

The University of Manitoba  
School of Social Work

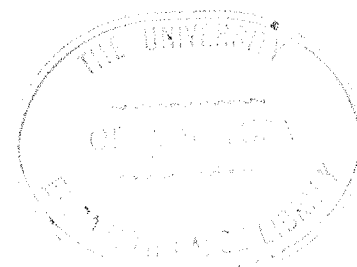
A Study of the Period of Transition from  
Social Work Student to Professional Practitioner

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### Abstract

This study, which focused on the graduates' transitional period, was undertaken as part of the requirement for the Master's Degree Program in Social Work. Concern about the transitional process from graduate to competent practitioner has been expressed by many people who are connected with the profession of Social Work as well as other professions. The general purpose of the study was to examine the period of transition from social work student to fully responsible professional practitioner and to try and determine the extent to which trained social workers felt prepared for their first full-time position after receipt of their Master's Degree in Social Work.

The sample group of graduates was selected from the graduating classes of the Manitoba School of Social Work for the years 1966 to 1969 inclusive. The sample was limited to a hundred graduates employed in social agencies in Manitoba.

The supervisors' sample was limited to those who worked in agencies within the provincial boundaries. This sample number was forty-six. Of the total number of questionnaires distributed there was approximately a 47 per cent return in both groups.

Since the study was descriptive, it was designed to find out which variables contributed to or detracted from the transitional process. Some of these variables included the graduates' education, experience in the social work field, the graduates, the particular agency, the graduates' supervisors, the job description, the orientation program. In addition the respondents, both the graduate and the supervisor, were asked to reply to questions about the agency's expectations, the manageability of work load, the function of the School of Social Work, as well as comment on the process itself. Supervisors were also asked to state if the demands of the agency on the recent graduates' skills were insufficient adequate, or excessive. The information for compiling the study was obtained from the separate questionnaires each sent to the graduates and



to the supervisors respectively.

The information obtained through the questionnaires was analyzed by 'grid' type tables and by general perusal. Also, direct quotations from the questionnaires were transcribed in the analysis. Certain identified variables seemed to be more helpful than others. These included social work 'education' and 'agencies' among others; those less helpful seemed to be the 'job description' and the 'conditions of work' among others.

In general most of the respondents felt that the School of Social Work should teach general principles and not specific tasks in preparing the beginning practitioner for his initial job. Despite deficiencies both in the school curriculum and in agency orientation procedures, nearly all the respondents conceded that there would be a transition period even without such deficiencies. The gap between a beginning practitioner and a competent one is a matter that would be bridged with experience.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### Reason for the Study

During the past few years, certain trends in the social welfare field, on both the local and national levels, have suggested the need for an examination of the agency responsibilities assumed by trained social workers during a period following their graduation from schools of social work and of the relevance of their social work education to these responsibilities.

"Social work educators, practitioners, and agencies have for years been predominantly concerned about the gaps - actual or perceived - between the educational preparation for trained social workers and the requirements of social agencies which employ them."<sup>1</sup>

For example, Mr. W. D. MacFarland, Director of Social Services in the Province of Manitoba, concerned about the kind of graduate he is getting, stated the problem rather pessimistically as follows:

"The new social work graduate must have sufficient life experience that he doesn't have to use the first two years of his job to become a mature adult....where are we missing the boat in recruiting and even more importantly, what is wrong with our selection criteria and where do we go wrong in their training?....is our demand for academic excellence and high marks weeding out exactly the kind of people we want?....somehow the people we want are not surfacing in sufficient numbers - to what jobs and/or what professions are we losing them - I don't know."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Levy, Charles S., *From Education to Practice in Social Group Work* (School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, New York, 1960) p. 1.
  2. *From Statement Given at the Opening of the Conference on Manpower Needs in Social Welfare Services* (Department of Health and Social Services, Province of Manitoba, May 1, 1969).

Marion Guild, Personnel Director of the Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg, responded to the Greater Winnipeg Social Service Audit's proposed network of Neighbourhood Health and Social Service Centres in the following manner:

"The social workers who will be required to staff them will have to be experts in financial assistance, child welfare, corrections and educational fields. It is my experience that such social workers do not exist. She noted that universities are turning out a generic type of social worker ....that is one who doesn't have specialized training."<sup>3</sup>

One argument on behalf of schools of social work against these kinds of statements is that "professions have organized the transition from student to the status of 'fully qualified practitioner' in a variety of ways" from a policy of a set period of apprenticeship or internship to the swim or sink technique.<sup>4</sup>

In regards to social work specifically the following stand has been taken:

"In view of the complexities with which social workers need to deal, it is essential to provide a period of one or two years following graduation in which emphasis is placed on educationally focused supervision, whether of tutorial or group form, to ensure the 'ripening' of the competence which has been 'seeded' in the period of formal education."<sup>5</sup>

The above statements seem to polarize the situation rather conveniently. Leaders in the field of practice seem to be saying they want a social worker who can leap right into his agency responsibilities confidently and competently. Educationists on the other hand feel justified in saying that the purpose of the professional school is to teach basic, general principles for practice which upon graduation will need polishing and focusing to the

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3. Article *Winnipeg Free Press* (Social Worker Hard to Get: Director) p. 6, October 9, 1969.

4. Letter to the sponsors of the Winnipeg Social Service Audit, prepared by 25 faculty members of the University of Manitoba School of Social Work and authorized to speak on behalf of 40 full- and part-time faculty members, p. 8.

5. *Ibid.* p. 8.

particular agency situation the graduate faces. Perhaps the urgency of the work load agencies are under prompts them to cast education and practice as two mutually exclusive processes while schools of social work see the two as going hand in hand with less emphasis on one or the other depending on where the worker is. If he is in school his education will take priority over practice but the latter will still be evident in his field work sequence. Once he leaves the educational institution, practice will take precedence but education should not stop. At neither point, according to schools of social work, does one of these processes by its presence exclude the other. We have perhaps overstated the existing situation and read too much into the above quotations in order to obtain clarity. At any rate, there seems to be a basic misunderstanding or disagreement on the part of leaders in practice and educationists in regard to a worker's beginning competence and his preparation for work responsibilities. Perhaps a difference in view between the educational institution and the work organization in regards to the importance of the educative component in the job assignment and the professional's personal responsibility for this, lies behind this disagreement.

In a city such as Winnipeg which has recently undergone a social service audit, in which the entire system of social services was examined and certain aspects of it were found wanting, we feel this offers us some rationale for the examination of one of the professional groups - professional social workers - responsible for the carrying of service to clients.

"The fact is that with all the concern to improve the situation in spite of the increasing number of dollars being spent each year in social services, in spite of the best efforts of staff members of agencies and the volunteers who worked with them, there are still more problems than there are solutions....the present method of getting services to people is obviously not satisfactory."<sup>6</sup>

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6. Report of the Social Service Audit (Social Service Audit Inc., 501-177 Lombard Street, Winnipeg 2, 1969) p. 50-51.

In a time when legislation and attitudes on social welfare policy change from year to year and when new ideas, concepts, and policies involving important changes in the social welfare system are being discussed, we feel that it is important to analyze the professional worker in his transition from student role to practitioner in a system which is in a state of constant change. It is possible today for a person working in the Manitoba social welfare system to take educational leave for two years (Master's program in Social Work at University of Manitoba at present) and return to a role significantly changed from that which he left.

When the worker returns to his agency he is faced with new responsibilities and there will be different expectations made of him. The result of his newly acquired training and accompanying status may cast him as a supervisor upon return to the agency. Policy, programs and regulations may have changed significantly during his two-year absence and he will have to learn these and adjust to them. Perhaps the work situation will not have changed but his own ideas and values may have. This will require adjustment on his part. At any rate, we can see how his role may change significantly within the relatively short period of two years.

We want to find answers to questions such as - Is the school preparing the student for the new techniques and methods being used in practice today? 'Participatory management', 'client participation', 'social action' and 'community development' are the new phrases in Manitoba Social Work Practice. Is the beginning professional practitioner equipped to deal with these new and changing techniques?

Is the recent graduate more or less prepared to meet the challenges of his or her agency and how much orientation does he need, if any, to adjust to the work situations? What is it that agencies expect of the new worker and how much variance is there in the field in regard to agency expectations?

With the shortage in manpower being what they are today, do agencies expect more of the graduate than he is capable of, based on his training and

life experience? Are they justified in this in light of the costs of professional education today? Since taxpayers invest a great deal of money into bursaries they expect a certain rate of exchange on their dollar.

"The full-time enrolment in the eight existing schools during the academic year 1965-66 was 869 students. This number, however, is far from keeping pace with the increasing demand for professionally qualified workers, and Canada has for some time been experiencing a serious shortage of graduate workers."<sup>7</sup>

The demand for trained social workers continues strong in practically every field of service.

"It is reported that presently there are 12,000 vacancies in professional positions now existent and it is projected over 100,000 vacancies by 1970."<sup>8</sup>

In the above dissertation, we have identified possible situations and issues which may or may not lie behind the existence of a period of transition from social work student to professional practitioner, and may or may not contribute to the success or failure of such a period. All of these factors considered it is our contention that even under the most favourable conditions in regard to the previously mentioned conditions in education and practice, there would remain a transition period from student to practitioner in social work as in any other discipline, profession, or trade requiring academic standing or accomplishment prior to practice as opposed to apprenticeship training. The student has achieved a certain degree of competence to the satisfaction of the School of Social Work and now must apply this competence. We contend that competence and its application are not one and the same. Each individual will find the transition period of applying competence more or less difficult, but nevertheless there will be such a period of transition. There is a passage from the educational institution to the work organization and

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7. *Organization and Administration of Social Welfare Programs* (A Series of Country Studies - Canada) (United Nations, New York, 1967) p. 103.
  8. Barker, R. and Briggs, T. *Trends in the Utilization of Social Work Personnel: An Evaluative Research of the Literature* (New York: National Association of Social Workers Inc., 1966, p. 2).

we want to determine and discover the responsibility of both in facilitating this passage. Is this period of transition recognized both by schools of social work and by agencies and, if so, what are they doing to aid the individual in his transition and in achieving its completion? What are they doing to ensure a complete transition, to hasten the transition, and to reduce the trauma around it on behalf of the individual? What kind of initiation or orientation is provided by schools and agencies towards these ends?

Agency expectations and professional expectations as taught at schools of social work may or may not be in harmony. This may be one of the issues that the individual will have to resolve during his period of transition. The development of a working arrangement between these two expectations may constitute the transition period and we shall endeavor to find answers in regard to this aspect. Is this a valid aspect of the period of transition in some cases? What can be done about it? What causes it?

The concern in relation to our subject is expressed by Charles S. Levy thusly:

"Schools, agencies and individual practitioners have long shared the concern about both the quality of professional education and the status of professional practice. If there is to continue to be a mutual influence between education and practice which is salutary, proposals for change should be based on deliberate research and evaluation with participation both by those engaged in education and those engaged in practice. Mutual understanding between both groups continues to be essential."<sup>9</sup>

### Purpose of Study

This study was undertaken to attempt to find answers to some of the questions as outlined above. The general purpose of this study is to

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9. Levy, Charles S. *From Education to Practice in Social Group Work*. p. 3.

examine the period of transition from social work student to fully responsible professional practitioner as reported by recent Master's degree graduates and agency supervisors. Specifically, it was designed to discover the extent to which trained social workers felt prepared for the first full-time positions they obtained upon receipt of their social work degrees, and the extent to which they were deemed, by agency representatives with responsibility for supervising them, to be prepared by their professional training for these first positions.



