designed to cover an array of topics related to the delivery of child welfare services by the Agency. For example, four task groups devised were: the Communication Task Group; the Stakeholder Identification Task Group; the Workload Management Task Group and the Data Gathering Task Group. Figure 6 shows the program-based model which will take effect some time in the fall of 1999.

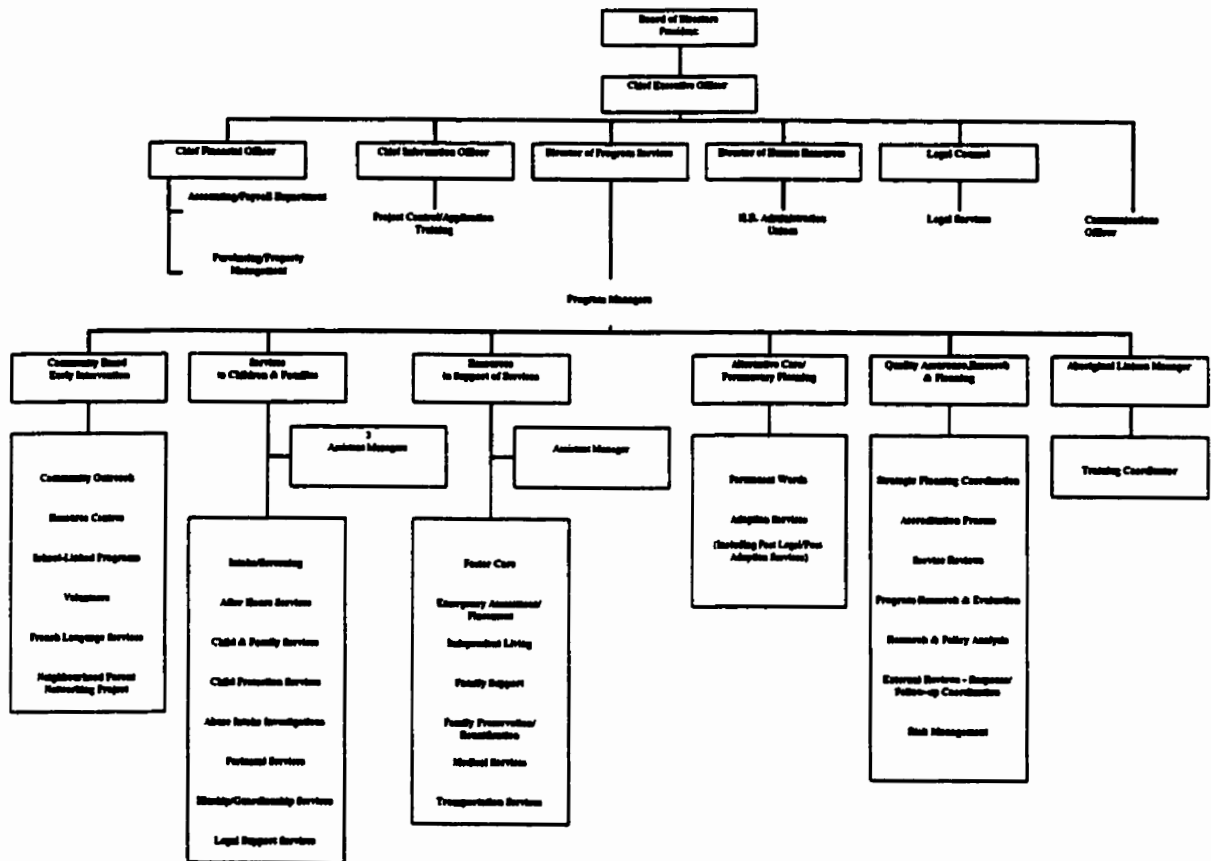


Figure 6: Program-Based Model of Service Delivery. (from Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1999.)

Of significant importance for our discussion on citizen participation is the Stakeholder Identification Task Group. This group's purpose was to identify a diverse group of major stakeholders who would provide comprehensive information and input to influence the Agency's statement of values, mission, goals and objectives (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:23 February).

The next stage in planning for agency renewal was the participation of staff, stakeholders, Board members, and government representatives, in a strategic planning retreat. Employees and stakeholders, as selected from a list submitted by the Stakeholder Identification Task Group,

were invited to attend the four-day retreat. At the retreat, Agency values, vision, mission statement, and organizational goals and objectives were developed. Portions of the mission statement that emerged point toward an Agency that values citizen participation. Winnipeg Child and Family Services is under provincial legislation to support and strengthen families and work together with the community for the protection and care of children and the prevention of child abuse and neglect . . . (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1999:3). In addition, the service vision statement encompasses some provisions for citizen participation. It reads:

to work together, with families and communities to ensure the safety and well being of all children: by being community based: establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with the community for the purpose of identifying child and family related needs and developing comprehensive and coordinated responses to those needs (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1999:3).

Another important step in the agency renewal process was to appoint Program Managers for the five new programs identified. The hiring process included front line social workers participating in the selection procedure.

Finally, the transition from an Area-based service model to an Agency-based program model involved the development of 16 Program Work Groups representing the program functions of the program areas (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:6 October). Each group was to be headed up by the Program Manager assigned to oversee the particular function. All staff were given the opportunity to review the recommendations of the Work Groups upon completion. Each Work Group compiled a paper, complete with proposed recommendations for program functions. These papers were presented at a three-day Feedback Forum comprised of representatives from each Work Group and the Executive Management Team of the Agency.

The final decisions regarding program functions, staff composition, and service configuration,

were left to the Executive Management Team. The Board of Directors of Winnipeg Child and Family Services will be responsible for reviewing, approving, and recommending changes prior to implementation. This type of decision making characterizes a representative model of participation.

Before going on to analyze the participation process undertaken during agency renewal, it is important to note the use of the term 'agency renewal'. The significance of the use of this term, versus the use of the term 'agency restructuring' is in the definition of each. 'Agency renewal' refers to the organization defining what it needs to do, whereas, 'agency restructuring' is the organizational changes that will take place in order to meet its organizational goals and objectives (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:11). Agency renewal connotes participation, as the organization defines what it needs to do. On the other hand, organizational restructuring does not refer to any type of involvement of the organization in the process. This is precisely what occurred both in 1985 and 1991 where external groups stepped in to advise upon what changes had already been determined (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:12). The process being undertaken with the present renewal seems to be a much more democratic process than in the past and involves both internal and external participants.

Workplace Participation

The agency renewal process has afforded many opportunities for citizen participation. With respect to participation in the workplace, several avenues can be identified. Firstly, staff were appointed to be participants on the steering committee. Management compiled a list of names of staff who would be suited to, and interested in, this type of work and from this list, names were

chosen with a view to obtaining representation from across the Agency (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:5). The purpose of this committee was not to decide what the Agency's strategic plan would be. Instead, it was developed to ensure the process remained on track within the already stated time frames (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:5).

Secondly, staff were requested to volunteer for Task Groups, and later, Work Groups. The Steering Committee established Task Group memberships by selecting names from the respective volunteer lists, while the selection of membership for Work Groups was made by the Program Managers of the respective Work Group function. These individuals also came from a list of volunteers and were chosen with the intent of ensuring a variety of views and experiences were represented (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:6 October).

