

STUDENT CHILD CARE WORKERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
FIELD EXPERIENCES

by

Catherine M. Blakesley

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
in the
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of field experience of a child care training program indirectly clarifying the nature and value of field experiences in related fields, such as teacher preparation in early childhood education. Specifically, it investigated the following questions:

1. What is the nature of students' participation in a six-week field experience program during the last block of child care training?
2. What learning is gained by students from their participation in the field experience?
3. What concerns and problems do students experience during their participation in the field experience?
4. What is the influence of significant others and academic coursework on the nature of students' participation in the field experience, learning acquired and the concerns and problems experienced?
5. What perspectives on teaching do students develop from their field experience?

A 44-question interview was developed and administered to 15 students enrolled in the Child Care Worker Training Program at the University of Winnipeg during 1986-88. Interviews were transcribed into written transcripts and analyzed for categories of responses.

The results of the study indicate that: (1) reflective thinking, the integration of theory and practice, and the development of a humanistic orientation towards young children were educational outcomes of the field experience, (2) conflicting expectations of the student's role between the university and placement site can result in uneven opportunities for student autonomy, responsibility and participation in the field experience, (3) survival concerns associated with the low status and ambiguity of the student role may have inhibited risk taking behavior in students, and inclined them to conform to expectations of authorities rather than act from personal convictions, (4) the university supervisor played a key role in guiding and supporting student learning, (5) to a large degree, what students learned from the field experience was congruent with the program's intentions and purposes.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father for his endless hours of typing, his continual love and support, and for being the "wind beneath my wings."

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A component of most teacher preparation programs is the provision of clinical or field-based experience. Traditionally these experiences have been highly regarded by teacher educators and are assumed to be an integral and necessary part of the professional preparation of teachers (Conant, 1963; Joyce, Yarger, Howey, Harbeck & Kluwin, 1977). Field experience is usually intended to stimulate reflection and analysis, integrate theory and practice, and encourage further exploration of theoretical concepts and principles of teaching (Association of Teacher Educators, 1973, 1986).

Yet recent research suggests that these outcomes are not always manifested in practice. Several studies (Goodman, 1985b; Hooper & Johnson, 1973; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Salzillo & Van Fleet, 1977; Tabachnick, 1980) suggest that field experiences often merely socialize students into existing patterns of school practice, lead to rigid, authoritarian attitudes, and develop utilitarian perspectives on teaching. Students become passive technicians who merely learn how to do things without asking why. Such findings are clearly alarming because they question the contribution of a major

element of the professional training of teachers.

Reviews of the research literature on field experiences (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Gehrke, 1981; Lasley & Applegate, 1984) indicate a lack of information about the nature of these experiences and the processes they involve. What do students do and learn in field experiences, and what factors influence and shape their success? Clearly the value and impact of field experiences on the development of teachers cannot be assessed without answers to these questions.

Statement of the Problem

The following study investigated the role of field experience of a child care worker training program indirectly clarifying the nature and value of field experiences in related fields, such as teacher preparation in early childhood education. Specifically, it investigated the following questions:

1. What is the nature of students' participation in a six week field experience program during the last block of child care worker training?
2. What learning is gained by students from their participation in the field experience?
3. What concerns and problems do students experience during their participation in the field experience?

4. What is the influence of significant others and academic coursework on the nature of students' participation in the field experience, learning acquired and the concerns and problems experienced?
5. What perspectives on teaching do students develop from their field experience?

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been specifically defined to denote the particular meaning used for the purposes of this study.

Field Experience A six week placement in a community based child care centre where students engage in practice teaching activities under the direction of an onsite and University supervisor.

Significant Others Those persons interacting with the student during the field experience including the University supervisor, onsite supervisor, centre director, centre staff, children attending the child care centre, University instructors, other students, friends and family members.

Learning The acquisition of skills, knowledge, insights, beliefs, concepts, facts, techniques, and information experience.

Teaching Perspectives A coordinated set of ideas and actions that a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation. These thoughts and actions are coordinated in the sense that the actions derive reasonably from the ideas contained in the actor's perspective. Seen by an observer, teaching perspectives appear to be a possible set of ideas which explain and justify the actor's decisions (Becker, Geer, Hughes & Strauss, 1961).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The primary issue which dominates research on field experiences in teacher education is the value of these experiences to the professional development of teachers. However, no clear conclusions have emerged regarding the impact of these experiences and the issue remains a source of controversy and debate (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Peck & Tucker, 1973). The following is a review of the research on field experiences in teacher education programs.

Field Experiences as Valuable

One certainty which has emerged from the literature on field experiences is the continued belief in and commitment to these practices by teacher educators and institutions of teacher education. Both the 1973

and 1986 policy statements of the Association of Teacher Educators stressed the importance of field experiences in teacher education and indicated their support for the continued inclusion of a field experience component in teacher preparation programs (ATE, 1973, 1986). Similarly, Ishler and Kay (1981) surveying 240 teacher training institutions in the U.S., found that 99% of these institutions included a field experience component in their programs. Some U.S. states now mandate early field experiences before student teaching as a prerequisite to certification (MacNaughton, Johns & Rogus, 1982). Such evidence suggests that teacher educators and teacher training institutions clearly support the field experience and view it as a necessary and integral component of teacher preparation.

Support for field experiences can also be found among the students of teaching and practicing teachers. Research investigating student attitudes toward their field experiences indicates that students hold highly favorable attitudes toward these experiences (Appleberry, 1976; Haring & Nelson, 1980; Nosow, 1975). Lortie (1975) in his now classic sociological study of teachers and teaching found that inservice teachers regarded their practice teaching as one of the most useful components of their training.

Field Experiences as Detrimental

Despite the beliefs of teacher educators, students and teachers in the value of field experiences and the proliferation of these programs in teacher training institutions, empirical support for these views in the research literature has been lacking. What research has emerged appears to support a contradictory view of the value of field experience programs, namely that field experiences result in negative consequences to teacher development.

A primary source of skepticism about field experiences comes from researchers who have investigated changes in preservice teacher attitudes during field experiences. In general, student attitudes appear to become more custodial and negative during these experiences. Using pre-and post-test measures of student attitudes, several studies all found that student attitudes toward children declined significantly during field experiences (Alper & Retish, 1972; Dispoto, 1980; Dutton, 1962). Similarly, Henry (1976) and Sa'ed (1977) found that student teachers tended to rate teachers with child-centered classrooms as poorer teachers than those with subject-centered classrooms.

Student attitudes toward classroom management and

organization also appear to be influenced by field experiences. Hoy (1967, 1968) and Hoy and Rees (1977), studying pupil control ideologies of preservice students along a continuum of custodialism and humanism, found that students became significantly more custodial in their orientations after student teaching than before. A custodial pupil ideology was defined as one stressing the maintenance of order, distrust of students and a punitive moralistic approach to pupil control. It contrasts to humanistic ideology, which stresses an accepting, trustful view of pupils and an optimism concerning their ability to be self disciplining and responsible.

Many of the studies on attitude change have identified the source of these changes to be the co-operating teacher. For example, Mayhan and Lacefield (1976) found that when there are discrepancies between the student and co-operating teacher, students were likely to resolve the conflict by adopting the beliefs and values of the co-operating teacher. Students themselves often report their co-operating teacher as the most significant influence on their field experience (Karmos & Jacko, 1977; Manning, 1977). Support for these findings has also been found in studies which

investigated the influence of the university supervisor on students' attitudes and behavior. Several studies (Sandgren & Schmidt, 1956; Schueler, Gold & Mitzel, 1962; Morris, 1974) report that university supervisors have little observable effect on student teachers' attitudes and behavior during field experience.

The results of this research have led many researchers (Hoy & Rees 1977; Lacey, 1977; Salzillo & Van Fleet, 1977) to conclude that field experiences primarily socialize students into the traditional beliefs and practices of the school system. Progressive humanistic ideas of education learned in coursework are believed to be replaced by the custodial and conservative teaching practices found in the field (Salzillo and Van Fleet, 1977; Friedenberg, 1973; and Schoenrock, 1980). Not surprisingly, the process inhibits the development of innovative, reflective and competent teachers.

Judged by this research, there is little doubt that the impact of field experiences is negative and lacks educational value. A closer scrutiny of the research, however, leads one to caution about drawing firm conclusions from the studies. Many of the studies of changes in student attitudes relied entirely on pre-and post-test administration of questionnaires and

surveys for their data and therefore lack information about how the nature and quality of the experience influences and shapes attitudes. The primary measuring instrument designed to assess teacher attitude was the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory. While this data may be helpful in suggesting what attitudes and opinions students hold toward teaching, it does not illuminate how these attitudes develop or what processes occur during the field experience which may shape these attitudes.

It should also be noted that attitude changes does not necessarily lead to changes in behavior. Most comprehensive reviews conducted on the research literature on field based experiences (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Peck & Tucker, 1973) lament the lack of systematic study of the processes involved in field experiences and knowledge of what really happens to the students of education participating in these experiences. Without greater understanding of the relationships, interactions and behaviors involved in the field experience, the only conclusions which can be drawn is that they have both negative and positive consequences on the development of teachers.

Ethnographic Studies of Field Experiences

Recently a small number of studies (Gibson, 1976;

Tabachnick, 1980; Tabachnick et al, 1979-80; Evans, 1986) have attempted to explore the nature of field experiences using ethnographic methodologies. Unlike the attitudinal research previously discussed, the ethnographic studies have focused on the behaviors, perspectives and meanings students develop during their actual participation in a field experience. The results have been fairly consistently reported that students develop utilitarian perspectives on teaching during field experiences. Tabachnick et al, (1979-80) found that students engage in routine and mechanistic teaching and focus mainly on activities designed to keep children quiet or on task. In addition, students evaluated teaching techniques as good or bad solely on the basis of whether they 'worked', in the sense of solving the immediate problem at hand.

While these findings appear to support the view that field experiences merely socialize students into existing school practices, the researchers offer a different interpretation. Rather than attributing the cause of these utilitarian perspectives solely to the schools, the researchers suggested that courses, procedures and interactions occurring at the university

contributed to these perspectives as well. By examining the content of supervisory conferences and seminar discussions, it was found that the university also focused on the 'how to's' of teaching, as opposed to the underlying concepts and principles upon which teaching is based. Such findings suggest that field experience is embedded in a complex web of interactions, structures and relationships which act jointly to develop students' attitudes and behaviors.

Goodman (1985b) also used case studies to investigate the development of student teaching perspectives. He found that what students learned during field experience varied with the individual student, the cooperating teacher and ecology of the specific practicum site. A majority of the students did engage in routine, managerial teaching activities that involved little creativity, thoughtfulness or talent and expressed utilitarian perspectives on teaching. A significant minority of others, though, did not exhibit these tendencies. Some students showed creative and thoughtful teaching techniques demonstrating an integration of theory and practice. What appeared to stimulate thoughtful teaching was the support, guidance and

direction of the co-operating teacher, university supervisors and professors. Goodman points out that in most cases it was the student who initiated this help from the significant people involved. Goodman's findings appear to suggest that the value of field experiences lies in the quality of the experience provided and that it is the nature of the experience which determines what students learn from their field experience. What constitutes a beneficial or negative field experience appears to lie in the interactions, relationships and structures involved in the process.

Summary

In summary, the research on field experiences in teacher preparation programs suggests that students develop less favorable attitudes toward children and teaching and adopt utilitarian teaching practices and perspectives. Such attitudes and perspectives appear to contradict the expressed aims and purposes of the field experience articulated and valued by teacher educators. While some researchers have concluded that field experiences have little educational value and have a negative impact on teacher development, the research base upon which these conclusions are founded is limited in scope. To date, only a few studies focus on the

actual processes involved in the field experience and how attitudes and perspectives on teaching are developed during the experience.

Recently, ethnographic studies of field experiences indicate that students' perspectives on teaching are shaped and influenced by interactions with significant others involved in the process, especially co-operating teachers and university supervisors. The content of university seminars and discussion are also possible influences on the development of student perspectives, though not necessarily a progressive one. The use of ethnographic methodologies in these recent studies appears to be a useful approach for illuminating the processes which shape these perspectives. Pre- and post- test measures do not seem to address the complexity of the field experience process.

The existing research on field experiences has clear implications for teacher educators. The research seems to indicate that the expressed goals and aims of field experience programs are not resulting in their intended outcomes, and that those involved in teacher preparation programs need to determine what students actually do learn from their field experience. It is

only through research and evaluation of existing practices that educators will be able to determine what aspects of the field experience are constructive, and which are not.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Eighteen subjects were randomly selected from the Child Care Worker Training Program [CCWTP] 1986-1988 student enrollment at the University of Winnipeg. A forty-four question interview was developed, pre-tested and then administered to fifteen subjects using a tape recorder. Interviews were later transcribed into written form and results analyzed. The following chapter is a description of the CCWTP sample selection, measuring instrument, reliability and validity measures and the procedures used to conduct the study.

The Child Care Worker Training Program [CCWTP]

CCWTP is an eighteen month continuous program of professional studies leading to a level III Child Care Certificate with the Province of Manitoba (CCWTP, 1986). The program is designed to provide a comprehensive education in the early childhood field, one integrating theoretical coursework with practical training. Students progress through several six week blocks of academic coursework alternated with blocks of field experience. During field experience blocks, students work in day care centres, nursery schools and other child

care facilities located throughout the Winnipeg area. During these placements, students return to campus each week for academic instruction in two method courses and a group seminar meant to integrate theoretical background with practical training.

Sample Selection

The subjects for the study were selected from the twenty five students enrolled in the CCWTP at the University of Winnipeg during 1986-88. The students varied from 22 to 54 years old, with a median age of 25. Students were female, primarily white, and from middle class backgrounds. All students resided in the Winnipeg area, with the exception of one person who commuted from a rural community outside of Winnipeg. Eight students were parents raising children. All students attended school full time and progressed through the program at the same rate. All had met admission requirements for University entrance and had previous experience working with children.

In April 1988, prior to the last field experience block, 18 students were selected from among the students to participate in the study. Subjects were selected at random, using a table of random numbers, so as to create an unbiased and representative sample of the

student population.

Once selected, participation in the study was voluntary. As it turned out, 3 students were unavailable to complete the study due to moving out of the province and personal holidays. This reduced the sample size to 15. Due to technical problems with recording interviews, data on one subject was not obtained, resulting in a final sample size of 14 students.

Description of Measuring Instrument

One instrument was used to investigate the research questions, consisting of a forty-four question interview which was administered individually to subjects the month following completion of the last field experience.

An interview guide was constructed for the study, consisting of five sections, each addressing one of the five research questions (Appendix I). The questions in each section were constructed from informal discussions with students from a similar program operating at the University of Winnipeg.

Questions were designed to be general and open-ended in nature to allow subjects to respond as freely and elaborately as possible. Following the subject's

initial response, probes for clarification were used to obtain more specific and in-depth information. Questions were logically arranged to progress from requests for factual information to those of a more threatening and personal nature. The purpose of this sequencing was to establish initial rapport and trust with the interviewer.

Reliability and Validity of Measuring Instrument

The interview guide was pretested in a pilot study using 5 students from a similar training program at the University of Winnipeg (Appendix II). The purpose of the pretest was to address issues related to instrument validity and reliability. Responses to the questions were recorded and analyzed for instrument deficiencies such as unclear wording or phrasing, redundant questions, negative subject reactions, timing, quality of recording and potential problems in quantifying and analyzing the interview data. The purpose of these procedures was to identify any uncontrolled variables and reduce errors of measurement which would effect instrument reliability..

A copy of the interview guide was also given to 3 university supervisors working in the CCWTP for suggestions and feedback. The supervisors were asked to

examine the interview guide for wording and phrasing of questions and appraise how well the individual items addressed the specific research questions investigated in the study.

The purpose of these procedures was to provide information on the content validity of the interview in terms of how well the instrument (interview) appeared to measure the intended research questions. Due to their involvement in the field experience component of the CCWTP, comments and suggestions from the university supervisors were considered to be "expert judgement" of the content validity of the measuring instrument. Information obtained from all the pretest measures were analyzed and used to revise and refine the interview guide for the research study.

Procedures

One week prior to beginning the field experience block, the names of all students enrolled in the program was obtained, and each name was assigned a random number to determine selection in the study. Those chosen were sent a letter of introduction (Appendix III) outlining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Students were asked to attend a short information meeting to meet the researcher and ask questions

regarding their participation in the study. All students signed a letter of consent (Appendix IV) indicating their agreement to participate in the study.

Interviews were conducted by the researcher the month following the end of the field experience (June, July 1988). Each interview was approximately 1-1½ hours in length. Prior to each interview the researcher talked informally with the student to establish comfort and rapport. Purposes, format and procedures of the interview were explained, and an opportunity was provided to ask questions about the study. All interviews were recorded using a tape recorder, and later transcribed into a written form (Appendix V). Following the completion of all interviews each student was sent a letter thanking her for her participation in the study (Appendix VI).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The following chapter indicates the results of the interview data obtained from fourteen interviews. As mentioned in chapter II, the interview guide consisted of five sections, each addressing one of the research questions investigated in the study. The results of each section are presented by section with each one headed by the research question it addresses. The questions in each section are presented by number and question as indicated in the interview guide (Appendix I). The results presented for each question represent an analysis of the fourteen subject responses to the question. The analysis of each question is followed by representative quotes selected from the interview data to convey the overall tone and flavor of the responses. These statements have been referenced by subject number and the page they are located in the original subject's transcript. A summary of the results for each section is presented at the end of each section.

The results of the interview data were analyzed in the following way. Subject responses to each question

were first organized together into one transcript. This reorganization of data resulted in a transcript which allowed individual responses as well as the range of responses to be analyzed for each question. A chart was made for each question where the key points and phrases of each response were recorded and identified by subject number. Once recorded on the chart responses were analyzed for 'categories' or patterns and themes in ideas. This was done by examining the range of responses and the frequency in which an idea or comment was expressed. Both statistical figures and general terms such as "many" "most" and "some" were used to denote the frequency or strength in which a particular idea or theme occurred. As a guideline the term "most" was used to refer to more than 55% of the total responses, "many" refers to any number between 40% and 55%, and "some" to any number between 2% and 40%.

The first person statements which follow the analysis of each question were selected to represent the interview data from which the theme or category was determined.

SECTION I

NATURE OF STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE FIELD
EXPERIENCEQuestion 1

Could you please describe the centre you were placed in during your last field experience block?

Students described their field placements in terms of at least three of the following characteristics:

- 1) Number and ages of the children served (i.e. infants, preschoolers, school age).

"It was sort of 3 levels of daycare, it had an infant centre, preschool centre and school age centre and I was in the infant centre. There were eight children". (Subject 1, page 1).

"It was a school age centre I was in. There were twenty-four children in our section". (Subject 5, page 1).

"It was at an infant centre for children aged 4 months to 24 months". (Subject 6, page 1).

"It was a pre-school centre where there were children ages 2-6". (Subject 7, page 1).

"I dealt with all kinds of age groups but basically 4-10 year olds". (Subject 11, page 1).

"The age range of children was from 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ months to 16 years old". (Subject 12, page 1).

- 2) Characteristics of the children (i.e. special needs, mixed ethnic background, emotional problems).

"It was close to the university. A mixture of multi-cultural children, Canadian children, Native children, Vietnamese, that kind of thing". (Subject 4, page 1).

"All of the children had some kind of disability. We had some spina bifida, some cerebral palsy, alcohol syndrome...". (Subject 9, page 1).

"The children I worked with, most of them were terminally or chronically ill". (Subject 12, page 1).

"There were a lot of emotional problems amongst the children. Most of the families were single families.... most unemployed". (Subject 15, page 1).

- 3) Setting or location of the centre (i.e. house, community club, core area, worksite, hospital, museum).

"The centre I was placed in was a core area centre". (Subject 4, page 1).

"It was a worksite day care in a hospital setting, in a medical setting". (Subject 6, page 1).

"It reminded me very much of a regular school setting". (Subject 9, page 1).

"I was at the Children's Museum". (Subject 11, page 1).

"The centre I was in the last placement was a vocational centre. It's in the basement of a community club". (Subject 12, page 1).

- 4) Centre's program or philosophy

"The program was designed like a lot of school age programs are with a lot of options. The children had lots of choices....It was a very unstructured centre". (Subject 5, page 1).

"....the centre worked as quite an integrated centre. They didn't segregate their special needs...They tried to integrate the children". (Subject 7, page 1).

"....theirs was more like a treatment centre....". (Subject 9, page 1).

"I found there was too much teacher directed activities. It was like they were product oriented....". (Subject 13, page 1).

"Our program is called a family centre. It is an off-shoot of a day care but it also incorporates other programs for Moms". (Subject 15, page 1).

5) Centre's daily schedule

"They didn't really have a schedule because they went by the infant's own scheduling. They only did one activity a day". (Subject 8, page 1).

"...we would do orientations and tell them what was in the museum and what they would be seeing". (Subject 11, page 1).

"The children come to the centre for a maximum of 8 hours a week....We have different ones in the morning as opposed to the afternoon but every day there's a different age group any way". (Subject 15, page 1).

6) Number, qualifications and attitudes of staff

"There were two workers I worked with on a regular basis, one came in the morning and was gone by 3 pm and the other stayed until the end of the day". (Subject 5, page 1).

"There were five or six regular staff and three special needs workers, fulltime special needs workers to work with the children". (Subject 7, page 1).

"The rest of the staff, I guess the other thing I find very surprising in child care, is the fact that special needs workers have the least training of anybody and that was the case there too". (Subject 1, page 1).

"Staff wise I was really surprised. They were level I. Like I don't think that was too professional. They

didn't have any training". (Subject 14, page 1).

"It was the one place where I experienced a lot of bad feelings from the staff. There was a lot of dissension going on amongst the staff". (Subject 3, page 1).

"I found the staff very friendly, very helpful, very caring, very energetic". (Subject 4, page 1).

Overall, student placements were diverse with few commonalities among them. Each placement seemed to be unique in terms of it's particular setting, children, program and staff.

Question 2

What were you hoping to accomplish during your placement at this centre?

In general, students viewed their last field experience placement as an opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills about working with young children or to further build and develop the knowledge and skills they had previously acquired. Nine out of fourteen students wanted to 1) acquire or further develop practical work experience with a particular age group or type of child (i.e. special needs, school age), or 2) acquire a specific child care skill. (i.e. administration, guiding children's behavior).

"Just to see if I could work with school age kids.I had never really worked with that age group before". (Subject 3, page 1).

"What I wanted to do was have exposure to the various

children classified as special needs. I didn't feel equipped to work with children with their various specialized needs". (Subject 7, page 1).

"Definitely to be exposed to a variety of disabilities that I could feel more comfortable with". (Subject 9, page 2).

"Well, I wanted to get more experience with school age. I wanted to see something different". (Subject 11, page 1).