## Chapter II

## Review of the Literature

The literature that is reviewed in this section was found to relate to the period of transition, but often only in a limited and sometimes superficial context. Our endeavors verified the availability of much literature in the general area of graduate student work performance. However, this research was linked to specific variables such as manpower, years of education, curriculum content, and prior work experience. We have documented this information in order that it may serve as a framework in which our main interest, the period of transition, can be developed and evaluated in a scientific manner.

A study by Charles S. Levy<sup>10</sup> of graduating social work students in 1959 concluded that the graduate's social work education did prepare him sufficiently to start on his responsibilities in his first full-time agency job after receipt of his social work degree. The design of this study was a questionnaire given to graduates as well as a questionnaire given to supervisors. From the views expressed by graduates and supervisors it was evident that they did not expect any social work graduate to be completely prepared by his social work education for all the requirements of his first job after receipt of the social work degree. The assumption was made that there would usually be gaps between the preparation that the graduate acquired through social work education and the preparation required of him for competent professional performance in his first job. This study further assumed that professional development was necessary for most graduates

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10. Levy, Charles S. *From Education to Practice in Social Group Work*. School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, New York. 1960.

before they could fulfill their agency responsibilities with the degree of competence and independence expected of experienced professionally trained social workers.

Lucille Austin<sup>11</sup> also maintains that a graduate's social work education did prepare him sufficiently for his first full-time agency job but that his success was determined by the strength of his own motivation and the available resources of learning, such as 'inservice training' and library journals. She felt that self direction must be the main driving force if the graduate entering practice was to advance in skill and professional expertise.

Roger Miller<sup>12</sup> shares Austin's view that whether a graduate advanced professionally was in part determined by the graduate himself. Miller felt that recent graduates had certain problems that both schools and agencies must take into account. Miller felt that besides other pressures recent graduates also had the "problems characteristic of early adulthood, such as those of working out life plans, establishing identity and emancipating from parents".<sup>13</sup>

Arnulf M. Pins<sup>14</sup> stated that the people who choose social work as a profession come from many varied backgrounds, they have different perceptions and different objectives. He felt that schools and agencies must plan for the constructive use of these individual differences.

Clive Bate has also made some observations on what qualities he considers essential for a social worker. He states:

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11. Lucille Austin. *Supervision and Staff Development*. Family Service Association of America, New York. 1966.
  12. Roger Miller. "Learning Objectives of Beginning Psychiatric Social Workers", *Social Work*, January, 1963.
  13. Roger Miller. *op. cit.*, p. 45.
  14. Arnulf M. Pins. *Who Chooses Social Work, When and Why*. Council on Social Work Education, pp. 30-31, New York. 1963.

"We have learned some crucial and, to some, upsetting facts about the necessary qualifications for a person who would be a helper. Professionals still proliferate the myth that what they know in terms of knowledge or technique is the key factor in a positive outcome in counselling or therapy. At the Children's Home we have realized that the truly important qualities in the person who would help others are empathy, warmth and genuineness. We have discovered that knowledge or technique, while important is secondary to these personality qualities."<sup>15</sup>

Avis Kristenson<sup>16</sup> feels that there is a gap between the demands of beginning practice and beginning competence. She maintains that this gap is in part created by the manpower shortage in all fields of social work. The increasing demands for more trained social workers places pressures on the schools through increased enrollments and on the graduates themselves because the agencies, with heavy caseloads, are using the graduates for more difficult jobs.

Jacqueline McCoy<sup>17</sup> feels that schools have an educational function and agencies have a training function in preparing students for social work practice. McCoy goes on to report that many agencies are complaining that schools of social work are not preparing students for on-the-job performance, that the schools are idealistic and philosophically oriented. The schools, on the other hand, complain that students are subjected to too many demands from the agencies, that the caseloads are too heavy and that the students are not given enough time to become oriented to that particular agency. McCoy maintains that there is no one specialized area of social work

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15. Clive Bate. "Warrendale Western Style". *The Manitoba Newspaper*, December 8, 1969. p. 12.

16. Avis Kristenson. "The Child Welfare Worker: Strengths and Limitations in His Professional Training", *Education and Training for Child Welfare*, Child Welfare League of America, Inc., New York. February, 1964.

17. Jacqueline McCoy. "Are the Schools Adequately Training Students for Child Welfare?" *Child Welfare*, Vol. XLIX, No. 3. 1965.

practice that the student can be adequately prepared for in two years of academic education. She feels that the school's position should be to provide the student with an educational experience from which hopefully he will be able to draw for future growth and development. She sees this as being more important than the students being prepared by the school, to immediately upon graduation take on full agency responsibilities.

A preliminary report presented by the Committee on Group Work of the Council on Social Work Education dealt with a survey completed in 1956 of job responsibilities and the committee's evaluation of the appropriateness of their educational preparation. According to this preliminary report a majority of the graduates indicated that their professional education had been effective in helping them understand their roles as professionals. This included an increased awareness of a professional self, of professional thinking and behavior, identification with a profession and development of a code of ethics. Only a small minority of the sample group felt that their educational preparation had failed to give them a clear concept of the role of the professional worker.

A study by Ronald G. Corwin<sup>18</sup> of the 'professional employee' indicated that the conceptions of role learned in the schools do not encompass the full complexities of work experience. Corwin states that there is a conflict between role delineated by the agency and that which the school inculcated. Corwin focused his study on bureaucratic versus professional orientation as related to the profession of nursing. However, his findings have relevance for other professions, such as social work. Corwin stated that the passage from school to agency is a discontinuous turning point at which the professional ideas stressed in the school are sometimes dramatically confronted with the bureaucratic principles which

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18. Ronald G. Corwin. "The Professional Employee; A Study of Conflict in Nursing Roles". A thesis, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. 1963.

operate in the agency. Corwin felt that the degree of conflict was increased if the agency administration had little say in the operation of the professional schools.

In summary, the literature reviewed indicated that the graduate's social work education was of prime importance toward attaining a professional career. It must be recognized that this is only one aspect in the graduate's total professional development. His ability to make a smooth transition from student role to professional practitioner role is dependent upon his basic education, the social agency and the graduate himself.

## Chapter III

### Method

#### Introduction

Considering the many variables affecting the graduate's transition to professional practitioner, and because of the difficulty of sufficiently controlling them for an experimental research design, we had decided on a descriptive analysis plan to increase understanding and to indicate direction for further study.

#### Definition of Terms

Throughout the study, a number of pertinent terms are specifically focused upon. It is felt that at this point an operational definition of each of these terms is necessary in order to ensure a full understanding of their meaning and purpose in relation to the entire study. These are as follows:

Acclimatization: Refers to the practitioner's adjustment to an agency.

Agency climate: The conditions of staff relationships and work atmosphere in a social work agency.

Experienced: Workers with experience in the social welfare field prior to entry into the School of Social Work.

Formal and authoritarian: A condition of staff relationships where personnel work under rules and structured procedures and where there is a lack of participatory management.

Formal and democratic: A condition of staff relationships where personnel work under established rules and structured procedures, but where

there is participatory management.

Graduate: A recipient of a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Manitoba after May, 1966.

Inexperienced: Workers with no experience in the social welfare field prior to entry into the School of Social Work.

Informal and authoritarian: A condition of staff relationships where personnel work under flexible rules and relatively unstructured procedures, but where there is a lack of participatory management in decision-making.

Informal and democratic: A condition of staff relationships where personnel work under flexible rules and relatively unstructured procedures, and where there is participatory management.

Manageable: A work situation where the volume and difficulty of tasks can be coped with.

Operating premises: Refers to the agency philosophy, procedures, and methods of operation.

Orientation program: The planned effort of agencies to provide the beginning practitioner with information relating to policies, programs, methods, and administrative structure of the agency. Knowledge of these facts being essential in order to commence employment.

Practitioner role: Behavior patterns attributed to the M.S.W. employee of a social work agency when the employee is engaged in social work practice.

Social work agency: A governmental or non-governmental operation possessing public mandate and sanction to carry out casework, group work, community development, and/or community organization.

Student role: Patterns of behavior of M.S.W. candidates engaged in the process of learning in the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba.

Supervisor: An employee of a social work agency whose duty it is to direct the activities of one or more M.S.W. practitioners who graduated after May, 1966.

Transition period: The duration of time elapsed in the course of the graduate's adjustment from student role to practitioner role.

Unmanageable: A work situation where the volume and difficulty of tasks cannot be coped with.

#### Methodology of the Study: Part I

The methodology of the study consisted of:

1. An inquiry addressed to social workers who have graduated since May, 1966 from the University of Manitoba School of Social Work. The purpose of this inquiry was to determine what factors made the graduate's transition period easy or difficult, effective or ineffective in the first full-time agency job which he obtained upon receipt of his social work degree.

2. An inquiry addressed to supervisors in agencies in the province of Manitoba for the purpose of ascertaining their view of the positive and/or negative aspects affecting the graduate during his period of transition in his first full-time agency job upon receipt of his social work degree.

The graduate portion of the study population was limited to graduates of the University of Manitoba School of Social Work to provide a controlled sample group having similar educational background. The reason for limiting the supervisory population to those employed in Manitoba was primarily because of the time factor and hence the need for accessibility.

#### Procedure.

Questionnaires were used to obtain all of the data for this study. The reasons for this were as follows: (1) the time limit of the study; (2) the geographic limitations made interviewing infeasible because of the distance involved; (3) the desire to increase objectivity through standardization; (4) the desire to obtain a more individualized response than would have been possible had the respondent not had sufficient time



to formulate his answers, as may have been the case in an interview situation; (5) the desire to include as many people as possible in the study.

A pretest was administered to a random sample of the study population. The respondents were contacted personally. In accordance with the results obtained, no revisions of the questions were made.

A brief explanation of the purpose and scope of the study accompanied each questionnaire (see Appendix II). Stamped return envelopes were provided with each questionnaire. The pretest with the sample group was conducted at the end of December, 1969, and the remainder of the schedules was sent out in January, 1970.

A follow-up letter signed by our research advisor, the Director of the School of Social Work, was mailed shortly after, promising confidentiality and anonymity and requesting cooperation in the study and return of the questionnaires as soon as possible because of the time limit. In addition, a number of respondents, both graduates and supervisors, were contacted personally or by telephone for the purpose of ensuring their cooperation.

Graduates were contacted who had been out of school for a period of time not exceeding three years to allow for an adequate period of agency experience upon which they could base their evaluation of their period of transition. Other reasons for using the graduates from this three-year period were: (1) to ensure an adequate sample; (2) to ensure that the graduates would still be able to clearly remember their transitional period; (3) to allow for the fact that certain graduates in this category could actually still be in a stage of transition.

#### School, Graduates, and Supervisors.

The target population consisted of 100 caseworkers and group workers who had graduated from the University of Manitoba School of Social Work within a three-year period and currently practicing in Manitoba, and 52 supervisors whose names were obtained at random from the agencies in which these graduates were practicing. There was no attempt made to match

graduates and supervisors in the same agencies; therefore, all supervisors in all agencies were not contacted. It is believed that our sample group is representative of professional social work staff currently practicing in Manitoba because it contains representatives of public and private agencies, with both city and rural clientele. The supervisory population was obtained through a random sampling of the supervisors. The graduate population group included all graduates from the three-year period, working in Manitoba, for whom addresses were available.

#### The Questionnaire.

The questionnaire for both graduates and supervisors consisted of a face sheet, a job description form, and a section dealing with observations concerning the period of transition. The majority of the questions in the latter two sections were open-ended in order to present ample opportunity for the graduates and supervisors to express their own views and opinions.

#### Face Sheet.

The graduate's face sheet requested certain statistical information such as sex, age, year of graduation, number of years of experience in social work before attending the School of Social Work. Also included were questions related to the graduate's pattern of social work education, position held in the field prior to and after attending graduate school.