Thirdly, employees, in addition to Management, were selected to be involved in the hiring of the new Program Managers. Finally, staff were chosen to take part at the Strategic Planning Retreat and the Feedback Forum sessions.

Stakeholder Participation

Another planning principle for the renewal process was securing active stakeholder involvement in setting the goals and direction for the future of the organization (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:12). Stakeholder input and participation is included in various ways throughout the Strategic Planning process. For example, stakeholders were invited to Work Group meetings to help identify issues and to the retreat to help develop the Agency's mission, vision, goals and guiding principles. Stakeholders, as defined by the Agency, are anyone 'interested in' or 'affected by' why the Agency exists, what it seeks to accomplish, how it will

fulfill its purpose, and the principles that guide it as it pursues its purpose (Winnipeg Child and Family Services 1998:3). Some examples of stakeholders are: staff of the Agency, clients, foster parents, local citizens, Agency members, Board members, volunteers, collateral agencies, government organizations, other service providers, community groups etc. (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:3).

Citizen Participation in Agency Renewal

The participation by staff of Winnipeg Child and Family Services in the renewal of the organization lends some support to the theory of participatory democracy. Although the groups organized for the purpose of allowing participation to take place run counter to Rousseau's idea of no organized groups being present, this type of participation is partially supported by the general definition, stated earlier, that claims that the theory of participatory democracy is built around the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another and that for maximum participation by all people at that level, socialization, or 'social training', for democracy must take place in other spheres (Pateman, 1970:42). In this instance, the sphere we are referring to is the child and family services system. If the major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is an educative one (Pateman, 1970:42), then this process of participating in the workplace is fulfilling that function. Staff would be gaining practice in democratic skills and procedures through these groups and learning through the input of others. Participating in the Work Groups could serve to enhance the confidence of staff in the organization's belief that the work of employees is of value and worthy of attention. In fact, Schibler (1999:17 June), an employee and foster parent of Winnipeg

Child and Family Services, felt that she was able to provide a leadership role in the process of participating in the renewal. Not only does this serve to fulfill the purpose of changing individual attitudes, as this theory claims, but it also serves to develop psychological qualities such as feeling valued. Furthermore, subsidiary hypotheses about participation are that it has an integrative effect and that it aids the acceptance of collective decisions. In this writer's view, the final decisions about how the Agency will be organized, and ultimately deliver services, could be more supported by some Agency staff. This is due to the fact that they were included in the development of the new organization. The most convincing part of this argument comes from an example provided by Schibler (1999:17 June):

At the Strategic Planning Retreat, a proposal was made to look at Aboriginal issues as a separate Program in the Agency. It was acknowledged at that time, but did not seem important enough to be classified as a Program of its own. In the Work Group examining Aboriginal issues, it was emphasized again by the participants and stakeholders that this area required a separate Program. This process changed the course of history for the Agency. In a unanimous decision by the Agency's power holders, a permanent position was identified for an Aboriginal Program Manager.

Bryden's direct participation model also supports the technique of involving staff in decisions, to some extent. The direct participation process must be rounded out by being extended to the workplace which continues to be central to most people's lives. In fact, the workplace is probably the most important locus of participation, since decisions made there have greater immediacy for the individual than those made almost anywhere else (Bryden, 1982). Therefore, participating via the workplace participation techniques outlined above is a form of consummative participation in the direct participation model. However, there is no devolution of authority. The process of the Board of Directors making the final decision detracts from a direct participation model. This process is more characteristic of a representation model. In the

representation model, if we recall, public input occurs preeminently through popularly elected representatives (Bryden, 1982). In the case of the Agency, those representatives are the Board of Directors who have the power to make the final decisions and those members have been mainly appointed by government.

This type of participation does not move the process to the highest rungs of Arnstein's ladder of participation either. Some more cynical individuals may interpret the process as a form of manipulation that was intended to pacify staff and community members so that they would be less critical of the final outcomes. There is no delegation of power to staff in terms of the making of the final decisions, nor do the staff have full managerial power, as the eighth rung indicates. In fact, the Agency's governing body - its Board of Directors - has the final decision making authority (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1998:12). The fourth rung - consultation - is definitely being attained as the staff may indeed be heard in the process, but they still lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the Board. The staff are also able to advise through this process, as characteristic of the placation rung, but again, the Board maintains the right to make the final decisions. Once more, this points to degrees of tokenism being the result of the participation efforts in the renewal process. We may be able to extend the Work Group technique to the sixth rung of Arnstein's ladder where partnerships, and therefore some degree of control, are developed. Since the Board is represented both as a participant on the steering committee and as a stakeholder, decisions made through this technique should have the support of the Board. In fact, Winnipeg Child and Family Services (1998:12) claims that it would be unlikely, although not guaranteed, that the Board would suddenly withdraw its support of a decision it had a hand in making.

When transferring the experience of White's Wesley Agency into the arena of Winnipeg Child and Family Services during the renewal process, some approximations can again be made. There is a deemphasis on the principle of hierarchy, as in a traditional bureaucracy, with respect to the Work Groups and the hiring process at the Agency. The Work Groups were comprised of individuals from a diverse group of employees at all levels of the hierarchy. Regardless of the individuals' position, decisions in these groups were made by the entire group and many views and perspectives were presented at the Feedback Forum. Several options were proposed with respect to the service configuration of each function. This ensured some balance of power at this point in the process, however, the final decisions are being left up to the Board of Directors. This is characteristic of a traditional bureaucracy where strictly defined roles are articulated in terms of layers of authority (White, 1969).

In the Wesley Agency, supervisory and management positions were periodically assigned by total staff decision (White, 1969). During the hiring of the Program Managers at Winnipeg Child and Family Services, staff from diverse groups were included on the hiring panel. This shows a commitment to the idea of heterogeneity that was evident in White's dialectical organization. The Wesley Agency maintained a direct organizational cognizance of various perspectives and individual styles (White, 1969). The Task Groups, Work Groups, steering committee, and hiring panel, all of which were comprised of a diverse group of individuals from across the Agency, allowed for various perspectives to be presented. However, as in a traditional bureaucracy, the final decisions are not being made by these people. They are maintained by the highest layer of authority in the bureaucracy.

These innovative methods of participation in the workplace show evidence of an attempt at

changing the organizational ideology and mentality. The Dionysian ideology stressed innovation, which was one of the planning principles of the Strategic Planning process, while the secondary mentality stressed team work or a commitment of its members to collaboration (White, 1969). There is clearly a commitment to collaboration with respect to the hiring process and the development of the various program functions via the Work Groups. However, this collaboration does not necessarily mean that there will be consensus with regard to the final outcomes.

The influence from stakeholder involvement in this process is questionable. If a true partnership was being established, this involvement would include power sharing. Arnstein's description of partnerships claims that power is, in fact, redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders and that they agree to share planning and decision making responsibilities (Arnstein, 1969). Clearly, this is not the case with the inclusion of stakeholders in the Strategic Planning Process. Instead, stakeholder input was intended to provide significant information through meetings and events that were not generally to be decision making vehicles, but rather, ways to gather a wide range of perspectives (Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 1993 :4). Langille (1993) claims that unless the people are recognized as the majority stakeholders and their representatives wield the most power, there is no hope of democratic control through the forging of 'strategic partnerships' between stakeholders and power holders. Therefore, this type of involvement by stakeholders is nothing more than tokenism. It does allow for various perspectives to be presented and collaboration to be present, as was occurring in the Wesley Agency, but it does not ensure that decisions are based on consensus.