"New techniques to work with children and guiding. With proper techniques in guiding you can prevent a lot of problems". (Subject 13, page 1).

"My aim....was to tackle the administrative side of day care. I wanted to find out how the actual wheels of the day care administration turned". (Subject 15, page 2).

Three students identified a more general goal of wanting to integrate theory with practice. Having completed an academic block they now wanted to apply what they had learned to their work with children.

"Well, in our theory part of our specialization we had talked a lot about a particular philosophy so I wanted to try that out". (Subject 2, page 1).

"I learned so much in the academic part of the course I wanted these things to sort of fall into place, so they made sense to me, so they were relevant to what I was doing....and really be able to apply what I was learning". (Subject 5, page 1).

Only two students described goals which were not related to the acquisition of knowledge or skill as a child care professional. Basically these students wanted to simply complete the last field experience block and/or do well in their evaluations.

"I was hoping to accomplish getting an honours for my final placement...a good evaluation from my supervisor, and getting all my assignments done". (Subject 8, page 1).

"My initial goal I guess, was to finish off my last six week placement and just finish the course...". (Subject 12, page 1).

Question 3

Could you please explain what you feel your role was at this centre?

Responses to this question fell into two distinct categories. Students described their role in the field placement as that of a student (7) or staff member (6). In the student role students viewed themselves as helpers or assistants to staff. They had less autonomy and responsibilities than staff and did not feel they were full contributing members of the child care team.

"More like a guest or visitor...I had to practically beg for a time allotment to do an activity". (Subject 1, page 3).

"It works out that you never really have the kind of responsibility that you actually do as a staff...just trying to help out as much as I can". (Subject 2, page 1).

"My role was to help out with the staff where I could". (Subject 4, page 1).

"They didn't have very many expectations of me and I took the initiative in trying to do things. I was asked not to...that everything had to be okayed through them". (Subject 9, page 2).

Five of the seven students who described their role as a student found it unsatisfactory and limited. The major reasons given were lack of autonomy and responsibility. Specifically students commented about not being left alone with children and not having access to confidential information regarding family background or medical history. It should be noted that presence of a staff member is required at all times by law in Manitoba.

"I had to practically beg for a time allotment to do an activity". (Subject 1, page 3).

"I probably went with the idea that I'm a student, always checking with everybody about is this OK to do. (Subject 7, page 1).

"The only thing I wished was that I could have more responsibility in like...If I felt like going to the store I could take some kids with me, but I couldn't because of the contract". (Subject 14, page 1).

"The staff people knew all the medical history of each patient and I didn't because I wasn't able to get access to the charts because of the confidentiality". (Subject 12, page 2).

In contrast, students who characterized their role as that of staff member saw themselves as having the same autonomy and responsibilities as others. They felt they were contributing members of the child care team and were included in the full operation of the centre. Students clearly saw this as being preferable

to the student role, having previously experienced the student role in other placements.

"I think that as much as I could I was number 5 staff person and I had responsibilities and I had a role and I had a place". (Subject 6, page 2).

"They gave me absolute free reign which not all centres do". (Subject 5, page 2).

"They certainly accepted me as a member of the team and I was involved with their planning and programming". (Subject 7, page 2).

"They gave me the role of a staff person...so I really felt I wasn't just an observer. They gave me an active role". (Subject 8, page 1).

"They accepted me as a staff and to me that really felt good because all the other places and blocks they used me for menial tasks all the time". (Subject 14, page 1).

Questions 4 and 5

To give me an idea of your involvement and participation at the centre would you please describe some of the activities and things that you did while you were there? How did you spend your time? (Question 4)

Could you describe for me what a typical day was like for you at this centre? (Question 5)

Overall, students participated in a wide range of activities during their field placements. Students described the nature of their participation in terms of group and individual activities, daily routines, planning and specific activities related to a particular curriculum area (science, art, music etc). The type

and scope of activities reflected the particular age group of children attending the centre. Students both planned and implemented activities on their own as well as assisted staff in carrying out their tasks. While the range and type of activities the students participated in were diverse there was a common base or principle which guided students in their involvement and participation in the centre. Regardless of the age or type of child students attempted to provide experiences which met the particular developmental needs and interest of the children in that setting. Students were attempting to put theory into practice.

"I found out what their interests were and implemented a lot of things they were interested in". (Subject 3, page 3).

"From a caregiver's point of view it had all of these wonderful skills related to it...". (Subject 6, page 3).

"I did all kinds of nature activities with the kids.... I was developing another area for the children....I predominantly did an area where they were deficient". (Subject 5, page 2).

Students described a typical day in terms of daily routine at their centre. Many students stated that there was no typical day as their activities varied according to the routine or shift. In general students found their days busy and fast paced and often felt tired at the end of the day.

Question 6

I'd also like to know about your involvement with the staff and your onsite supervisor. For example, what kinds of things did you do and talk about with the staff and onsite supervisor?

More than half of the students (9) indicated that the staff person with whom they primarily interacted with in the centre was the onsite supervisor. The timing and frequency of these interactions varied among students. Some students met with the onsite supervisor at a specified time each week while others interacted on a more ongoing sporadic "as things came up" basis throughout the day or week. The nature of these interactions focused on 3 main topics 1) discussion and feedback on how the student was doing in regards to her work at the centre 2) discussion about what activities the student would do at the centre and it's scheduling and 3) discussion of specific concerns, observations the student had about the centre or children and how to handle them.

"Mainly, just what I was doing with the kids and discuss my program". (Subject 3, page 3).

"My onsite and I usually met Monday morning...and I would tell her what I wanted to do during the week". (Subject 6, page 4).

"I did discuss things like the concerns I had or things I observed in the centre...We would talk about the things I was doing, my planning". (Subject 7, page 4).

"I mainly asked a lot of questions I wanted to know about the disability, whether that was characteristic". (Subject 9, page 6).

"I asked her if I was treating activities appropriately for the children". (Subject 9, page 7).

"Mostly guiding because this centre had a lot of discipline problems". (Subject 1, page 5).

Interactions and involvement with other staff members appeared to be of a similar nature to that which occurred with the onsite supervisor but was less frequent. Students would ask for input into their work at the centre and discuss specific children with individual staff members. One type of involvement students had with staff on a collective basis was during staff or planning meetings. This seemed to provide the student with an overall picture of the operation of the centre.

Question 7

How about your university supervisor? What kind of contact and involvement did you have with her? What kinds of things did you talk about?

The primary contact students had with the university supervisor occurred at the student's placement centre. Students met with their university supervisor twice during the 6 week field experience. Two students ind-

icated they had additional contact with the university supervisor through phone calls or meetings at her office at the university.

Like the onsite supervisor, the nature of the interaction between the student and the university supervisor was focused primarily on observation, discussion and feedback of the student's work in the centre.

Typically the university supervisor would observe the student implementing an activity and then later discuss her observations with the student.

"They would mostly observe, like I said, the activity you had planned and after they would sit down and talk to you about it". (Subject 1, page 5).

"She came out and observed me the first week I was there for about two hours. ...she did a real thorough observation and she just gave me a few suggestions and ways I could improve". (Subject 8, page 2).

"She came and observed me for an hour and then we went to talk about it....". (Subject 6, page 4 and 5).

The second type of interaction that seemed to occur between the university supervisor and the student was discussion about the thoughts feelings and concerns students were experiencing at the centre. This type of interaction was much more personal than the first type mentioned and arose out of the daily journal students kept about their activities and work at the centre.

"....There was a lot of tension going on. I wrote it down rather than just to be able to cope with it and tried to figure out what's happening. I got a lot of feedback from her on my journals. She would read the journal and then talk about them". (Subject 3, page 4).

"We had a journal....and we would write up our day, how we were feeling and what we were doing and so on. I wrote a lot into the journal, how things were coming together for me and so on. We talked about a lot of things....how I was feeling and so on. She was very open and I felt very comfortable with her". (Subject 5, page 5).

"She spent the last week, a good deal of time actually, running through feelings because I was concerned about what was going to happen....". (Subject 9, page 8).

Question 8

Part of your field experience included coming back to the university for classes in Guiding Children's Behavior, activity planning and a group seminar. I'd be interested in knowing what kinds of things you were expected to do in these courses.

Students described the various assignments they were required to complete in the different courses. Overall, these assignments were practical in nature and required the student to implement, report, or discuss some aspect of their work with the children in their field placement centre.

"Quite a few assignments that we had to do were practical assignments with the children and write reports up on". (Subject 3, page 4).

"We had to keep a journal on just guiding behavior and for activity planning, we had to write up six activities,

fairly freely, just how they went, why you did them, what the different age groups were, and how they reacted to them....". (Subject 6, page 5).

"In guiding we normally talked about things, scenarios, things that might happen in the centre; we would talk about different ways of handling things". (Subject 7, page 5).

"....activity planning was not bad because we were able to discuss the activities that we did that week". (Subject 8, page 3).

"We had to plan our activities and present it to the class...it was like workshops almost, where we would do them and try them out". (Subject 14, page 2).

A number of students (5), when describing the course expectations commented on the work load involved in the courses. Two students felt that the work load was light while three students described the work load as heavy and difficult. Students who described the work load as heavy and difficult attributed this to being "burnt out", too hectic a pace, or an intrusion on their work responsibilities at the centre. Although these students found the work load demanding they also felt that the assignments were useful and relevant to their work at the field placement centre.

"One of the things I found difficult was doing the assignments during the time that we were doing practicum because practicum itself involved a lot of work... Although at the time they seemed like an intrusion on the practicum a lot of them were very useful and very relevant to what you were doing". (Subject 5, page 5).

"....I found it was a very heavy load. There were just too many little assignments and too much running around.there were a lot of assignments...but it was really good because we actually did things instead of just talking about them". (Subject 11, page 3).

Question 9

In your view, what purpose did these courses serve in your field experience?

Responses to this question fell into two categories. Half (7) of the students indicated that the courses were useful and relevant to their work in the field. The remaining students (5) indicated that the courses were not adequate in meeting their needs, or had mixed feelings about their usefulness.

Overall, students in the first category described the courses as being useful in helping integrate theory with practice. Course assignments implemented in the field required students to think about and apply theory to their field work. For some students class sessions were helpful because they provided an opportunity to discuss and obtain feedback on a specific problem or incident they were encountering in the field. Other students felt that class discussions were useful in exposing them to new ideas and methods for working with children. While some of the issues and problems discussed did not relate specifically to their present field

placement, hearing about these concerns was seen as useful to their future work with children.

"I guess they give you a practical exposure to some of the theoretical stuff, being able to apply some of the principles you learned". (Subject 7, page 6).

"I found that often after it was complete (an assignment) I felt very good because it made me think about something and do observations. Sometimes out in the centres you sort of lose bits and pieces of it and this kind of brings it back". (Subject 5, page 5).

"For guiding it was helpful because maybe I didn't have those problems in my centre but now I have a better idea of how to handle it if it does happen in the future". (Subject 14, page 3).

"It's nice to actually have actual problems and then come back to class and say 'I know what we have been talking about' but how does this fit into it". (Subject 2, page 3).

"....it was good having us do some experiential things... it helped us think about what we would do when presenting activities to children with different disabilities and what might help them, how they might adapt it". (Subject 9, page 8).

Many of the students in the second category described the courses as "busy work" "filling in time" or "make work projects". These students were expecting more from the courses than they received. The responses as to why the courses were not adequate in meeting the students' needs varied. Some felt that courses lacked depth in terms of coverage. What was learned simply wasn't enough. They wanted more specific information. Whereas students in the first category viewed class

sessions as helpful in discussing specific problems and concerns they were encountering in the field students in the second category did not find these sessions helpful for this purpose. Class discussions were described as arguing or "bitching" sessions and offered little in terms of answers to specific problems.

"I found we didn't learn enough at the beginning to help us too much. Near the end we finally hit on how... what to do with these kids and we were finished". (Subject 13, page 3).

"I was expecting more than I got. The specialized development course for one. I was expecting a lot more development ideas whereas what we basically focused on was language". (Subject 4, page 3).

"Basically they reiterated everything we had done previously. It was almost like some of the courses were fillers because we had to have so many hours before we can have our III (CCWIII)". (Subject 15, page 4).

"I found it really hard to get info on specific things and to bring up something that created controversy... very often I would leave the class very angry because we didn't get enough answers". (Subject 3, page 4).

"We didn't have to spend basically an entire day every Tuesday for six weeks sitting around arguing with people which was a lot of it". (Subject 6, page 5).

"...seminar I didn't find helpful at all. It turned into a bitching session". (Subject 12, page 4).

Question 10

Overall, could you describe what the past 6 weeks of field experience has been like for you?

Overwhelmingly, students described their field experience as a positive and valuable learning exper-

ience. Only 1 student described the experience as unsatisfactory. Students reported their experience as being "great", "very very positive", "good", "the best", "really valuable". Although it was expressed in a variety of ways, overall, students described their field experience as a meaningful one where they or others recognized some aspect of their growth, skills, knowledge and abilities as a child care worker. Students talked about their experience as a time when things came together and they became confident in their abilities. Situations which were previously uncomfortable and difficult for the student were now viewed as being handled in a knowledgeable and competent manner. They felt good about the work that they did in the centre. A sense of accomplishment was derived from being able to effectively put their ideas and knowledge into practice. This was particularly true when staff members recognized their work as being worthwhile by commenting positively or giving the student increased autonomy or responsibilities.

"It was probably the best six weeks of my whole eighteen months as far as feeling that I did something...I thought it was really valuable". (Subject 3, page 5).

"I think the things that I really hoped would happen, happened for me...there were situations in guiding and so on, where I really felt uncomfortable before...but these things just fell into place". (Subject 5, page 5).

"It was just one of those six weeks where you think, wow, now I can go out and be a child care worker and not think twice about it and I'm not really afraid or nervous or unsure of myself". (Subject 6, page 6).

"I was able to give a lot of quality, one on one interaction with children". (Subject 8, page 3).

"As a person and team member it helped me to sort of sum up what I have learned in the course and it helped me to recognize where I have come". (Subject 9, page 9).

"It was the best time ever during the course. I think it was because there was more responsibility for us and I felt freer because the staff accepted me...". (Subject 14, page 3).

SUMMARY

Overall, students carried out their field experience in a variety of settings and programs, working with diverse ages, numbers and types of children. This included infants, pre-schoolers and school age children as well as children with special needs, mixed ethnic backgrounds and emotional problems. The child care centres were located in the core area of the city, community clubs, houses, worksites, hospitals and a museum throughout the Winnipeg area.

Students viewed their field experience placements as an opportunity to either acquire new skills and knowledge about working with young children or further develop their existing knowledge and skills. This included such things as learning about a particular age group or type of child, acquiring a specific child care

skill such as guiding and integrating theory with practice.

Students characterized their role at the placement centre as either that of a student or staff member, and clearly preferred the latter. In comparison to the student role, the role of staff member was viewed as having more autonomy and responsibility. Students considered themselves to be contributing members of the child care team and fully included in the operation of the centre.

During their field experience students participated in a wide range of activities. Students participated in the carrying out of the daily routines of the centre and planned and implemented activities related to the various curriculum areas, with small and large groups of children. While the type and scope of activities varied according to the particular centre and children served, all students attempted to structure their involvement and participation around meeting the particular developmental needs and interests of the children in that setting.

The interaction which occurred between both the university and onsite supervisors and the student appeared to focus primarily on discussion and feedback of the student's work in the centre. In addition to this

type of discussion, interaction between the university supervisor and student also included discussion about the student's thoughts, feelings and concerns regarding the centre and her role as a student. This type of interaction appeared to be more personal in nature.

Overall, course assignments were practical in nature and required the student to implement or discuss some aspect of their work with children in their field placement centre. Students had mixed views about what purpose these courses served in **their** field experiences. Students described their academic courses as either useful and relevant to their work in the field or irrelevant and inadequate in meeting their needs.

When asked to describe overall what the field experience had been like for them, students were extremely positive. Students viewed the experience as a valuable and meaningful one where growth, skills and knowledge were gained and recognized in some way. There was a prevailing sense of accomplishment and confidence about the experience.

SECTION II

WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED DURING FIELD EXPERIENCE

Question 1

Could you please describe how you think you've benefited as a result of your participation in this field experience?

Responses to this question were varied. A number of students (4) commented that the field experience helped them to gain confidence in their opinions and abilities as child care workers. There was a personal recognition that they had something of value to offer.

The integration of theory and practice was also identified by students as a benefit gained from the field experience. These students stressed the importance of understanding why they were doing the things that they were doing with children. Theory or experience alone wasn't enough. The two must work together.

Self evaluation was also highlighted by students as an important benefit derived from the field experience. For these students learning to evaluate their own work was seen as a tool which they could take into the field which would help them grow and improve as child care workers. Like the above students, self evaluation helped these students understand the "how and whys" behind their work with children. The remaining students described the benefits of the field experience

in terms of gaining specific knowledge about a particular age group of children, type of children or community. It appeared that the characteristics of the placement setting (i.e. school age, hospital) were unique in some way that they provided the students a different kind of learning experience from that of a more conventional child care setting.

"Probably one of the things I got out of it was that it gave me some self confidence. I guess because people were willing to listen to me and talk to me. I felt that....I really do have something to offer". (Subject 7, page 7).

"Generally you couldn't be a child care worker without doing the field work. It would be like being a doctor and never operating...The point was that it all came together". (Subject 6, page 7).

"I had worked with some school age children before but I was lacking the theory and the knowledge, so I find like a lot of things I was told to do I was understanding why I'm doing things now". (Subject 9, page 10).

"It's very very important (self evaluation) because it's something you're going to carry out of the field with you and you're going to be able to improve yourself if you can self evaluate". (Subject 5, page 7).

"I know what a school age worker has to go through now. I know now that there's a big difference from pre-school to school age". (Subject 14, page 4).

"I learned a lot about different types of illnesses where I wouldn't have been able to do that in the classroom setting". (Subject 12, page 6).

"I benefitted in the community networking liaison aspect and got to know the community really well". (Subject 15, page 6).

Question 2

Could you please describe what you feel you learned about working with young children? About children in general? About the field of child care?

In general, students indicated that their knowledge about children, working with children, and the field of child care had been broadened or changed in some way by their experiences in the field. Two themes appeared to emerge about what students learned about working with children.

The first theme focused on the demanding nature of the work in terms of physical and mental energy. Some students who had previously perceived working with children as "baby sitting" now viewed the two as separate and distinct forms of care. In contrast to babysitting, child care or working with children was viewed as very demanding and responsible work. The work of the child care professional was seen as having an important and lasting impact on the lives of children.

The second theme which appeared to emerge regarding what students learned about working with children was the uniqueness of children in terms of their individual needs and developmental levels. From this realization came the understanding that one has to get to

know children and use a variety of guidance and teaching techniques. There are no blanket solutions to problems.

The theme that working with children is physically and mentally demanding in nature was further developed in student responses to what they had learned about the field of child care. Students viewed the field of child care as a developing profession requiring trained workers. Unfortunately though students also learned that the status and economic rewards usually given to the professions in general was limited in child care.

"...it takes an awful lot of energy, mental and physical. (there) is a lot of misunderstanding of what you're actually doing with the kids. A lot of people that I've talked to that know I'm in the program want to know, what are you doing that for? - anybody can babysit. I don't feel that's true. Anybody can baby sit but this is definitely not babysitting". (Subject 3, page 6).

"Well, when I first started out, like, I thought oh, it's babysitting, you know but it's not...There's a lot that goes into it". (Subject 14, page 4).

"Children are all individuals. There's no blanket solution to anything...you're a very important part of that child's life so what you do when that child spends time with you is very important and you can't just take it lightly, saying it's a job. You have a very definite impact on the children's lives so you have to take it very seriously what you're doing". (Subject 5, page 8).

"I guess I find that each time you go to a centre, the children are different. I need to observe and be with children for a few days to see what they like, what are their interests, where are they, what they are accustomed

to, then kind of build on that". (Subject 7, page 7).

"I don't think it's recognized as it should be economically and the workers who are in it". (Subject 15, page 6).

"I think that child care is a profession...I'm a professional and I have rights and responsibilities and I should be paid accordingly and respected accordingly". (Subject 6, page 8).

Question 3

What techniques of working with young children did you observe during this field placement? What techniques did you use during this field placement?

Students reported observing a variety of guidance techniques in their field placements. When discussing their observations students clearly distinguished between what they considered appropriate and inappropriate methods of guiding children's behavior. Techniques such as patience and respect, giving choices, redirection, logical consequences and reflective listening were observed and evaluated as effective and appropriate methods of guiding. In contrast, observed techniques such as yelling, ordering, using quiet, physical force were judged as ineffective and inappropriate for guiding children.

Not surprising, students attempted to use guiding techniques which they considered to be positive, and appropriate for the children they were working with.

Students focused on giving choices, preventing misbehavior before it occurs, positive directions, redirection, reflective listening and reasoning and explanation. It was clear from the responses that students were aware of why they used particular methods and were integrating theory into their practice. Their rationale for using and evaluating techniques were based on concepts and principles of psychological and educational theory.

"I was trying to use a lot of reflective listening... From the philosophy that I took from the theory part of our class, I was really trying to get more involvement of the children so I was trying to cut down on direction because with infants and toddlers it's very easy to spend the whole day just directing people around". (Subject 2, page 4).

"I like to try and give them choices. I try not to guilt them into things because it's a meaningless concept to children...Babies don't do things to irritate you. They're telling you something if they are biting you". (Subject 6, page 8).

"I didn't bombard the babies with myself. For the first few days I sat back and let them come to me. They're at an age where they have stranger anxiety a lot of them". (Subject 8, page 6).

"I really went towards talking to the children and explaining to them why we don't do things. Like telling them that's not allowed because of rules, they just sort of look at you. If you tell them why it's not allowed they seem to understand". (Subject 13, page 4).

"I'd let them be there by themselves for a while and let them think about what they'd done and then maybe come back and ask them, you know, how do you feel...and that

kind of worked because it got them to think about what they had done". (Subject 14, page 5).

Question 4

Could you please describe one or two experiences you had during this field experience which were most rewarding to you?

The kinds of situations and experiences students described as being rewarding focused on two main themes. Students talked about experiences where they had either established a relationship with a particular child or used a particular technique or teaching method effectively. Overall, these were situations in which students felt they had made a difference in some way through their actions. Many of these experiences were situations where students had implemented a plan of action which had resulted in the intended outcome. Students could "see" a direct relationship between process and outcome.

"It involved doing that reflective listening....sometimes you sort of feel like yah, this sounds like a good idea, but is this going to work? -- is this going to have any outcome? I think it was about three or four weeks into it, you know I really didn't feel like anything was being accomplished in the children really understanding what I was trying to get at, but anyway, when I did this with one child...I think it was about the fourth week, he'd have a conflict over a toy and we'd do this reflective thing and then about two minutes later he would give it to the other child and I wasn't saying "Give it to him", rather "He really would like to have

that", and he sort of went away for two minutes and thought about it and then he gave it to the other child. It was fantastic." (Subject 2, page 5).