The supervisor's face sheet asked about the length of social work experience which the supervisor had, the number of years in which supervision was a part of this experience, about the supervisor's training, the total number of people supervised, and whether he was supervising or had supervised a worker who graduated with an M.S.W. degree from the University of Manitoba within the three-year period which the study covered. Supervisors were asked about the pattern of their education, from which school they held their degree, and their year of graduation.

#### Job Description.

The first three sections of the job description form which was employed to collect data about the graduate's agency responsibilities were the same for both the graduates and the supervisors. In these sections,

the respondents were asked to indicate their agency's field of practice, the graduate's major areas of responsibility in his first full-time agency job, and the specific tasks performed by the graduate. In sections four and five, the graduates were asked about the manageability of their work load, and factors about the agency climate. In sections four and five of the supervisor's job description form, the supervisors were asked whether or not there is differentiation in responsibilities assigned to M.S.W. graduates and untrained workers. In addition the supervisors were questioned about the orientation program of their agencies for M.S.W. graduates.

Observations Concerning the Period of Transition.

The first five parts of both the graduate's and the supervisor's section on the observations concerning the period of transition were phrased to coincide as closely as possible. The data requested included agency expectations, social work education's role in job preparation, worker and agency responsibilities, and job orientation.

In the following sections, the graduates were questioned as to the nature of their supervisory contacts, and as to how the following helped or hindered their transition: the agency which employed them, themselves, their supervisors, their education, the agency's orientation program, conditions of work, and their understanding of the job description.

The supervisors were asked to comment on the manpower shortage in their agency and its relation to the demands made on the new graduate. In relation to performance expectations of the agency, the supervisors were asked if there was a written job description that they could discuss with the new worker. Similar to the graduate, the supervisors were asked how the agency, the graduate's supervisor, the conditions of work, and the graduates themselves were helpful or detrimental in preparing the graduates to fulfill their first full-time agency jobs.

In conclusion, both the graduates and the supervisors were asked an

open-ended question regarding any further comments on the transition process.

#### Methodology of the Study: Part II

Of the 100 questionnaires sent to the graduates, 50 per cent or 50 of these were returned. Of those returned, 3 were disqualified, i.e. one was returned unanswered and 2 were returned marked "address unknown", thus leaving 47 questionnaires for analysis. Of the 52 questionnaires sent to the supervisors, 6 were disqualified as these persons did not wish to participate in the study. A total number of 23 supervisors' questionnaires were returned. Of these 23, two were returned with no answers as these supervisors had never supervised any M.S.W. graduates. The final sample of supervisors' questionnaires thus consisted of 21 questionnaires to be analyzed.

As stated previously, the purpose of this study was to examine the period of transition from social work student to professional practitioner as reported by recent Masters Degree graduates and agency supervisors. Specifically, it was designed to discover the extent to which trained social workers felt prepared for the first full-time positions they obtained upon receipt of their social work degrees, and the extent to which they were deemed, by agency representatives with responsibility for supervising them, to be prepared by their professional training for these first positions. In accordance with this purpose, we intended to relate the following variables: age, sex, education pattern, previous and present work experience, fields of practice, areas or responsibility, manageability of work load, conditions of work, social work education, agency expectations, orientation program, job description, supervision, and the graduate's own efforts.

In compiling the data obtained from the questionnaires, it became evident that it would be impractical to utilize all of the variables

originally outlined. The reasons for this were: (1) some questions were directed more to supervision and orientation programs; (2) lack of clarity of answers given by respondents; (3) certain questions were unanswered. Often, those that were answered gave information which was vague and unrelated to the original intent of the question; (4) the open-endedness of certain questions made the responses difficult to categorize.

In view of the above-stated difficulties, it was necessary to limit and/or disregard data from both the supervisors' and the graduates' questionnaires. A critical selection of the remaining data resulted in the preparation of the following tables in order to attempt to relate significant variables:

Table 1.

This table compares experienced and inexperienced workers to see in what areas of responsibility their first jobs were, and to see if there was a difference in regard to manageability-unmanageability of work load for experienced and inexperienced workers. We expected to find experienced people saying that they had manageable work loads, whereas the inexperienced people were expected to have more unmanageable work loads.

Table 2.

The purpose of this table was to relate the patterns of education and prior experience to agency expectations of the beginning worker to whether or not responsibility should be limited or unlimited. We suspected that workers with prior experience or those who had worked between their first and second years of social work education would find that agency expectations were more realistic than inexperienced workers, and that the former would probably desire unlimited responsibility.

Table 3.

This was an attempt to relate how an orientation program might have affected both experienced and inexperienced graduates' views of their agencies' expectations of them. We expected to find that all inexperienced workers would have some form of orientation and that the lack of, or presence of, an orientation program would determine how the graduate would

see the agency expectations, i.e. as realistic or unrealistic.

Table 4.

In this table, specific tasks or general principles of the graduate respondent are related to realistic or unrealistic expectations and orientation program or no orientation program.

Table 5.

Here we were attempting to relate realistic-unrealistic expectations to agency climate and initiative. We expected that we would find that agencies with the most realistic expectations would have the best agency climate.

Table 6.

(A) This was a basic table relating the following variables obtained from the graduates' questionnaires: agency, graduate's supervisor, conditions of work, graduate's education, orientation program, the graduate himself, and understanding of the job description. The intent here was to point out the specific variables which helped or failed to help the graduate in his transition period.

(B) Here we were attempting to relate the experience or inexperience of the graduates to the previously-stated variables to see if certain of these were more or less helpful to one group or to the other.

(C) In this table, graduates feeling that the agency had realistic expectations and those feeling that the agency had unrealistic expectations were viewed in relation to whether they felt that the above variables helped or failed to help in their transition. It was expected that we would find that those graduates who felt that the agency expectations were realistic would tend to say that most of the variables were helpful, and vice versa.

(D) The purpose of this table was to relate manageable and unmanageable work loads to whether or not the graduates were helped in their transition by the variables in question.

Table 7.

This table relates agency expectations with the graduates' view of

manageability of work load.

Table 8.

The purpose of this table was to show the number of graduate respondents who stated that agency expectations were clearly stated, in relation to those who did not.

Table 9.

Here we were trying to determine from comments made by supervisors whether or not the graduates' education prepared them for their agency responsibilities or not.

Table 10.

(A) Here orientation and extent of school preparation for the graduate for his first full-time agency job were related to realistic or unrealistic agency expectations. This was expected to show that agencies which had an effective orientation program would have realistic expectations of the graduate.

(B) Here we were trying to find which of the aspects helped the graduate in his transition period (according to supervisors). This was intended to show whether or not the transition was successful.

Table 11.

Here we were attempting to relate the supervisors' opinions about realistic or unrealistic expectations and whether or not there is a manpower shortage in that particular agency, to whether or not the demands or tasks required of the worker made insufficient, adequate, or excessive demands on his skills. We felt that agencies with a manpower shortage would be those making excessive demands on the worker and having unrealistic expectations of him.

A further refinement of these tables was made in order to isolate the most pertinent variables. These included such factors as manageability of caseload, realistic or unrealistic agency expectations, the graduate's previous work experience, the extent to which the graduate felt that his responsibilities in his first full-time agency job should have been limited primarily to those for which his social work education prepared him, and

several others.

We found that because of the nature of our study, the most appropriate way of presenting our data was to describe our findings using proportions and percentages to illustrate the most important findings.

#### Critique of the Questionnaire.

From the beginning, the group members were concerned about the length of the questionnaire. Nine pages for the graduate, and seven pages for the supervisor might have been a psychological deterrent for the respondents. The length of time required to answer the questions was one of the reasons given by the supervisors of one urban agency for their refusal to become involved in the study. As we were concerned to do a thorough descriptive study, we included many variables, some of which could more appropriately have been used as topics for study in themselves.

As we began to analyze the responses, it became evident that difficulties were arising that our pretest did not reveal. One of these difficulties was our apparent lack of clarity in our formulation of certain questions. For example, when we asked whether or not certain aspects helped or failed to help the graduate in his transition period, many respondents did not speak of their own experience, but rather tried to generalize about other graduates whom they knew.

Another difficulty would seem to be the fact that many of our questions were too long and involved. In support of this statement, we can cite the example that twelve respondents stated that they did not understand what we were looking for in question number six, page seven, on the graduate's questionnaire.

An oversight which occurred in the planning of the questionnaire was our failure to take into consideration the possibility of formulating the questions in a manner such that the responses could be computerized. Such computerization would have made possible a more intricate relationship of variables. Had a computer been utilized, it might also have been



possible to correlate not only the responses within the questionnaires but also between the responses of the graduates and the supervisors.

In addition, respondents were not asked to recommend specifically the part the agency, supervisor, school, or the graduate himself could play in more adequately assisting the graduates in making the transition from social work student to professional practitioner.

Also, although we assumed that recent graduates experience a transition period, we did not ask specifically whether they had difficulty in making this transition. This necessitated much interpretation on our part. Interpretation on our part was made even more difficult because of the fact that we made no attempt to include questions in our questionnaire which would reveal whether or not the respondents were expressing their genuine feelings.

A major strength of our research design lies in its providing the graduates and supervisors with the opportunity to express their feelings regarding many variables affecting the transition period. It is of considerable importance to know how individuals really perceive their work situations and their educational experiences. It is this perception which determines in large part how the individual will perform in his work role. Thus, it would seem that much of the subjectiveness which this study actually entailed, in reality, does have considerable value.

Since we endeavoured to include 100 per cent of those graduates working in Manitoba who had graduated in the three-year period which our study covered, and since we included a random sample of supervisors working in public and private agencies in Manitoba, we believe that our conclusions can be generalized to include all social workers currently working in Manitoba who had graduated from the University of Manitoba School of Social Work, in relation to the positive and negative aspects which they experienced in their period of transition from social work student to professional social worker.

These findings can also be generalized to include other schools of social work or to beginning practitioners in other professions.

## Chapter IV

## Analysis

Of the 100 graduate questionnaires that were sent out, 47 were completed and returned and similarly 21 of the 46 supervisors' questionnaires. In each case the return was approximately 47 per cent of the total distribution. Another two supervisors' questionnaires were received; however, they were inadequately filled out and because of this were excluded from the analysis.

Among the graduates, there were 27 male and 20 female respondents; 19 of the males and 13 of the females were between the ages of 21 and 30; 5 males and 4 females were between the ages of 31 and 40; and between the ages of 41 and 50 there were 3 of each sex.

Age and sex of graduate and  
supervisor respondents.

	Age		Age		Age		Age		Totals		Total
	21-30		31-40		41-50		51+				
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Graduate	19	13	5	4	3	3	0	0	27	20	47
Supervisor	2	0	5	3	5	5	0	1	13	8	21

Of the 21 supervisors reporting, 13 were male and 8 were female. Two males and no females were in the first age set; 5 males and 3 females were between 31 and 40; 5 males and 5 females were between 41 and 50 and one respondent, a female, was over 50.

In respect to experience of the graduate respondents there were 13 or 28 per cent with no experience in social work before entering the School of Social Work and 34 or 72 per cent with a year or more experience.

The experience of the supervisors varied a great deal between 2 and 20 years in the social work profession as supervisors.

### Graduates

In Table 1 (page 33) which dealt with the graduates' initial area of responsibility, work load manageability and experience, the number of answers exceeded 47 because a number of respondents were involved in more than one area of responsibility. Most of the respondents, 56 per cent in all, found the work load manageable; 44 per cent overall found it unmanageable. Broken down among the five areas of responsibility and experience the trend was consistent except for the graduate who had had previous experience and was involved in direct service. Of the 17 non-experienced respondents, only 5 or 30 per cent of the 17 reported that their work load was unmanageable and all of these responses were involved in the area of direct services. None of the non-experienced reported their work load unmanageable in any other area. Besides these 5, there were 8 other answers in the direct service category who claimed that their work load was manageable. The other four non-experienced respondents were involved in other areas of responsibility; intake, 2; supervision and inservice, one each; and all four of these said that their work load was manageable.

