

THE CULTURE OF CHILD PROTECTION WORK

By

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**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

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Dedication

To my parents, Dorene Hayden and Baldur Sigurdson, who have shown me the best of Irish and Icelandic tradition.

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Abstract

Child protection work is complex and difficult. Our society places recent college and university graduates in the position of making critical decisions in frightening and desperate situations of child maltreatment. Often these staff are inadequately prepared for child protection work. In addition, they face challenges such as interfacing with the medical and justice systems for which they are often poorly prepared. There is little information on the culture of child protection work from the perspective of the adaptation made by current social work graduates in academic preparation for social work careers. It is important to more fully understand the culture of child protection work from the perspective of the ethnic or cultural origin of the worker, the culture of the workplace, and the social construction of these services. This construction is derived from the societal discourse on child protection that has created and perpetuated the need for this commodity or service.

Child protection work is influenced by a large number of reported cases (Feldman, 1991; MacMillan, 1998), finite resources, large case loads of children coming into care (Corcoran, 1999), and a large proportion of caseloads requiring cross cultural work (Manitoba Family Services Annual Report, 1997-98). The work is difficult and demands many skills. These factors create a condition of stress and uncertainty which child protection staff face daily. The situation is further complicated by contradictory perspectives in child welfare practice. Some hold the view that prediction of future conditions for the child is impossible. Others take the perspective that workers should be able to make accurate predications in the interests of protecting children. The news media stories about children being returned to their homes inappropriately or taken into care when they should have remained with their parents assume that any reasonable

person would have known the correct decision to make in these circumstances. These matters occur in the context of the workplace of child protection in agencies which are staffed by recent graduates of social work or community colleges. Most of this work is assigned to employees who do child protection work exclusively. These graduates are hired by agencies that are frequently short of staff due to high turnover of employees. It is common for staff to begin this work with little opportunity for supervision, to be given a full case load by the end of their first week, and to have insufficient training in the understanding of the risk factors pertaining to child maltreatment. The system of case management may not place sufficient attention on risk factors for child abuse and neglect that might help staff to make an informed decision about the likelihood of reoccurrence of maltreatment (Gove, 1995). This is particularly important since child protection work involves high risk families from different cultural groups. One stressful aspect of child protection services is that the relationship with the client is mandated. When the client does not seem motivated, workers take responsibility for the change and feel exhausted and overwhelmed as a result (Corcoran, 1999).

It is a logical extension of these observations to study how staff learn the culture of this workplace and develop competence and mastery of work.

This is a study which asks the research question: What is the nature and culture of child protection work in Winnipeg, in 1999, from the perspective of recent graduates of the discipline of social work? The proposal for this study was developed in 1998, as part of the course requirements for a Master's degree in Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba. This study includes the development of a theoretical model of the culture of child protection work, based on a review of the literature.

The objectives are to describe the formal and informal acquisition of knowledge by employees who have recently completed 1 to 3 years as a child protection worker and to explore in a retrospective fashion how they perceive their values have changed. This was done by looking at the narratives of the informants, with interest in how staff understand risk factors in a cross cultural setting.

Sixteen main themes emerged in the analysis of participants' responses. Four of these themes were chosen for detailed analysis because they were cited most often by the informants, were the themes about which staff had the most emotive content, and because they were most relevant to the theoretical model. One of the 4 themes cited for closer examination was the gap between theory and social work practice. Another was the central role of cross cultural experiences in child protection work. Other themes which stood out were the variation in the use of a risk assessment methodology, and the importance of supervision in the transition from new employee to more senior staff. These themes are examined in detail with supporting discourse from the informants.

Child protection regulates one of the adverse effects of the current social structure, namely child abuse and neglect. These services are provided sometimes with limited knowledge and understanding of the people served. There is a place for expanded knowledge to support increased effectiveness of child protection services. This knowledge will likely contribute to the development of staff competence and mastery of tasks. This will presumably lead to positive outcomes for the children in the child protection system.