"When I was working with infants...they have anxieties about new people but some have more than others, and one child it just took a long time for her to get to know me but when she got to know me she was so friendly and outgoing and she really trusted me and that was nice to have her trust after realizing that you don't just get that at the drop of a hat". (Subject 2, page 5).

Question 5

What were some of the things that you learned during this field experience that surprised you?

Only one half (8) of the students indicated that they had been surprised about some aspect of their learning. Out of this group the majority of students (5) reported being surprised to learn that they had some skill or quality which they had not recognized previously. Other students were surprised to learn about some aspect of the child care system or centre operation.

"My tolerance for children who in the past I considered "I want to keep my distance"...I do have patience for that now that I didn't think I had before". (Subject 1, page 10 & 11).

"Being patient was really relevant...I know that I can be patient with my own children but I was not sure that I could do it with other people's children, especially that many children". (Subject 5, page 9).

"That I had the guts to work in a setting like that where you could see kids' stomachs and wearing plastic

bags and that I was able to handle calmly the situation where an IV needed resetting and doing suctioning... I didn't think I had the stomach for it, not at all". (Subject 12, page 7).

Question 6

How was this field experience different from your previous field experiences?

Most students described this field experience as being different from others because of some particular characteristic of the placement such as it's setting (i.e. hospital, museum), the type of children served (i.e. core area, critically ill), the age of the children (school age, infant), staff, or structure of the program. A number of these students (5) reported that it was the age group of children that they worked with which made the field experience unique. Most commented on how working with an older or younger age group required them to develop and use different skills and teaching methods.

Whereas the majority of students saw the field experience as different because of some particular characteristic of the placement, there was a small number of students (3) who identified the field experience as different because of a change in themselves. These students talked about feeling more confident about themselves and performing their work in more knowledgeable ways.

"The age of these children was different. Dealing with school age children was much different than dealing with preschoolers. I felt more comfortable with a non-structured situation". (Subject 5, page 10).

"It's a totally different age group....I had to start all over learning new techniques with the school age". (Subject 14, page 6).

"I would say the two of them were different in that they were core area and that they were children who really needed socialization and a lot of other things besides. The other areas I was in were just your average children and I don't think that they needed any of the extras. I guess all children need the extras but they were getting them". (Subject 1, page 11).

"In this one, I felt like I was able to use everything that I had learned over the last seventeen months and I put it all into one centre". (Subject 4, page 5).

"I really felt like I did know what I was doing". (Subject 6, page 9).

Question 7

How has this field experience changed your views on working with young children?

Just over one half (8) of the students indicated that the field experience had helped them make a decision about what age group, type of child or type of program they would like to work with in the future. For other students the field experience was described as confirming or reinforcing their views on working with young children rather than changing their views.

"I think more it made my decision as to what group of young children I would like to work with. It helped make a decision as to which age group you feel the most

comfortable with and which type of programming you feel the most comfortable with and which will work the best". (Subject 5, page 10).

"I know I feel better about working with infants specifically. I know that I really want to do that and that was kind of a question mark going into it". (Subject 6, page 9).

"I think it's helped me to accept the special needs child and feel very comfortable with that. I know I could work with special needs children". (Subject 9, page 12).

"I don't think it's changed my views. I'm even more convinced that people need to be educated as far as child development is concerned". (Subject 3, page 8).

"It never really changed my views...it just made me want to be with the children more, especially the young children". (Subject 13, page 5).

Question 8

I'm wondering if there is anything you expected to learn but didn't?

Nearly one half (6) of the students could not identify anything they had expected to learn but didn't, suggesting that whatever expectations they held had been met. Three (3) students expressed a desire to learn more about administration and management of child care centres, an area not included in the program curriculum. Other responses varied. Students indicated they wanted more specialized and in-depth knowledge about the families of the children in their care, working with a particular age group and how to adapt

equipment for disabled children.

Overall, it was unclear from the responses whether students were simply identifying a desire or need for more knowledge in these areas, or whether their expectations for this particular knowledge had not been met.

"The only thing I can think of is that I would have liked to learn more of the director's job...I feel I'd had a lot of exposure to practicum and the basics of working on the floor and now I'd like to see what's behind that". (Subject 1, page 11).

"Yes, I expected to learn more about the overall running of the centre". (Subject 15, page 7).

"One is the relationship of the children to their family. You have to deal with those parents, that's the only way to do it, but I've always felt that every block, I felt there's a piece missing". (Subject 6, page 10).

"I think I expected to go and have more opportunity working with equipment that was adapted or seeing more of that than I did". (Subject 9, page 13).

Question 9

If you had to go through this whole experience again what would you do differently?

No clear theme or pattern could be identified from the responses given to this question. Students talked about 1) the operation or structure of the training program (more spaced out, better organized) 2) establishing better relationships with centre staff or program administrators 3) being more assertive about getting needs met 4) being more involved in their work and

trying more things out 5) doing more or less pre-planning. Whereas one student indicated she, in retrospect, would not have taken the training program, two students were happy with their experience and could not identify anything they would change or do differently.

"For a long term course like that you need (the administration) to be more organized because when you're not organized the students aren't". (Subject 12, page 8).

"I wouldn't take eighteen months straight. I think a person needs a break. It's just too much work with never having a break". (Subject 7, page 9).

"I think I would attempt to get to know one person really well in the administration of the program so that when things got a little hairy I would have someone to go to...and could really offer me some solid advice". (Subject 15, page 8).

"You could be more aggressive about saying "This is where I want to go, this is the type of centre I want to have". (Subject 2, page 6).

"I'd probably try some things I hadn't". (Subject 6, page 10).

"I wouldn't do it if I knew what was involved. Not with two little children and a husband who is also in school. So I'm glad I didn't know". (Subject 3, page 8).

"I don't think there's anything I would do differently... I don't have any regrets about anything". (Subject 8, page 7).

Question 10

In what areas of working with young children do you feel most competent as a child care worker?

Although individual response varied the majority of students (8) described feeling most competent about their ability to communicate, understand, and form relationships with children. Students talked about being able to communicate at a child's level, develop language and problem solving skills and sensitivity to children's needs.

The remaining responses could be grouped into 2 categories. These students felt competent in the area of guiding and disciplining children (2) and their ability to be flexible and creative in implementing activities.

"Talking, communicating, understanding. I guess most of the time, presenting things at their level that will encourage them, challenge them". (Subject 2, page 6).

"I'm very strong in the area of developing children's language and problem solving...". (Subject 5, page 11).

"I can communicate with kids. I probably communicate, that's one of the things I do best. I can talk to kids, I can get them to expand on using their language". (Subject 7, page 9).

"...I'm really good at doing spur of the moment things, when things are falling apart. ...a lot of impromptu stuff". (Subject 3, page 8).

"I have fun with them and so I do think I'm creative enough, imaginative enough, to present things to them to make them interesting...". (Subject 9, page 13).

Question 11

Overall, how would you rate this field experience in contributing to your ability to work with young children? 1) extremely helpful 2) helpful 3) somewhat helpful 4) not helpful? Could you please elaborate on that?

Overall, students rated the field experience as being extremely helpful (9) or helpful (3) in contributing to their ability to work with young children. Although responses varied greatly as to why students felt this way it appeared that the experience had been one which provided them with a new opportunity to learn something new or different about themselves or working with children.

"I would probably say it was extremely helpful. Mainly because I was forced to do things on my own because there was nothing else there". (Subject 3, page 8).

"Because I found out that my strengths were in developing activities more for physically disabled children". (Subject 4, page 5).

"I think it was very helpful because of the people I was working with. I had good role models to observe. Because they allowed me the freedom to try my skills...". (Subject 5, page 12).

"...I felt most confident and comfortable in the infant centre so I guess this place has helped me realize that that's where I best work or fit in". (Subject 8, page 8).

"Extremely helpful. ...The age difference brought a big awareness...there's a totally different thought process...it was totally different so it really helped me a lot". (Subject 14, page 6 & 7).

"It was helpful from the point of view that you had extremely close contact with the infants...which hadn't been apparent in any other field block. So there were areas we hadn't touched which came to light during the last field experience". (Subject 15, page 8).

SUMMARY

Overall, the major benefits students gained from the field experience were increased confidence in their beliefs and abilities as child care workers, integration of theory and practice and learning how to evaluate one's own work. Understanding the "hows" and "whys" of their work was stressed as important knowledge.

Understanding that working with children was demanding and responsible and that children were unique in terms of their needs and development were two important realizations students learned about working with children. To work effectively with children requires knowledge, skill and training and is definitely not "babysitting".

Students were aware of a great number of techniques for working with children. What was noteworthy about the responses was the clear differentiation of techniques as positive or negative. Positive methods of

guiding such as giving choices, positive directions, redirection, listening and reasoning were identified as appropriate for children. The rationale for these methods emerged from educational and psychological theory.

Students' most rewarding experiences were those in which they had established a relationship with a particular child or successfully used a method or technique effectively. In effect, they were seeing the fruits of their labor.

It appeared that the last field placement offered students different opportunities for learning than previous field experiences. The major difference was in the type of setting or children of the placement. Before this time most students had worked primarily in pre-school programs. For the final placement students worked with different age groups and characteristics of children or in unique child care settings such as a hospital or museum. For many students this field placement confirmed for them what type of age group, children, and program they would like to work with in the future.

Overall, students considered the field experience to be either extremely helpful or helpful in contributing

to their ability to work with young children. While students identified some things they would do differently if they had the chance, they appeared to be basically satisfied with the learning opportunities provided.

SECTION III

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS EXPERIENCED IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

Question 1

What were some of the most difficult experiences you had during this field block?

Interestingly, student accounts of their most difficult experiences focused primarily on developing and maintaining relationships with the staff at the placement centre. Ten of the fourteen students described situations where they had difficulty communicating with the staff in general or a particular staff person. In comparison only five students identified a problem or difficulty which related directly to their work with children.

Some students described situations where the working relationships among staff were tension filled. Students found themselves getting caught in office

politics or squabbles which they did not want to be a part of. Other students described the general attitude of the staff as distant and uncommunicative.

Students had to struggle to become part of the team.

A major dilemma for students was observing inappropriate behavior, management practices or infractions of licensing regulations. Given their temporary "student status" students often felt they were not in a position to make changes or confront directly.

Although the onsite supervisor was the primary person students interacted with in the placement regarding their work, she was identified as a key person students had difficulty communicating with. The major problem here was not getting feedback from the supervisor about the student's work.

What appeared to heighten or intensify these difficulties for students was the realization that the staff they were having difficulty with were in a position to negatively or positively evaluate the student in terms of her performance at the centre. Students were very conscious of their student status and often felt powerless because of it.

The difficulties students encountered with children were varied. Some students found it difficult to leave

centres in which they had developed close relationships with the children. Other students described situations where they had difficulty establishing a relationship with a particular child due to his/her behavior.

"Probably communicating with staff. Just trying to keep out of their squabbles because there was a lot of fighting going on. I don't think they understood what I was there for". (Subject 3, page 9).

"Trying to get the staff to talk to me...I mean, just somebody to talk to. It's almost like, well, I guess you are the outsider". (Subject 1, page 13).

"I guess the most difficult one would be the fact that I wasn't able to talk to the supervisor, or that she wasn't able to talk to me. I think that was the most difficult one because you're always looking for feedback and she's the one that's supposed to be evaluating you so I was looking at her as the person to give me feedback. We didn't connect". (Subject 4, page 6).

"...I felt that I didn't get any feedback from my supervisor. I had to be on top of her if she was doing my evaluation. I felt almost like a burden rather than welcomed". (Subject 8, page 9).

"Just basically seeing things that you knew weren't good for children. Just being in a position where things you said to people would probably effect how they would react to you and how they would assess you at the end of the block. They were all basically in that kind of vein. Things I wasn't too happy about seeing and didn't feel in a position to be able to change". (Subject 2, page 7).

Question 2

How did you resolve these difficulties?

Given the perceived precarious nature of the student role it was not surprising that students chose to deal

with their difficulties with staff indirectly. Most students chose to discuss the problem with their practicum instructor from the university or in some cases with classmates. For many it became a matter of accepting the difficulty as part of being a student and trying to maintain a workable enough relationship with staff to complete their field experience successfully.

In resolving their difficulties with children, students appeared to draw on a variety of resources. Students consulted with staff, their onsite and practicum instructors, and other classmates. Students appeared to be more comfortable about "having" and dealing with child related difficulties than staff related concerns. It was as if these problems in some way were expected as part of their field experience and resolvable. Students were able to identify some strategies for resolving them which seemed to be lacking in the staff related concerns.

"Basically talking to my practicum instructor about it. Talking to other classmates". (Subject 2, page 7).

"I just accepted what little bit of conversation we did have. I still attempted to communicate with her...I figured well, eventually the relationship will go". (Subject 4, page 6).

"Because you're a student you are in a position where you can't do much about it. You may know that something

is wrong but because you haven't got the training nobody will respect your opinions and so you feel very uncomfortable with walking up to somebody and saying, "Hey, this is not right". (Subject 5, page 13).

"I called my supervisor (practicum) and discussed things with her and I also said that perhaps I should be speaking with her about it, that she should know all the facts". (Subject 9, page 15).

"I just kept asking them questions...try to make them feel that in me, when I'm talking to them that I'm not a threat to them and that what I see I'm not going to report". (Subject 1, page 13).

"I tried to avoid the issue most of the time and basically talked about what I was doing and why". (Subject 3, page 9).

Question 3

Based on your experiences in the field, what is the most difficult thing about working with young children?

Although there was no overall major theme which emerged from the responses there were a number of students who indicated that the most difficult aspect of working with children was 1) trying to meet individual needs while working with large groups of children (4), 2) communicating with parents (2), and 3) being part of a child care team (2). Other difficult aspects of working with children included understanding children's behavior, guiding, toilet training, and staying fresh and original in one's daily interactions with children.

"Planning for a group. You've got a general idea of how to do that but when there's one child that doesn't really fit into the group I find it difficult to plan for one". (Subject 13, page 7).

"Trying to please everyone, I think. Some children don't want to do an activity or something. I mean it's their free choice but I'd like to see one time when all the children are completely satisfied". (Subject 14, page 8).

"They (children) don't play together and share until they're 4 or 5 years old but they're forced to do it because there's so many children together. Trying to accommodate that age group with such a large amount of children. Trying to accommodate their abilities and the way you have to behave". (Subject 3, page 9).

"It would be working with the team. I've learned an awful lot about communicating and doing it positively, and constructive criticism and that kind of thing but I recognize that all the people you work with aren't at that level". (Subject 9, page 16).

"Transferring the attempts that you make to introduce different behavioral patterns for the children and trying to have the parent look at them or even contemplate them". (Subject 15, page 9).

Question 4

On a day to day basis what were some of the things that irritated you the most about working with young children? About working with other staff?

Students identified two aspects of working with children which irritated them on a day to day basis. These were 1) the high noise level and 2) trying to balance the needs of the group with those of individual children. In regards to the high noise level students

commented that loud voices and crying were particularly irritating when they themselves were tired and the noise level remained high for long periods of time. When working with groups of children students continually struggled with trying to meet the needs of all children. Students commented that the needs of the group often had to take precedence over individual needs. Trying to keep all children interested in one activity was difficult as was the constant consideration of the staff-child ratio.

In general, the irritating aspects of working with staff were those elaborated on in question 1. Students identified poor communication and inappropriate or unprofessional behavior as the two aspects of working with staff that irritated them most on a day to day basis. Things such as lack of information and feedback, and indirect communication among staff were irritants which made one's work more difficult. Other sources of irritation were observations of labelling inappropriate expectations of children and lateness exhibited by staff.

"With my infant experience...it would be, they cry all the time and they really, I mean, kids can cry for a long time and never get tired and they just rip your eardrums out...you'd have a bad day like the days when all twelve of them would cry all day and every time you tried something it would be wrong and they would hit you and you'd think, 'I can't stand this' ". (Subject 6, page 3).

"Noise is irritating on a day when I'm irritable...I know if you are tired then yes the noise level will bother me and children bickering bothers you, and spilt milk bothers you, everything bothers you". (Subject 7, page 10).

"Having to do things in a certain framework because of the ratio. You can't allow one child to go back by themselves, you have to take all of them so somebody has to wait". (Subject 2, page 7).

"I think in the child care profession, the ratio, the high ratio. Not having enough time off to spend with a child who definitely needs your time". (Subject 5, page 10).

"When you get a whole bunch of them at once, trying to get them all in line to do the same thing. Keeping them interested in it". (Subject 4, page 6).

"Maybe a lack of feedback from a lot of staff. You had to really pry sometimes to get feedback on things that you'd done". (Subject 3, page 10).

"It irritates me when people talk behind their back. That bothers me. If you've got a problem with somebody then you need to discuss it with them, not discuss it with me". (Subject 7, page 10).

"One thing that irritated me was the little backstabbing that went on. They always seemed to be nattering about somebody at every centre". (Subject 8, page 10).

"Just seeing them attribute negative things to a child..." (Subject 2, page 7).

"More with people who expected things from the little kids that they weren't capable of doing". (Subject 3 page 10).

Question 5

Was there anything that occurred during the field experience which disappointed you?

Ten of the fourteen students interviewed said that

they had experienced some disappointment during the field experience. Of these students six expressed a disappointment related to some aspect of the centre's operation. Overall, these students experienced disappointment when the centre and behavior or attitudes of the staff didn't appear to reflect the "ideal standards" associated with a good centre or good caregiving. What "should be" was not always "what happened" in their centre. In many cases these were situations where theory and practice were not perfectly integrated. It was as if students were saddened to find that there was no perfect and ideal centre. Students were disappointed when the centre was not up to licensing standards, they observed inappropriate behavior toward children, or the centre lacked good role models. The remaining students expressed disappointment in the way they were evaluated or prepared for their field placements. In these situations students expressed disappointment in their marks or their orientation to the centre.

"I don't know if it's a disappointment...I came to the realization that, I guess I sort of decided that there's really no perfect centre. Every centre has problems of one sort or another...". (Subject 7, page 11).

"I think it's probably centres or staff who, I would

consider unsuitable or at least not living up to the standards". (Subject 9, page 16).

"...when you got into a centre where there was actually not a good role model to follow and learn from. I came in to learn not for them to learn from me...If these are the centres we're going to they should be good centres". (Subject 2, page 15).

"There was one time that I honestly felt that I should have gotten an honours and I didn't and I didn't think it was fair..." (Subject 8, page 10).

"Just that my final mark wasn't as good as I thought I had done. The verbal feedback my onsite had given me and the other staff was very good and then when it came down to the paper she didn't put as good as she had been telling me which bothered me". (Subject 13, page 8).

Question 6

As you see it, what were the major drawbacks of this field experience?

What students considered to be drawbacks to their field placements varied greatly from student to student. A number of responses (6) appeared to focus on drawbacks related to some aspect of how the field placements were organized or structured. These comments pertained to the length of the field placement (too short), unclear communication of expectations between the university and the centres, too few visits from practicum supervisors, not enough time for planning, and unrealistic assignments.

Other students did not identify any drawbacks to

the field placement (3) or identified such things as communication with staff, lack of role modelling, not being reimbursed for one's time and effort and termination from the centre (5).

"Most of them were very short. We didn't have time to get to know the children or the staff and to work properly with the children you have to know those individuals". (Subject 3, page 10).

"I find that the staff that are working with these children don't have the experience that I have, so therefore I'm not learning anything as far as that goes". (Subject 7, page 11).

"There's not enough communication between the centre and the university as to what is expected of us. We go into a centre and for the first week we have to explain to them...I spent a lot of time explaining what we were supposed to do and what was meant by certain things". (Subject 13, page 8).

"Lack of visits from supervisors. I don't think 2 visits in six weeks is enough". (Subject 15, page 9).

"Getting attached. Getting to know the kids and then having to leave was the hardest part". (Subject 12, page 10).

Question 7

Could you tell me what your biggest concern or problem was during your field block?

Responses to this question reflected the difficulties, irritants and disappointments expressed in questions 1, 4 and 5. Nearly two thirds of the students (9) identified their biggest concern or problem as being related to poor communication with staff, lack of

team work, inexperienced or inappropriate role modeling, and being in the "student role". Other student concerns focused on issues related to their work with children such as integrating theory with practice and planning appropriate activities for children's developmental levels.

"I would have to say it would be the staff...I had hoped to have a resource when I came out of here of activities in all areas and I do to a certain extent, but mostly from what the instructors here at the university had given us, not from what I've seen out there because out there it's not there". (Subject 1, page 15).

"I guess it would be sort of the staff bitching about stuff that they could do something about...clearly when the same problem kept cropping up every staff meeting, they weren't dealing with it". (Subject 6, page 14).

"Just that the staff were irritated and that the staff should be working together and really communicating..." (Subject 11, page 9).

"It always comes down to the same thing. As people I didn't feel that they had child development background to understand why children were doing things". (Subject 2, page 8).

"I think mostly having everything come together for me. Having the academic become relevant. I was afraid this wouldn't happen...I was wondering whether I was going to be able to apply it...". (Subject 5, page 14).

SUMMARY

The most difficult experiences students described as having in their field placements were related to developing and maintaining relationships with staff. Only a small number identified difficult experiences

related to their work with children. The dilemma for students was that staff persons such as the onsite supervisor were in positions to positively or negatively evaluate the student's performance. Most students reported resolving these difficulties in an indirect way hoping to at best maintain a workable enough relationship with staff to successfully complete the field experience.

Difficulties related directly to working with children focused on trying to meet individual needs while working with large groups of children, communicating with parents and being part of a child care team. On a daily basis students were irritated by high noise levels and the continual balancing of individual and group needs and concerns such as staff child ratios.

Learning that centres did not always reflect the "ideal standards of practice" were seen by most students as a disappointment. It saddened students to not see the perfect mix of theory and practice.

Surprisingly, the difficulties and disappointment identified with staff and centres were not seen as major drawbacks to the field experience. Instead students described major drawbacks as things related to some aspect of how the placement was organized or structured.

SECTION IVINFLUENCES ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION DURING FIELD
EXPERIENCEQuestion 1

Would you please tell me what persons you consider to have been most helpful to you during your last field experience? What was it that (name person) did to help you?

In the majority of cases students identified between two and four individuals who they considered most helpful during their field experience. The most frequently mentioned individual was the university supervisor (9) followed by a classmate (5), and centre staff person (5). Other individuals who were mentioned included the onsite supervisor (4), friends (3), family members (3), university instructors (3) and centre directors (2). Overall, students found these people helpful because they were generally supportive and understanding of the student (8), offered practical suggestions, ideas, information or advice (9), or specific feedback to the student about her work and/or progress.