Of the 42 experienced respondents 22 or 53 per cent stated that their work load was manageable. This figure included 4 who were involved in intake; 2 in supervision; 2 in inservice functions; 2 in research and 12 in direct service. Twenty or 47 per cent of the experienced thought that their work load was unmanageable. Most of these, 18 altogether, were employed in the area of direct service with only one each in intake and in

Table 1. Manageability of work load of experienced and non-experienced graduates in respect to area of responsibility.

Graduates	Responsibility and Manageability																Totals			
	Intake		Supervision		In-service		Research		Direct Service											
	Man.	Unm.	Man.	Unm.	Man.	Unm.	Man.	Unm.	Man.	Unm.	Man.	Unm.	Man.	Unm.						
	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N	% N						
Experienced	9 (4)		4.5 (2)		4.5 (2)		4.5 (2)		31.5 (12)		53 (22)									
(42)		2 (1)		2 (1)		-		-		43 (18)		47 (20)								
Non-experienced	11(2)		6 (1)		6 (1)		-		47 (8)		70 (12)									
(17)		-		-		-		-		30 (5)		30 (5)								
Total (59)*	10(6)		4.5 (3)		4.5 (3)		3 (2)		34 (20)		56 (34)									
Respondents		1.5(1)		1.5(1)		-		-		41 (23)		44 (25)								

\* Number of responses exceeded 47 because some respondents were involved in more than one area of responsibility.

supervision. The 18 who found their work load unmanageable accounted for 60 per cent of the graduates involved in direct service.

Table 2 related the graduates' views about initial responsibility with their educational patterns.

In respect to the graduates' educational patterns, 13 or 28 per cent of the respondents, entered graduate school after receiving their undergraduate degree without working before entering graduate school. Twenty-three, or 49 per cent of the respondents, after receiving their undergraduate degree, worked in social work and then entered graduate school of social work. Only 4, or 8 per cent, entered graduate training for one year after their undergraduate years, worked in the social work field and then returned to school for the final year of the master's program. Two, or 4 per cent, worked after receiving their undergraduate degree; obtained one year towards social work degree, worked in social work and returned to complete the master's program. Five, or 11 per cent of the respondents acquired their degree through variations of these patterns.

Most of the respondents, 39, or 23 per cent, felt that the graduates' initial responsibilities should not be limited to what the school had taught them, and 5, or 11 per cent of the respondents thought that the initial responsibilities should be limited. Three, or 6 per cent, did not answer.

In Table 3, the non-experienced and the experienced graduate respondents were compared vis-a-vis to the use or lack of use of an orientation program, and also to the respondents' answers about the initial expectations of the agency in regard to the realistic or unrealistic demands that they placed on the graduate.

Before differentiating between non-experienced and experienced, it should be noted that of the 47 respondents, 13, or 27 per cent said that they had had an orientation program, 32, or 69 per cent said that they did not have one, and 2, or 4 per cent did not answer. In respect to agency expectations, 36, or 77 per cent claimed that they were realistic,

Table 2. Patterns of education and graduates' initial responsibilities.

Graduates'												
initial	A*		B*		C*		D*		E*			
responsibilities												
should be:	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Total	
<hr/>												
Limited	2	(1)	9	(4)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	11	(5)
Not limited	24	(11)	38	(18)	6	(3)	4	(2)	11	(5)	83	(39)
No answer	2	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	6	(3)
<hr/>												
Total	28	(13)	49	(23)	8	(4)	4	(2)	11	(5)	100	(47)
<hr/>												

- \* (A) Entered graduate school after receiving undergraduate degree without working before entering graduate school.
- (B) Received undergraduate degree, worked in social work, and entered graduate school.
- (C) Received one year of graduate training, worked in social work and returned for final year of the masters program.
- (D) Worked after receiving undergraduate degree, obtained one year of social work degree, worked in social work, returned to complete masters degree.
- (E) Other.

Table 3. Graduates, experienced and non-experienced in relation to an orientation program and to agency's expectations.

	Orientation					No Orientation					No Answer					Total	
	Realistic		Unrealistic		No Answer	Realistic		Unrealistic		No Answer	Realistic		Unrealistic		No Answer		
	%	N	%	N		%	N	%	N		%	N	%	N			
Experienced (34)	18*	(9)	4	(2)	-	29	(14)	15	(7)	2	(1)		-	2	(1)	72	(34)
Non-experienced (13)	5	(2)	-		-	23	(11)	-		-			-	-		28	(13)
Total (47)	23	(11)	4	(2)	-	52	(25)	15	(7)	2	(1)		-	2	(1)	100	

\* All the per cent figures are expressed as a percentage of 47.

9, or 19 per cent said that the expectations were unrealistic and 2, or 4 per cent failed to answer.

All of the non-experienced (13) felt that the expectations were realistic, and 2, or 16 per cent of these had an orientation program, the other 11, or 84 per cent did not have a formal orientation program.

Of the 34 experienced respondents, 23, or 67 per cent felt that the expectations were realistic; 9, or 26 per cent stated that they were unrealistic, and 2, or 7 per cent gave no answer.

Twenty-one, or 61 per cent of the 34 experienced respondents did not perceive themselves as having an orientation program; of these 21, 14, or 67 per cent found the expectations realistic and seven felt that the expectations were unrealistic. Of those experienced who had an orientation session, 9, or 81 per cent of the 11 thought that the expectations were realistic and 2 felt the opposite. In regard to the orientation program, 2 did not answer.

In Table 4, the respondents' answers in respect to whether the School of Social Work should prepare the graduate for specific responsibilities or should teach them general principles that could be adapted to the particular job, were related to agency expectations and to the use of an orientation program. Forty-one, or 88 per cent of the graduates felt that the school should teach general principles, 3, or 6 per cent thought that the school should prepare the student for specific responsibilities, and 3, or 6 per cent did not answer.

Thirty-six, or 77 per cent of the 47 respondents said that the agency's expectations were realistic; however, there were only 11, or 30 per cent of the 36 who had had an orientation program. Of the remaining 25, there were 24 respondents who did not perceive themselves as having an orientation program. One person did not answer.

There were 9, or 19 per cent of the 47 respondents who said that the expectations were unrealistic. Of these 9, two had taken an orientation program and seven claimed they had not taken one. Two, or 4 per cent of the respondents did not answer in respect to agency



Table 4. Graduates' views of function of School of Social Work in relation to agency expectations and use of orientation program.

Agency Expectations	Orientation Program	Teach specific Tasks		Teach general Principles		No answer		Total	
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Realistic	orientation		-	23	(11)		-	23	(11)
	no orientation	4	(2)	47	(21)	2	(1)	52	(24)
	Sub-totals		-	2	(1)		-	2	(1)
Unrealistic	orientation		-	4	(2)		-	4	(2)
	no orientation		-	12	(6)	2	(1)	15	(7)
	Sub-totals		-		-		-		-
No answer	orientation		-		-		-		-
	no orientation		-		-	2	(1)	2	(1)
	Sub-totals	2	(1)		-		-	2	(1)
Totals		6	(3)	88	(41)	6	(3)	100	(47)

expectations.

Table 5 relates to agency climate, taking into consideration such things as staff relationships, work atmosphere, etc., and to agency expectations.

Of the 47 respondents, 5, or 10 per cent felt that the agency climate was 'very good' and that expectations were realistic. Twenty-five respondents, or 53 per cent felt that agency climate was 'good'; but of these, 19, or 41 per cent said that expectations were realistic, and 5, or 10 per cent said that they were unrealistic. One person did not answer.

Fifteen, or 33 per cent claimed that the agency climate was fair; 12, or 26 per cent said that expectations were realistic and 3, or 7 per cent said that they were unrealistic. Two respondents said that the agency climate was poor.

Table 6 relates graduates' views of the manageability of their work load with agency's expectations. Of the 47 respondents, 49 per cent stated that their work load was manageable and that the agency's expectations were realistic. Six per cent of the 'manageable' said that the expectations were unrealistic.

Twenty-eight per cent claimed that their work load was unmanageable but that the expectations were realistic. Of the 'unmanageable', 13 per cent said that the expectations were unrealistic.

Table 6 A relates to the variables that helped or failed to help the respondent fulfill responsibilities in his first full-time agency position. The following variables were considered; agency, graduate's supervisor, the conditions of work, graduate's education, orientation program, the graduate himself, and understanding of job description.

The following information was obtained from the 47 respondents; 31 or 66 per cent felt that the agency helped in their first full-time position. Eleven, or 24 per cent felt that the agency did not help. Five, or 10 per cent did not answer. Twenty-nine, or 61 per cent felt that the graduate's supervisor helped, while 13, or 29 per cent felt that the

Table 5. Graduate respondents on agency's expectations and climate.

Agency climate	Expectations realistic		Expectations unrealistic		No answer		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
very good	10*	(5)	-		-		10	(5)
good	41	(19)	10	(5)	2	(1)	53	(25)
fair	26	(12)	7	(3)			33	(15)
poor	-		2	(1)	2	(1)	4	(2)
	77	(36)	19	(9)	4	(2)	100	(47)

\* All these figures are expressed as a percentage of 47.

Table 6. Graduates' views on manageability of work load and agency expectations.

Agency's expectations	Work load Manageability					
	Manageable		Unmanageable		Total	
	%		%			
Realistic	49	(23)	28	(13)	77	(36)
Unrealistic	6	(3)	13	(6)	19	(9)
No answer	0	(0)	4	(2)	4	(2)
Total	55	(26)	45	(21)	100	(47)

Table 6 A. Variables affecting transition that helped or failed to help.

Variables		Helped		Failed to Help		No Answer	
%		%	N	%	N	%	N
Agency	(47)	66	(30)	24	(12)	10	(5)
Graduates' supervisor	(47)	61	(29)	29	(13)	10	(5)
Conditions of work	(47)	46	(22)	36	(16)	18	(9)
Graduates' education	(47)	76	(35)	14	(7)	10	(5)
Orientation program	(47)	17	(8)	12	(5)	71	(34)
Graduate	(47)	80	(38)	6	(2)	14	(7)
Understanding of job description	(47)	30	(14)	40	(19)	30	(14)

graduate's supervisor failed to help. Five or 10 per cent did not answer. Twenty-two, or 46 per cent felt that the conditions of work did help in the first full-time position, while 16, or 36 per cent felt that the conditions of work did not help. Nine, or 18 per cent did not answer. Thirty-five, or 76 per cent felt that the graduate's education helped while 7, or 14 per cent felt that it did not help. Of the respondents who had had an orientation program, 13 in all, 8, or 61 per cent said that it helped and 5, or 39 per cent said that it failed to help. Thirty-eight, or 80 per cent felt that they were of no help in their first full-time position. Seven, or 14 per cent did not answer. Fourteen, or 30 per cent felt that their understanding of the job description helped while 19, or 40 per cent felt that it was of no help. Fourteen, or 30 per cent did not answer.

In Table 6 B the experienced and non-experienced graduate respondents were compared in respect to the variables that helped or failed to help them fulfill their responsibilities in their first job. The variables included the agency, the graduate's supervisor, the conditions of work, the graduate's education, the orientation program, the graduate and his understanding of the job description.

Of the 34 experienced respondents, 19 or 55 per cent stated that the agency was helpful, 11 or 32 per cent replied negatively and 4 or 13 per cent failed to answer. Among the non-experienced (13), 12 or 92 per cent claimed that the agency helped, and one or 8 per cent did not answer.

In regard to the graduate's supervisor, 17 or 50 per cent of the experienced respondents felt that they were helpful and 12 or 35 per cent said that they were not. Five did not answer. All the non-experienced except one found the supervision helpful. The exception said that it was not helpful.