Clients are being viewed as stakeholders in this process. To some extent, this indicates a

move toward a changing client relations as in White's dialectical organization. The client is being viewed as a peer in this regard, by involving him or her in the planning process. For example, the Work Group established to review the delivery of services to adolescent parents, termed the Perinatal Work Group, invited two clients of the system who were receiving service from the Agency. The members of this Group regarded the information provided by the young women with respect and incorporated it into the final recommendations from the Group. This allowed the clients to help define problems and ensured that the information provided was included in the presentation of the Group. However, there will not be an opportunity for these clients to wield any power in the final decisions. They were merely being consulted through this involvement. Arnstein would place this type of participation on her fourth rung of the ladder. However, Bryden might consider this a form of consummative participation, in that there may be a feeling among all the participants in the agency renewal process that they belong to the community as they come together to discuss and define the problems of the child welfare system.

SUMMARY

This chapter has examined three distinct structural arrangements of the organization responsible for delivering child welfare services in the city of Winnipeg and analyzed mechanisms of citizen participation inherent in each. Under regionalization, by virtue of the fact that the boards of directors were elected and were comprised of members from each agencies' respective community, this arrangement, in theory, had the most potential for citizens gaining more power in decisions made in the child welfare field. The six agencies could potentially have closely resembled a dialectical organization but the fact is they remained, both financially and

legislatively, under the control of the province. Before their potential to allow citizens more power in the field could be realized, the Provincial government, under the Progressive Conservative Party, stepped in and dismantled this structure for the reasons cited. The entire system, with the exception of the province, included some form of citizen participation. There was clearly many characteristics of White's dialectical organization evident during this time. The new, centrally administered, geographically-based model is overseen by a single Board of directors and moved the Agency away from the opportunities for citizen participation that were evident under the decentralized model. The newly developed Area Councils, as vehicles for citizen participation, do afford citizens the opportunity to participate in decisions made in the system. However, this method is no more than tokenism as the Councils are made up of representatives from the community, including staff, who are merely able to advise upon, or possibly influence, decisions around Agency policy and service requirements.

With the current renewal process underway and a move toward a program-based model, we have seen some progress in the opportunities for citizens to participate. Some of the techniques have given staff and stakeholders some decision making powers. However, as our analysis pointed out, most of these are token opportunities as the traditional power holders maintain the final decision making authority. Although much of what has taken place during the strategic planning phase has possessed many of the characteristics of White's dialectical organization, once the process is complete, there remains the question of what methods will be employed to involve citizens in the field and hence maintain the image of a dialectical organization. Although portions of the mission statement and the vision statement claim that the Agency will maintain effective working relationships with the community, it remains to be seen whether these

relationships will be true partnerships in the sense of the definition where power is shared. It also remains to be seen whether any authority will be delegated to community organizations, staff, or clients in the future, through further initiatives.

CHAPTER 6

SERVICE DELIVERY CONTEXT

This thesis has demonstrated throughout that attempts have been made, and are still being made, to involve people in public decision making in the child welfare field. According to Tillotson (1994), conservative social commentator William Gairdner, argues that the welfare state bureaucracies have tended to encourage the passive consumption of state provision and seriously undermined citizens' confidence in their ability to direct their own lives. In fact, there is evidence of this occurring in the child welfare field in the past. At one time the protection and apprehension of children was seen as the prime mandate of child welfare services and when abuse and neglect became apparent, the most common response was the removal of the child and placement in alternative care (Savoury and Kufeldt, 1997). Today, however, when there are concerns about the safety of children, the contention here is that all alternatives to removal must be explored. What is required are services that reflect citizens' own values. In fact, Principle 10 of *The Child and Family Services Act* (1985:3) asserts that communities have a responsibility to promote the best interests of their children and families and have the right to participate in services to their families and children. The techniques described thus far have included a broad range of citizen involvement, but none of these is capable of dealing with the very private, individual and unique needs and issues of the client. Each client, or client system served by the child welfare field, is unique in terms of its issues, needs, make up, and values. What is needed is a method of citizen participation that can take these specific issues and needs into account. Problems of children's welfare are inextricably intertwined with the problems of their families

and there is a need to provide a forum for negotiation between professionals and families, and that wider family involvement in that forum would be welcome (Marsh and Crow, 1998:21).

This chapter will examine a method of delivering child welfare services that recognizes that children and their families are often in the best position to make decisions about their lives. This method returns the authority of the individual to the individual, of families to families, and of the community, to the community (Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997:13). This technique is called Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) or Family Group Conferencing (FGC). FGDM, unlike the other methods of participation described, addresses a very small, but important part of the system - decisions about how service will be delivered. It allows citizens, as clients of the system, to participate in decisions around how service will be delivered and how support plans will be provided with resources. This is consistent with the definition of citizen participation in Chapter 2 where it describes the actions of citizen participation to include a range of individual involvement from action toward a given goal (Kubiski, 1992:2). In the service delivery context, this given goal could be the goal of protecting the children, or the goal of having a family remain intact. Finally, on a broader level, also in relation to Kubiski's (1992:2) definition, is actions taken toward changing existing policies, authorities, or structures. The FGDM model relates to these actions in so far as FGCs may result in the identification by the family, or by involved community members, of a needed resource that may not be available in the community in question. As a result, both the family and the community, may be given the opportunity to influence the creation of programs and resources.

FGDM is a technique that takes citizen participation in child welfare to the higher levels of Arnstein's typology. Here, varying degrees of power can be seen. There are many similarities to

White's dialectical organization, closely resembling this ideal type. It is indicative of consummative participation in Bryden's direct participation model and it possesses some of the functions of Rousseau's theory of participatory democracy. The following section will examine this model of service delivery.

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING

Family Group Decision Making is the first attempt in mandated services by the child and family services system in Manitoba to give the family any kind of decision making role (Hall, 1998:5 May). It is a formalized mechanism of involving families and communities in the delivery of services. The Manitoba Department of Child and Family Services has recognized a need to support new approaches to service delivery in the province and FGC is one of those approaches supported.

In Manitoba, Family Group Conferencing is a pilot project developed for this purpose. It has been implemented at four sites in the province: Dauphin, Lynn Lake, Brandon, and Winnipeg. In Winnipeg, the site is located in Gilbert Park, a community which receives services through Winnipeg Child and Family Services', Northwest Area.

Background

The origins of Family Group Conferences lie in New Zealand in the early 1980s, although the pressures and ideas that led to them have been occurring throughout the Western world (Hassall and Maxwell in Marsh and Crow, 1998:37). The model has its origins with the Maori community of New Zealand where it has been enshrined in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice legislation since 1989 (Winnipeg Child and family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre,

Inc., 1997:1). The pressures from the Maori community were primarily due to the consistent objections that the needs of their children were being poorly dealt with by the child welfare system, and that it would be far better to support Maori families rather than to remove their children, a process which all too often reduced or severed the children's links with their families (Marsh and Crow, 1998:38). There was a prominent and public championing of the need to strengthen families and to respect culture, which was perhaps unique (Marsh and Crow, 1998:39).