Introduction

Child protection work is difficult and complex, demanding many skills. Some of these skills include knowledge of child development, family systems, community values, interviewing techniques, assessment capacity, intervention planning, crisis work, and conflict resolution. In addition, a working knowledge of the medical and legal aspects of child protection is required. The work of child protection is influenced by increasing number of reported cases, finite resources, more children coming into care, and frequent work in a cross cultural context. These factors create a condition of stress and uncertainty which child protection staff face daily. As stated by Corcoran, "Involved with the stressors and demands of child protection, workers may feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and without hope for their clients' ability to make use of services and to change in a positive direction" (1999, p.462). The situation is further complicated by contradictory perspectives in child welfare practice. Some adopt the view that prediction of future conditions for the child is impossible, while others think that workers should be able to make accurate predications in the interests of protecting children. The dilemma for child protection staff is how to know one made the right decision. Sometimes there are horrors inflicted upon children as a consequence of returning them to their homes inappropriately and there are regrettable consequences of taking children into care when they should have remained with their parents. Staff face making correct decisions in these circumstances on a daily basis.

The above system description applies across North America where most child protection agencies are staffed by recent graduates of schools of social work or community colleges. Some system characterization includes documents like The Badgley Report (1984) in Canada and the observations of Schene (1989) in the United States. Most of the work of child protection is assigned to employees who do child protection work exclusively. These graduates are hired by agencies that are frequently short of staff due to high staff turnover. It is common for staff to begin this work with little opportunity to

work with a mentor, to be given a near full case load by the end of the first week and to have insufficient training in the understanding of the risk factors pertaining to child maltreatment (Sigurdson & Reid, 1987). This is particularly important since child protection staff work with high risk families, from different cultural groups. Aside from anecdotal information, however, little is known about how these conditions may affect child protection practice. It is a logical extension of these observations to study how staff learn the culture of this workplace.

My interest in this topic stems from earlier research on the characterization of the current system of child protection in Winnipeg (Sigurdson & Reid, 1987) and some of the challenges faced by agency staff in doing this work (Reid, Hill, Sigurdson et al., 1987). The research question was further refined by preparatory work on risk factors in child maltreatment (Sigurdson, Reid, 1990 and Reid, Sigurdson et al., 1995). The challenges faced by staff were described previously (Reid & Sigurdson, 1994) as a set of observations from applying risk estimation knowledge in practice situations.

Statement of Purpose

This is an initiative to learn about the nature and culture of child protection work in Winnipeg from the perspective of recent graduates of social work.

Statement of Objectives

There is little information on the culture of child protection work and the adaptation that recent graduates, employed in this field, must make. It is important to learn more about the culture of child protection services, particularly from a perspective of learning about how staff understand risk factors for child maltreatment in a cross cultural setting. Thus the objectives are:

- (1) to describe the formal and informal training and learning of employees who recently completed 1 to 3 years as a child protection worker in Winnipeg.

- (2) to describe how the values of child protection workers have changed in relation to cultural factors affecting workplace conditions and work with clients.

Research question

This study asks what is the nature and culture of child protection work in Winnipeg from the perspective of recent graduates who have completed 1 - 3 years as a child protection worker?

Professional career narratives of child protection workers with Winnipeg Child and Family Services provide insight regarding the temporal sense of the worker's experience. This is a personal reconstruction looking backward on career experience and how more and less experienced workers may reconstruct earlier experience. This gives understanding of how cultural values were acquired before work started and how they have been modified after several years in this occupation. These narratives reveal some of the cross-cultural experiences of the informants.

Literature Review

Overview

One response to the tragedies of child deaths and injuries due to maltreatment has been to develop methods of case management and analysis to determine risk factors for predicting the re-occurrence of these injuries (Schene, 1996). The logic is that the identification of high risk situations lead staff to take steps to remove the danger to the child and thus make the child's life safer. As well, this process supports lower risk cases being managed appropriately (Waterhouse & Carnie, 1992). These developments have occurred at the same time as many new staff are overwhelmed by the culture of their new employment. Child protection workers are confronted with obstacles which arise from difficult real problems anchored in social structure which they cannot change. Their work is further complicated by the substantial practical difficulties which are particular to this type of work. These fundamental predicaments are exacerbated by large case loads and a relative lack of other resources.