Twelve or 35 per cent of the experienced said that the conditions of work were helpful; 14 or 14 per cent said that they were not and 8 or 24 per cent did not answer. Among the non-experienced ten or 77 per cent

Table 6 B. Variables affecting the transition of experienced and non-experienced graduates.

Variables	Graduates		Helped		Failed to Help		No Answer	
	Experienced and	Non-experienced	%		%		%	
Agency	Experienced	(34)	55	(19)	32	(11)	13	(4)
	Non-experienced	(13)	92	(12)	0	(0)	8	(1)
Graduates' supervisor	Experienced		50	(27)	35	(12)	15	(5)
	Non-exper.		92	(12)	8	(1)	0	(0)
Conditions of work	Experienced		35	(12)	41	(14)	24	(8)
	Non-exper.		77	(10)	15	(2)	8	(1)
Graduates' education	Experienced		66	(22)	19	(7)	15	(5)
	Non-exper.		100	(13)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Orientation program	Experienced		18	(6)	16	(5)	66	(23)
	Non-exper.		15	(2)	0	(0)	85	(11)
Graduate	Experienced		75	(25)	6	(2)	19	(7)
	Non-exper.		100	(13)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Understanding of job description	Experienced		29	(10)	42	(14)	29	(10)
	Non-exper.		30	(4)	40	(5)	30	(4)

said that the conditions of work helped, two or 15 per cent said that they did not help and one person did not answer.

The graduate's education was seen as a helpful tool by all of the non-experienced respondents but only 22 or 66 per cent of the experienced said that it was helpful while 7 or 19 per cent said that it was not. Five or 15 per cent did not answer.

In regard to the orientation program, 23 or 66 per cent of the experienced respondents did not answer; six or 18 per cent claimed that it was helpful and 5 or 16 per cent said that it was not helpful. All of the non-experienced, except for two who found the orientation program helpful, did not answer.

Of the graduates themselves, 25 or 75 per cent of the experienced stated that they helped, 2 or 6 per cent said that they did not help and seven or 19 per cent failed to answer. All of the non-experienced respondents stated that they helped themselves.

Of the experienced respondents, 10, or 29 per cent felt that the job description helped; 14, or 42 per cent stated that it did not and ten did not answer. Among the non-experienced, four, or 30 per cent said that the job description helped and 5, or 40 per cent said that it failed to help. Four did not answer.

In Table 6 C, the views of those graduate respondents who thought that the expectations of the agency were realistic and those who thought that they were unrealistic were compared in respect to the variables that helped and those that failed to help the graduates fulfill their first full-time responsibilities. The variables included the agency, the graduate's supervisor, the conditions of work, the graduate's education, the orientation program, the graduate himself and finally, his understanding of the job description.

The total number of graduates who found the agency expectations realistic was 36, and the number who found them unrealistic was 9. Two did not answer in respect to expectations.

Of those graduates who found the expectations realistic, in excess



Table 6 C. Variables affecting the transition of the graduate respondents in respect to the realistic or unrealistic expectations.

Variables	Graduates' view of expectations	Helped		Failed to help		No answer	
		%	N	%	N	%	N
Agency	Realistic (36)	78	(27)	11	(6)	11	(3)
	Unrealistic (9)	34	(3)	66	(6)	0	(0)
	No answer (2)						
Graduates' supervisor	Realistic	70	(25)	22	(8)	8	(3)
	Unrealistic	45	(4)	55	(5)	0	(0)
Conditions of work	Realistic	49	(18)	31	(11)	20	(7)
	Unrealistic	45	(4)	55	(5)	0	(0)
Graduates' education	Realistic	87	(31)	5	(2)	8	(3)
	Unrealistic	45	(4)	55	(5)	0	(0)
Orientation program	Realistic	19	(7)	8	(3)	73	(26)
	Unrealistic	12	(1)	22	(2)	66	(6)
Graduate	Realistic	83	(30)	3	(1)	14	(5)
	Unrealistic	88	(8)	12	(1)	0	(0)
Understanding of job description	Realistic	33	(12)	42	(15)	25	(9)
	Unrealistic	22	(2)	45	(4)	33	(3)

of 70 per cent of them claimed that the following variables were helpful: In order of the most helpful, first these were the graduates' education, 87 per cent; the graduate, 83 per cent; the agency, 78 per cent; and the supervisor, 70 per cent. The rest of the variables were rated to be helpful by less than 50 per cent of the respondents.

On the other hand the same group of respondents felt that the following variables did not help. In order of that which helped least these were: the understanding of the job description, 42 per cent; the conditions of work, 31 per cent; supervisors, 22 per cent; and agency, 11 per cent.

Of those graduates, 9 altogether, who said that the agency expectations were 'unrealistic' only the graduates themselves were considered to be helpful by more than 50 per cent of the respondents. Eighty-three per cent said that they helped while less than 50 per cent of them claimed that the other variables were helpful. Of the 'unrealistic' more than 50 per cent of the respondents felt that the following variables failed to help. These were in order of rank: the agency, 66 per cent; the supervisor, 55 per cent; the conditions of work, 55 per cent; the graduate's education, 55 per cent; and the understanding of the job description, 45 per cent.

In Table 6 D the graduate respondents' views, according to whether their work load was manageable or unmanageable, were related to whether certain variables helped or failed to help the graduate fulfill their initial responsibilities. The variables included the agency, the graduates' supervisor, the conditions of work, the graduates' education, the orientation program, the graduates themselves, and their understanding of the job description.

Of the 47 graduate respondents, 26 or 55 per cent reported that their work load was manageable; 21 or 45 per cent said that it was unmanageable.

In response to agency, 19 or 73 per cent of the 26 respondents who said that their work load was manageable also said that the agency helped

Table 6 D. Variables affecting the transition of the graduate respondents in respect to the manageability of their work loads.

Variables	Graduates' view of manageability of work load	Helped		Failed to Help		No answer	
		%	N	%	N	%	N
Agency	Manageable (26)	73	(19)	11	(3)	16	(4)
	Unmanageable (21)	57	(12)	38	(8)	5	(1)
Graduates' supervisor	Manageable	67	(15)	27	(7)	16	(4)
	Unmanageable	66	(14)	29	(6)	5	(1)
Conditions of work	Manageable	65	(17)	16	(4)	19	(5)
	Unmanageable	24	(5)	57	(12)	19	(4)
Graduates' education	Manageable	76	(20)	8	(2)	16	(4)
	Unmanageable	71	(15)	24	(5)	5	(1)
Orientation program	Manageable	19	(5)	4	(1)	77	(20)
	Unmanageable	14	(3)	19	(4)	67	(14)
Graduate	Manageable	68	(18)	8	(2)	24	(6)
	Unmanageable	95	(20)	0	(0)	5	(1)
Understand- ing of job description	Manageable	39	(10)	34	(9)	27	(7)
	Unmanageable	19	(4)	47	(10)	34	(7)

them in fulfilling their responsibilities. Three or 11 per cent said that the agency failed to help and 4 or 16 per cent did not answer. Of those graduates who claimed that their work load was unmanageable 12 or 57 per cent of the 21 said that the agency helped; 8 or 38 per cent said that it failed to help; and one did not answer.

Of the 'manageable' respondents, 15 or 67 per cent of the respondents indicated that the supervisor helped; 7 or 27 per cent claimed that the supervisor did not help; and 4 or 16 per cent did not answer. Of the 'unmanageable' 14 or 66 per cent stated that the supervisor helped and only 6 or 29 per cent claimed the opposite. One did not answer.

Regarding the conditions of work 17 or 65 per cent of the 'manageable' responses were favorable and 4 or 16 per cent were negative. Five or 19 per cent did not indicate an answer. Of the 'unmanageable' 5 or 24 per cent found the conditions favorable. Twelve or 57 per cent said that the conditions did not help. One did not answer.

In comparing the responses between Table 6 C and Table 6 D in respect to certain variables, there appeared to be some significant differences, assuming that a difference of 20 percentage points was significant. For example, in Table 6 C which dealt with 'realistic' and 'unrealistic' agency expectations, 45 per cent of the 'unrealistic' respondents felt that their education 'helped' in comparison to 71 per cent of the 'unmanageable' respondents of Table 6 D which dealt with manageability. Fifty-five per cent of the 'unrealistic' answered that education did not help and 24 per cent of the 'unmanageable' said that it did not help.

In respect to agency, 34 per cent of the 'unrealistic' said that it helped but 57 per cent of the 'unmanageable' said the same thing. There were 38 per cent of the 'unmanageable' who answered that the agency did not help and 66 per cent of the 'unrealistic' who gave similar answers.

The conditions of work were rated as helpful by 49 per cent of the 'realistic' and by 65 per cent of the 'manageable'. The supervisor was

said to be helpful by 70 per cent of the 'realistic' and by 67 per cent of the 'manageable' but in addition, 66 per cent of the 'unmanageable' also thought the supervisor helpful.

From the point of view of lack of help the 'unrealistic' respondents, 55 per cent answered that the supervisor was not helpful, while 29 per cent of the 'unmanageable' said that the supervisor did not help. On the other hand, 66 per cent of the 'unmanageable' said that he helped and 45 per cent of the 'realistic' said the same.

There did not appear to be any other significant difference among the remaining variables in respect to the two tables.

On the matter of the graduates' education, 20 or 76 per cent of the 'manageable' respondents said that it helped and only 2 or 5 per cent said that it did not. Four failed to answer. Of the 'unmanageable' 15 or 71 per cent claimed that their education helped and 5 or 24 per cent said that it failed to help. One person did not answer.

In respect to the orientation program 5 or 19 per cent of the 'manageable' respondents said that it helped; 1 or 4 per cent said that it failed to help. Twenty-three or 77 per cent did not answer. Among the 'unmanageable' answers 3 or 14 per cent said that it helped, but 4 or 19 per cent said that it did not help. Eleven or 67 per cent did not answer.

Of the 26 'manageable' respondents 18 or 68 per cent replied favorably that they had helped themselves. Two said that they did not help and 6 or 24 per cent failed to answer. Of the 'unmanageable' responses 20 or 95 per cent claimed that they helped; no one said that they did not help and one person did not answer.

In regard to the job description, 10 or 39 per cent of the 'manageable' stated that it helped; 9 or 34 per cent said that it failed to help and 7 or 27 per cent did not answer. Of the 'unmanageable' 4 or 19 per cent replied favorably and 10 or 47 per cent said that it did not help. Seven or 34 per cent did not answer.

Of the respondents who said that their work load was manageable, the

variables that received the highest percentage of favorable responses, listed in order of rank were: graduates' education, 76 per cent; the agency, 73 per cent; the graduate, 68 per cent; the supervisor, 67 per cent; the conditions of work, 65 per cent; the job description, 39 per cent; and the orientation program, 19 per cent. The variables that did not help in order of rank were: job description, 34 per cent; the supervisor, 27 per cent; the conditions of work, 16 per cent; the agency, 11 per cent; the graduates and their education, both 8 per cent; and the orientation program, 4 per cent.

Of the respondents who said that their work load was unmanageable, the variables that were said to help according to rank were: the graduate, 95 per cent; education, 71 per cent; the supervisor, 66 per cent; the agency, 57 per cent; the conditions of work, 24 per cent; the job description, 19 per cent; and the orientation program, 14 per cent. On the other hand, those variables that failed to help were according to rank: the conditions of work, 57 per cent; the job description, 47 per cent; the agency, 38 per cent; the supervisor, 29 per cent; education, 27 per cent; the orientation program, 19 per cent; and the graduates themselves, nil.