FGCs have been widely adopted as an alternative approach to child protection services in many countries, including Canada. In addition, Manitoba has recently incorporated FGCs into its child welfare system. Similar to the model having its origins in the Maori community of New Zealand, Manitoba's model has its origins in the First Nations community. Again, there is a similarity to the Maori's of New Zealand in the history of the treatment of Aboriginal communities by child welfare systems in Canada. During the 1960s, Native children were removed from their homes in great numbers by child welfare authorities with devastating impacts on both the communities and the children. The feelings of fear, hostility, and mistrust concerning the children's aid societies became prominent (Anderson, 1998). This comparison provides a rationale for the use of FGDM among First Nations communities.

Philosophical Base

Family Group Conferencing outlines the principal goals of collective responsibility and protecting children by strengthening families (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997). FGDM respects the integrity of the family unit including

extended family and kinship, capitalizes on the family's strengths and the contributing role of the community, emphasizes a partnership of collective decision making, and conveys sensitivity and respect for cultural diversity (Child Welfare and Family Support Branch, 1996). In short, Family Group Conferencing rests upon a foundation of partnerships of community organizations and government departments and, in turn, strengthens these partnerships through a joint intervention around and with specific families (Pennell and Burford, 1997:281). These partnerships are numerous, as Figure 7 depicts.

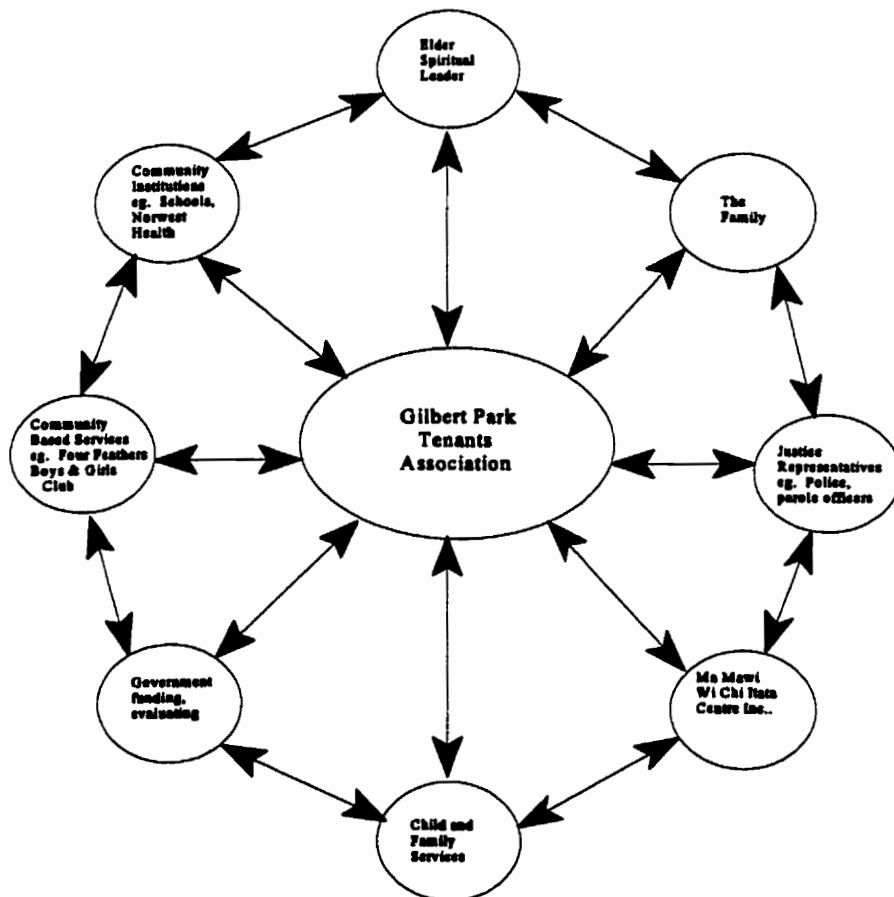


Figure 7: Partnerships in Winnipeg's Family Group Decision Making Model. (from Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997.)

Before moving on to outline the FGC process, it is important to make some points regarding the philosophical base and its relative connection to citizen participation. As mentioned, FGDM is based on a foundation of partnerships. The active involvement of the family in placement decisions and the development of support plans assist in the process of partnership building, while the contributing role of neighbourhood and community networks can help reduce risk for families and prevent disruptive placements for children (Child Welfare and Family Support Branch, 1996). This philosophy is a relatively new way of looking at providing services in the child welfare field. In the past, a prominent element of services was to provide professional care as a substitute for family care, an approach based in part on a *rescue* model of services (Marsh and Crow, 1998:5). FGDM has moved service away from this view of rescuing the child to one of supporting the family through a working partnership. Marsh and Triseliotis (1993:29) argue that partnerships between workers and users is central to achieving the objective of maintaining children's links with their families, except in circumstances where this would cause significant harm. Marsh and Crow (1998:6) ask, with whom should social workers be in partnership, and what areas should these partnerships cover? The answer to these questions lies in part with the interpretation of the term 'partnership'. Partnership is not about equality, but about sharing. A partnership is a formal agreement to share powers with others in the pursuit of joint goals and/or mutual benefits (Kernaghan, 1993). In the child welfare field the client disadvantage is important to recognize as it is generally the most disadvantaged group that comes to the attention of child welfare authorities. A partnership-based service, such as FGDM in child welfare, is about recognizing barriers to communication, different levels of power, and the need to develop a working relationship with constraints that both parties may be unable to alter (Marsh and

Triseliotis, 1993:42). Negotiation is the key to developing an effective relationship.

Traditional ways of delivering services have not emphasized this partnership-based approach. They have not provided a choice to the citizen as the user of service and because of the serious effects that the actions through the child welfare field have on families in terms of keeping children with parents or breaking them up, the state has a particular duty to make sure that citizens are treated justly, equitably, and fairly (Marsh and Triseliotis, 1993:43-44). Openness of decision making and gathering good information are important elements in a partnership-based service and provide an important safeguard for the citizen (Marsh and Triseliotis, 1993:44). With these issues in mind, our discussion will now turn to the FGDM process which will assist in developing a connection between FGDM and citizen participation.

The Conference

Unlike the New Zealand FGCs that are mandated by state authority, Manitoba's FGCs operate on the basis of administrative discretion. However, the basic elements and the structure of the Conferences remain the same. The elements that are important for family participation in decision making include the information available about the nature of the child protection issues prior to the Conference, the information available during the Conference, the private time for the family to deliberate, the negotiation of the agreement and the formulation of the plan (Robertson in Hudson et. al, 1996:52). These elements will become clear with the ensuing discussion. In addition, there are several key dimensions to the FGC. These include:

- Clear, jargon-free information and planning to ensure clear communication;
- A wide and inclusive concept of family which may include extended family, honorary family, such as godparents, or those whom the family are prepared

to count as honorary and who are prepared themselves to be counted;

- ▶ An independent coordinator to listen and provide support for participants, but not to provide assessment or services;
- ▶ Respect and support for families' views, unless there is a risk of significant harm to the child;
- ▶ Building on family strengths, and negotiation of services; and
- ▶ Diversity but conformity. This requires that each Conference be diverse with respect to each family's issues but within their principled base (Marsh and Crow, 1998:45-47).