One theme in child protection services across North America is the matter of how to construct a risk estimation system. Johnson and L'Esperance (1984) described in their article the difference between risk assessment using actuarial means and consensus means. The consensus model processes the data by an analysis which then places the user in the position of using the data to make an informed decision based on the facts of the case. The actuarial model processes the data statistically and provides to the user the mathematical answer about risk. An example of the actuarial method is the finding that parents of a certain age group have the highest, age adjusted, rates of child maltreatment. This is incorporated with other factors into a mathematical model about risk.

Actuarial methods of risk assessment have been reported to be more reliable (Johnson, 1994). The steps taken to process the data reduce cultural, or contextual, or observer biases. The questions

asked which form the data set may have no obvious explanatory value. An example is the finding that children in single-parent homes are at higher risk of being abused than children in dual-caretaker homes. This methodology is usually based on the analysis of data sets of sufficient size (Krishnan & Morrison, 1995).

Consensus methods are generally favoured by child protection services (Smith, 1995). This is due in part to the reluctance of child protection workers to use statistical tools, particularly of a quantitative nature and reluctance to apply empirical scientific methods in practice situations. The consensus method requires active participation by the user to form a judgment about the meaning of the data, namely the risk to the child of future harm.

There is wide acceptance of the powerful role which culture plays in placing value and meaning on the attitudes and behaviors of adults in their treatment of children. This explains the importance of understanding the parents' culture and its implicit and explicit values in child-rearing. As observed by Barsky, "What may be considered neglectful parenting in the standards of one culture may be considered appropriate parenting in another culture" (1999, p.490). Culture and social environment creates the content of meaning for most of our attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Culture is the sum of belief and knowledge through which we engage with the world. Shared belief and knowledge helps families and social groups to define and maintain an identity by means of cultural systems. These cultural systems can be understood in terms of their capacity to express the nature of the world and to shape that world to their dimensions. The sociologist, Merton, defined culture as "that organized set of normative values governing behavior which is common to members of a designated society or group" (Ritzer, 1996). Culture serves a purpose by creating a normative value or reference point for decisions. This view emphasizes that one's culture creates one's consciousness. The literature of anthropology refers to a set of causal elements (e.g. environment, economy, and politics) in addition to the cultural belief system (Pelto, 1997). For the families who are

the focus of child protection service, it follows that a system of protecting children by means of government legislation and through the activities of social workers who are entrusted to do this work will have its own system of belief and knowledge which is the culture of child protection. I offer a framework that will allow for understanding this culture. I suggest that there are 3 components to the culture of child protection. They are (1) the ethnic origin or culture of the worker and client (e.g. Irish, Aboriginal, Jamaican), (2) the culture of the workplace or agency (the values and knowledge of the employment domain), and lastly (3) the societal discourse on child protection which has created the need for this commodity or service. This is the critical analysis of the system and how it functions. These three aspects of the concept of culture as an authority or reference point for decisions are relevant to this research.

Many staff work in cross cultural settings most of the time. Social workers come from a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds. An important task which social workers face when working with different communities and cultures from one's own, is to be able to communicate difficult issues in a respectful manner. This lies at the heart of effective practice. Good social work is culturally sensitive and requires a communication process that minimizes misunderstanding and bias. As well, it is desirable that local communities control their own social services to the maximum extent that is feasible (MacKenzie, 1995). English (1991) believes the benefit to those who learn more about other cultural systems is the improvement in understanding the dynamics of other cultures which leads to improved assessments and determination of risk. Child protection work involves decisions about child care in the community and requires knowledge of assessment, healing methods, and intervention plans. In Manitoba in 1997, 5227 children were in care related to decisions of case management and risk assessment (Annual Report, 1997-98). The majority (65%) of these children are Aboriginal children and a majority of child protection staff are not aboriginal. This is a cultural gap. It is not clear whether the cross-cultural

differences are a more important factor than the socio-economic gradient between the child protection worker and the client.