In Table 7, the graduate respondents who thought that the agency expectations were clearly stated upon commencing employment, so that duties and expectations were clearly stated and those who did not, were recorded. Sixteen, or 34 per cent of the 47 respondents replied favorably that the expectations were clearly understood, and 11, or 23 per cent stated that the expectations were not clearly understood. Twenty, or 43 per cent failed to answer.

Table 7. Graduates' view of clarity of agency expectations.

Clearly stated		Not clearly stated		No answer	
%	N	%	N	%	N
34	(16)	23	(11)	43	(20)

### Supervisors

Of 46 questionnaires sent out, 21, or 47 per cent were returned adequately completed for the purpose of analysis. Another 2 were returned but these were not used in the analysis.

In Table 8 of the supervisor respondents, 1 felt that the school should teach specific skills in preparation for work. Nineteen, or 90 per cent thought that the school should teach general principles. One respondent did not answer.

Of the 21 respondents, 9, or 44 per cent said that the school should teach general principles, that the agency's expectations were realistic and that they offered an orientation program. Two, or 8 per cent claimed that the school should teach general principles and that the expectations were realistic, but that they did not have an orientation program.

Four respondents, or 19 per cent who had an orientation program and said that the school should teach general principles did not see the agency's expectations as realistic. Another 3, or 14 per cent who said that the function of the school was to teach general principles did not have an orientation program and did not think that expectations were realistic.

Forty-nine per cent, or 10 of the respondents who had an orientation program said the expectations were realistic. Nineteen per cent, or 4 respondents said that they had an orientation program but that expectations were unrealistic. Similarly, 19 per cent said that expectations were not realistic and that they did not have an orientation program.

In Table 9 , 62 per cent of the supervisors felt that the agency's expectations of the graduate were realistic while 38 per cent or 8 felt that they were not realistic. In comparison, 77 per cent of the graduates thought that the agency's expectations were realistic and 19 per cent thought them unrealistic.

In the matter of an orientation program, 14 or 68 per cent of the supervisors claimed that their agency had one. This compared to 27 per

Table 8. Supervisors' views of function of School of Social Work in relation to agency expectations and orientation program.

Agency Expectation	Orientation Program	Teach Specific Tasks		Teach General Principles		No Answers		Total	
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Realistic	Orientation	5	(1)	44	(9)		-	49	(10)
	No orientation		-	8	(2)		-	8	(2)
	No answer		-	5	(1)		-	5	(1)
Unrealistic	Orientation		-	19	(4)		-	19	(4)
	No orientation		-	14	(3)	5	(1)	19	(4)
	No answer		-		-		-		-
No answer	Orientation		-		-		-		-
	No orientation		-		-		-		-
	No answer		-		-		-		-
Total		5	(1)	90	(19)	5	(1)	100	(21)



Table 9. Supervisors' views on agency expectations, effectiveness of orientation and school preparation.

Agency's Expectations	Orientation-effective				Orientation-ineffective				No answer			
	School Prepared		School not Prepared		School Prepared		School not Prepared		School Prepared		School not Prepared	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Realistic	19	(4)	9.5	(2)	19	(4)	14	(3)	-		-	
Unrealistic	14	(3)	9.5	(2)	-		9.5	(2)	5	(1)	-	
Sub-total	33	(7)	19	(4)	19	(4)	24	(5)	5	(1)	-	
Total (21)		52 (11)				43 (9)				5 (1)		100

cent of the supervisors reported that their agency did not have an orientation program in comparison to 69 per cent of the graduates who said that they did not have one. One supervisor did not answer.

Of the 14 who reported an orientation program, 11 thought that it was effective in preparing the new worker, 3 supervisors did not think it effective. Of these 11, only 7 thought that the school prepared the graduate sufficiently for his initial job. The other 4 thought that the school did not prepare the graduate sufficiently. Of those who did not have an orientation program, 6 in all, 4 thought that the school prepared the graduate and 2 thought the school did not prepare the graduate.

Table 10 deals in respect to some of the variables that would tend to be influences in the graduates' transition period; in order that they could fulfill their responsibilities, the supervisors generally felt that the agency, the supervisor, and education were the most positive influences. The factors were rated 62 per cent, 70 per cent, and 57 per cent respectively. Of the three positive influencing factors, education was rated the lowest. In fact, 43 per cent thought that it did not help. While 10 per cent of the supervisors felt that they did not help and 24 per cent said that the agency did not help, the graduate and the conditions of work were rated by the supervisors respectively as the least helpful. Thirty-nine per cent of the supervisors felt that the graduate helped himself in the transition, 20 per cent felt that he did not help, and 43 per cent could not answer. Only 29 per cent of the supervisors felt that the condition of work helped but 57 per cent felt that they did not. Fourteen per cent did not answer.

Table 11 indicates the supervisors' perception of the agency's demands, whether adequate, excessive or insufficient in respect to the graduates' skill and knowledge and the supervisors' view of whether there was or was not a manpower shortage in their particular agency. Of the supervisor respondents, 48 per cent considered the demands of the agency adequate in respect to graduate skills and knowledge, but 43 per cent thought that the demands were excessive and only 9 per cent thought them insufficient.

Table 10. Supervisors' view of variables which helped or failed to help the graduate.

Variables		Helped		Failed to Help		No Answer	
		%	N	%	N	%	N
Agency	(21)	62	(13)	24	(5)	14	(3)
Supervisor	(21)	70	(15)	10	(2)	20	(4)
Conditions of work	(21)	29	(6)	57	(12)	14	(3)
Graduate	(21)	39	(8)	20	(4)	43	(9)
Education	(21)	57	(12)	43	(9)	-	

Table 11. Demands of agency on graduates' skills and manpower shortage.

Demands of Agency on Graduates' Skills	Manpower Shortage				Totals	
	Yes	No				
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Insufficient	9	(2)	-	-	9	(2)
Adequate	19	(4)	29	(6)	48	(10)
Excessive	24	(5)	19	(4)	43	(9)
Total	52	(11)	48	(10)	100	(21)

Eleven of the 21, or 52 per cent felt that there was a manpower shortage, 48 per cent felt that there was not. Of those who felt that there was a manpower shortage, 33 per cent said that the agency's expectations were realistic.

Although the answers of both graduates and supervisors as they pertained to certain questions were a definitive 'yes' or 'no' most of them had additional comments which were illuminating and qualifying. The following comments from both graduates and supervisors were included to give a representative and a truly accurate account of how they viewed certain variables that affected the transition period.

The first part of these quotations, both positive and negative, were taken from the graduates' answers to questions about how social work education, agency, supervisor, conditions of work, job description and orientation program helped or failed to help in the transition process.

#### Graduates

##### Education.

1. "Provided a fairly good background out of which I could learn specifics."
2. "Adequate preparation for general casework practice."
3. "Social work first gave an understanding and application of methods that was useful in working with clients. It provided a better way of looking at the total social welfare field."
4. "Social work education does not sufficiently prepare you for any specific responsibilities. It is generic in nature and rightly so."
5. "The only part of the education process that helped prepare me was my second year field placement."
6. "... did not prepare me for my job. Specifically stress the need for more education in method and techniques, e.g. Child Welfare."
7. "... did not sufficiently prepare me for the realities of

social work practice."

8. "... it did not give me any preparation for group work, administration, or community organization all of which I had to do."

Agency.

9. "Agency provided adequate instruction with support and realistic expectations."
10. "Agency was very supportive and offered flexibility in programs."
11. "... provided a considerable opportunity to put one's training to use and freedom to choose techniques as necessary."
12. "The greatest demand is to find that much of the work is of a clerical nature and that many clients have negative attitudes towards our agency."
13. "... initial expectations too specific."

Supervisor.

14. "Does whatever he can to accommodate workers. He has given me a free hand."
15. "... encouraged me to use my skills and experience."
16. "Supervisor does his best to direct and provide case consultation."
17. "Ready to discuss and guide at any time. Tremendous support."
18. "Many problems ... could have been better handled with good supervision which was lacking in my agency."

Conditions of Work.

19. "Pleasant and democratic. Good lines of communication."
20. "Conducive to work."
21. "Good working conditions particularly in regard to staff relations."
22. "No time to think about how good or bad a job I was doing ... overloaded with work."
23. "The work load can be crippling because facilities in the schools and at the clinic are poor."

24. "Offices overcrowded, lack of privacy."

Job Description.

25. "This certainly clarified responsibilities in a broad sense."  
 26. "... vague as it tends to be based on a particular caseload."  
 27. "Not good. One of the worst areas here because of the circumstances, the stated policies could not be implemented satisfactorily."

Orientation Program.

28. "Good. Well planned and provided me with practical means of dealing with several sticky areas of the work."  
 29. "Gave good instruction in agency policy."  
 30. "This I feel was a failure. It was too quick and brief to really be of assistance."  
 31. "Not of much use ... too vague."  
 32. "Absolute crap."

The second part contains some of the comments of the supervisors in respect to certain variables such as the agency, the graduate, conditions of work, and on the adequacy of the preparation of the graduates as provided by social work education for their first permanent job.

Supervisors

Agency.

33. "The graduate must become familiar with agency policies, routines, etc., before he is completely effective."  
 34. "One problem with some MSW's is that they see themselves as pursuing a professional goal and expect the agency to make this pursuit possible. We cannot always do so unless the goal is reasonably concerned with the goals and responsibilities of the agency."  
 35. "I believe that the transition process could be helped if agencies could afford a period of time for further learning

with fewer cases."

36. "Agencies have a right to expect more than they are getting from graduates. Graduates should be professional and should be motivated to work and seek opportunities."
37. "... provided orientation and inservice training that was quite realistic."
38. "Agency failed in helping by not having a planned orientation or training program."
39. "Helped by orientation, supervision and freedom to make decisions within policy framework. Failed to help MSW's goals and agency goals, fail to coincide in certain cases, heavy volume of work."

#### The Graduate

40. "Problems often occur because now graduates are seemingly naive above the importance of factual and financial matters in exploring, diagnosing and treating. Many seem to see this as demeaning to the client and irrelevant in the social work process."
41. "... their capacity and enthusiasm for non-theoretical work is disappointing. Once they leave the world of assignments, projects and small learning caseloads, they are somewhat floored when hit by a full caseload."
42. "Most of the new graduates felt that it was a growth producing experience and their performance increased in terms of quality."
43. "The graduates' expectations are unrealistically low as compared to the responsibilities we have towards human needs and rights."
44. "We expect graduates to be competent, to provide a certain quality of service."

#### Conditions of Work.

45. "... good staff morale, a fairly clear philosophy which is constantly under examination with staff involvement."
46. "... the personnel, from filing cleric to supervisor are



generally helpful."

47. "... over crowded; old facilities."
48. "... workload too heavy in some cases. Working conditions generally poor."

#### Social Work Education.

49. "Yes, but of course he must become familiar with agency policies."
50. "On the whole yes, but the school should strive for a more independent practitioner."
51. "In earlier years, often felt graduates insufficiently prepared - often unclear as to their knowledge and skills ... considerable improvement in recent years."
52. "Partially, need more competence in social work treatment and in manageable knowledge."
53. "No. Our experience has been that they are less able to function independently and imaginatively than they were as intrainees."
54. "No. I feel that M.S.W. is unprepared to handle the size of caseload but that is common in Child Welfare in Manitoba."
55. "No, not in general ... ability to translate theory to practice is a major factor."

The quotations derived from the questionnaires indicated certain trends among the graduates' and supervisors' responses regarding education, the agency, the supervisors, the graduates, the conditions of work, the job description, and the orientation program. It is important to note that these quotations were representative of the responses given by the sample group.

#### The Graduates

1. Many graduates approved of the education in the School of Social Work preparing them for general tasks; however, it was felt that the

education did not help the graduates to cope with the realities of agency practice such as the manageability of caseloads. In addition, graduates felt that community organization and administration courses at the School were deficient.