The structure of the Conference involves several key players. In Winnipeg, Child and Family Services, Northwest Area is responsible for facilitating the implementation of the model by acting as a referral source, ensuring the ongoing safety and protection of the children and families participating, and assisting with the evaluation of the project (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997). Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., a non-mandated Aboriginal organization which does not deliver those services defined in *The Child and Family Services Act*, but instead delivers support services, is one of the partners in the project. The responsibility of this organization is to administrate the daily operation of the project and to act as a potential resource in the facilitation of the support plans devised through the Conference (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997). A community advisory panel has also been established. The panel, community-based with cross-sectoral representation, monitors the decision making process at the community level, assists in the identification and mobilization of existing community-based resources, assists in the review of the developed support plans, and facilitates community-based mediation services

for families who are unable or unwilling to develop effective support plans (Child Welfare and Family Support Branch, 1996). Finally, the Family Group Coordinator, an independent facilitator, is responsible for implementing the model and developing a partnership linkage with the community-based resources in the Northwest location (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre., Inc. 1997).

The initial stage of FGDM is the referral stage. The referrals are received from the child welfare agency by the Family Group Coordinator once the investigation and assessment phases of the case management process are completed by a child welfare worker (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre., Inc., 1997a). A referral must meet the established criteria. Once this has been done, the Coordinator approaches the family members to determine their willingness to participate (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997a).

The second stage, or planning stage, is initiated once consent is received from the family. During this stage, the Coordinator develops a participation list in conjunction with family members and contacts relatives, friends, neighbours, and professionals to secure their participation at the Conference (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997a). In Figure 8, examples of who may attend the Conference, as participants, are provided.

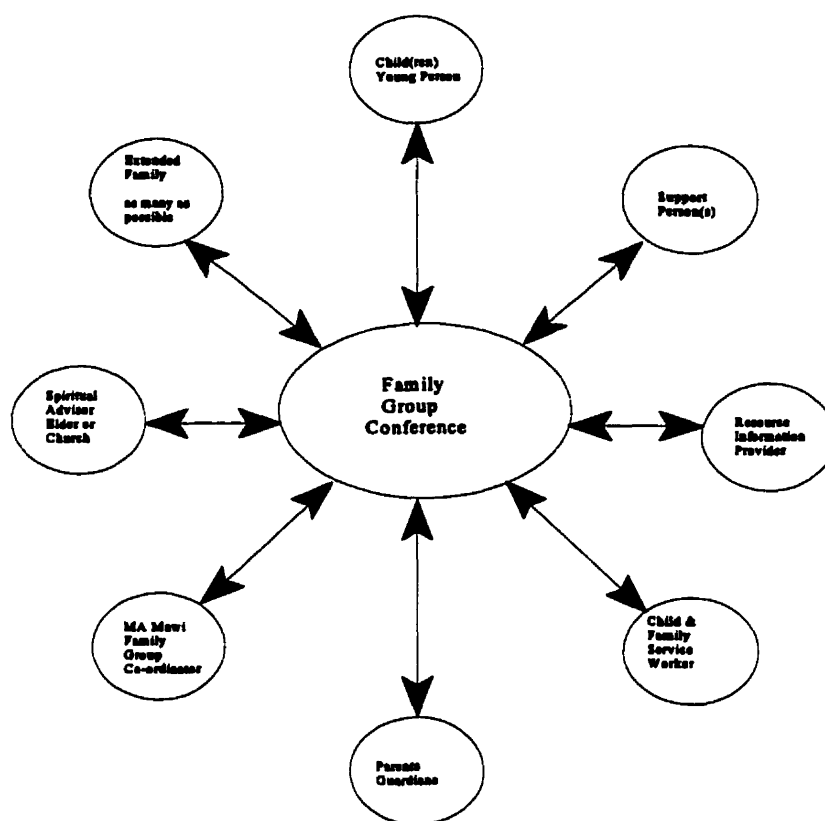


Figure 8: Examples of Family Group Conference Participants. (from Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997.)

The implementation stage, or Conference, is next in the process and commences in a format congruent with culture and tradition (Child Welfare and Family Support Branch, 1996). Presentations are provided regarding areas of concern and risk and information about relevant options and services available to the family are presented to others who are invited for this purpose (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997a). During the Conference there is a deliberation phase which is meant for allowing the family to deliberate in private and develop a support plan without interventions from non-family members. If the family requires assistance with this phase the Coordinator will facilitate this process. The

support plan is to ensure the safety and protection of children and is authorized by the child welfare agency on the basis of its ability to protect the children. The Agency, the Coordinator, and the community are to be involved in assisting in the development of local resources. See Figure 9 for the FGC process.

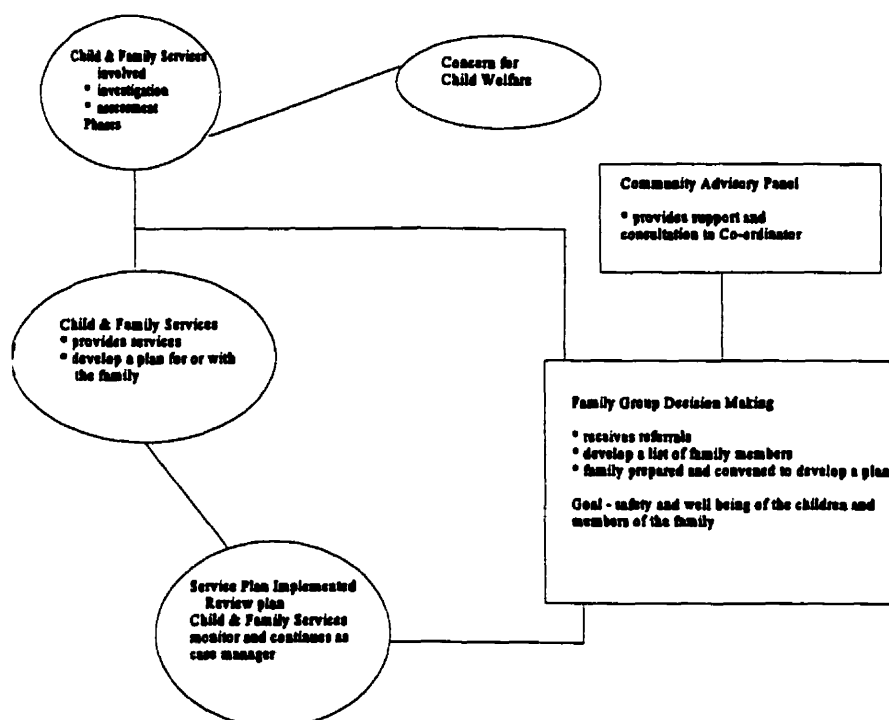


Figure 9: Family Group Conference Process. (from Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997.)