To determine whether the amount and kind of help

given to students varied among the different groups of individuals, data was categorized according to individuals and the kind of help given and then compared.

The university supervisors were described most often as supportive and understanding of the student. This included such things as being very knowledgeable and aware of the student and her work situation, intervening on the student's behalf, standing up for the student's point of view with others and being empathetic and easy to talk to, and providing open access to the student in terms of her availability. The offering of suggestions and ideas for guiding children's behavior and activities, as well as specific feedback about the student's work were also identified as helping behaviors. Compared with other individuals the university supervisor seemed to provide the greatest range of help to students. She was identified as helping students both personally and professionally. In general she was there for the students to help in any way.

"She's just supportive and she understood what I was trying to do and she understands my personality and how being in that centre would affect me and offering suggestions and then trying to intervene on my behalf sometimes too". (Subject 2, page 9).

"She made herself very aware of what my situation was before I became her student and then she gave me free access to her whenever I wanted to talk to her, which

was great". (Subject 5, page 16).

"She offered her phone number and I could always talk to her and she was always there, always, for any of her students. She really helped with guiding techniques and we sat down and she gave me different ideas that I never knew about...really very helpful". (Subject 14, page 10).

"...I gravitate to people who can be empathetic and open and speak easily...so possibly this is why I found this particular practicum supervisor helped me a lot. In her evaluations as well, she gave a lot of comments, she just commented on everything I think, which helped me in the professional part. It was very easy for me to talk to her about personal problems and she would be supportive and help to guide me". (Subject 9, page 17).

Particular staff persons were seen as helpful because of their accepting or open attitude toward the student. These were people who were friendly, willing to offer information and suggestions to the student and in general treated the student as one of the team. One specific area staff persons were seen as helpful was in their knowledge about the particular children being cared for. Having worked with these children over a period of time these staff persons in a sense "knew the children". This was considered to be helpful information for the student.

"Just a staff person at the centre and I guess because she was the most receptive to what I had to say and after she realized I was interested she volunteered information". (Subject 1, page 16).

"The two staff that I worked with. They accepted me as part of the staff...". (Subject 5, page 16).

"She worked for a couple of years so she knew children and some of the characteristics and behavior. She was there for a year and a half so she knew the children as well". (Subject 14, page 10).

The most helpful behavior the onsite supervisor seemed to provide was specific feedback regarding the students' work in the centre.

"I found her helpful in giving me feedback about how things were progressing with me being in the centre". (Subject 7, page 12).

"She would mention things like spontaneous activities I was doing. I didn't realize what I was doing and she would point them out". (Subject 13, page 9).

One's classmates appeared to be a source of help primarily because as students they were able to share with each other common problems and experiences.

Fellow students were usually most empathetic and supportive of one another and offered suggestions and ways of handling assignments and situations.

"...a couple of my classmates (were helpful) because they're there to help discuss and they have the same kind of problems in their centres and it's just good to talk about things that other people are experiencing..." (Subject 2, page 9).

"She would help me during academic time and I would help her during practical time. We found a balance of how we could support each other..." (Subject 9, page 17).

"We would discuss different things with each other and with different problems we had with some of the children. That way we would get feedback from each other and how to handle certain situations and how we each would handle it". (Subject 13, page 9).

Friends and family members of students were described as helpful for listening and generally "being there" for the student. Although these people often couldn't offer suggestions or ideas the fact that they were there to listen to what the student had to say was seen as supportive and helpful. In some cases friends and family members provided practical "hands on" help to the students by helping them prepare materials for activities with the children.

"Probably the most helpful person would have been my room mate. She helped, she listened to me, number one. She would listen to anything that happened during the day, any concerns or whatever without being involved. Not that she really could give an answer or comment on it or whatever, but, at least she listened. It was somebody to listen to you. (Subject 7, page 12).

"She was also really helpful when I needed to do something with helping me prepare activities and stuff and has been very supportive". (Subject 7, page 12).

Students who identified a university instructor as helpful did so not because of their instructional role but because the student found him/her supportive and willing to listen. Like the university supervisors, friends and family, the instructor was someone who was empathetic and understanding to the student, and easy to talk to.

"I chose her as a support system, a friend...She was always ready and willing for me. That was most supportive because I found I could go to her with a personal problem or just to let off steam. She was there to listen and I knew she understood...". (Subject 9, page 17).

Centre directors were the least frequently identified source of help. One way directors were helpful to students was in their sharing of knowledge about the overall administration and operation of the centre.

"She was very open about everything that was going on in the centre and it made me feel like I saw the operation of the centre from the inside". (Subject 5, page 16).

Question 2

You have mentioned (identify those people in question 1) and how they have helped you. I'm wondering how (those people not identified in question 1) contributed to your participation and involvement in your field placement? How did they influence your learning or progress?

Overall, students comments about how people they did not identify as being helpful in question 1 contributed to their involvement and participation in their field were similar to those given by students in question 1. Any differences seemed to be in terms of the degree to which students found these people helpful. One factor which appeared to contribute negatively to the influence on the university supervisor, onsite supervisor and centre director was the limited amount of contact the student had with these people. Students commented about not having enough time to get to know these people, thus their impact on the student's learn-

ing was lessened.

"I felt like she really understood what I was trying to do and was pretty supportive of that but it was just a really busy time for her...so she just wasn't there a lot, even physically". (Subject 2, page 9).

"The centre director was never there...it was never really a relationship". (Subject 14, page 9).

"We didn't get to know them. They changed supervisors and then again with our program discontinuing we lost a lot of people at the last minute. People that I had sort of established a fairly good relationship with had left the program. I didn't feel I had anybody I could talk to". (Subject 3, page 12).

Question 3

What was the most difficult thing about communicating with these people?

About one third of the students found that they had no problems communicating with the people they discussed in questions 1 & 2. The two most frequently mentioned difficulties were not finding time to discuss and talk about problems and people not really listening to or understanding the student's concerns and situation.

"Really finding the right time I suppose, because it got pretty hectic in there and sometimes things got left out". (Subject 2, page 9).

"Probably the time aspect. There was not time to really get to know anybody". (Subject 3, page 13).

"I cannot communicate with people I don't think are listening to me...I have to feel that there is a communication back and forth, it's not just a one way communication. (Subject 7, page 13).

"Family and friends and some classmates I think couldn't

understand what I was saying I needed or what it was like for me". (Subject 9, page 18).

Question 4

Could you identify some ways the university supervisor and the onsite supervisor could have been more helpful to you during this experience?

About one third of the students were satisfied with the help they received from the supervisors and did not identify any other ways they could have been more helpful. A number of students identified more feedback about their work from both supervisors as a means of providing more help. The issue of limited contact with the university supervisor was again raised in this question. Students would have liked the university supervisor to come out and observe more than twice during the placement. Students did not feel the supervisor had a thorough understanding of their work based on two visits.

"Probably receiving more feedback. I don't feel that a university supervisor sitting there for half an hour really got any idea of what we were doing or what was happening". (Subject 3, page 13).

"Not enough feedback from the onsite supervisor...they were very busy and some of the places ended up with several students so they just didn't have time to sit and talk to you for any amount of time". (Subject 3, page 13).

"I didn't really find that I learned lots from my

practicum instructors because they only came out for two visits so I don't know". (Subject 8, page 13).

"If my instructor would have came out more, like maybe once a week or something instead of just twice for six weeks. That may have been better where she could have seen more of what I was doing and my involvement". (Subject 14, page 11).

Question 5

My last question has to do with the academic courses you took during the field experience. Could you please tell me how your participation in these courses helped or hindered what you actually did at your last centre placement?

There was no overall consensus about how the academic courses influenced students' participation in the field. Some students felt that the academic courses were closely related to their work in the field while others found no relevance at all. Similarly, students found the courses too condensed and too broken up.

"They were really good at gearing to specific age groups with specialty groups". (Subject 1, page 18).

"There was a bit of a gap there although I enjoyed learning what I learned from both areas, it was just they didn't really go together". (Subject 2, page 10).

"It helped me a lot because I could do activities that promoted them (the children) to do what they would probably be doing soon". (Subject 8, page 14).

"It (the centre) was so contrasting to what I was taking, like the practicum setting didn't fit...didn't fit at all. It didn't connect". (Subject 12, page 12).

"Some of the courses, I felt the assignments they asked for, there were too many for the practicum time and site". 9Subject 9, page 19).

SUMMARY

The person considered most often to be helpful to students during their field experience was the university supervisor, followed by a classmate or centre staff person. The university supervisor was considered helpful because of her support and understanding of the student. In comparison to other individuals the university supervisor appeared to provide the greatest range of help to students. She was there for students personally and professionally.

Other helpful individuals such as classmates, centre staff persons, onsite supervisors, friends and family members, university instructors and centre directors were seen as helpful in different ways. This seemed to be related to the individual's relationship to the student and their particular involvement in the program. For example, classmates were helpful because of their shared perspective and experience of being in the program, while centre staff persons were helpful because of their knowledge and experience with particular children at the centre.

Overall, students described a support system or network of whom they drew on for different things.

The major difficulty students had communicating with the university and onsite supervisor appeared to be related to time. Two visits by the university supervisor during the field placement was not considered enough for some students. Likewise, students had difficulty arranging time with onsite supervisors to discuss student concerns. Perhaps related to the time concern was student desire for more feedback from supervisors regarding their work.

The influence of academic courses on student's participation in the field experience varied among the individuals. There was no consensus of opinion. Some students found the courses related well to their field experience while others saw no relevance at all.

SECTION V

PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING

Question 1

If you had to describe what a child care worker or professional does all day what would you say?

Overall, students described the child care worker's function or role as enhancing the development and growth of children, meeting their various needs and facilit-

ating learning. This was done by providing experiences and activities that foster development, facilitating children's play, providing a safe, stimulating environment, helping children problem solve and acting as good role models. Often this involved performing a variety of roles such as mother, father, teacher, nurturer etc.

Students commented that the above aspects of their work are not always apparent to the untrained eye or casual observer. The work of the child care professional takes place within the context of daily routines such as snack, lunch, nap, story time, outdoor play, toileting and opening and closing etc. The broader role or function of the child care worker performed while carrying out these activities is not as clearly observable as the tasks themselves. Hence much of the work of child care is underrated.

"I guess, so that the child's growth, each individual child's growth is facilitated in whatever way is appropriate for the individual child...". (Subject 6, page 19).

"They help the child to develop to it's potential, but they do it through offering experiences...". (Subject 9, page 20).

"They do a lot. They are there for the needs and wants of the children. They are there to facilitate, to make a clean healthy environment to be in, a loving environ-

ment, to make it exciting and challenging and learning" (Subject 13, page 11).

"I would say they guide them through the day and social skills and in health and nutrition. That they provide activities that will enhance their creativity, cognitive physical, emotional (development), show them how to deal with problems...". (Subject 1, page 19).

"I dont know where to start. That would be really hard to describe. I think a lot of people driving by a playground with a bunch of little kids and staff would think there's absolutely nothing going on. You would think that they were just sort of bystanders watching what was going on or not even aware of what was going on". (Subject 3, page 14).

Question 2

What kinds of knowledge, skills, experiences, attitudes, etc. does a child care worker need to work with young children?

Not surprisingly, students identified a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for working with young children. Although there was no overall consensus as to what these were, knowledge of children's needs and development, a flexible and adaptable approach to one's work, and open and non-judgmental attitudes were most frequently mentioned. Other essentials that students identified were: love of children, ability to work as a team member, creativity, warmth and friendliness, a sense of humor and an ability to question one's work.

"They need to be very flexible, they need to be able to adapt their day to fit the children's...I think a warm and friendly personality too". (Subject 1, page 19).

"You have to have the knowledge of what's normal, what's possible in the range of behavior and development..." (Subject 2, page 19).

"You have got to know something about child development. How a child develops. How the progression sequence is so that things can be planned that are appropriate for the child's developmental level". (Subject 7, page 15).

"Not to be judgemental in any way. To remember that the child does belong to the parent and we shouldn't push our standards on them...". (Subject 9, page 20).

"I think they have to be completely open minded and flexible in their approach". (Subject 15, page 13).

Question 3

Out of all the things that child care professionals do in carrying out their work with young children, which do you consider to be the most important?

Responses to this question fell into 3 categories. Students felt that meeting children's needs, understanding children as individuals and being able to communicate clearly were three of the most important things child care workers do in carrying out their work with young children.

Meeting the needs of children tended to be an all encompassing definition of the work of child care. Students felt that this couldn't be narrowed down to

one specific task or behavior but rather required using a range of skills, for each child has different needs. The tasks and skills used are dependent on the needs of the child.

Understanding children as individuals appeared to be a means for meeting children's needs. In order to help children reach their potential and needs, the child care worker needs to know where each child is coming from.

Communicating one's expectations to children and helping children express themselves clearly was also considered important work of child care workers. Some students also identified the need to facilitate communication between parents and children and child care workers and parents.

"Meeting their needs. That takes a lot, because they can meet their needs through planning. Just their attention or just being with them...". (Subject 15, page 13).

"They are all important. I couldn't say which is more important because you have to have a basis of looking at the different needs". (Subject 15, page 13).

"Helping the child so he can function in society at whatever level that may be or whatever problem he has and just help him develop from where he is". (Subject 9, page 20).

"I think that communication is, like being able to let the child know what you expect, helping them communicate

what they are trying to tell you, why they are doing things, and what they want". (Subject 2, page 11).

"Probably understanding the kids as individuals, where they are coming from. Each person is an individual. It doesn't matter what age they are and you have to know that". (Subject 3, page 14).

Question 4

To what degree do you think you and other child care professionals you worked with and observed during your field experience, were able to do (list question 3) ?

Student responses indicated that although child care workers strived to attain those important aspects of their work identified in question 3, the degree to which they achieved these things varied. The number of children and workers as well as time constraints made meeting the needs of children and understanding them as individuals difficult to carry out a hundred percent of the time. Teamwork, questioning one's work and training were identified as effective ways of achieving the important aspects of work despite some of these restrictions.

"You could do it sometimes but you're often very torn because you couldn't...you couldn't just sit with a child that needed special attention, or work with a child that needed special attention because there just wasn't time. There wasn't enough people. Too many rules and regulations to follow so therefore you just couldn't do it". (Subject 13, page 15).

"It depends on the people you work with. Everybody doesn't see things the same way as I do. Perhaps that's a difficult thing to do when you have large groups". (Subject 7, page 15).

"I think all of us strive to do all those things and certainly with the training I think it comes home a lot more". (Subject 15, page 13).

"I think if you have a centre where workers work as a team that it's very effective". (Subject 1, page 19).

"I think child care workers who are really questioning of their work and respectful (do)". (Subject 6, page 20).

Question 5

Could you please describe for me the best child care professional you have observed and/or worked with during your field placement?

Students described the best or ideal child care worker as a multifaceted individual possessing a combination of personal and professional qualities. Although students described numerous abilities and qualities, child care workers who were warm, patient, giving, loving, approachable, respectful and genuinely concerned and interested in children ranked highly in the student's eyes. The ability to communicate and guide children positively was also a highly regarded skill. In many cases the best child care worker was one who appeared to go the extra mile putting in the extra time or effort into something which made a difference. For example,

making extra effort to know parents and school personnel, attending professional development workshops and conferences and being an active member of one's professional association were seen as noteworthy endeavours.

"He is a very warm and giving person and really relates well to children". (Subject 5, page 21 & 22).

"...That that person is patient. That's one of the things I admired. Another thing is communication. Helping the children, communicating with the children so that you're trying to help them solve their own problems but you're not ignoring the problem". (Subject 7, page 16).

"I think I see them as being warm, loving, approachable. It appears that they like children...I mean it's just a part of them that's natural. They are usually patient and get down to the level of the child. I see them as having good guiding skills. They respect the children and you can see that in the way they deal with them". (Subject 9, page 21).

"She was very empathetic to the children, to their special needs. Really made an effort to know the parents, was always there which is very rare to see. She also made a point of going into the school with the kids and talking to teachers and getting a lot of feedback from the schools". (Subject 3, page 15).

"That they had a sense of humour, that they questioned what they were doing and didn't settle for second best... I think they could deal with children, respecting all the parts of a child that make up that child...they continued education or they belonged to the professional association. They went to conferences". (Subject 6, page 20).

Question 6

Looking back on your field experience could you please tell me some of the ways you were able to tell

if you were doing a good job of what you did at your last centre? How do you think child care workers working in the field evaluate their effectiveness in working with young children?

Students used a combination of methods to gauge their work performance. The three ways most often used were the feedback and response of the children, feedback from other staff, and self evaluation. Interest and participation from the children was viewed as a good indicator that they were relating well to the children and meeting their needs. While some students viewed the feedback of others as useful because of the broader or more objective perspective they could offer, others felt that one's own self evaluation was more important as it came from within. While students viewed formal performance appraisals and evaluations as useful some students stressed the importance of self evaluation more heavily because they didn't perceive the more formal evaluation methods as occurring frequently in the work situation.

The responses of how students evaluated themselves and how they perceived other child care workers employed in the field as evaluating themselves did not vary greatly. If anything, students felt that other child care workers relied more often on feedback from

other staff. There was some tendency to question the regularity and use of evaluation in the field. Overall, students viewed evaluation as a necessary and important component of the child care professional's work.

"A lot of times I got feedback from the onsite supervisor and just basically how the children reacted...if they were interested, if it helped them resolve a conflict, if you could see them more content after you dealt with them". (Subject 2, page 12).

"Usually if the kids enjoyed what they were doing, were happy with what they were doing and there was not a lot of dissension going on I felt I was doing a fairly good job". (Subject 3, page 15).

"Mainly the response of the children and then, otherwise I think probably I would look to the staff to get feedback because even though I might think I had covered everything when you're not completely familiar with what can happen you need someone to tell you where it is until you begin to recognize it in yourself". (Subject 9, page 21).

"....I think feedback is a big part because someone else watching somebody do something can pinpoint it easier than they themselves can". (Subject 14, page 14).

"Some centres have evaluations and self evaluations. Very few, possibly that's one of the problems. Again, there's not enough feedback for the staff to see how they're doing". (Subject 3, page 15).

"The ones that do (evaluate)...they think. They critically think. They sit back and say 'Let's look at this', I can look at my work and say, 'Well that was really bizarre' and being able to know why you did something". (Subject 6, page 21).

Question 7

Looking back to when you first started your prog-

ram of studies how have your ideas or views about working with young children changed?

The general theme which appeared to emerge from the responses was the idea that the student's thinking and ideas about children and the child care field had broadened and matured. Some students felt their views of working with young children had developed rather than changed as they described commencing their studies with few ideas or notions about what the field of child care was all about. Students who held definitive views on working with young children prior to their studies described these views as remaining basically the same but their views were more grounded and developed now. In one case a student described herself as being more realistic and accepting of the limitations of child care. Learning gained from the experience seemed to create a feeling of confidence in students that their work with children did have an impact. One student stated "I know what I'm doing now". Other students described their ideas as changing in very specific ways such as looking at children as individuals, respecting children and talking to them in a different way than before.

"I feel confident where I didn't feel confident before..."

I think seeing positive results from, really seeing that somewhere along the line you're making some impact". (Subject 5, page 22).

"I didn't enter the program with a lot of preconceived notions. I had some experience with young children but I was pretty open to learn and I could discard the junk". (Subject 6, page 22).

"I feel like I know what I'm doing now. I didn't before. It was sort of like haphazard before. I was guessing. Now I'm confident I know what I'm doing. I recognize that". (Subject 9, page 21).

"They've been cemented. I still have the same notions as when I started, I still have them now, but I've grown a lot in the knowledge that I've acquired in the 18 months....the way I feel about working with children and so on has just become more grounded upon me from when I started". (Subject 15, page 14).

Question 8

In your own experience what are the most satisfying aspects of working with young children? Least satisfying?

Over one half of the students described the close attachments and relationships with children as the most satisfying aspect of working with children. Another satisfying aspect of the work was seeing children interested in learning. There was satisfaction gained from making a difference in someone's life and providing a service that was needed by families.

"Making a difference in that child's life..." (Subject 1, page 21).

"Gaining their trust. Knowing that they like you,

knowing that they trust you. Feeling important to them." (Subject 2, page 13).

"It's satisfying for me when kids are asking lots of questions and they're interested in what you're doing or what's being offered at a particular time, or just something that they come across." (Subject 7, page 16).

"I like children. I like to see them learn, to get excited about something. I think building relationships with children that you know that they find comfort in you...that interaction." (Subject 9, page 21).

"I also like the fact that it's providing a service that's very important in this society at this time to people who need it and want it." (Subject 6, page 22).

Lack of recognition or acknowledgement from others about the work performed by child care workers was most often mentioned as the least satisfying aspect of their work. Included were comments on the low salaries child care workers receive. In terms of the daily work with children students found the routine or mundane tasks such as set up, diapering and cleaning as least satisfying.

"Probably very little credit from anyone else for working with little kids. You don't feel you're doing anything." (Subject 3, page 16).

"I would just think the salaries. That would be the least satisfying. It could get discouraging and that's why some centres and staff look so burnt out because you do so much work and every two weeks you don't feel like you're being acknowledged." (Subject 8, page 16).

"Being caught in a centre where you're doing a lot of mundane tasks, where you're not really spending time with

children that you really want to..." (Subject 5, page 22).

"Probably it's just some of the daily...the diapering part, the daily kind of things that you've got to do but it's part of the job but it's really not interesting to me. I like to be with the children." (Subject 7, page 16).

Question 9

If you could make any changes at all in the child care field what would they be?

The dissatisfaction students had with the recognition and salaries received by child care workers was identified as one of the primary changes that students would make in the field. Higher salaries and respect and understanding from others was given top priority. The other needed change identified by students was more and varied education and training opportunities for the field. Students talked about the need for part time programs, ongoing professional development opportunities, upgrading and undergraduate and graduate programs in child care.

"Having the respect of people, of understanding how difficult it is to be a child care worker and how much stress there is..." (Subject 2, page 13).

"A lot of recognition for what we're doing. There isn't any." (Subject 3, page 17).

"Definitely the pay. That would make a big difference." (Subject 1, page 21).

"Definitely it would be the salary." (Subject 9, page 21).

"I think all child care workers should be trained. I think there should be training for everybody and that's not the case. There should be more opportunities for workers to develop themselves, to continue education, to upgrade themselves, to know about new things that are coming or being discovered and being talked about." (Subject 7, page 17).

"...They were talking to us about a Masters in child study or something because I think you almost have to have a degree if you want to be recognized as a professional." (Subject 8, page 16).

Question 10

My last questions have to do with your future plans in regards to working with young children and the child care field. Where do you see yourself headed from here?