2. The graduates were of the view that the agency was a very helpful factor in the transition period offering support and providing flexibility. The demands of a clerical nature upon the workers seemed to be resented.

3. The respondents indicated that the supervisors provided tremendous support and assistance during the transition period. Some graduates felt that supervision could be improved in their agencies and thus ease some of the problems that occurred during the transition period.

4. Many graduates felt that work conditions were not good because of poor facilities and large work loads. Others were quite satisfied. It is significant to note that graduates who rated the work conditions as poor seemed to refer more to the physical facilities while those who were satisfied referred to work conditions from a staff relations perspective.

5. The graduates tended to rate the job description quite low.

6. The orientation programs were rated, overall, to be of little value because the many who replied either did not perceive themselves as having an orientation program or did not consider having one even though the agency thought it did. Many of those who had an orientation program found it of value.

### The Supervisors

1. Supervisors felt that M.S.W. graduates had difficulty fitting into the agency situation. The supervisors recognized that agencies had both positive and negative influences in the transition period. They felt that graduates should be more aware of the agency work realities.

2. The supervisor respondents were of the view that graduates were too academically oriented and that the graduates had low expectations of

what they should do.

3. The supervisors who rated the conditions of work highly as a helping factor in the transition period referred to staff relationships. Those who felt that the conditions of work were not helpful in the transition process referred to physical facilities.

4. The supervisors felt that social work education would prepare the graduate to be more independent and to be able to handle larger work loads when they graduate.

## Chapter V

## Conclusions

The conclusions are based on the question to which this study was directed: that is, the study was undertaken for the purpose of examining the period of transition from social work student to social work practitioner as reported by recent Masters of Social Work graduates and agency supervisors. From this examination, it was anticipated that we would achieve some understanding of the extent to which Masters of Social Work graduates felt prepared for the first full-time positions which they obtained upon graduation.

Thirty per cent of the respondents with no previous experience indicated that their work loads were unmanageable and 70 per cent of the inexperienced graduates had manageable work loads. Among the experienced graduates, 53 per cent found their work loads manageable and 47 per cent found them unmanageable. This suggests that there are significantly more inexperienced graduates than experienced graduates who found work loads manageable. However, after correlating the findings, the differential factor was found to be 1.3 and statistically insignificant.<sup>19</sup>

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19. The differential factor was determined by use of the formula

$$\text{d.f.} = \frac{N(AD - BC)^2}{(A+C)(A+B)C+D)(B+D)}$$

. Where N = number of graduates; A = Realistic-Manageable; B = Realistic-Unmanageable; C = Unrealistic-Manageable; and D = Unmanageable+Unrealistic. Since the differential factor was less than 3 it was not significant.

After graduation, 45 per cent of the experienced graduates who returned to the agencies where they had worked previously stated that they had manageable work loads while 67 per cent of the experienced graduates who went to different agencies claimed that their work loads were manageable. The difference in the percentage of these experienced graduates who found their work loads manageable could be due to differences in expectations of the agencies and/or in the nature of the type of social work service offered by the respective agencies. In addition, difficulties around the manageability of the work load may have resulted because of insufficient orientation for the experienced graduate who returned to his previous employer. The agency, on the assumption that the returning graduate knew what was expected of him, did not provide him with an orientation program. This would appear to be plausible in light of the large percentage of graduates who did not have an orientation program.

The graduates found the following factors helpful in their transition period. In order of rank; the graduate, their education, the agency, their supervisor, the working conditions, the job description, and their orientation program. Only 27 per cent of the graduates reported having an orientation program.

The supervisors, responding to a similar question, rated the following factors helpful in the transition period. In order of rank; the supervisor, the agency, the education, the graduate, and the work conditions.

One significant factor to note is that the graduate and the supervisor each ranked themselves highest of factors relating to the transition period. The supervisor ranked the graduate lower on the scale, while, conversely, the graduate ranked the supervisor lower as a factor in a successful transition. One can speculate that the supervisor expected that the graduate should be more agency oriented upon graduation. This attitude could contribute to the lower rating of the supervisor on the part of the graduates.

The difference between the experienced workers and the inexperienced workers in regards to the factors which helped or failed to help during the transition process was negligible. In addition, there was little difference in the manner in which helping factors were ranked by graduates with manageable work loads and those with unmanageable work loads.

Graduates who felt that agency expectations were unrealistic ranked the agency lower than the other factors which they felt helped in the transition period. They tended to rank the graduate, the education, and the supervisor as highly as the respondents who perceived agency expectations as realistic. Thus, graduates who felt that agency expectations were unrealistic tended to give the agency low rank as a source of help. Eighty-seven per cent of the graduates who said that education was helpful had realistic expectations. Thus, most who regarded education as helpful perceived agency expectations as realistic while only 45 per cent of those who perceived the expectations as unrealistic considered education as a helping factor. In the latter case, either education supplied insufficient preparation for those individuals or the education was functional and agency expectations were, in fact, unrealistic.

The study's findings indicated that there was no relationship between agency expectations and agency climate since the majority of the graduate respondents regarded the agency climate as positive.

The inexperienced workers and most of the experienced workers felt that initial responsibilities in the first full-time agency job should be unlimited. This may indicate that both groups considered that the general principles that they learned in school could be applied to any situation. We are of the opinion that the experienced workers felt that they should not be restricted by having limited responsibilities by virtue of their previous experience in social work practice. A qualifying remark is in order since the different answers may have resulted from varying interpretations of the term 'responsibilities'. Although

respondents generally felt that there should be unlimited responsibilities, some of the respondents indicated that they were not prepared for certain types of tasks and had trouble when these tasks were encountered in the field. (Refer to the quotes under 'education' in the Analysis.)

The supervisors were divided in respect to the graduate having limited (43 per cent) and unlimited (53 per cent) responsibilities. Reasons for this may be related to the fact that some supervisors may have felt that experienced workers should assume unlimited responsibilities and the inexperienced, limited responsibilities. Other supervisors may have felt that graduates should become oriented to the agency and its functions before assuming unlimited responsibilities. Of those who felt that responsibilities should be unlimited, they may have assumed that the graduates should be able to apply the knowledge learned to any situation and thus take upon themselves unlimited responsibilities because of the anticipated competence that the M.S.W. had attained.

The majority of both the graduates and supervisors felt that the School of Social Work should teach general principles. More graduates than supervisors were of the opinion that the graduates' education helped in the transition period. In other words, the graduates tended to rate the education factor higher than the supervisors did. This may be related to the fact that the graduates were more recently exposed to education and thus were more oriented to the School of Social Work than to the agencies where they had commenced work. Secondly, the supervisors' responses indicated that they expected the graduates to be more agency oriented in understanding and operating within the practicalities of an agency situation. They felt that graduates were academically and professionally oriented and not totally aware of the realities of the agencies and the tasks that they were required to perform. Since we did not ask the supervisors to distinguish between the experienced and inexperienced graduates, we are unable to distinguish which group the supervisors were referring to. However, we can speculate that the inexperienced workers would be less aware of the practicalities of agency

situations. In addition, some experienced workers might also be unaware of certain practicalities where these workers moved into a different agency from that in which the experience was obtained. Perhaps the graduates were promoted to positions whose realities they were unaware of.

Despite the overall positive perception of the graduate's education, respondents, both supervisors and graduates, indicated weak areas in the education process. Their comments in this regard are quoted under the education heading in the analysis.

The authors of the study considered agency manpower shortages and subsequent excessive demands on Masters of Social Work graduates as being an important factor in the transition process. Overall, the supervisors felt that the demands were excessive but that the expectations were realistic. This could mean that in some agencies, although the expectations were quantitatively realistic in relation to what a beginning practitioner could handle, the manpower shortage caused the practitioner to get involved in a larger work load than the expectations required. In other words, the expectations of the quality and quantity of work loads that graduates could handle given ideal conditions where no manpower shortage existed were realistic but because of the shortage, the actual quantity exceeded what was perceived as realistic. Other supervisors might have felt that some graduates are not equipped to handle large work loads even though the supervisors' expectations of handling large work loads were considered realistic. It seems that excessive demands on the graduate were realistic according to some supervisors. Some of the graduate respondents stated that they had not been equipped by the School of Social Work to handle large work loads. From the results, we conclude that the extent to which a manpower shortage exists within a given agency can be an important factor in determining the successful completion of the transition period.

Agency expectations were perceived as realistic by 100 per cent of the inexperienced workers. Seventy per cent of these inexperienced



workers indicated that they felt their work loads were manageable. In part, this may be due to the fact that agencies often assign the more difficult cases to the workers with the most experience. Another explanation could be that since the graduates had never worked in agencies before, their comprehension of what is realistic and unrealistic in relation to agency expectations is limited.

Of the experienced workers, only 67 per cent perceived agency expectations as realistic. Sixty-one per cent of the experienced graduates did not have an orientation program. Of those that were exposed to an orientation program, 81 per cent felt that the agency expectations were realistic, and of those not exposed to an orientation program, 67 per cent felt that the agency expectations were realistic. Thus, orientation programs may or may not be a positive factor in the graduate's perception of agency expectations. In the cases where the experienced workers did not have an orientation program, yet found the expectations realistic, one can speculate on the reasons.

The agency should expect more of the experienced graduate than of the inexperienced graduate. In addition, the experienced graduates should have a more realistic idea of their skills and ability than the inexperienced graduates and consequently should set more realistic expectations for themselves than those proposed by an agency.

Of the 49 per cent of the experienced and inexperienced graduates who found agency expectations realistic, work loads were perceived as manageable. Twenty-eight per cent of the graduates perceived the expectations realistic and work loads unmanageable. Most who perceived the agency expectations as realistic perceived the work loads as manageable. Thus, there is a relationship between realistic agency expectations and manageable work loads. This does not explain the 28 per cent who indicated no relationship between manageable work loads and realistic expectations. This inconsistency could possibly be explained by the content of work loads, the agency climate or other factors that made the work loads for the 28 per cent unmanageable. In other words,

the expectations were considered realistic but despite this the graduates were unable to live up to these expectations because of a lack of suitable agency facilities.

Fifty-two per cent of the supervisors indicated that they perceived their agency orientation programs as effective; 43 per cent indicated they were ineffective and 5 per cent did not answer. Only 17 per cent of the graduates indicated that the orientation program was an effective factor in facilitating a successful transition period. The trends in the study indicated that the supervisors valued the orientation programs more than the graduates. The difference in perception may be due to differences in defining what constitutes an effective orientation program. Graduates' perception may differ from that of the supervisors in terms of their concept of a formal or informal orientation program, what such orientations consist of in regard to content, and of the value of such content. The supervisor may see the orientation program in the light of what they want the graduate, in general, to do while the graduate views the orientation as providing what he personally needs to perform his social work tasks and activities.

An implication for social work from such findings is that agency orientation programs must be re-examined and re-evaluated. Supervisors stated that their agencies all had orientation programs. However, a majority of graduates stated that in effect there was no orientation program, and that the philosophy followed by the agencies was a "sink or swim" approach. We feel that an effective orientation program is of vital importance to the beginning practitioner because it would offer an efficient bridge between his competencies and the job that he is expected to do. We also feel that responsibility for these orientation programs should rest primarily with the employing agency, as it has in the past, but that the agencies should make use of the school's resources and experience, if only on a consultative basis.

### General Summary of Conclusions

1. One of our primary conclusions was in agreement with that found by Charles Levy in that the majority of respondents felt that their professional education did sufficiently prepare them to assume certain agency responsibilities after graduation from the School of Social Work. Over 90 per cent of the graduates were in agreement that the School of Social Work should continue in their teaching of generic principles. However, our study was clear in pointing out that both supervisors and graduates felt that the school was preparing the graduate for beginning professional practice and not preparing him specifically for his first agency job.