Furthermore, Marsh and Crow (1998:19) claim it adds a new dimension to three crucial areas in child welfare:

When examining the seriousness of situations there is a need for more voices to be heard from a wider range of family members. In regards to engaging the family in the debate, it needs to be recognized that families are diverse in shape and form, and this diversity needs somehow to be reflected in the models of involvement. Finally, there is a need for practice which will make it most likely that voluntary, rather than compulsory, arrangements are made - a difficult enough task with a small number of parties, but even more daunting if the extended family is to be more involved.

Evaluating Family Group Decision Making

The Manitoba project is still underway. Therefore the evaluation and findings are not available. Although most of the findings support the use of FGCs, this model is not without its shortcomings. Some of the most disadvantaged groups of people come to the attention of the child welfare system. When empowering families to make decisions about who should participate in a FGC, or possibly who might be an alternative care provider for the children, at times those individuals identified by the family are equally as disadvantaged as the family itself (Schibler, 1999:17 June). This would make it difficult to identify legitimate resources and could detract from the idea of a partnership when the Agency representative is unable to support the plan. However, Schibler (1999:17 June) maintains that the family can still be given the courtesy and respect of the Agency, to at least examine the plan and inform the family of the reasons for not supporting it.

Resources are also required to make FGCs work. This model should not be used as a cost saving technique for child welfare agencies. According to Hall (1998: 5 May), cost savings are a secondary goal of the use of FGCs in Manitoba. The priority is to develop healthy communities and healthy families through the involvement of people in decisions (Hall, 1998: 5 May).

FGDM requires support from management and staff in organizations that intend to use models such as this. According to Marsh and Crow (1998:65), vehement opposition to the model was found from a few and debates about working with families, about power, and about meeting the needs of children and families, arose. FGDM requires a whole new way of thinking about child welfare practice which may pose some difficulties. For many, the model is a challenge to the assumptions underlying their work, which despite the emphasis on partnership,

still revolved around ideas of professional control, and of families or households predominantly having 'problems without strengths' (Marsh and Crow, 1998:65).

In general, practitioners say that they support the FGC approach (Robertson in Marsh and Crow, 1998:94). Many social workers spoken to have given some indication of appreciating the value of the FGC model and many saw a difference between the FGC and other meetings such as child protection conferences and review meetings (Marsh and Crow, 1998:81). However, despite expressed positive views, many social workers do not want to use the Conference model. Marsh and Crow (1998:82) state that there are a number of different possible reasons for this reluctance, among them, the passing of power and responsibility to families is threatening and to be avoided.

Most of the evaluations on FGC to date have highlighted some very positive trends. For example, research in New Zealand resulted in a dramatic reduction in out-of-family care with 50 per cent of the decisions being made in the context of FGC leading to a new caregiver who was usually a family member, while in Newfoundland, 36 of 37 conferences resulted in the development of a viable case plan and family members expressing a high level of satisfaction with outcomes (Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Mamawi Wichi Itata Centre, Inc., 1997a). The evaluation information provided, coupled with the results and outcomes below, provide a high degree of support for the use of the FGDM model. In addition, the following section analyzes the use of FGDM as a method of citizen participation and provides further support for the model in child welfare. A list of the results and outcomes from a child welfare perspective are provided in Figure 10.

Immediate
Results/Outcomes

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Family: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - culture recognized and respected - feel sense of support in dealing with problems; mobilized network and resources to care for children - feel empowered/sense of responsibility - sense of hope - learn about the nature of abuse |
| Children: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experience of family support/strengthened relationships |
| Community Agencies: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased inter-agency collaboration - responsibility shared/partnership for child protection decisions. |
-

Intermediate
Results

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Family: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthened ability to ensure child's safety - motivated to seek lasting solutions to problems - improved functioning - retained within extended family network - returned to family from state care |
|---------|---|
-

Ultimate Results

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Children: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children protected from abuse and neglect - communal sense of responsibility for children and families |
|-----------|---|
-

Figure 10: Results and Outcomes of Family Group Decision Making. (from Hudson et. al, 1996:15)

Citizen Participation through Family Group Decision Making

The FGDM model is clearly based on a partnership between the client, or family, and the state. It also emphasizes the development of partnerships with the community. Through the negotiation process, power is redistributed between the family and the Agency. This method of delivering services in the child welfare field moves the citizen participation process up Arnstein's ladder to the sixth level - partnership - where the family is enabled, through negotiation, to engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders, or in this case, the child and

family services agency. The community is also seen as a partner in the FGDM model as community members are involved through their engagement in helping to resource the support plan. The community is responsible for identifying and mobilizing existing community resources.

Some delegation of authority can be seen in this model as well. According to Arnstein (1969), negotiations between citizens and public officials can also result in citizens achieving dominant decision making authority over a particular plan or program. In the case of FGC, the citizens, as the family, are given dominant decision making in the deliberation process and ultimately in the formulation of the support plan. Provided the plan meets the requirements of protecting the children, this authority is maintained by the family. Furthermore, the community is given the authority to support the plan through the provision of resources to meet the objectives outlined by the family. This is also a form of delegated power arrangement as characteristic of the seventh rung of Arnstein's ladder.

The traditional means of providing service, through a rescue model, as previously defined, is more indicative of the lower rungs of the participation ladder where agency authorities attempt to "cure" the family as in the manipulation and therapy rungs, or at the very most, where the family is consulted, as on the third rung, around service and planning. FGDM is a good way to reach the disadvantaged who are not reached by traditional participation means (Hall, 1998: 5 May) If we refer back to Figure 1, these are really types of non-participation where the citizen does not possess any "muscle", hence there is no assurance of change (Arnstein, 1969).

FGDM is antithetical to the traditional bureaucratic means of relating to clients. The client in this model is distinctly treated as a peer as were the clients in White's non-bureaucratic

organization. Traditionally, it seems that clients of child and family services agencies have been viewed as subordinates where the social worker and the agency define the problem and develop an intervention plan which is then imposed on the family. FGC provides the family with the opportunity to be treated as equal by giving them the power, not only to identify who they wish to attend the Conference, but also through the deliberation phase of the Conference where it is the family who develops a support plan. Collaboration is essential to its success.

The Agency's role, and the social worker's role in FGC, are also very non-traditional. One result of FGDM is that it increases the number of individuals and agencies participating in addressing the concerns which have been identified (Graber, Keys and White in Hudson et al, 1996:189). Traditional approaches tend to treat each concern segmentally. With FGC, the family and its concerns are treated as a whole. The child welfare agency is no longer responsible for assigning a treatment plan. Instead, the family, possibly with the assistance of the Coordinator, deliberates and develops its own support plan. For social workers accustomed to traditional decision making models, the FGC represents a shift in the power relationship with the expectation that the social worker entrust and empower the family to make decisions for their children and to share the responsibility to resource the plan with the community. This method of delivering service is not unlike the Wesley Agency in White's analysis. The Wesley Agency theory of social work stressed mutual conciliation of all parts of a social problem situation versus the classical clinical style which stressed a therapeutic role for the social worker through which a psychic rearrangement or restructuring of the individual client is effected (White, 1969).