More than one half of the students saw themselves as moving into administrative positions in centres or government. The most frequently mentioned position was that of a day care director. Nearly half of the students also planned to further their education by attaining undergraduate or graduate degrees related to children. Of these students the education field was seen as a possible next step or alternative to the child care field. Their reasons stemmed from the perspective that the education field offered better pay and working conditions while maintaining their desire to work with children. The remaining students saw themselves as remaining in the child care field working directly with children but with a different age group

such as infants or school age. The future plans of the students did not appear definitive. Most students mentioned two or three options they were considering pursuing. Factors such as finances, work and educational opportunities available and personal circumstances at the time were seen as deciding factors.

"I'm looking right now for a directorship of a small centre. I feel I have very clear ideas about day care managements and how day care should be set up and I would like to get out there and do it." (Subject 5, page 23).

"I don't expect that I will be working directly with children on the floor as we say. In five years I expect...I will be the director. I guess I see a role for myself in government, in the bureaucracy of child care or in the administration of a program." (Subject 6, page 23).

"Academically I'll always be going to school because I still think there's always something out there for me to learn about the field. I'll be going into the degree program. I want to have my Masters, and go for my P.H.D." (Subject 12, page 15).

"...I was thinking of going for a degree in child studies, or whatever and if not continue working or actually the alternative was getting my Bachelor of Education." (Subject 14, page 15).

"I'm hoping to find a nursery school position or in 3 years go back into education. For the hours and the pay. To be totally honest, much better working conditions." (Subject 3, page 17).

"...there's not a lot of skills going on in infancy right now. I would really like to get into that." (Subject 2, page 14).

Question 11

Do you see yourself as working with young children 5 years from now? (If yes, ask) How do you think your ideas and views about working with young children will have changed?

All students saw themselves as working indirectly or directly with children in 5 years. The responses to this question appeared to be most definite. Students appeared split about whether they wanted to remain on the floor working directly with children or in a more indirect way such as the role as an administrator. Education was again seen as a related alternative to the child care field.

In terms of how their ideas and views about working with children would have changed in five years students were again divided. About one third of the students didn't know if their ideas would change. Another third felt that views would probably not change. If anything, time would confirm their philosophy and perspectives. The remaining students could not identify specifically how their views would change but felt they would because of their desire not to become stagnant and in a rut. They hoped to continue to learn and grow.

"Yes, oh definitely. I would think I will probably work with children working in a centre until they throw

me out." (Subject 5, page 23).

"Oh I think so. In the child care field. I want work in a centre but I also think I have administrative skills. I would like to perhaps direct a centre, so yes. I would be working in a centre but maybe not directly with the children in 5 years..." (Subject 7, page 17).

"Oh yeah. I can't think of anything that would interest me enough to change fields." (Subject 8, page 17).

"I don't think they will change a lot (ideas). I had thought they would have changed through the past eighteen months and they didn't. They just, I learned a lot to back up what I felt." (Subject 3, page 17).

"I don't think they'll have changed much. I'd really be surprised if some wildly new theory or some new approach came down the pike that we can't see now." (Subject 6, page 23).

"Definitely. If your philosophy doesn't change then you're stagnated and that's my greatest fear. I don't want to be stagnant at all." (Subject 12, page 15).

"I hope that I get some new information and some new influences so that I'm not staying stagnant because I do see that as a threat." (Subject 2, page 14).

SUMMARY

Overall, students described the role or function of the child care worker as enhancing the development and growth of children. While this encompassed a number of activities and roles most students felt that the important aspects of the work were not readily apparent and visible to the casual observer, as they took place within a broad context of daily activities and routines.

To work with young children requires a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes, particularly knowledge of child development, flexibility and open and non-judgemental attitudes. Out of all the things child care professionals do in carrying out their work with children, students considered meeting children's needs, understanding them as individuals and communicating clearly with others to be the most important. While child care workers strive continually to achieve these things most students thought it was difficult to achieve them all of the time. The sheer number of children one works with and time constraints made the important aspects of their work difficult to achieve.

The ideal child care worker was described as possessing a combination of personal and professional qualities. She/he is warm, patient, giving, loving, approachable, respectful, and can communicate and guide children positively. The ideal child care worker makes a difference by going the extra mile.

Overall, students considered evaluating one's work as an important component of a child care worker's job. Students saw themselves and others in the field as using feedback from children and staff and self evaluation as the primary methods of evaluation.

Students found that their ideas and thinking about children had broadened and matured since starting their program of studies. Simply stated, students knew what they were doing now.

The satisfactions gained from working with children was primarily the attachments and relationships formed with children. The least satisfying aspects of working with children were seen as the routine or mundane tasks of care such as cleaning, diapering, setting up etc. On a broader scale, dissatisfaction with the recognition and status of child care workers was noted. Students viewed salaries and professional recognition as two major areas in child care that needed to change, as well as the desire for more and varied educational opportunities.

The future plans of students were not definitive. Most students saw themselves as pursuing further education and moving into administrative positions. Virtually all students saw themselves as working in some way with children five years from now, whether it was in an administrative position or working directly with children. Overall, students were unclear if and how their ideas and views about working with children would change. On one hand some students saw their philosophy

or beliefs as a solid foundation that would continue to guide their work while others saw their philosophies and beliefs as fluid and open to change.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The main issue in the research on field experiences is the value of these experiences to the professional development of teachers. Some studies indicate that field experiences are an effective part of teacher preparation and stimulate reflection and integrate theory with practice. Other research has found negative consequences of field experiences for teacher development. In this view, such experiences merely socialize students into existing practices, lead to rigid attitudes and mechanical teaching.

While there has been abundant research investigating field experience, very little is known about the details of these experiences and the processes and interactions which occur. Knowledge of what students learn in field experiences and the factors which influence their learning is clearly needed before the value can be assessed.

By investigating student child care workers' perceptions about their field experiences this study clarifies questions regarding the nature of field experiences, the perspectives on teaching which are

learned, and what aspects of the experience contribute to the development of this learning.

In this chapter the results of chapter III are interpreted in light of the research literature and their implications for education. A summary of the results of chapter III is presented and then discussed in terms of five themes which emerged from these findings.

Summary of Results

During the six-week field experience, students carried out field work within a variety of settings, participating in a range of activities and with definite learning goals in mind. Their role in the centre was characterized as that of either a student or staff member, the latter being preferred for its greater autonomy and responsibility. The on-site and university supervisors were identified as the key persons with whom students interacted regarding their field placement. The focus of these interactions was on observation, discussion and feedback of the student's work and progress in the centre. Students appeared to have mixed views about the usefulness and relevancy of university courses. While many found the courses help-

ful in integrating theory and practice, others found them inadequate in meeting their needs. Overall, students described the field experience as a positive and valuable learning experience which increased their skills, knowledge and abilities as child care workers.

The major benefits gained from the experience were increased confidence in their beliefs and abilities as child care workers, the integration of theory and practice and the ability to evaluate one's work. Students emerged from the experience feeling most competent about their ability to communicate, understand and form relationships with children, guide children's behavior, and their ability to be flexible and creative in implementing activities. For most students the experience confirmed their desire to work with young children. Overall, students rated the field experience as extremely helpful or helpful in contributing to their ability to work with young children.

The problems and concerns experienced by students were primarily related to relationships with staff, particularly the on-site supervisor. What seemed to exacerbate the nature of these difficulties was the student's status or role in the centre. Students were in the vulnerable position of trying to resolve conflict

with people who could evaluate their performance. Most students chose to deal with conflict indirectly and accepted it as part of being a student.

Students developed a support system of two to four people who helped them in various ways. The most frequently mentioned individual was the university supervisor. She appeared to provide the greatest range of help of all individuals. The things that students found helpful were support, understanding, practical suggestions, feedback on one's work and listening.

Students viewed the work of child care as complex and demanding. Overall, the purpose of child care is to enhance the development and growth of children. This involves knowledge about children's needs and development, a flexible approach, and open, non-judgmental attitudes. Ideally, according to the students, the child care worker possesses these qualities. She knows if he/she is doing a good job from the feedback of children and staff, and from self-evaluation. Satisfaction comes from relationships with children and from seeing them develop and learn. The least satisfying part of the work is its lack of recognition by others, either in status or pay.

Students reported completing their field experience

with a broadened, more mature view of child care. Most students wanted definitely to work with children in the future in various capacities, but had mixed feelings on how and if their present ideas would change as they continued to work in the field.

Discussion

The results of the interview data presented in chapter III can be synthesized into five themes which represent the significant findings of this investigation:

- 1) The field experience as a desirable and positive learning experience.
- 2) Reflective thinking and the integration of theory and practice.
- 3) The development of a humanistic orientation towards young children.
- 4) The problematic nature of the student role.
- 5) The role of the university supervisor and the student support system.

Each of these themes will be discussed in terms of the research literature and their implications for education.

The Field Experience as a Desirable and Positive Learning Experience

Overall, the results of the interviews indicate that students perceived the field experience as a valuable learning experience which contributed to their ability to work with young children. Students described the experience as a time when they recognized growth in their knowledge, skills and abilities as teachers of young children and when theory and practice came together. Many saw the experience as confirming their desire to work with young children. These findings appear to be highly consistent with research studies which have investigated student inservice teacher attitudes toward field experiences (Appleberry, 1976; Haring & Nelson, 1980; Lortie, 1975; Noscov, 1975). Such studies indicate that students hold highly favorable attitudes toward the field experience and often regard it as one of the most useful aspects of their training.

While these highly favorable and positive views of the field experience appear to support the beliefs of teacher educators and training institutions that such experiences are a desirable part of teacher training programs, one is reluctant to draw such conclusions

without examining these experiences in light of their educational outcomes. A number of studies (Hoy & Rees, 1977; Iannaccone, 1963; Salzillo & Van Fleet, 1977; Tabachnick et al, 1979-80 indicating that what is learned during field experiences often contradicts intended educational purposes such as the integration of theory and practice, of reflection and analysis, and the exploration of theoretical principles. It therefore appears necessary to further examine the results of the interviews data for how well they serve educational purposes.

Reflective Thinking and the Integration of Theory and Practice

One theme which appeared throughout the interview data and which is relevant to educational outcomes is the importance students placed on integrating theory with practice, and on reflection and analysis of their work. In section II of the interview, students identified the integration of theory and practice and self evaluation as two of the major benefits gained from the field experience (section II, question 1). Students stressed the importance of understanding the "hows" and "whys" of their work with children. Theory or experience alone was not enough. The two must work together.

Self evaluation was considered to be an important tool for evaluating the effectiveness of their work and helping them grow and improve as teachers of young children.

Student perceptions of their activities in the field, the techniques they used and their perspectives on the work of teaching young children tend to confirm that the linking of theory and practice and reflective thinking were a part of their learning experiences in the field. For example, when discussing the activities they performed in their placement setting in section I, students indicated that the basis upon which they planned and carried out activities was developmental theory (Section I, questions 4 & 5). Students attempted to provide experiences which met the particular developmental needs and interest of the children in their setting.

Connections between theory and practice were also evident in student's perceptions of the techniques they used to guide children's behavior and their perspectives on the work of teaching. In section II students indicate that they were aware of what techniques they used and why. The rationale for these actions was articulated in terms of theoretical concepts and principles. Such findings indicate that students perceive techniques to

be a means for achieving some educational purpose, rather than an end to themselves. Likewise in section V students describe the work of teaching in terms of a broad educational goal such as enhancing the development and growth of children. They note that the activities performed to achieve this goal do not look important to the untrained eye or to one who does not know the underlying purposes. Such thinking implies that teaching activities are meaningless when separated from their goal. They only become meaningful when they are connected to their broader educational purpose.

The above findings suggest that reflective thinking and the integration of theory and practice are educational outcomes or consequences which resulted from the field experience. This would tend to provide support for the beliefs of teacher educators that field experiences do contribute beneficially to the development of teachers and that they are valuable aspects of teacher education programs.

It is also apparent that the above findings are contradictory to other research studies such as Evans, 1986; Gibson, 1976; Goodman, 1985b; Tabachnick, 1980; Tabachnick et al, 1979-80. These studies found that students engaged in routine mechanistic teaching act-

ivities which required little thought or reflection and which led to utilitarian perspectives on teaching. Students viewed teaching as primarily a technical activity which involved learning "how to" do specific routine, managerial teaching activities. There was very little concern for or understanding of the "whys" behind the teaching activities performed in the placement setting. Instructional activities and techniques were justified on the basis of whether they worked rather than in terms of any education goal or theoretical concept. Researchers such as Tabachnick et al, (1979-80), attribute these findings in part to the processes and structures inherent in the school context such as the pre-determination of curriculum content, the use of pre-packaged curriculum materials and the fragmented structure of the school day.

While the contradiction in findings implies that field experiences result in both negative and positive outcomes, the critical questions are why and how does this happen? The view of Zeichner (1980) and others (Popkewitz et al, 1979; Ryan, 1970; Tisker, 1982) that the nature of the processes, interactions, relationships and structures occurring within the field experience is what shapes and influences it's outcome appears to be

useful in explaining the difference in findings between this investigation and others.

On the face of it, the intended purposes and structure of this field experience program appear to be similar to those of other teacher preparation programs. There is a difference though, in the contexts in which the field experiences occurred. Whereas the field experiences in the above studies occurred within the school system, the field experiences in this study occurred in various child care programs in the community. While these facilities may differ among themselves they share a common independence from the school system. The differential outcomes of this field experience program and others may be attributed in part to the particular processes and structures occurring within the two different contexts.

For example, Tabachnick et al, (1979-80), attributed students' utilitarian perspectives on teaching to the presence of a pre-determined curriculum in the schools and the use of pre-packaged curriculum materials. Many of the activities students performed during their field experience were pre-determined by the school or classroom teacher before the students began their placement. Students had little to say about what was

to be taught, how it was to be taught, or with what materials.

The effect of this, is that students do not get the opportunity to think about what children need to know or how to best help them acquire this knowledge. They do not have to make or justify instructional decisions or consider the consequences of their action. In short, they have little opportunity to make linkages between theory and practice.

In early childhood education, it is common for child care programs to plan the curriculum around the developmental needs and interests of the children. Thus the curriculum tends to be open and flexible and does not have a prescribed or specific content which must be rigidly adhered to. It is the teachers in these programs who plan and implement the curriculum to achieve the goals of the program.

The perceptions of the students in this study regarding the nature of their participation and involvement in the field experience tend to reflect this kind of a program context. In section I of the interview students indicated that they engaged in planning and implementing activities to meet the developmental needs and interests of the children in their centre. In

doing so, students must address questions of what, why, and how to teach. Thus linkages between theory and practice can be made.

It appears from this analysis that students during their field experience become part of a pre-existing context. This context has certain practices, belief systems and behavior patterns which influence and shape the student's behavior and teaching perspectives. If one of the purposes of the field experience is to develop thoughtful, reflective teachers who are cognizant of the relationship between theory and practice, it seems necessary to place them in a context that will provide these opportunities.

The Development of a Humanistic Orientation Towards Young Children

It was clear from the interview data that students had a very humanistic orientation towards children with whom they worked. Students were concerned about enhancing and facilitating children's development, meeting individual needs, understanding children from their own perspective and maintaining sensitive interactions and relationships with children.

Indications that students valued humanistic principles and beliefs was most evident in the perspectives

on teaching which they expressed. Over half of the students identified close attachments and relationships with children as the most satisfying aspect of working with young children. Student descriptions of their most rewarding experiences in the field confirmed this view. Likewise, students described the ideal child care worker in terms of humane qualities and characteristics. Child care workers who were warm, patient, giving, loving, approachable, respectful, and genuinely concerned about and interested in children were highly regarded by students.

Humanistic ideas and beliefs about children were incorporated into the ways students managed children's behavior in the centre. Students attempted to use behavior management techniques which were positive and non-directive, and which supported children's self-esteem.

These findings tend to contradict the early research studies of student attitudes toward children and teaching that form as a result of teaching experiences (Alper & Retish, 1972; Dutton, 1962; Hoy, 1967; Hoy & Rees, 1977). In general, these studies found that students became more negative, custodial, bureaucratic and authoritarian after student teaching. More recent

ethnographic studies investigating the development of student teaching perspectives during field experiences tend to support these findings (Gibson, 1976; Tabachnick, 1980; Tabachnick et al, (1979-80. For example, Tabachnick et al (1979-80), found elementary student teachers to be primarily concerned with activities emphasizing order, impersonal and usually related to the task at hand. Their interactions were also found to take up a large portion of the student's time with children and were generally handled in a routine manner.

In the previous discussion it was suggested that the network of interconnected processes and structures present in the field experience setting can both inhibit and promote the range of teaching activities students can engage in during field experience. This in turn influences student learning in different ways, as well as the nature of the student's relationships with children.

In particular, if one examines the structures of schools and child care centres, it becomes apparent that there are differences in staff-child ratios and in the ways teaching/learning activities are organized in the two contexts. These differences may influence how much students develop a humanistic orientation

towards children and teaching.

In the school context it is not uncommon for teachers and student teachers to carry out their teaching activities alone with twenty to thirty children at a time. This relatively large class makes classroom management difficult and limits the amount of time the teacher has to interact with individual children. These conditions would not seem to promote humane, sensitive relationships between teachers and children.

Teaching/learning activities in the school system are also separated into school years and grade levels. Each grade level has a curriculum which defines the teaching/learning objectives which need to be achieved by the end of the school year. Likewise, the school day is separated into discrete periods of time, each for a specific subject area. In many cases children move to and from other classrooms and teachers throughout the day for instruction in different subject areas.

The effect of these structural conditions is to create demands on the teacher and student teacher to keep children orderly, quiet and focused on a particular task at a particular time so that the curriculum will be "covered" by the end of the school year. The pressure to keep children moving through a prescribed lesson in a given time period would seem to promote

interactions with children which are brief, impersonal and task related. Opportunities for engaging in any sustained informal and personalized interactions with children would appear to be severely limited. Given the structural demands of the school setting it is not difficult to see why students develop an orientation toward children and teaching which is more bureaucratic than humanistic in nature.

In a child care centre, the teacher or child care worker usually collaborates with other staff to carry out the daily activities of the program. This child care team is jointly responsible for supervision of children. In most provinces, furthermore, there are minimum staff-child ratios and group size requirements which must be met by child care centres. For Manitoba, for example, ratios are 1:8 for children ages 2-6 with a maximum group size of 16 and 1:15 for ages 6-12 with a maximum group size of 30 (The Community Child Day Care Standards Act, 1983). Students during field experiences are not included in the staff-child ratio of the centre, so their presence lowers these ratios still further.

It is suggested that the small group size and the presence of other staff persons considerably reduces the need to emphasize control of children's behavior.

Class management becomes less of a problem. The smaller number of children would seem to promote more personalized and humanistic interactions between teachers and children.

In the child care system, child care centres carry out teaching/learning activities on a continual twelve month basis. There are no specific teaching/learning goals which must be achieved within a prescribed year or time period. The daily schedule of the child care centre is organized in terms of activities and routines rather than subject areas. These include such things as free play, large and small group activities, outdoor time, snack, rest or quiet time, and lunch. The curriculum areas are integrated into these activities and routines. Although the daily routines and activities are divided into time periods, these periods are flexible and can be changed according to the needs and interests of the children. Teachers also carry out teaching/learning activities with the same children throughout the day.

In comparison to the school context, the structuring of teaching/learning activities in the child care context appears to allow for a much broader range and type of interaction to occur. Working with the same

group of children throughout the day in a variety of activities would seem to offer many opportunities for spontaneous, and informal interaction. Similarly, it would seem that by observing and interacting with children in a variety of activities throughout the day, the teacher would develop a more holistic view of children. Field experiences in this kind of context would seem to favor the development of a more humanistic rather than bureaucratic orientation towards children and teaching.

The Problematic Nature of the Student Role

Despite the highly favorable attitudes of students towards their field experience and the indications that the experience resulted in some positive educational outcomes in terms of teacher development, it was evident from the interview data that some events and processes were also perceived as problematic. Many of these appeared to be related to the student's role and status.

One half of the students characterized their role as being a helper or assistant to staff. This role was seen as having less autonomy and responsibility than others in the centre and did not allow students to be full contributors to the child care team. The other

half of students saw their role as that of a staff person. They had the same autonomy and responsibilities as others in the centre and considered themselves to be full contributing members of the child care team. It was evident from the responses that students clearly preferred and desired the "staff role", but the opportunity to assume this role was perceived as dependent on the centre, not the student's initiative. If so, these results imply that the student's role in the centre is not clearly defined by the university; or if defined, it is not clearly communicated or understood by all placement sites.

Research on field experience programs in teacher education appear to support this view, indicating that colleges do not communicate clearly the expectations for the field experience to the public schools (Erdman, 1983; Zeichner, 1980; Howey et al, 1978). Similarly, Applegate & Lasley, (1982, 1984) investigating perceptions of cooperating teachers about field experiences found that cooperating teachers were often unsure about the intentions of the field experience and what to do with students.

An examination of the curriculum outline of the training program (CCWTP, 1986) appears to suggest that

one of the intended purposes of the field experience was for students to assume greater autonomy, responsibility and participation in the field experience. Yet one half of the students perceived their role in the centre as not meeting this goal. While other results in this study suggest that the perceived limitations of the student role were not seriously detrimental to student's learning, it remains a problem that needs to be addressed in order to maximize the benefits of the field experience.

The data on student concerns during the field experience indicate that the student role predisposes students to act in certain ways simply to survive the field experience. Many problems and concerns were related to interpersonal relationships with centre staff and supervisors. What was significant about these findings was not that they occurred, but that students felt unable to deal with them directly because of their student status. Students were aware that staff and supervisors might evaluate them negatively and they therefore felt compelled to adopt a safe strategy, one of accepting interpersonal difficulties as part of being a student, and trying to maintain workable relationships so they could get through the experience without upsetting staff and supervisors.

These findings support research studies on the development of student perspectives (Gibson, 1976; Tabachnick et al, 1979-80; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985). For example, Gibson (1976), interviewing students over a 3 year period, reported that as students progressed through their program they developed a safety-survival perspective. This involved giving teachers what they felt they wanted, and ensuring that their behavior fit what they thought was expected of them by the school and college. Similarly, Tabachnick et al, (1979-80) found that students consciously avoided conflict with the cooperating teacher and were aware that getting a good recommendation from him/her was important to their success in job hunting. Zeichner & Tabachnick, (1985) studying the development of teaching perspectives of student and beginning teachers over a 2 year period, found that they adopted strategies to deal with situational demands in which they appeared to comply with the constraints of the situation, but retained private reservations about doing so.