Risk estimation in child welfare is derived from the societal discourse on child abuse. This entails the formulation of an opinion concerning a future state of child maltreatment based upon the facts which are accessible with respect to a current, substantiated instance of child abuse or neglect. It is a systematic process of identifying and understanding uncertainty in the context of case decision-making. The objective of risk estimation is to promote systematic thinking and clear decision-making in child protection (Reid & Sigurdson, 1990). The 2 general categories of risk estimation are those of actuarial method and those of a consensus method. One method is not clearly superior to the other, but rather each has a utility. There is agreement that a valid and reliable method of risk estimation should be made from logical components and an underlying philosophy (Reid & Sigurdson, 1994; English & Pecora, 1994). As such, a risk estimation process should be used to examine the many different life circumstances which children experience when they are abused or neglected. The well-being of children and their inherent worth is a fundamental value which all cultures support. These concepts can be embedded in a codified risk estimation process by developing clear, concise terminology which provides a language that can be understood across professions, differing communities and differing cultures. There is limited information about how new graduates operationalize a knowledge of risk factors in the reoccurrence of child maltreatment, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. It is a reasonable consequence of the foregoing observations that new graduates working in child protection might feel overwhelmed by issues related to complexity of cases, number of cases, and insufficient preparation from a perspective of cultural considerations or knowledge of risk factors for child maltreatment.

If new graduates experience the absence of competence and lack of mastery of their tasks it is likely that this leads to considerable stress for these new workers. As limited information exists regarding

the meaning of the work experience for this group, it is a logical extension of current knowledge to study this and the specific characteristics of staff who have been successful in this setting as measured by completing 1 to 3 years of child protection employment.

If culture and social environment create the content of meaning for most of our attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, as defined by Merton, then cultural systems can be understood in terms of their capacity to express the nature of the world and to shape that world to their dimensions (Scheper-Hughes, 1988). In this context, culture is defined as the sum of belief and knowledge through which we engage with the world. The following is an introduction to the three aspects of culture with respect to child protection services.

The first aspect of culture is that which gives the ethnic identity to an individual's expression of their world view. An example of this is "Irish" music or "Taoist" philosophy. Ethnicity refers to the clan or tribe membership which each person, including parent or child protection worker, belongs to in genetic origin or adopted value. These ethnic values are a part of the culture of child protection and values related to child-bearing are largely derived, but not solely, from one's ethnicity. There is acceptance of the powerful role which culture plays in placing value and meaning on the attitudes and behaviors of adults in their treatment of children. As stated by Sanders-Phillips, "Ethnicity may play an important role in influencing the circumstances of abuse and in mediating the impact of our responses to childhood sexual abuse" (1995, p.692). This explains the importance of understanding the parents' culture and its implicit and explicit values in relationships, and in particular its child-rearing practices. As well, the relationship of child protection staff and client is shaped by the ethnicity of both.

The culture of socialization and the culture of experience are potentially alternative sources of values. An example of this is how some of the roots of child maltreatment are found in our cultural experiences. Here the dimension of culture, as historically

experienced, alters the interactions between ethnic groups. Smallwood, commenting on child maltreatment from an indigenous Australian perspective, states:

For us to deal with child abuse and neglect in our society today, we cannot pretend that the past does not exist, as the symptoms of today are the results of the past colonial practices of abuse. The appropriation of our children has created massive mental health problems for the Aboriginal community as a whole (Smallwood, 1995, p.285).

A second important consideration of culture as it applies to child protection services is the dimension of the workplace culture. Across North America most child protection agencies are staffed by graduates of social work or community colleges with related studies. Most of this work is assigned to employees who do child protection work exclusively and most staff are recent graduates of social work programs. They are hired by agencies that are frequently short of staff due to high staff turnover. It is common for staff to begin this work with little opportunity to work with a mentor, to be given a near full case load by the end of the first week and to have insufficient training in the understanding of the risk factors pertaining to child maltreatment. This is particularly important since child protection work with high risk families, from different cultural groups, is a difficult task that most new staff face. This organizational culture of discontinuity and constant crisis is a part of the culture of the workplace.

There is a broad literature on occupational culture or workplace culture that speaks to labor-management relations, employment standards, and maintenance of competence. These views are relevant to this aspect of the culture of the workplace (Arno, 1985).