2. Nearly all the respondents accepted the fact that of necessity there must be a transition period. It was further accepted that there would be gaps in the beginning practitioner's knowledge and that these gaps would disappear as he became more experienced. However, there would appear to be no planned ongoing education for masters graduates and in effect they are left alone to close the gap between their beginning knowledge and full agency competence.

3. Graduates felt that the Community Organization and Administration courses offered at the School of Social Work were inadequate.

4. The School of Social Work does not prepare the graduate for the transition process although it indicates that the graduate should be able to handle the transition in any setting because of the general principles taught in the school.

5. In some agencies, excessive demands because of a manpower shortage are an important factor in the degree of difficulty some graduates had in their adjustment to the work situation.

6. Supervisors tended to indicate that they expected the graduates to be more agency oriented in understanding and operating within the practicalities of the agency situation. They felt that the graduates were academically and professionally oriented and thus were not aware of the

agency reality situation nor were they aware of the tasks that the agency was expected to perform.

### Recommendations

1. The School of Social Work and the agencies should collaborate to determine if they can facilitate the ease of transition for a beginning practitioner.

2. The School of Social Work should determine the feasibility of strengthening the weaker aspects of the curriculum, i.e. administration and community organization.

3. The agencies that have a job description and an orientation program should determine the effectiveness of these. For those agencies that lack either one of these procedures, it is recommended that they develop and implement both as a means of facilitating the transitional phase of the beginning practitioner.

In addition, it is also recommended that the use and relevance of orientation programs would be a suitable topic for future M.S.W. research projects.

4. Agencies should undertake self-studies to determine the difficulties that the graduates have in transition. The job description should be given careful scrutiny since it was rated quite low in the variables that helped in the transition process.

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Appendix I

(Questionnaires)



Face Sheet: Graduate

1. Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Year of graduation with M.S.W. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years of social work experience before attending the School of Social Work \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please check one of the following categories regarding the pattern of your own education in social work: (Do not include summer work)
  - (a) entered graduate school after receiving your undergraduate degree without working before entering graduate school
  - (b) received your undergraduate degree, worked in social work, and entered graduate school
  - (c) received one year of graduate training, worked in social work and returned for your final year of the masters program
  - (d) worked after receiving your undergraduate degree, obtained one year of your social work degree, worked in social work, returned to complete your masters degree
  - (e) other, please specify on back of questionnaire
4. If you worked in the social work field before attending graduate school and/or between the first and second year of the graduate program at the University of Manitoba, please indicate the title of your last position(s) and in which agency(ies) did you hold the position(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the title of your first fulltime position after receipt of your M.S.W. degree? In what agency did you hold this position? Are you still occupying this position? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. After receipt of your Social Work degree, did you remain with or return on a fulltime basis to the social agency for which you worked prior to entering the School of Social Work for fulltime study? If yes, did you return to or

(continued)

remain with that agency, and were your job responsibilities different after receiving your Social Work degree? If yes, how were your responsibilities different? \_\_\_\_\_

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Job Description: Graduate

1. Please indicate the field(s) of practice that your agency is primarily focusing

- upon:
- (a) child welfare
  - (b) community planning services
  - (c) corrections
  - (d) education
  - (e) family
  - (f) group services
  - (g) medical
  - (h) psychiatric
  - (i) public assistance
  - (j) combined fields, please specify
  - (k) other, please specify
- 
- 

2. Please indicate the major areas of responsibility that you were assigned to initially when you began your first fulltime agency job:

- (a) intake
  - (b) supervision
  - (c) inservice staff training duties
  - (d) research
  - (e) direct service to client
  - (i) casework
  - (ii) group work
  - (iii) community organization
  - (iv) community development
  - (v) crisis intervention
  - (vi) other, please specify
- 
- 
- 

3. In your first agency position what were the specific tasks actually performed by you? Please indicate the actual tasks performed as opposed to tasks as outlined in the job description of the agency. \_\_\_\_\_

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(continued)

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4. Do you feel that your workload is manageable or unmanageable? Please explain.
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- 

5. Agency Climate

- (a) Were the staff relationships in your agency
- (i) informal and democratic
  - (ii) formal and democratic
  - (iii) informal and authoritarian
  - (iv) formal and authoritarian
  - (v) other
- 
- 

- (b) Was the work atmosphere in your agency
- (i) informal and democratic
  - (ii) formal and democratic
  - (iii) informal and authoritarian
  - (iv) formal and authoritarian
  - (v) other
- 
- 

- (c) Did you receive the support of your fellow staff when agency problems arose?
- (i) always
  - (ii) occasionally
  - (iii) never

- (d) Did you receive the support of your supervisor when agency problems arose?
- (i) always
  - (ii) occasionally
  - (iii) never

(continued)

(e) Did you take the initiative in seeking additional information in learning the job? eg. from other workers, from the supervisor, others, other sources. \_\_\_\_\_

(f) Were communication channels open to you if you wanted to consult an administrator above your immediate supervisor? (i) always  
(ii) occasionally  
(iii) never

(g) In answering the following question, take into consideration such factors as agency morale, physical facilities, administrative procedures, etc.

Agency climate is (i) very good  
(ii) good  
(iii) fair  
(iv) poor

Observations Concerning the Period of Transition: Graduate

1. In what ways did your social work education prepare you sufficiently to start on your responsibilities in your first fulltime agency job after receipt of your social work degree? In what ways did it not? What parts of your job put demands on you in which you did or did not feel adequately prepared?

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2. Do you think it was the function of the School of Social Work to prepare you for the specific responsibilities that you assumed in your first fulltime job

(continued)

after receipt of your Social Work degree or did you feel that it was the function of the school to teach you general principles and skills which you could adapt to your specific responsibilities? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you think your responsibilities in your first fulltime agency job after receipt of your Social Work degree should have been limited primarily to those for which your social work education prepared you? Please answer 'yes' or 'no' and briefly elaborate. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you think that the agency had realistic or unrealistic expectations of you as a beginning practitioner? Please comment. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. Does your agency have an orientation program for M.S.W. graduates? If yes, did this help in acclimatizing you to the agency? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

(continued)

Did this orientation program prepare you to begin work? What was the time span of orientation? What was the content of the orientation program? Does your agency have a written job description and did you have an opportunity to discuss the description with your supervisor? Did you take advantage of this opportunity? Were the expectations of the agency clearly stated upon commencing employment so that duties and expectations were clearly understood? What were these expectations? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Opportunity to Learn on the Job

What were the nature of supervisory contacts, taking into consideration their frequency and the content focus during the contacts between your supervisor and yourself? Was education included in the content? Please distinguish between administrative and educative contacts. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Please indicate, in the spaces provided, how each of the following helped or failed to help to prepare you to fulfil your responsibilities in your first

(continued)

fulltime agency job after receipt of your M.S.W. degree:

(a) the agency which employed you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) yourself \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(c) your supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(d) your education \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(e) the orientation program \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(f) the conditions of work \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(g) your understanding of the job description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you have any other comments on the transition process? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



University of Manitoba  
School of Social Work  
Winnipeg 19, Manitoba

January 21, 1970

Dear Colleague:

In reference to the questionnaire which you recently received concerning the M.S.W. graduate's period of transition from student to practitioner, we would appreciate your cooperation in completing the questionnaire by the end of January in order to meet certain practical time limits imposed upon the project.

You may be assured that the information will be considered as confidential.

We wish to thank you in advance for your valuable assistance in this undertaking.

Yours sincerely.

*per RW* C. G. Gifford,  
Director

CGG:rt

For every new graduate, when he or she comes to his or her first job, there is a transition period from the time the graduate negotiates employment with the agency to a point where the graduate can be said to have 'settled in' to the job. Our concern is what factors make this transition period easy or difficult, effective or ineffective. We hope, with your help, to clarify ways in which the student himself, the school of social work, and the employing agency can contribute to making this transition as short and effective as possible, for the sake of the people served, the worker and the agency.

If you are unable to answer the questions in the spaces provided, please answer on the back of the question sheet indicating the appropriate question number.

Thank you for your co-operation.



Questionnaire

..1..

Face Sheet: Supervisor

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_
2. Degree(s) held \_\_\_\_\_
3. School(s) attended \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Year(s) of graduation \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of years of social work experience \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of years serving in a supervisory capacity \_\_\_\_\_
7. Total number of people that you have supervised \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are you presently or have you previously supervised a worker who graduated with an M.S.W. from the University of Manitoba in or after May 1966? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Please check one of the four categories regarding the pattern of your own education in social work: (do not include summer work)
  - (a) entered graduate school after receiving your undergraduate degree without working in social work before you entered graduate school
  - (b) received your undergraduate degree, worked in social work and then completed two years graduate school
  - (c) completed one year of social work, worked in social work and returned to complete one year for your masters degree
  - (d) worked after receiving your undergraduate degree, obtained a Bachelor of Social Work degree, worked in social work and returned to obtain a masters degree
  - (e) other, please specify on back of questionnaire
10. Total number of people that you are supervising at present. (This includes all the workers and not only M.S.W. graduates) \_\_\_\_\_
11. Total number of M.S.W. graduates that you have supervised since May 1966 \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description: Supervisor

1. Please indicate the field(s) of practice that your agency is primarily focusing

upon:

- (a) child welfare
  - (b) community planning services
  - (c) corrections
  - (d) education
  - (e) family
  - (f) group services
  - (g) medical
  - (h) psychiatric
  - (i) public assistance
  - (j) combined fields, please specify
  - (k) other, please specify
- 
- 

2. Please indicate the major areas of responsibility that graduates from the Manitoba School since May 1966, supervised by you, have been assigned to

initially:

- (a) intake
  - (b) supervision
  - (c) inservice staff training duties
  - (d) administration
  - (e) research
  - (f) direct service to client
  - (i) casework
  - (ii) group work
  - (iii) community organization
  - (iv) community development
  - (v) crisis intervention
  - (vi) others, please specify
- 
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3. Please outline the specific tasks undertaken by recent graduates directly supervised by you in the area(s) of responsibility that you have indicated. Please indicate the actual tasks performed as opposed to tasks as outlined in the job description of the agency. \_\_\_\_\_

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- [illegible]

Observations Concerning the Period of Transition: Supervisor

1. On the basis of, and experience with, the beginning M.S.W. graduate do you think that his or her social work education prepared the graduate sufficiently to start on the responsibilities in the first fulltime agency job after receipt of his or her social work degree? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you think that it was the function of the School of Social Work to prepare the graduate for the specific agency responsibilities which the graduate was given in the first fulltime agency job after receipt of the Social Work degree or do you feel that it was the function of the school to teach general principles and skills which your agency would help the graduate adapt to specific agency responsibilities? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you think that the graduate's responsibilities, in his first fulltime agency job after receipt of the Social Work degree, should have been limited primarily to those for which his social work education did prepare him? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you think that the agency had realistic or unrealistic expectations of the graduate in his first fulltime agency job? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you feel that the agency orientation was effective in helping the graduate

continued...

move into his job responsibilities? Please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Is there a manpower shortage in your agency? If so, did it require the new M.S.W. graduate to assume tasks that were of such a nature that his education could not legitimately have been expected to prepare him? Did the tasks required of him make insufficient, adequate or excessive demands on his skills? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. In relation to performance expectations of the agency, was there a written job description that you could discuss with the worker? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Please indicate, in the spaces provided below, how each of the following helped or failed to help to prepare the beginning graduate to fulfil his or her responsibilities after receipt of the M.S.W. degree:

(a) the agency \_\_\_\_\_

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(b) the graduate's supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

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(c) the conditions of work \_\_\_\_\_

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(d) the graduate \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you have any other comments on the transition process? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_