The safety-survival oriented concerns shown by students in this study also reflected the developmental perspective proposed by some researchers to explain the concerns characteristic of teachers as they develop over time (Caruso, 1977; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Katz, 1972;

Sacks & Heatherington, 1982). Essentially, this perspective views teachers as passing through distinct stages in their concerns about themselves and their abilities to deal with teaching. Survival concerns, accompanied by feelings of anxiety, insecurity and unsureness about one's competence gradually diminish as confidence develops. Conflict and stress accompany most of the phases and are triggered by ambiguities in the role of the student and the development of personality and role conflicts with others. The student attempts to please both cooperating teachers and university supervisors while undergoing evaluation.

Student perceptions of their student role and the concerns they encounter during the field experience indicate the importance for teacher educators to know and understand the field experience from the student's perspective and how events occurring in the experience are interpreted by them. Survival concerns clearly impact on student behavior in the field, and need to be addressed and understood by those involved in managing the experience. Students' survival concerns need to be acknowledged and supported in such a way that students will be encouraged to face the risks of teaching and act in accordance with their own developing beliefs, rather than out of a need to fulfil expectations of others.

Those who are involved in supervising field experiences must therefore be sensitive to the feelings of students and should work towards developing relationships where student trust in authorities is encouraged.

The Role of the University Supervisor and the Student Support System

The interview results suggest that students' relationships with the university supervisors had a key impact on their progress and learning during the field experience. While both the university and on-site supervisor observed and provided feedback to the student about her work in the field, the university supervisor seemed to play a more substantive role in guiding and supporting the student. It appeared that she had an understanding of the student's performance in the field as well as the feelings and concerns students were experiencing about their work. Students clearly identified the university supervisor as being supportive, understanding, empathetic and easy to talk to. Compared with other individuals who students considered helpful, the university supervisor seemed to provide the greatest range of help in terms of personal and professional guidance. This would seem to indicate that the student's strong needs for social and emotional

support discussed in the previous section were largely met by the university supervisor.

One problem which particularly bothered students and which they identified as a major disappointment, was observing teaching behaviors and attitudes in the centre which were contrary to what students believed to be good care-giving practices. Although it was not mentioned by students, it would seem from other comments about their interactions with the university supervisor, that the supervisor played a key role in helping students interpret and understand behaviors and attitudes which they did not approve of - what might be called "the realities of the field."

While the university supervisor appeared to be the key person for support and guidance, note that other individuals involved in the training program also served as resources. Most students developed a personal network of individuals who helped them in different ways. The help provided by each individual depended on the nature of the relationship with the student.

Conclusion

This investigation indicates that reflective thinking, the integration of theory and practice, and the development of a humanistic orientation towards

children were educational outcomes of the field experience in child care work. Overall, the nature of the processes, interaction, relationships and structures occurring in the child care context were found to be conducive towards influencing these outcomes.

The study also suggests that conflicting expectations of the student's role between the university and placement site can result in uneven opportunities for student autonomy, responsibility and participation in the field experience. While this did not appear to severely inhibit positive student outcomes, it suggests that clear definition, communication and understanding of the student role between those involved in managing the experience can enhance realization of the program aims.

Survival concerns associated with the low status and ambiguity of the student role may have inhibited risk-taking behavior in students, and inclined them to conform to expectations of authorities rather than act from personal convictions. This finding suggests that those involved in managing field experiences must be sensitive to the social and emotional needs of students and work towards strengthening students' capacities for autonomy.

The university supervisor played a key role in

guiding and supporting student learning. By being supportive, understanding of the student's situation, empathetic and easy to talk to, the university supervisor provided a range of personal and professional guidance.

All things considered, the results of this investigation suggest that to a large degree what students learned from the field experience was congruent with the program's intentions and purposes. Although this investigation studied the field experience of only one child care training program, its findings suggest that field experiences are a valuable aspect of child care training programs in general, and benefit the professional development of early childhood teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION I

NATURE OF STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

1. Perhaps we could begin student's name by having you describe the centre you were placed in during your last field experience block. I'd be interested in knowing about the program and the children and staff who were there. Please do not tell me the name of the centre or the names of any persons who were there.
2. In general student's name, what were you hoping to accomplish during your placement at this centre in terms of your growth, development, skills, etc. as a child care worker?
3. Could you please explain what you feel your role was at this centre?
4. To give me an idea of your involvement and participation at the centre would you please describe some of the activities and things that you did while you were there? How did you spend your time?
5. Could you please describe for me what a typical day was like for you at this centre?

6. You have given me a good idea of your involvement with the children at this centre. I'd also like to know about your involvement with the staff and onsite supervisor. For example, what kinds of things did you do and talk about with the staff and onsite supervisor?
7. How about your university supervisor? What kind of contact and involvement did you have with her? What kinds of things did you talk about?
8. Student's name, part of your field experience included coming back to the university for classes in Guiding Children's Behavior, Activity Planning, and a group seminar. I'd be interested in knowing what kinds of things you were expected to do in these courses.
9. In your view, what purpose did these courses serve in your field experience?
10. Overall, student's name, could you describe what the past 6 weeks of field experience have been like for you?

SECTION II

WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED DURING FIELD EXPERIENCE

I'd like to talk now about what you feel you've gained from your participation in the field experience you've just completed.

1. Could you please describe how you think you've benefited as a result of your participation in this field experience?
2. Could you please describe what you feel you learned about working with young children? About children in general? About the field of child care?
3. What techniques of working with young children did you observe during this field placement? What techniques did you use during this field placement?
4. Could you please describe one or two experiences you had during this field experience which were most rewarding to you?
5. What were some of the things that you learned during this field experience that surprised you?
6. How was this field experience different from your previous field experiences?
7. How has this field experience changed your views on working with young children?
8. You've given me a good idea of how you feel you've benefited from this experience. I'm wondering if there is anything you expected to learn but didn't?

9. If you had to go through this whole experience again what would you do differently?
10. In what areas of working with young children do you feel most competent as a child care worker?
11. Overall student's name, how would you rate this field experience in contributing to your ability to work with young children?
 - 1) extremely helpful.
 - 2) helpful
 - 3) somewhat helpful
 - 4) not helpfulCould you please elaborate on that?

SECTION III

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS EXPERIENCED IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

Now that we have talked about some of the benefits you saw yourself as gaining in the field experience, I'd like to know about some of the things that were difficult for you.

1. What were some of the most difficult experiences you had during this field block?
2. How did you try and resolve these difficulties?
3. Based on your experiences in the field, what is the most difficult thing about working with young children?

4. On a day to day basis what were some of the things that irritated you the most about working with young children? About working with other staff?
5. Was there anything that occurred during the field experience which disappointed you?
6. As you see it, what were the major drawbacks of this field experience?
7. I know this is a hard question, but, could you tell me what your biggest concern or problem was during your field block?

SECTION IV

INFLUENCES ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION DURING FIELD EXPERIENCE

My next set of questions have to do with some of the people who were involved with you during your field placement and how they influenced your participation in the field experience. For these questions I do not want you to tell me their names, only their relationship to you - for example; friend, onsite supervisor, staff member, fellow student. Using this index card and without showing me, would you please write the names of the people you consider to have been most helpful to you during your last field experience. Beside each name would you please write their relationship to you?

1. Without telling me their names and using only their relationship to you, would you please tell me what persons you consider to have been most helpful to you during your last field experience. What was it that _____ did to help you?
2. You have mentioned _____ and how they have helped you. I'm wondering how (onsite supervisor, university supervisor, centre staff, centre director, children, other students, family members, course instructors) contributed to your participation and involvement in your field placement? How did they influence your learning or progress?
3. What was the most difficult thing about communicating with these people?
4. Could you identify some ways the university supervisor and onsite supervisor could have been more helpful to you during this experience?
5. My last question has to do with the academic courses you took during the field experience. Could you please tell me how your participation in these courses helped or hindered what you actually did at your last centre placement?

SECTION VTEACHING PERSPECTIVES

This final set of questions has to do with your views on working with young children.

1. If you had to describe what a child care worker or professional actually does all day what would you say?
2. What kinds of knowledge, skills, experiences, attitudes etc. does a child care worker or child care professional need to work with young children?
3. Out of all the things that child care professionals do in carrying out their work with young children, which do you consider to be the most important?
4. To what degree do you think you and other child care professionals you worked with and observed during your field experience, were able to do list question 3?
5. Could you please describe for me the best child care professional you have observed and/or worked with during your field experience?
6. Student's name, looking back on your field experience could you please tell me some of the ways you were able to tell if you were doing a good job of what

you did at your last centre? How do you think child care workers working in the field evaluate their effectiveness in working with young children?

7. Looking back to when you first started your program of studies, how have your ideas or views about working with young children changed?
8. In your own experience what are the most satisfying aspects of working with young children? Least satisfying?
9. If you could make any changes at all in the child care field what would they be?
10. My last questions have to do with your future plans in regards to working with young children and the child care field. Where do you see yourself headed from here?
11. Do you see yourself as working with young children 5 years from now? (If yes, ask) How do you think your ideas and views about working with young children will have changed?

CLOSING That's all the questions I have student's name.
I would like to thank you for sharing with me your thoughts on caring for children and your experiences in the field.
Good luck in your future plans.

PROBES FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Repeat question.
2. Anything else?
3. Any other reason?
4. Any others?
5. How do you mean?
6. What do you mean?
7. Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?
8. Could you elaborate on that?
9. I'm not quite sure if I understand. Could you give me an example?

APPENDIX II

SAMPLE RESULTS OF PILOT STUDYSTUDENT CHILD CARE WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FIELD
EXPERIENCE

MARCH 1988

Catherine Blakesley

In January 1988 a pilot study of Student Child Care Workers' Perceptions of Their Field Experiences, was conducted with five students from the Training For Child Care 1987 program at the University of Winnipeg. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the interview guide for instrument deficiencies such as wording, question clarity, negative subject reactions, timing, quality of recording and to develop a method for quantifying and analyzing the interview data.

The students who participated in the pilot study were at the end of a one-year child care training program similar in nature to that of the child care worker training program to be investigated in the study. Students were selected by the researcher and asked to participate in the pilot study. Interviews were recorded, and later transcribed into written form. Each interview was approximately 1-1½ hours in length.

The results are presented in five sections, each representing one of the research questions to be investigated in the study. The questions in each section are identified by the number in which they occur in the interview guide. First person statements taken from the interviews follow the analysis to reflect the nature of the responses from which the analysis was determined. Section I is presented in it's entirety and is followed by a summary of the results for that section. Only one question from each of the remaining sections was analyzed for the pilot study.

SECTION INATURE OF STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCEQuestion 1DESCRIPTION OF CENTRE, PROGRAM CHILDREN AND STAFF

Each of the students described their field placement in terms of the nature of its setting (school age, preschool etc.), its philosophy or program (learning through play, parent participation etc.), and the characteristics of the children (special needs, hospitalized etc.). Overall the placements were diverse with few commonalities among them. Each placement was unique in terms of its particular setting, philosophy, program and children.

"It was a core area daycare and it catered specifically to special needs. Every child there had some sort of problem. They mixed the children. The kids weren't segregated."

"It was a school-age centre based right in the school. No special needs. The philosophy was to give to the children. Let them have fun while they are learning."

"It was a hospital setting in a child life department. They had cancer...things like that. Their philosophy is that children use play as their outlet...that's how children learn and express themselves."

"This was an infant centre as well as a pre-school. It was relatively new. The program was very fluid. A lot of parent participation."

Question 2WHAT WERE YOU HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH DURING YOUR PLACEMENT AT THIS CENTRE?

Basically students viewed their last field placement as either an opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills about working with young children or to further refine, practice and develop their current knowledge and skill as child care workers. Three out of five students indicated that they had an interest in working with a particular kind of child or within a particular setting. These students expected their placement to confirm or disconfirm future goals and directions in working with children.

"I would like to specialize in special needs and I guess I was looking for a lot of experience in it. I learned a tremendous amount. It was a good experience."

"My purpose was to see whether I could really handle being in a child life setting. I'd always wanted to work there... I think I can be."

One student who wanted to practice or develop her current knowledge and skill as a child care worker, identified a particular skill area to work on such as guiding children's behavior.

"I think I wanted to tighten things up, especially behavior modification. I wanted to get a lot more comfortable with it."

Other students (2), expressed a desire for more responsibility and autonomy in their field placement. For these students a major goal was to actually experience being a full time teacher of young children. They wanted to 'feel' like a 'real' teacher of young children, not like a student.

"I wanted to have more responsibility where I could just take over someone's responsibilities for the whole day. It gave me an idea of what it would be like to be a full fledged child care worker. It's different being a student than a child care worker. You're just not permitted to assume full responsibility."

"I specifically asked for this centre because I knew that they would give me a lot of latitude and I wouldn't be stuck in one spot. I wanted to go with whatever was going on."

Question 3

COULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN WHAT YOU FEEL YOUR ROLE WAS AT THIS CENTRE?

Four out of five students characterized their role as being one of an aide or assistant. This role was seen as distinct from that of a staff member. Two out of three students who expressed a desire for more autonomy and responsibility (question 2) found this role limiting and expressed dissatisfaction with it.

"I sort of became an assistant. I think I felt like an outsider who was just there for visits. Not like one of the staff."

"My role was that of an aide. Somewhat a gopher."

Only one student described her role as being that of a staff person. This was described as being distinct from that of an assistant or student role and was clearly preferable.

"They didn't make me feel like I was a student. After the first day they sort of accepted me as one of the staff. I think my role was just one of the staff."

Questions 4 and 5

DESCRIPTION OF TYPICAL DAY AND NATURE OF ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN

Overall, the students participated in a wide range of activities during their field placement. Students described the nature of their participation in terms of group and individual activities, daily routines (snack, cleanup, lunch, nap), planning and specific activities related to a particular curriculum area (science, art, music). The range and scope of their participation reflected the multifaceted nature of working with young children. The single unifying theme or principle upon which students appeared to base their participation and activities was to provide experiences which met the particular needs and interests of the children in that setting. Students viewed their work as purposeful and directed towards meeting children's developmental needs and interests. Students were clearly attempting to put theory into practice.

"I tried to incorporate a lot of different activities. There wasn't a lot of science being done so I did a lot more science. Overall I tried to incorporate something from all eight curriculum areas. It depended on what the kids wanted and were able to do."

"I mostly tried to communicate with them, see what they wanted to do or play. I would do some planned activities as well as spontaneous ones."

"I talked a lot to the children and tried to expand on the activities done. I focused on listening to them. I tried to see they had a creative day without too much structure."

"I made my schedule up each morning according to the children."

Two out of five students described their days as being fast paced, demanding and challenging.

"It was so hectic. You could never let your guard down. You had to be one step ahead. It was really demanding."

"The days went really fast and every day was different. It was hard to plan but it was challenging."

Question 6

YOU HAVE GIVEN ME A GOOD IDEA OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CHILDREN AT THIS CENTRE. I'D ALSO LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE STAFF AND YOUR ONSITE SUPERVISOR. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DID YOU DO AND TALK ABOUT WITH THE STAFF AND ONSITE SUPERVISOR?

The nature of student's involvement and interaction with the onsite supervisor appeared to take two forms. Four out of five students indicated that the onsite provided practical, 'how to', technical kinds of information in regards to planning and implementing activities and centre policy, procedures and responsibilities.

"We discussed the program and its policies. She gave me a lot of suggestions for activities."

"A lot of the times we'd just talk over my activity plans and he would offer suggestions."

"My onsite taught me a lot about woodworking and tools."

"In the morning she would tell me what she felt I should be working on that day."

"She informed me just how things work...the system, the responsibilities of the staff."

The other major form of interaction appeared to centre on discussions of children's developmental or health backgrounds and their family circumstances. Four out of five students mentioned this as a topic of discussion.

"We spoke mostly about the kids' backgrounds. She would let me know what kind of home they were living in."

"She'd fill me in on the children's different prognoses, what was wrong and what I could do to play with them."

"We talked about concerns I had with the children. She'd fill me in on their background. That gave me insight into their behavior."

The onsite supervisor appeared to be the primary person in which students interacted. In contrast to the onsite supervisor students rarely commented on the nature of their interaction or contact with other staff members, suggesting that other centre staff played a limited role in the day to day participation of the students.

"Basically the only staff I saw was my onsite."

"With other staff It was just basic conversation."

"I had a good relationship with staff. They said they liked having me there."

Question 7

HOW ABOUT YOUR UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR? WHAT KIND OF CONTACT AND INVOLVEMENT DID YOU HAVE WITH HER? WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DID YOU TALK ABOUT?

Students' interaction and involvement with the university supervisor appeared to be much broader and deeper in nature than that described with the onsite. Whereas interaction with the onsite supervisor tended to focus on the practical aspects of caregiving and the sharing of information related to specific children, interaction with the university supervisor focused more on students' ongoing growth and development as childcare workers. Although the university supervisor provided practical "how to do it" suggestions this tended to be only a part of a larger ongoing process of observation, discussion and feedback of the student's work.

"She would observe me. She would go over what she had seen and tell me what was really good and what needed work on. We'd discuss things I could do, how I was doing and any concerns I had."

"She wanted me to grow. She'd give me feedback on what I had done and suggestions on my activities. We'd talk about where I could improve."

Three students described their university supervisor as being supportive and understanding to their needs and easily accessible to them. These students indicated talking about a broader range of topics such as the field of child care and personal philosophies of working with children. Two of these students related that the university supervisor was the person they discussed their personal fears and struggles with and about themselves as caregivers.

"We talked about my fears. I'm still working on them. Also we used to talk about the field a lot. Actually it was more or less deciding what my philosophy was. She really helped me see a broader view."

"My practicum supervisor was a very supportive intelligent woman. I knew that at any given time I could call on her for advice personally as well as a student. I discussed with her my uncomfortable feelings about working in childcare."

Question 8 and 9

OMITTED. N/A TO SAMPLE GROUP.

Question 10OVERALL, COULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT THE PAST 6 WEEKS OF FIELD EXPERIENCE HAVE BEEN LIKE FOR YOU?

Out of the four students who responded to this question two described their last placement as being hectic, fast paced, too condensed and too short a period of time for learning. It should be noted that for the pilot study sample group that the three field placements previous to the last field block had been 10-12 weeks in duration. In comparison the last field block was 5 weeks long, less than half the usual time spent in the field.

Despite the short time period, two out of four students indicated that their last field experience was the best block in terms of learning. For these students the final field experience was a time when they recognized their growth as child care workers.

"I think I learned the most in these five weeks but then I think it was because I had the other three blocks as the experience behind me. I think by the time I got to this block I didn't feel like a student any more. I guess it was really the best experience even though the time was short."

"It was the best block I had. I was much more sure of myself. A lot more confident and I gave myself more credit for being able to do the job. I feel confident enough to go out and apply for a job. I feel quite capable."

SUMMARY

Overall, students carried out their field work within a wide variety of settings and programs and with diverse numbers and characteristics of children. Students viewed their final field placements as either opportunities to practice and refine their current knowledge and skills as child care students or assume greater professional responsibility and autonomy as child care workers. The majority of students described their role at the field placements site as that of an assistant or aide. Almost half were dissatisfied with this role, particularly those who expressed a desire for more autonomy and responsibility. Students distinguished between the roles of student, aide or assistant and staff member, and implied that the role of staff person was the desired one. The daily participation and activities of the students were diverse. Although there were no similarities across placements in regards to the specific nature of activities, nearly

all students indicated that the needs and interests of the particular children guided their participation and involvement at the field site. Students appeared to have limited contact and involvement with centre staff persons other than the onsite supervisor. The two primary persons students interacted with were the onsite and university supervisors. The nature of interaction and involvement with these two individuals appeared to differ in two ways. Interaction with the onsite supervisor was limited more to the provision of practical suggestions on activities or sharing of specific information related to particular children at the centre. In contrast, interaction with the university supervisor appeared to reflect broader and more in-depth concerns related to the ongoing growth and development of the students as child care workers. A broader range of topics were discussed apart from the student's specific work at the field site, such as the field of child care and personal philosophies of working with children. Some students related sharing personal struggles and conflicts about themselves with the university supervisor. Overall, students described their final field placement as being fast paced, demanding and hectic. A major concern was the short duration of the placement. Some students described their final field placement as the best experience for learning, indicating a recognition of their growth as child care workers.

SECTION II

WHAT STUDENTS GAINED FROM THEIR FIELD EXPERIENCE

Question 1

COULD YOU PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW YOU THINK YOU'VE BENEFITED AS A RESULT OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS FIELD EXPERIENCE?

Five out of five students responded to this question by commenting on their growth and development as child care professionals. A major theme that emerged was how the field experience had either broadened, deepened, developed or changed in some way their attitudes and understanding of children, themselves and the child care field. One of the major reasons attributed to these changes appeared to stem not so much from the particular characteristics of the field placement but rather from the overall diversity of experiences with programs, children and staff encountered during each of their four field placements throughout the year. Three out of five students made comparisons of the different centres in terms of their philosophies and children and how staff worked together and with children. For the majority of students the final field experience represented

a culmination of all that had been seen, heard or done in the field and a conscious recognition of how these experiences had changed and developed them as caregivers.

"I think I'm less judgemental. I've developed so much patience that I didn't know I had. I just found that it was a sort of a culmination of everything from the year sort of ended up in this last block."

"I've learned there's a lot of different ways to do things. My last two centres were different in how they implemented things and ran the program. The biggest thing I got was knowing that not all centres are the same and that the people do really bring their own personalities to it."

"I've learned a lot about how children develop throughout the whole program but I really learned how to respect children in this block and build my own philosophy."

"I've come a long way. I have gained insight, self control, understanding and empathy. I've become more of a whole person because of my range of experiences."

"It made you more aware of what it was going to be like working out in the field, the variety, the ways of doing things. I've learned how to work with different people. There's different ideas, philosophies and ways people can work together and that's good."

SECTION III

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS EXPERIENCED DURING THE FIELD PLACEMENT

Question 1 and 2

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES YOU HAD DURING THIS FIELD BLOCK? HOW DID YOU TRY AND RESOLVE THESE DIFFICULTIES?

One common concern or problem experienced by three of the five students in the last field block was its short duration. Each of these students felt that the short length of the placement (5 weeks) did not allow them enough time to establish a relationship with the children they were working with at the centre. Apart from this common concern students talked about personal difficulties related to working with a particular child or group of children and staff members.

"It was mainly not having enough time to establish a relationship with these kids."

"I would say having to be tactful between an onsite supervisor and a new director who did not like each other. Also the hours were inadequate to get to know the children. I did have difficulty with a child whose personality and temperament were the same as mine."

"It was working with children who were really sick and how I felt about them. I really had to learn how to control my feelings."

"Playing a heavy all the time. I also struggled with the fact that in a school-age centre some of the kids were bigger than me. It was difficult trying to break up a fight. I also found it difficult being tested by them."

"It was difficult being in a new place, a whole new group of kids. Sometimes I felt like an outsider. It was hard when you were working with a child and he would then start biting or spitting. That was frustrating."