One response of the workplace to the tragedies of child deaths and injuries due to maltreatment has been to develop methods of case management and analysis to determine risk factors for the re-

occurrence of these injuries (English, 1996 & Gove, 1995). The logic is that the identification of high risk situations lead staff to take steps to remove the child from the danger and thus make the child's life safer (Greenland, 1987). Regardless of these developments, many new staff are overwhelmed by the demands of their new employment and consideration of risk factors is not a priority. Child protection workers are confronted with obstacles which arise from the difficult theoretical problem of being able to correctly identify when to intervene in families' lives, and their work is further complicated by the substantial practical difficulties which are particular to this type of work. These fundamental predicaments are exacerbated by large case loads and a relative lack of other resources. Most studies of child protection services have placed emphasis on the knowledge of the worker and his or her relationship with the client (Filip, 1991).

The third component of the cultural dimension is how society has developed a need for this service and what factors maintain it and allow it to operate in its current form. This refers to the critical reflexive literature in social work that examines the role of social workers in serving state interests. This is an aspect of child protection work which has been less closely examined ; it is the extent to which this activity ensures the replication of a pattern of order in the social process (Arno, 1985). In Manitoba, The Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry placed strong emphasis on the adverse effects of government policy. The authors state:

We feel many of the problems Aboriginal people face with the criminal justice system today have roots in the history of government-Aboriginal relations. No analysis of the justice system can be complete without understanding the devastating effect these relations, guided by government policies, have had on Aboriginal families. For many Aboriginal societies, existing child welfare practices have ranked as a major destructive force to their families, communities, and cultures (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p.510).

A similar conclusion was reached by York in an analysis of the origin of social problems of Aboriginal communities in Canada. He concluded that problems currently being experienced are the result of the legacy of interference in the lives of Canada's Native peoples by non-native governments and institutions and agencies (York, 1990).

Current literature in anthropology places importance on a set of causal elements such as environment, economy, politics, and the cultural belief system (Pelto, 1997) to understand behavior. The replication and maintenance of socialization stems from these environmental, economic, political, and cultural needs. We promote systems of health, justice, and education as positive elements in our community. Yet child maltreatment exists and is found in almost all societies. The damage done to children by adults is pervasive and the social response has been to develop methods of surveillance based on the critical analysis of our social system and how it operates. Few of the prevailing theories concerning Native child neglect critically examine the institution responsible for child welfare services to Native people. In his article, McKenzie locates some of the origins of First Nations parents' difficulty in providing child care as stemming from the colonization process (McKenzie et.al., 1995, p.648).

Thus, there are at least three aspects to the concept of culture as it pertains to child protection: the ethnic or racial or cultural origin of the worker and client, the culture of the workplace, and lastly the societal discourse on child protection which has created the need for this commodity or service. This has been summarized in figure 1. This study describes the components of the culture of child protection from the perspective of new staff working in this field. The culture of the clients shown on the right hand side of Figure 1 is not examined.

Figure 1

<p>Culture: The sum of belief and knowledge through which we engage with the world.</p>		
	<p>Child Protection Staff or Child Protection System</p>	<p>Clients of families served by staff.</p>
<p>Ethnicity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widely varied • personal ethnography describes experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widely varied • personal ethnography describes experiences
<p>Culture of the workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupational knowledge and skills need to be acquired and modified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong belief systems about engaging with the workplace
<p>Societal discourse which created the system (critical analysis of the system and how it functions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this group maintains surveillance of the community • analysis of this group attributes responsibility for maintaining problems of some cultural groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this group is the subject of surveillance • funding and standards derive from size of this group

The Organizational Structure of Child Protection Services.

In Manitoba, child and family services are provided by three community-based agencies, regional offices of the Department of Family Services and First Nation's agencies.

In Winnipeg, in 1999, services are provided by four regional community-based agencies. They are Child and Family Services of Central Winnipeg, Winnipeg South Child and Family Services, Northwest Winnipeg Child and Family Services, and Child and Family Services of Eastern Manitoba. This last agency also serves part of southeastern Manitoba. An overview of service activity as found in Appendix E.