The following summarizes the close link between the FGDM's client orientation and White's client relations dimension of a dialectical organization:

The ultimate objective of this type of social work is to enable the client to represent himself as an equal in the process of working out a concord between himself and community institutions. Hence the goal is not to subordinate the client, but to elevate him to a position of equal power and negotiational effectiveness. On the other hand, workers must interact with representatives of the community institutions in an effort to build good will or “credit” with them which can then be used to benefit the client (White, 1969).

The introduction of FGDM into Winnipeg Child and Family Services shows a shift in the organizational ideology as in Dimension III of White’s dialectical analysis. FGDM is an innovative strategy in child welfare that at least approximates the non-bureaucratic Dionysian type where staff and neighbourhood organizations were involved in controversial issues. The issues at hand are controversial in that children are considered to be at risk of neglect or abuse once they have come to the attention of the child and family services agency. Although staff have always been involved in these issues, traditional service delivery has not emphasized the involvement of the family as the primary support plan provider, nor has it highlighted community organizations as partners in delivering the service. As Dionysians were those people who, through a stronger ego, were able to confront death without fear, they could be considered willing to take risks. FGDM is a risky endeavour in so far as it allows child welfare authorities to forfeit their traditional powers to the family, while empowering the family to devise its own plans. To run FGCs effectively requires an acceptance of values consistent with the application of the technique and the use of appropriate skills (Ban in Hudson et al, 1996:15). The values entrenched in the philosophy of FGC run counter to those of traditional social work practice which stresses the worker as superior and the client as subordinate. Furthermore, families who enter into FGC also take risks when the family convenes because intimate information on those family members will be shared with the entire family (Child Welfare and Family Support

Branch, 1997).

FGDM will also require a shift in the organizational mentality. The idea that families ought to have a say in what happens to them appeals to many people; but the realization that the family is to be left alone in a room to talk among themselves, without a professional facilitator or therapist present, quickly highlights the need for a change in thinking about the way child welfare services are delivered. In the primary mentality of traditional bureaucracies, cooperation and order must be effected by coercion and compromise through a pyramidal structure of formal power where individuals bargain across the levels as best they can and “win-and-lose” (White, 1969). Traditional service delivery techniques appear to possess this primary mentality. Clients are required to bargain with the Agency to retain the care of their children. Ultimately, the client either wins by retaining or regaining care of the children, or they lose when the children are removed and placed in State care. With a secondary mentality, a social worker, and the Agency, would be required to place heavy emphasis on consensual decisions with an intense commitment to the superordinate goal of service. This could be accomplished through collaboration (White, 1969). FGDM approximates this secondary type with its emphasis on partnerships and collaboration in decision making. A shift to a secondary mentality may prove to be a difficult task for many social workers who have practiced traditional service delivery in the field. In fact, Burford and Pennell (1995a) cite one senior corrections official observing that “what you are asking me to do is completely change the way I do business.” Connor (Undated) provides an illustration that shows the process the organization may face in attempting a shift in mentality. See Figure 11.

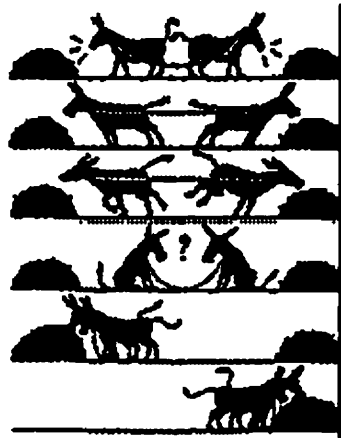


Figure 11: Cooperation

Some of the characteristics of Bryden's direct participation model can be found in the FGDM model. Consummative participation, in part, involves the devolution of authority to the lowest level of government capable of handling it (Bryden, 1982). FGCs give the authority to the family in identifying a support plan. The family can be viewed as the lowest level of which Bryden speaks. Although the child welfare agency ultimately must approve the plan, as they are required by legislation to protect children and the plan must reflect the protection of the children, the initial power to devise the plan is granted to the family. The family will maintain that power provided the plan ensures the safety of the children and provided the Agency and its representative staff person is supportive of the philosophical base of FGDM.

Fully effective public input requires consummative participation which fosters the individual's personal development through involvement in building the community (Bryden, 1982). One of the priorities of the introduction of FGDM in Manitoba is to develop healthy communities (Hall, 1998:5 May). With the community being involved in helping to resource the support plan, this goal can be realized. If a resource necessary in supporting a family's plan does

not exist, the organization can look at these gaps in the community and build in the resource (Hall, 1998:5 May). This will come as a result of the participation by the family and the community, and their role in identifying the gaps. In fact, Hall (1998:5 May) claimed that another goal of FGDM is for communities to become self-sufficient through members who have participated in the FGC process identifying the resources needed to support them and their community. In this sense, the participation in FGCs will provide opportunities for citizens to influence the development of programs and resources.

The theory of participatory democracy can be applied to FGDM. Rousseau's three functions of participation, education, the close connection between participation and control, and feelings of belonging in the community, can all be identified in this model. Firstly, FGDM will serve an educative function in that individuals can learn from the process that they have to take wider matters than their own into account. Social workers will have to take into account the family and the community and the family will have to learn to take in account Agency matters, such as the mandate to protect children. Secondly, the close connection between participation and control is bound up with the individual's notion of freedom. Participation in FGC will increase the value of an individual's freedom as he or she will be able to feel in control through the process of deliberating and formulating a support plan, and through the process of identifying the members to attend the Conference. Finally, there should be a feeling of belonging to the community, both for the family, and those community members who participate in the FGC. As a result of a support plan, the community engages in helping to resource the plan, while the family, through the identification of the support plan, may have the effect of influencing the inclusion of resources in their community. For example, one issue that may come to the attention of an

agency may involve neglect. This neglect may be a direct result of poverty and a shortage of finances to purchase food for the family. If this issue comes up in more than one Conference, the end result may be the development of a resource in the community, such as a food bank, to support the community's families. Again, families may have the ability to shape and influence the resources in their community through the process of identifying necessary resources (Hall, 1998:5 May).

SUMMARY

FGDM is a non-traditional, innovative approach to delivering child welfare services through a model whose philosophy emphasizes partnerships. It is citizen participation in the sense that it includes individual involvement from actions of family and community members toward a given goal, and that through the activities of families and community members, changes may come to programs and resources to ensure that they are developed or changed to meet the needs of the community and its members. It truly increases the amount of control that citizens have in decisions that directly affect their lives. FGDM is a good way to reach those disadvantaged citizens who are often not reached through traditional participation means and who are so highly represented in the child welfare field. It gives the family ownership by helping members to feel important and to have the power to affect their own lives (Schibler, 1999:17 June). As FGDM is merely a pilot project in Winnipeg, it is being proposed here that because of its strong emphasis on the participation of the family and the community, this model should become a permanent structure of service delivery in child welfare. In fact, Schibler (1999:17 June) believes that all social workers in the child and family services system should be practicing this philosophy of

service and that all families need to be involved in the plans that affect their fate.