Students attempted to resolve these difficulties in a number of ways. Three out of five students indicated that they dealt with their difficulties by analyzing their own feelings and behavior and by attempting to try and understand the situation from the child's perspective. Although the actual means used to deal with the child(ren) varied (touch, verbalizing of own and child's feelings, spending more time with child, getting to know children's names) all students indicated that they had made a direct attempt to understand, communicate and resolve their difficulty with that person. Two students indicated they shared their difficulties with the university supervisor as a means of dealing with the problem.

SECTION IV

INFLUENCES ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION DURING FIELD EXPERIENCE

Question 5

MY LAST QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH THE ACADEMIC COURSES YOU TOOK DURING THE FIELD EXPERIENCE. COULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME HOW YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THESE COURSES HELPED OR HINDERED WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DID AT YOUR LAST CENTRE PLACEMENT?

No definitive statements regarding the influence of academic courses on student's participation in their field sites could be determined. While four out of five students indicated they had difficulty applying what was being learned in class to their particular field placement, their explanations for this varied. It was also unclear whether the comments were related to one or all academic courses in the block. Some students thought that the courses were too specific and condensed into too short a time period to be able to apply it in the field. Others found the courses too general and vague to be of practical use. One student attributed the difficulty in implementing course work to the unique nature of the placement setting (hospital). In general students appeared to be aware of how and why their academic courses could be important to their work with children but the exact nature of what and how this knowledge influenced their work in the field placement remains unclear.

SECTION V

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

Question 1

IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE WHAT A TEACHER OF YOUNG CHILDREN ACTUALLY DOES ALL DAY WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

The majority of students (3 out of 5) responded to this question by describing the role a teacher plays in the lives of young children. Essentially teachers of young children help children grow and learn. The specific strategies, activities or ways a teacher carries out this role varied from student to student, reflecting a range of teaching philosophies or perspectives.

Two students emphasized the importance of helping children develop positive feelings about themselves and their potential.

"They need to be helped to find the potential they have. You need to find whatever it is that they are good at and build their esteem. Give them confidence."

"A lot of what you do is trying to make children feel good about themselves. Encouraging them to be the best they can be."

Two students described the work of teaching young children as creating opportunities for children to learn themselves.

"They look for and take every opportunity to teach themselves."

"She helps children teach themselves. She encourages a child to the point where they get the hunger for knowledge."

Two students also commented on the multifaceted nature of the work teachers of young children do.

"She's similar to a parent. She's a chauffeur, cook, bottle washer, cleaner, a guider of children. The job is very complex."

"She does everything. It's busy and hectic. She loves, cares for, challenges, disciplines. It's a whole range of things. We are a lot more than just babysitters."

APPENDIX IIILETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear ,

During the final block of the Child Care Worker Training Program I will be conducting a research study Student Childcare Workers' Perceptions of Their Field Experiences. The purpose of this study is to understand how students view their participation in the field experience component of their training and how they feel this experience contributes to their development as child care professionals. The proposed study will be used as a Masters' Thesis to fulfil partial requirements for a Master of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

As a student in the Child Care Worker Training Program I would like to request your participation as a subject in the study. This would involve meeting with me at the University of Winnipeg to discuss some of your thoughts and feelings regarding your last field experience. It is expected that this would require 1-2 hours of your time which would be arranged at a time convenient for you. Your cooperation and participation in the study would be greatly appreciated.

To further inform you about the purposes of the study and your participation in it a short meeting has been arranged following the Orientation to Practicum session on . I will be looking forward to meeting you at this time and answering any questions you may have about the study. If you would like to contact me before this time I can be reached at 837-6223.

Sincerely,

Catherine Blakesley

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear ,

You have been asked to participate in the research study Student Child Care Workers' Perceptions of Their Field Experiences. The proposed study is to be used as a Masters Thesis to fulfil partial requirements for a Master of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

The purpose of the study is to find out what student child care workers think about their experiences in the field work component of the Child Care Worker Training Program at the University of Winnipeg. As a subject in this study you will be asked to meet with myself, Cathy Blakesley, to discuss your thoughts and feelings regarding the field experiences you have participated in as part of your program of studies in the Child Care Worker Training Program. It is estimated that this will require 1-2 hours of your time. Any information shared by you during the interview will remain confidential in that your name will not be revealed. Excerpts from the interview may be used in the research results but will be anonymous. The completed study will be published as

a Msters' Thesis and will be available for examination by the Child Care Worker Training Program and any other interested parties. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and will in no way effect your status or standing in the Child Care Worker Training Program. You have the right to withdraw from the study without any penalty. A summary of the overall results of the study will be made available to you upon the study's completion. If you require further information about the proposed study please contact me at 837-6223 (home) or 586-8587 (work).

Attached is a letter of consent to be signed by you indicating that you have read the above letter and agree to participate as a subject in the study. Would you please sign the form and return to me as soon as possible. Your cooperation and participation is greatly appreciated. Thank-you.

Sincerely,

Catherine Blakesley

Dr. Kelvin Seifert

Faculty Advisor

LETTER OF CONSENT

I _____, hereby consent to participate as a research subject in the study: Student Child Care Workers' Perceptions of Their Field Experiences, conducted by

Catherine Blakesley as partial requirement for a Master of Education Degree, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. I agree to be interviewed about my experiences in the field work component of the Child Care Worker Training Program and understand that my participation is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study without penalty. I acknowledge having read the attached letter explaining the purposes of the study and the requirements of my participation.

Signature of Consent

Date _____

Signature of Investigator

Date _____

SAMPLE INTERVIEW DATA

SECTION I

SUBJECT 9

NATURE OF STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

Question 1

I was in a special needs type of centre, they didn't deal with any so called regular students at all. There were, I think 9 nurseries in that agency and I was in one. It reminded me very much of a regular school setting as opposed to a day centre. There were two teachers in the class room and they serviced 17 children, not all at one time. We got so many in the morning and so many in the afternoon. The children were slated to come every day but they didn't usually and I think some of that was because of their disabilities...they were prone to be sick more often and that sort of thing. All the children had some kind of disability. We had some spina bifida, some cerebral palsy, alcohol syndrome and quite a few that just weren't labelled. They were aged 4 or 5 although there were some of them who were going into school and I think they might have been 6. I was only allowed to look at one file while I was there and that was to do an assignment I had at the university. Otherwise I was not allowed to look at the files. They allowed me to ask questions about the condition of the child or the learning level but they didn't really want to give information about the parents and too much background about the child's life. Different from ours, like the general thing you'll see in child care was that....theirs was more like a treatment centre you know, as opposed to ours which it was definitely different but, not that I'm familiar with from like a special needs class in a school system, you know, I think that because I was there so I can compare the two. It's definitely different from child care or day care. When they received the child it was not necessarily that we're just going to help the child grow in a relaxed atmosphere of the way we do in day care, it was more that they were coming in here and it was a treatment plan that we were going to deal with. And so they would deal with these little treatment things all the way through. Like...on entry of the child they decided on the goals and objectives for a slated amount of time and to set something we'd take and it might be that they were just going to get the child to stop crying. Everything was very tiny in

segments and then when they reached that goal they would move to maybe taking the child out of the wheel chair and having the child spend a certain amount of time leaning up against some sort of platform where they could try and play or just get them to become involved with the children until it made progress to....if they had a visual problem where then they would take the child out of the wheel chair and try and have the child begin to move about the room independently and identify different areas like maybe....one request they had for me was to design something for them which I did with a circular covered cardboard with tinfoil which would designate the washroom area that we put up against the wall and the toy area, we put a furry triangle up on the side so that the child could feel it, and so that he could identify his own chair we put rough sandpaper on the back of the chair or we put electrical tape around the table so that he wouldn't bump into them as easily, you know, that kind of thing. And they were pretty well all like that, like it's a treatment kind of thing and that's what you had to work on daily like the activity for that child then would be perhaps insuring he was taken out of the wheel chair and taken through this kind of thing and that was his activity.

Question 2

Definitely to be exposed to a variety of disabilities that I could feel more comfortable with. I recognize that I wasn't all that comfortable because I didn't know it...you know...I realized that in day care we're going to be offered the opportunity actually to receive a variety of special needs children, and I felt that the main thing is that I have to get that exposure so I can begin to be comfortable and then begin to work with them. So that was my main concern.

Question 3

The role they gave me or the role I saw for myself? Ok, I went with the role like the universities offer me, that this is my last placement and chance to show what I knew in theory and then practice some of the things I had learned about special needs children and for me I thought, well, I would want also to be as much help as possible to the staff that are there recognizing that I hadn't worked with the children but once I got over my feeling of uncomfortableness I thought that well perhaps I would

just get right in there and be part of it. I believe their role for me was seen in a very different light. They didn't have very many expectations on me and I took the initiative in trying to do things. I was asked not to...that everything had to be okayed through them, discussed through them, which I thought were just natural things....we might come in and just say I have an activity and will you let me know when I can do them or something....like never given the opportunity to do them and they have another Red River student there who had never had experience with children whatsoever....had worked with some geriatric patients before, or something, and this was her first placement with children and they tended to use me very much like her, so that, like, to me, the idea of where they saw me was different than what I thought it would be. At first I thought all right, like where are the positives here. I know I'm getting exposure right, and that was my main goal. So the first two weeks I'd suppose I felt it's fine I'm just learning and I was asking lots of questions and they were very free in allowing me to talk with the therapist and that was the main interest for me, so that was fine. I found by the third week though I was starting to feel bored and then I was aware by the fourth week I had assignments to complete and it was difficult to do them so I was starting to feel frustrated and I didn't want to push because I kept saying, well, they can't use me the way that we thought perhaps I could be used. Like how can I best help them because I didn't, you know, think, like I thought it's fine for us to come in as a student and feel we need to accomplish certain things, but if it doesn't fit the program then we become I think, a hindrance to them and that's not fair. So I felt well, I'd turn this into something positive anyway and try doing that but I found it felt frustrating because it was so menial you know and I thought well I know I can do more and I feel comfortable with this...it's like (.....) on me, and that was frustrating and then I did start feeling concern about not getting the assignments done so I would try to settle the thing saying Gee I have these assignments I need to get done I haven't done many activities I wonder if we couldn't try some. I also felt then that there was a conflict between the two teachers in the classroom which they actually managed very well but I picked it up whereas I thought because I'm working with two teachers in the classroom I must treat them both respectfully in the same way. The one I was being supervised by did call me aside and wanted to make sure that

I brought all my activity and my questions to her not the other teacher and that if she felt then that the other teacher should know about them she would tell me to bring them to her and I tried explaining whereas I realized she was my supervisor that I brought them to her first to OK them but that it just happened before that the other teacher was around more, it wasn't her supervising me, it was just she wasn't around much. If I walked in with a box of things the other teacher was always very warm and friendly and she would start asking questions about them and I would think well, OK, she is the teacher here her students will have access to some of the things I do and explained it to both but it wasn't appreciated. So there was some conflict that I think may have created part of the problem too. Actually, the other teacher I think would have been more open to allowing me more freedom than this other person. So that made it a little difficult and then it was interesting because for my evaluation, and I had been speaking with my practicum supervisor all along that I was having difficulty getting my activities in and that in the evaluation this same teacher mentioned she would have liked to have seen me do more activities. So I said, well I was waiting for permission at this point, especially when I was being told not to do this or that without checking everything out first. But it went well.

Question 4

OK, I went in, and I thought I don't know these children, I don't know what they're capable of doing so the first activity I brought in actually was just clear covered plastic bottles with colors mixed into water and I used tinfoil to make little balls with different number of balls in each one, one to four because I thought I was recognizing that some of the activities because of their developmental degree and I wasn't sure what they were that I might have difficulty presenting something to them. I felt well this particular thing, those who were ready or at that level could learn the colors or count the objects inside or I could possibly teach rolling just whatever, get some interaction going on between myself and the child. Actually, they, I think, probably were the most suitable activity I could bring in for them because of the fact that the children changed plus the different levels of each one seemed to use them and found their own way to serve their needs, you know, which was fine

because I could take their own idea and work with it, you know, and the other thing too is that there were two of them there who had poor vision. One seemed to be more peripheral vision, the way he would take things and put them up to his face and that, so it was difficult for me to know exactly what you would offer this child plus the fact that would I might want to try as an experiment or just see where they might be in cognition in one area. They might not be working at that in the classroom they may be working at just having them physically stand so like there was that going on and the fact that you're not involved in the meeting or their discussion as to what are we working on right now then it gets a little difficult for a person to walk in and try and do something with the child. (Then you weren't involved in any of the conferences about the child?). No. That I think possibly might have been because the parents were always involved and that agency was extremely protective of their parents. So then the other things I brought in, I realized when I went in there that the children were not socializing together and I felt that to me that's one of the easiest things that I can get going and I kept thinking kids are kids there has to be a reason and I felt the best thing I could do was play with them and offer then socializing activities first and whatever comes from it, that whatever they accept after that like, on their individual levels there may be some learning there along with it. So I brought things in like....a tray with sponges and lifters and I thought I could show them how to use this to take a sponge and put it on and pretend it's cookies or whatever and I could put it in the cooking area then, you know, and try and get some interaction going on there. I brought scoops and pans with popcorn in it and I thought like we could get them to do pouring filling and you know, I brought nurf balls because I thought that the children, since they had difficulties, some of them with cerebral palsy, with using their hands that anything light would be all right and one particular child I decided I would try it in his right arm he couldn't use too well with his hand. So I felt they had said something about we might do something to get him to use it. I told him how I would build up my muscles at home working out and exercising and one way that we could build up muscles was squeezing nurf balls between our body and arm...this kind of thing...which he did. And I brought packing chips and we would put them in ice cream pails or I'd lay them on

the desk and get him to swipe them off with his arm. And that went well because the packing chips began to play tricks on us when they started to cling to the container themselves and they would...you'd go to reach for them and the electricity or something would get them to move and he thought this was hilarious. So it went well. That kind of thing.

Question 5

We would go in and the children started arriving and we would place chairs at the entrance of the doors so that the children would come in. They had difficulty taking off their clothes and that...their balance...they would come in and sit down and begin to try to take their jackets off. We would help those a little bit that need some help but we had to be careful not to help them too much. Then we would try and get them to take their jackets and put them in their respective cupboards and their boxes and that. Then I would go back with the child to the play area. And I think that's pretty well what they expected me to do was to be with the children and play with them. So I would just try and get some interaction going on between the kids, do some pretend things with them. For any of the children who at first would just walk in and sort of stand or be seated, taken out of their wheel chairs and just sat there I'd bring things to them and try and get some conversation going on like what does this feel like or get something going on so that the child was feeling it, does it have a smell, to get the use of their senses. Of course I could have someone rolling balls or a bottle back and forth to me while I was talking to them. We'd get something going. If you saw anything...like, there was one child who was autistic like and when you saw her going off into her little old corner or something we'd try and bring her around and back. Then we might open up any of the activity areas like the water table or the sand table. Then we would go to the gym class. That was nice, to be able to get them to do something. No one could sit around because they need so much you know, so you were either manning the slide or something and encouraging someone to go up the ladder and down the slide. They had these hydro spools and we could put them on them on their tummies or sitting, or whatever, for their inner ear balance to get them going side to side or front to back and that kind of thing. We did start to do some parachute things in the gym but for me, I thought that there probably wasn't too much staff for something like this. The ones

who have visual problems were very frightened and used to cry and there were only two or three people manning the large parachute, that's about all you could do with it whereas really there probably should have been a staff there holding the child underneath there with him. But I guess, for me, I don't believe in forcing, I would rather do it smoother. So when they're crying and they're disturbed, I guess for me there must be a better approach. Then we would come back in the room for snacks and bathrooming the children. I didn't do a lot of the bathrooming because those two teachers felt it was something they should look after although I did ask them if I could come and watch in case I needed to and then they would show me different things. They showed me a spina bifida lesion and explained a few things about it for me to know. Then we would go back after that to play area and it was time for the children to get ready to go home, or there might be, depending on the day, there might be music.

QUESTION 6

I mainly asked a lot of questions. I wanted to know about the disability, whether that was characteristic, whatever the child was doing was characteristic of that particular type of disability. For instance, like, we were talking about spina bifida and I wondered because we had three there with spina bifida and all at different levels of capability and she had mentioned something about the lesion being at different places so then my question to her was did the lesion's location impair more areas than another, like was their ability dependent on where that child had that lesion. She wasn't sure and she said that she would ask herself as well. I had been reading about getting some children to release some objects which they might have in their hands at home and I wasn't too sure I would be able to carry out what they said, like it just wasn't clear to me exactly what it was in writing. I asked the teacher and she suggested that I check with one of the therapists when they came in. She took me aside and she showed me maybe a spastic child, to release something in their hand should they have grabbed on to something and couldn't let go, so that was quite interesting. (Did you meet with them on a regular basis?). No, it was just like, as they, the teachers and the therapists really wanted me to

ask questions on an ongoing basis which at first I felt uncomfortable with because we were always told like, you don't talk on the floor, right? but they said that they thought my asking the question as it came up that if I waited I might forget to ask them as well as they, I think, didn't have time to take other than during the classroom hours with me and it would have made it more difficult for them. They didn't seem to be uncomfortable with talking about the children or anything actually, in front of the children, which is unusual to me because a day care stresses that so much you know. But, so then I was very careful to make sure that when I asked what I thought would be a regular question that it wouldn't embarrass the child or be anything that might be about the parents. Because I didn't think that was fair. So actually then, those kind of questions I sort of just put aside and I guess I never got answered because I just didn't feel it was right. (Any other types of things you talked about? - any questions regarding children?). I was fortunate in being given time to learn computer with the children and how the children could use the computer. I would ask questions about how they thought the computer would help these children and they asked me to do some programming that would augment some of the programs that the teachers were using or the computer. That was difficult for me in that, what I would do was what any teacher would do really which is if you're going to teach colors, I mean, you're going to introduce the colors you would have an introduction. You wouldn't just put the child on the computer and start saying where are the colors. However, they were doing that at first and I thought they must have introduced them to it earlier in the year and, to me, I guess I would use the opportunity at the first of the year and keep reinforcing it whether it's because we're going to have red milk say, or red water, or you know, like I just used to program that way so I ended up having to do that because it was the only way I know how to program and I felt a little uncomfortable because I thought too that any teacher would do and I didn't feel good about doing it that way. But the therapist who asked us to do it she then just said when I expressed that I was uncomfortable doing that she just said well remember, I'm not a teacher and I have to build a resource for the teachers so she said think of it as your help in need, which I did then. I took alphabet A B and C actually, and I gave them a story for each one and instead of caricatures I just cut them out which we were going to have laminated and then I just gave them things that they would reinforce the letter A or whatever in language arts. A suggestion for a field trip, a suggestion

for nutrition etc. and a character for every subject I could think of. (Getting back to your involvement with your supervisor, did you ever talk about what you were doing in terms of work with the children?). I asked her if I was treating activities appropriately for the children and she said yes, but she was busy, she didn't have time and she'd just say yes or when I showed her the activity she'd say OK. I'd walk away saying OK, but where's my guidance here and then thought she must think it's all right because I did emphasize the social skill but then I wasn't getting the opportunity to display the activity. The one time she particularly asked me to take something down, she had run out of things to do with the children that she was working with at the time, she just mentioned that I had some things, and it was the tray with the sponge and lifter. So I brought it down and we started with the child who I felt was most adept with doing anything, and because she did not lift the sponge and put it on the tray at first try the teacher got up and removed it, saying this is too difficult and went and got tongs and said this will be easier. She then got the children to use tongs. I did ask her after, I said if the lifters are too difficult you would say tongs before that and what if they can't manage the tongs because some of them couldn't manage the tongs. Their disabilities were so different and she said "their hands." So I said, oh, OK, fine. I felt that was something for me to try out I suppose. The other thing too is I really felt there were a couple of children in that particular group, because the levels were so different, who could definitely have used the lifter. Give them a chance, give them a try. So I didn't know if I was just threatening this lady or what. So I thought, you don't push, you ask questions.

QUESTION 7

I initiated a lot of phone calls with her because I felt comfortable in doing that. I knew her well enough by then so I asked her for supportive kind of things. Like, this is what I'm feeling. I'm recognizing that you see me in a different light than what you would like to do and having difficulty in getting married to a new job what do you want me to do. It was like not to worry about it as the main thrust of this practicum was supposed to be exposure and to feel more comfortable. We could try and implement things later on. I also used to report to her. There were three of us in that agency. One other particular girl wasn't doing so good. She was having a

very difficult time and I thought I could listen to her but she really needs some support from someone with authority so that she would feel comfortable herself, that it's all right. This girl didn't feel that she was prepared to call. I guess she felt that it would be like 'I'm complaining' instead of recognizing that they are there to help us recognize that yes, this is difficult and some of the situations were pretty bad. (So mainly she was supportive and listened to you regarding your cases?). Very much so. (Did she observe you?). Oh yes, she came in twice and she stayed quite a length of time. She saw me work in the play area at the back in the kitchen and I guess she was just mainly in the activity area. She spent the last week a good deal of time actually just running through feelings because I was concerned about what was --- going to happen, you know, like I didn't feel it was a good evaluation of what I could do. It certainly was not a bad experience, it was not a time when I didn't have any learning. There was so much learning going on anyway, but there wasn't an opportunity for me to show people what I can do and I thought since our evaluation was kind of based on that that I had some concern. So she spent a lot of time with me going through that and she went to check the activities we had done before we were through.

QUESTION 8 (and 9)

Some of them were very good in that...you're talking about the last part though, right?....because before they were very good but towards the last part....oh yes, no....we had some specialized activity planning and that was helpful because before that, like, we hadn't had a chance to think of adapting and it would....I mean not that we might not have done it on our own but I mean you don't have the time because you're in a hurry right? And so it was good having us do some experiential things where like we had to play the part that we couldn't use our arms and yet someone offered us some activity in painting - where do we go with that? But it helped us think about what we would do then when presenting activities to children with different disabilities and what might help them, how they might adapt it. So that was very good. And a lot of suggestions on how we might do that which we didn't know and so it gave us a lot of information in a short amount of time. Gee....I think it was the activity work that I found most helpful. (Guiding?). Yes, like I could have used a little bit

more help but what was happening to me is really....what I would need to do was to check out specific problems that I saw happening with our guiding teacher and we ran out of time. We'd have our class and everything and then I'd go back, but like that room (?????) dealt with things differently. Like we were always taught to try not to say no and be positive with your guiding and that wasn't the emphasis there. The emphasis there was also their feeling that some of the children were developmentally delayed or very low age level or that they wouldn't understand or even environmental background that the parents are always saying NO anyway and that if you want to get the children to learn anything that that wasn't the emphasis, that they had other, more serious things to deal with. So I could understand that, but I guess I would still like to have tried our approach.

QUESTION 10

They were good learning experiences, not just professionally but personally because it helped me realize that of course you're always going to run into situations where they aren't quite what you expect or what you're supposed to be doing and how can you make it positive. Like I know it's only been going on for the last six weeks but when I look at myself when I first started the course and myself now I realize that I have slowly been able to accept a lot of things that I would not have stood for in the beginning. Like if it had been my practicum site I probably would have said this isn't right, I have to do this. It's black and white and that's the way it is. As a person, and a team member, it helped me to sort of sum up what I have learned in the course and it helped me to recognize where I have come.

SECTION II

WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED DURING FIELD EXPERIENCE

QUESTION 1

Oh boy, so many. Definitely, like, I mean, the theory I mean, you know, like the academic end and that. I mean I had worked with some school age children before but I was lacking the theory and the knowledge so I find like a lot of things I was told to do and that like, I understand why I'm doing things now. I'm certainly better at working with children for it. It won't be such a struggle now.

QUESTION 2

That they do have different levels, that there is a sequence in learning and I recognize that they usually do follow that pattern but it's all right if there is an area that is missing. You may come up with a child that hasn't got that particular area. What I find is that I feel very comfortable and I don't sort of panic as much and can accept it and I tell myself I can offer them an opportunity to perhaps fill in that gap at the level they are at now or go back if I have to, and if they're ready to accept it that's fine but if they're not that's all right, you just continue and go on. (About the field of child care, what do you feel you have learned?). How very much it's needed. I wish I would have had this course when I was raising my own children. I really believe that it's an extremely important time of life for children more so, maybe because I'm in child care, but I feel more so than at any other time in the child's life. I guess I wish everybody else felt the same way.

QUESTION 3

I guess, other than the, like the treatment, the expertise...like ????????? and that kind of thing, the sort of medical end of things that I was aware of. I saw some, what I would sort of consider old school kinds of things that I'd seen before about disciplining or about trying to teach them how to learn things, like it's more like the school regimented kind of thing in the placement I was in. For me, I told myself, like I can see that and I can accept it because they may feel they have to do that. (Can you give me an example?) Well, you know, like, there's no leeway right, like there's not too much flexibility....this is what we're doing now and we're gonna sit down and that's it. Grant you, I think probably because they felt that some of the children with handicaps and that, you have to push them more. So maybe those are the reasons I guess, for me I'm at the stage where I'd like to try both and then, whatever suits that child. But it's non negotiable but, like, I think things can be non negotiable but they don't have to be with an authoritarian approach. I guess that's the difference between me and someone else. (What techniques did you try?). I just tried to be friendly and loving, I did try, and I feel I succeeded somewhat in getting the children to start using words between each other. Because I could see where they'd get frustrated and want to swipe at someone and at first I think they thought what's the matter with this lady, but it didn't seem to take me long

where I could just help me to remind them and say, like, can you use your words? like, so and so doesn't know what you want right now or this child is playing with this and maybe you could ask him when he's finished would he give it to you, this kind of thing. It worked, so I'd walk away from there and I wasn't there very long, about six weeks, and I'd tell myself that at this stage I can prove, because they are handicapped doesn't mean that they can't be treated the same way as we are supposed to be taught to teach other children. For those few that we might run across we may have difficulty with it I think we should just approach it the same way that we would for any other child who is a little difficult. We may have to do a little behavior mod or something or give them more attention or help him to see what he's doing and praise him for each little step because that's another thing I found, using praise, which they didn't in the beginning, they didn't do a lot of open verbal praising or even actually talking during snack time or anything. I just did it automatically and I found, that the children didn't respond at first because it's almost like we're not supposed to talk, we're eating. Maybe for some handicapped children they would be more prone to choking on lunch but I thought, well, we can take longer for snack time. Like, make it enjoyable. But the teacher started denying it (????) and let me do a bit, so they did, like...they never stand. So I think it was successful for me in the social end of it because I felt that I wasn't being allowed to do any of the other stuff.

QUESTION 4

I guess having the children respond to me. Things like, we had one child who was four with a developmental age of twelve months. That was interesting for me because he had just learned to walk and his gait and everything was just like a twelve month old child learning to walk, and I thought, well is it because he has a physical disability, and they were saying, no, it's just where he is at and for whatever reason, they didn't know. Arm movements and everything, here we have this four year old but he's just like a one year old child, where he would come up and stick his face in your face and everything. We went into the gym and I wanted him to get on to the spring horse and I kept thinking well, what do you do with a twelve month old baby. I'd try to get him to enjoy this horse and he didn't have much body movement so I bounced the horse up and down for him and everything and he would smile and give me eye contact and then I'd

stop. I felt he wanted me to go on but he wasn't giving me any physical indication. He just kept looking at me so I'd get it going again. But towards the end I almost think he was moving his hips to try to get the horse going again. I thought, am I imagining things, but I think so. This little fellow....I wore a dress one day and he just followed me around, and every time I wore this dress he just wouldn't leave me alone. Before I left he came up to me and I had a different dress on and he just gave me a big kiss and I felt well, he's acting just like a little baby would really, but in this four year old body. So they were the things that were rewarding....like he wouldn't have done this if he didn't like me. So I thought that even if maybe on the surface I didn't think I'd gained too much, like the fact that you're getting something more from the children, yes.

QUESTION 5

I think probably the surprise part would be that it was such a short time before I would forget they were disabled. I was accepting them, like I was making eye contact, I wasn't checking their bodies out or what they were doing as much as like, just accepting. Then, I guess one thing that surprised me was that when the one teacher brought me and allowed me to look at the spina bifida lesion on this other child and everything, and she didn't tell me about it, she said that she was told that you could touch it, it doesn't hurt, but I haven't reached that stage yet. I think that surprised me in that I presume she had been there at least a year probably more and that she hadn't reached that point. And then it made me think - that I also watched, and I didn't see her hug the kids very much. At the time I had gone in to see the child's lesion I had already had a relationship with him and I felt, like, I had no trouble hugging him and doing things with him. Like, I'd tickle him and she seemed surprised. Do you play with the kids, do you do these things? Sorry, but I do.

QUESTION 6

Well, especially because of the children with special needs. Like, they were very professional. You know they are very knowledgeable, very educated people as opposed to some of the other areas that I was in. I guess I felt like I was in a very special situation, amongst very knowledgeable people. All the information I was getting was very good. They knew a lot of the answers.

The other placements before that of course, like I recognized, like I was in a child care setting, a lot of the people I would run into they didn't even have a child care program. They lacked the skills. I did see a lot of things that I completely disagree with, a lot of sort of housing as opposed to offering a really good service. Because they don't know. An attitude...their attitude is different because I guess, like myself, where you try and work with someone but you don't have the understanding and you know, it's difficult then.

QUESTION 7

I think it's helped me to accept the special needs child and feel very comfortable with that. I know I could work with special needs children. I think it's also helped me be more open, with....I guess not more open because I was open before but, like a true acceptance as opposed to 'I think I do'. Because I have a girlfriend who raised a cerebral palsy, a man now, and in my mind I feel I have accepted him but then I was never put in a position where I had to interact with him very much and I have a niece who is MR and I think I just feel more comfortable with it because I understand, like at this point, where the parents might be frustrated because she's a grown woman now and she's getting into trouble now but right away this just bounces off me and I'm saying yes, because it's borderline, and they tend to get into more trouble than others.

QUESTION 8

I think I expected to go and have more opportunity working with equipment that was adapted or seeing more of that than I did. But everything I saw really was adapted but I guess I walked away, or when I walked, I thought, oh, I'm going to walk away with a lot more than I have. Right now I recognize though that if I should be faced with working with special needs children, those are the places I would go though. I'd say, all right this is the child I have and what can I best do to help that child. Probably it was an unrealistic expectation, that you can only go through so much in six weeks.

QUESTION 9

I guess I would have to, even though I thought I was very open and pushed I guess I would have to determine whether

it was worth the while to push more and like, sorry you have to take time with me even though on three different occasions I would say we must get together when I had these activities to do. It was always 'we must have lunch together' but it would never happen. I guess that's a hard one because I think if you become too pushy that that's not good either. I think probably if we were saying anything to our program people I would be asking that there be somehow better communication set up. Because at this particular agency the program people actually worked through a person who was not a teacher so everything was sort of disjointed so that might have been some of the reason.

QUESTION 10

I think I'd interact with them more. I enjoy them. I have fun when I go to work, I have fun with them and so I do think I'm creative enough, imaginative enough, to present things to them to make them interesting and because I'm not afraid to be, that I can get their attention and get them to play along with me.

QUESTION 11

In as much as it may not have been as helpful as I might have thought it would be at the beginning, really it's not just helpful, it's extremely helpful because of the fact that there were special needs children, it was my first real exposure and the fact that I was exposed to so many different ones. It was better for me than going into a day care setting where they may have had one or two children. Like I was exposed to everything and like, a lot of facial disfigurement and stuff like that which I think would be different to handle normally. It has to be extremely helpful in that area where I guess I was thinking more on the line that it should be in my programming assigning levels but that didn't come through, and that's all right.

SECTION II I

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS EXPERIENCED IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

QUESTION 1

Trying to meet the assignment and communicating to parents. Because we were not allowed access to the parents and it ended up even though I did a survey through

the teacher which I wrote up a survey and gave it to her and asked her to read it and hand it to the parents if she thought it was all right and for her to get the answers back and then read them and if she felt I should have that information she could give it to me so I could do my assignment. I was trying to be very careful and we did go ahead and do that but because everything was so disjointed, that some of the other girls were not allowed to do that, and then when my teacher in passing, mentioned that she thought it was very therapeutic for the parents to do this, administration caught hold of it and it was a big problem. So we both got into trouble about it but then I guess I found myself saying it's office politics because the walls of the agency were sort of echoing that this student had been told not to and let the survey out anyway. There was office politics in it.

QUESTION 2

Well, I listened to it, and I....the first time I heard it....I brought it to the attention of the teacher because first of all I didn't even know that there was a problem. She had heard there was a problem but felt that she had dealt with it and didn't need to approach me on it because everything had gone through her. So I brought it to her attention and she told me not to worry about it, that she had spoken to those people that she had needed to about it and that everything was fine. But it kept on for a whole week after, every day, stuff kept getting back to me through the other students because their teachers were talking about it. So I let it go until about, I guess, the last week and then I called my supervisor and discussed things with her and I also said that perhaps I should be speaking with her about it, that she should know all the facts. And I got a copy of the survey to her and kept her informed so she spoke to someone and apparently it was not supposed to be too bad but we kept the gossip flying, it kept getting wider and wider so then I went back to the practicum supervisor and I was angry by then actually, and I suggested to her that some of the things I was hearing like, 'that student' this kind of thing, that I didn't really feel good about leaving the agency, a place where I do know people who are involved with it, and I thought, well, I don't like hearing such things about myself because I really didn't think that was fair or reflecting on any other student in there as well. I certainly thought it was getting out of hand and suggested to her that perhaps we should meet with people she was talking with and make sure that we know that they had the correct information. So she set up a meeting and the next day I thought that in fairness

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to the teacher I was working with that I should let her know and certainly tell her that if she wanted to join that she could. At that point she said she would and then she disappeared and I presumed she must have gone to talk to them. She came back later and didn't join us for the meeting but we only met with one person and by the time we arrived for the meeting everything was just 'oh, so how are the ??????'. So I think what it did, it sort of put an end to the gossip that was getting out of hand.

QUESTION 3

Actually, what it might be for me, is not really working with the children. It would be working with the team. I've learned an awful lot about communicating and doing it positively, and constructive criticism and that kind of thing but I recognize that all the people you work with aren't at that level. I think that's what I might find frustrating, depending on the situation that I find myself in. It will be working with people who aren't comfortable with approaching people or being approached themselves about things who would perhaps take it too personally. If you want to discuss an approach, or whatever...so definitely, it would be the team.

QUESTION 4

I can't think of any. It would probably be more....in the beginning being in the practicum it might be my being unsure if I was doing well, like your responsibility. (With staff?). What would have irritated me in the beginning, like I may be aware at this point, but I don't think it would irritate me to the same extent because I'm more accepting and I tell myself that change is slow sometimes. Probably the different programs....weren't up to par into the licencing board, that kind of thing, or definitely someone who I felt did not have a good time with the children. That was frustrating.

QUESTION 5

I think it's probably centres, or staff, who I would consider unsuitable, or at least, not living up to the standards, I mean standards are fairly low, let alone not living up to them.

QUESTION 6

Probably just that I wasn't given the opportunity to try out what I do know, let alone trying something new. I think that would be it.

QUESTION 7

This question wasn't asked by the interviewer. (Or at least, it was not on the tape).

SECTION IVINFLUENCES ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION DURING FIELD EXPERIENCEQUESTION 1

One was an instructor. But that isn't where she was most helpful. It was...like...I chose her as a support system, a friend, and she was always most helpful, she was always ready and willing for me. That was most supportive because I found I could go to her with a personal problem, or just to let off steam. She was there to listen and I knew she understood, and even if she was probably just saying well, OK, I can't help you, I wish I could....that's OK, I was allowed to say how I was feeling and she was empathetic and I knew it. It wasn't false. She was definitely the most supportive. I guess the next one was a classmate. I didn't really befriend her right away I can't even remember for sure when we did finally become close friends but it started really with our recognizing where we could help each other so like, she would help me during academic time and I would help her during practical time. We found a balance of how we could support each other and then of course during that time the friendship developed and then we both became supportive of each other for personal reasons. And another one was a practicum supervisor. I think because of what I needed recognizing myself, I gravitate to people who can be empathetic and open and speak easily, and I need that return, so possibly this is why I found this particular practicum supervisor helped me a lot. In her evaluations as well, she gave a lot of comments, she just commented on everything I think, which helped me in the professional part. She was able to sort of help me see what I did have as an asset and what I could develop, and her manner of how she'd tell me

was excellent....like never once did I feel defensive about it whereas there was another person who I know was trying just so hard but her manner didn't quite suit what I needed and I found that I kept telling myself remember she's just trying to help you. But it was difficult to get past the mannerisms and so definitely that lady was extremely helpful and then because of the type of person she is, it was very easy for me to talk to her about personal problems and she would be supportive and help to guide me. There were a lot of helpful things going on because the course was something you hadn't taken before so there was a lot of learning. But as far as professors that I've had, there was one that I thought was very good and that was in our last block....in that all the time through it I was struggling with trying to write papers and they would give you their comments back but things weren't clicking or weren't working for me even though the marks were going up. There was just something that wasn't happening for me to understand what it was I needed to do. This professor allowed us to do verbal presentations in the classroom and then write our papers. But we could give him our first draft and he would make comments and I found that in doing that, comments that he gave me filled in what I had been missing and I was finally able to hand my paper in and get an A. The feedback he gave me finally clicked for me. And definitely for professors with anything we were doing, if they could see what we were doing wrong and don't give us the guidance like, how do we learn, and like maybe I should have gone somewhere else first to learn writing skills. But still, it wasn't happening and we didn't have the time to go and take extra things. So, I would have to say he would be the fourth person. Probably the others helped in certain ways but these were the people who helped me most.

QUESTION 2

Family, of course. My husband, definitely. If he wouldn't have been so supportive I wouldn't have made it through. I had some support from my mother at first, but after eighteen months people get tired of you. It gets to be a little difficult for them, it was very draining actually and perhaps I'm a needing person anyway or I look for support quickly so perhaps I don't wait too long and the eighteen months was probably longer for them than if I'd have been another person who felt stronger in certain areas.

QUESTION 3

These people here, I don't think it's difficult to communicate with. Family and friends, some classmates, I think, couldn't understand what I was saying I needed or what it was like for me. They had difficulty, they come from different situations and I recognize that but I think a lot of the people would say....like relatives and that....feeling that a lot of people go to university why can't you take time off? So really trying to communicate to them that for me to do as much as I thought I had to do or put in or get out of this course what I wanted I needed to apply myself and I enjoyed what I was doing but I needed the time to do it. The other demands that people wanted to put on me and I was saying now no you can't come for two weeks.

QUESTION 4

The university supervisor, I'm not sure who that would be. (Your practicum supervisor). OK, because we went through so many...I hate to put the blame just on them, I'm trying to think about what might have been helpful for everyone and it maybe wouldn't have been so draining on the few individuals we tended to pick on that I almost think in a course like this which is probably unrealistic for university, but, they could have had actual counselling on site or even though they had them there it was difficult. Like someone really even just to...part of a course...to help us go through the things we were having because we were such a varied group and everybody had different situations to contend with and all these changes to make in our lives plus going back to school and dealing with...you know...struggling with all that, and I think it might have been helpful just to have someone to get in touch with...like it's OK to feel this way, and carry us through I guess. Like a facilitator, although I don't know everybody would agree. I think a lot of the people in the classroom would have felt that was time wasted. I think there was a need for some of us. (Would you say then that that was some way the onsite supervisor could help too, and your practicum supervisor could have helped you?). Probably, because I got that help, but only because I'm the type of person I am and I tell myself I'm not going to survive unless I can find someone to tell me it's OK. So I went after it, but probably not as soon. They could have had an interpersonal course that went on and through the different periods of time that we had because what we started with...

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we changed along the way and even at the end I recognized, and one of the suggestions I made was that there were a lot of people in our room and I could still use some interpersonal skills, communicating skills. This would have helped us through our course and would also help us in our profession because we do have to work as a team.

QUESTION 5

Some of the courses, I felt the assignments they asked for, there were too many for the practicum time and the site. It just didn't fit. It became more like busy ????? work and I would prefer to do less and put in quality as opposed to the quantity. And I recognize that everybody was putting in different amounts of time. It was a different meaning for a lot of people. Even towards the end I felt like I just must get it done and not care and I'd tell myself gee isn't this wasted? But other people I know had stopped doing it a long time ago. So I don't know, (So in some ways it wasn't too helpful?). A real problem at times you know. There was some learning in some of the things that we had to do in the other practicum time and that but especially the last one and the second last practicum with a few placements. I can remember thinking....all this work....and it took away from the learning time. That's what happened with me.

SECTION V

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

QUESTION 1

They help the child to develop to it's potential, but they do it through offering experiences, and playing with them. They care. They love the children. They help the children to learn to cope with whatever problems they face which will make them a better human being. They are there to help the child with problems they are having, to help them ease over the transition that happens when there is separation of a parent, which happens, it's reality.

QUESTION 2

Definitely child development. I think they really need to know people, to understand families...it's very important to understand families...and to be accepting, that perhaps reaching better standards themselves, with the way they might live. They have to recognize that they don't really know what the families went through, what the situation is. They have to have very good attitude. They have to be willing to look at the child and the parent and say "I'm here to offer service, what can I do to best serve that parent or child now that is going to help them in the future". Not to be judgmental in any way. To remember that the child does belong to the parent and we shouldn't push our standards on them, we shouldn't...we have to recognize that the environment the child comes from and just make it as good as possible like, to compliment it but not to take them away from it either.

QUESTION 3

Gee...it's hard...I guess I think everything we do is so important. I think probably, accepting the child as an individual and accepting the parent because I think if you don't accept the parent the child will pick up on that. Helping the child so he can function in society at whatever level that may be or whatever problem he has and just help him develop from where he is. That's academically, socially.

QUESTION 4

I think...you can do a little bit, but not too much for the six week placement. I think, in the situation of now working there I think we are able to do that, but I think you have to have time with children and influence them, and model and that takes time. (Do you see yourself working towards that?). Yes, I think I do that with the guiding and everything automatically. I think that's one of the most difficult things for children, and adults where they have difficulty in communicating or accepting ??????????. Like, I guess when you see that adult who's angry because he's driving and someone cuts him off...this kind of thing...like I tell them that just gets them into trouble...like start now getting children to understand how they can handle whatever happens to them.

QUESTION 5

I've seen a few. I think I see them as being warm, loving, approachable. It appears that they like children....I mean, it's just part of them that's natural. They are usually patient and get down to the level of the child. I see them as having good guiding skills. They respect the children and you can see that in the way they deal with them. They're not inconsistent. They do have routines and things they follow but they do it in a nice manner and that's why I have respect for them.

QUESTION 6

Mainly because of the response of the children. And then, otherwise I think probably I would look to the staff to get feedback because even though I might think I had covered everything, when you're not completely familiar with what can happen you need someone to tell you where it is until you begin to recognize it yourself. (How do you think child care workers in the field evaluate their effectiveness in working with children?). I think there are a great many who don't bother. They may be the ones who didn't have the opportunity to take courses and don't even know how to evaluate. The places I have enjoyed have been places where they openly question each other or even use a charting system or something and discuss it among each other, that kind of thing. They give each other feedback so that people know whether they've done a good job or like someone has liked something and thought it was good.

QUESTION 7

I feel I know what I'm doing now. I didn't before. It was sort of like haphazard before. I was guessing. Now I'm confident I know what I'm doing. I recognize that. I think that's probably basically it. Like, you've taken it, now you know. You can evaluate and see where you're going, and what to do. That's your guidance for you.

QUESTION 8

I like children. I like to see them learn something, to get excited about something. I think building relationships with children that you know that they find comfort in you....that interaction. (The least satisfying?). Besides the fact that I think probably being in a place

where you don't necessarily agree with their philosophy or something is not the kind of place you want to be at. Probably the pay.

QUESTION 9

Definitely it would be the salary. You know, I guess... I realize it will take another ten years. I've recognized the value and I feel it should be a profession...right? Other than the changes we are striving for in Manitoba for child care probably I guess I would like something better and I would move away in about five years and be in B.C. and I would be starting all over because they're behind us.

QUESTION 10

Well, right now I want to work. I'm trying to choose a place where I work very carefully, because I want to continue to work. I expect to be starting at the U of M actually in the fall. I guess, taking a management course. I would like to see them have that child care degree in place. I'd like to be able to leave Manitoba in 5 or 6 years with my degree. And then I'm going to B.C. and there I may open up my own day care or perhaps I'll just work or something...I'm not sure.

QUESTION 11

Oh yes, working with children, definitely with children. (Do you think your ideas and views about working with young children will have changed by then?). I'm not going to allow myself to become stagnant I'm not going to fall into that old routine. I guess that's why I certainly want to continue in school. I wouldn't want to become bored and I think I could if I can't continue learning and enjoying what I'm doing I'm going to get bored and then I'll have to leave. (Then you're planning on taking off to B.C. and you'd like to continue working in the child care field?). Definitely. In the child care field, I'm sure.

APPENDIX VILETTER OF APPRECIATION

Dear ,

I am writing to extend my thanks and appreciation for your participation in my research study on Student Child Care Workers' perceptions of Their Field Experiences for my Masters' Thesis.

I enjoyed meeting with you and hearing your ideas and thoughts regarding your experiences in the field as a child care student. Your participation provided me with valuable information regarding what students gain from their experiences in the field. A summary of the overall results of the study will be made available to you upon the study's completion.

I wish you much success in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Catherine Blakesley