The experience to date supports the notion that the Family Group Conference can serve as a means of stimulating the rebuilding of connections within families and in mobilizing formal helpers to gear their interventions to mesh with the family's plan (Burford and Pennell, 1995a). In short, the FGC is not a panacea, but by bringing the group together around a family, the Conference stitches together the commitment of family for its own, the support of community for its members, and the protections of government for its citizens (Pennell and Burford, 1995:50).

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Historically, it was not accepted that the state had a duty to protect children. Little protection was offered until childhood had begun to be recognized as a unique stage of life. The child welfare system evolved from concern for orphaned and neglected children to the point where children's aid societies were established and were guided by provincial child welfare legislation. Amended legislation expanded the definitions of child abuse and neglect and widened the duties and responsibilities of agencies responsible for child protection.

During the 1960s, the concept of 'citizen participation' began to be recognized in the political field. The child welfare field also began to recognize its importance as it further developed. There have been several citizen participation opportunities within the child welfare field over the past decade and a half. Some of these have provided occasions for citizens to have greater degrees of power than others. Because of the profound impact that decisions made by child welfare authorities can have on the lives of those affected, it is imperative that those citizens have the opportunity to participate and share in decisions.

Citizen participation, by the definition provided in this thesis, encompasses all the activities examined. During the consultation process, the participation technique utilized by the Provincial government while reviewing *The Child and Family Services Act*, citizens were invited to present their concerns and views on what changes should be made. This process, although progressive, afforded those who participated a token opportunity, at best, which in the view of this writer had a cursory impact on the final outcomes of the changes to the *Act*. This is not to negate the

government's attempt at including citizens in the course of the review, but further reviews require a method of participation that will provide a greater degree of control, not only for the elite, but for any who participate.

With respect to the Office of the Children's Advocate, again progress has been made in allowing those directly affected by decisions made during child welfare intervention, to be involved. The Office can speak on behalf of those individuals, or groups, who otherwise cannot speak on their own behalf. However, given that the mandate of the Children's Advocate only allows for recommendations to be made, and given its limited powers of persuasion, this method of involvement is perfunctory. Again, it is a token gesture, with little guarantee that the outcomes will change through involvement. Increasing the powers of this Office, beyond that of persuasion and recommendation, to that of negotiation, by Arnstein's definition, would increase the impact, and consequently the power, of those citizens who request the service of the Office.

The organizational context of the agency responsible for delivering child welfare services differs in its opportunities for citizens to participate and have an impact on decisions, depending upon the structure of that agency. The former Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg was criticized for its lack of opportunity. The Children's Aid Society of Eastern, on the other hand, began to model community-based services and in 1986 when the NDP disbanded the Children's Aid Society, the system started to move in a direction that included citizens. The high degree of territorial decentralization increased the accessibility by consumers to services and consumer and resident involvement in developing programs to support families. In addition, there was a partial degree of administrative and political decentralization through the six boards of directors who came from the respective communities. They were, therefore, instrumental in influencing service

innovation. With this commitment to client services, with power being delegated to laterally related groups, mainly the boards of directors, and with the many characteristics of White's dialectical organization being present during regionalization, this structural arrangement showed the most promise for greater degrees of power over decisions being made.

Centralizing the system in 1991 resulted in a new initiative to involve citizens. The Area Councils, however, are more of an influence based model of participation than the decision making model evident during regionalization through the Boards. Although advisory councils, such as the Area Councils, have a long tradition of enlisting citizens to provide advice on complex issues, they remain forms of token participation. They have no significant role other than as a linkage to the community and although the schematic depicts a partnership arrangement between the Councils and the Area Directors, their powers are restricted to negotiation. The power holders, or Board of Directors, retain decision making authority.

Furthermore, the Community Relations Committee, as a support to the Area Councils, is made up of what appears to be an elite. This could result in the views of this group being mainly represented at the expense of the views of those people in the community who are most affected by the child welfare system.

With the Agency renewal process currently underway at Winnipeg Child and Family Services, some progress has been made with respect to increasing the powers of all stakeholders in Agency decisions. It has resulted in new activities for having staff, consumers, and other stakeholders, participate in decisions. These activities have centered around the reorganization from the current geographically-based model to a program-based model. Although the powers of those involved are again limited, and of a token nature, staff, clients, and community members

are being considered as having an important role in defining the future of the Agency. There is some indication that the Agency intends to attempt to transform the structure, the client relations, the ideology, and the mentality of the organization to one that is consistent with White's dialectical organization. However, there remains some question whether the commitment to this type of citizen participation will remain once the reorganization is completed and whether any authority will be delegated to staff, clients, or community organizations, in the future.

Family Group Decision Making, as a service delivery technique whose philosophy emphasizes involvement of clients and community members, shows a great deal of promise for attaining higher degrees of power in the decision making process. This model stresses partnerships in the sense of sharing in the power to make decisions. The family is actively involved in many aspects of a Family Group Conference, while at the same time, the community has a contributing role. This has moved the idea of a service approach being based in part on a *rescue* model to one of supporting the family through a working partnership. Some delegation of authority is taking place, in addition to a shift in mentality and the way the organization relates to clients, to where the client and community are seen as equals. This also requires a change in the organizational ideology in order to take the risk with an innovative technique such as FGDM. In the service delivery context, opportunities such as this should be provided to clients of the Agency and this type of practice should become a permanent fixture of child and family services agencies.

In conclusion, while there is potential for significant benefits to result from citizen participation efforts in the child welfare field, these benefits are by no means automatically guaranteed by involving people through the methods illustrated. Citizen participation and

collaboration needs constant nurturing. The Provincial government's attempts, through public hearings and advocacy, are token gestures, at best, and require further consideration for providing citizens with greater control to affect decisions. Future legislative reviews require an examination of ways that ensure that those whose needs are at stake are better met. In addition, the Office of the Children's Advocate requires greater power to negotiate outcomes with agencies.

The structural arrangement during the period known as regionalization showed the greatest promise for real citizen power to be realized. However, because the NDP did not commit to carrying this structure through, by adequately funding the agencies, its real potential flourished. The current geographically-based, centrally administered system, is characteristic of a traditional bureaucracy. The Area Councils are indicative of tokenism and allow for little more than influence to occur through the advice of those citizens who participate through the Councils.

With the Agency renewal taking place, the conventional methods of participation are being coupled with new participation techniques. These techniques are including those citizens who traditionally have not been afforded the opportunity to participate. Should this trend continue, in conjunction with a service philosophy such as that adopted by the FGDM model, we may see a greater chance for those who are most affected by the child welfare system to have real power over the decisions being made.

To achieve a truly participatory democracy, as in Pateman's definition, and an organization that possesses all the dimensions of White's dialectical organization, the child welfare field, in Winnipeg, must set aside the conventionally established ways of involving citizens and begin to permanently implement options such as FGDM as a service delivery model and continue to

design a structural arrangement that will include citizens and that will increase the power to affect decisions. More chances to delegate power to staff, clients, and community members, should be provided. Delegating power will allow citizens to enjoy the benefits of Bryden's consummative participation model and allow the highest rungs of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation to be reached. It is here that citizens, not just a privileged elite, can develop their full potential to impact on those decisions that can so profoundly affect their lives and the lives of those around them through the decisions made by child welfare authorities.

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