South central Manitoba and the southwest are served by Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba and Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba respectively. Both these agencies have several sub-offices in their regions besides their main offices in Portage la Prairie and Brandon.

The Department of Family Services operates child and family services in the local government districts and unorganized territory in Eastman region and in Interlake, Norman, Parklands, and Thompson regions. Workers are based in a number of towns and small communities in all these regions.

There are currently nine regional Native agencies serving Indian reserves. They are Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services, Anishinaabe Child and Family Services, West Region Child and Family Services, Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba, Southeast Child and Family Services, and Sagkeeng Child and Family Services. The remaining agencies are Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency, Peguis Child and Family Services, Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency, and Island Lake First Nations Family Services.

In Winnipeg services are also provided through Jewish Child and Family Services. Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre operates some voluntary family services for the Native people of Winnipeg.

What follows is a more detailed analysis of how the 3 components of culture are relevant to child protection staff.

Ethnicity

Many staff work in cross cultural settings most of the time. The definition of cross-cultural work is work where the difference in language and social organization is profound. Social workers come from a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds. In Winnipeg, most child protection workers trace their cultural background from over 20 ethnic groups. An important task which social workers face when working with different communities and cultures from one's own, is to be able to communicate difficult issues in a respectful manner (Johnson, 1994). This lies at the heart of effective practice. Good social work is culturally sensitive and requires a communication process that minimizes misunderstanding and bias. Also in good social work there is a recognition of situations where structural barriers are so great that adequate cross-cultural communication cannot bridge the barriers. As stated by Courtney, "As long as children of color remain more likely than Caucasian children to grow up in situations that put them at increased risk of child abuse and neglect, they will continue to be overrepresented among "clients" of the system and among the clients with less desirable outcomes." (1996, p.132). Regardless of these barriers, the well-being of children and their interest is a fundamental value which all cultures support.

In Manitoba in April 1997, 5227 children were "in care" related to decisions of case management and risk assessment. Approximately 65% of these children are Aboriginal children (Annual Report, 1997-98). It is noteworthy that approximately 10% of the social work staff in Winnipeg are Aboriginal (personal communication). A study in

Alberta raised the question whether the differences in abuse rates for minority groups was due to racial discrimination or are magnified by the socio-economic gradient (Krishnan & Morrison, 1995). This raises the interesting question whether these differences or conflicts are the result of cultural differences or socio-economic class conflict. In the United States, the largest group of children receiving out-of-home care are African-American (Brissett-Chapman, 1997). Data on the proportion of practicing African-American child protection workers is not available. This gap between the culture of the child protection worker and those they serve is wide. There is much to learn about the specific dimensions of knowledge of the profession and where it is needed in cross-cultural work.

As observed by English (1991), the understanding of the dynamics of other cultures is an important step toward improving assessments. Brissett-Chapman comments that there is a critical need for culturally competent assessments of the risk of child maltreatment in African American families and the implications for both policy and practice (Brissett-Chapman, 1997). The relationship between cultural differences and socio-economic differences is an important observation. Courtney described this in a study of those factors in the United States:

Children of color are more likely than Caucasians to be over represented in child maltreatment reports, based on the proportion of children of color in the child population. The correlation between race and income, however, often clouds interpretation of most studies. Indeed, the second National Study of Incidence and Severity of Child Abuse and Neglect found that families whose incomes fell below \$15,000 US annually were four and one-half times more likely to be reported for all forms of maltreatment than those with incomes above that level (Courtney, 1996, p.102).

There are some important parallels in Canadian practice. Krishman and Morrison (1995) examined the ecology of child maltreatment in Alberta. They based their study on the findings that

there are two broad explanations for child abuse; one which emphasizes the personal attributes of the victims or the abusers, and the second which emphasizes the socio-economic (structural conditions) underlying child abuse. They found that population and demographic change, unemployment rate, percent Native, and Northwest region are major positive correlates of the child maltreatment rate. In an Ontario study, Anderson reported on the favourable improvements which can be expected by changes in the mainstream child welfare system which enhance "the native child welfare policies, legislation, and agencies in Canada and the U.S." (Anderson, 1998, p.456).

The culture of the workplace

The protection of children from maltreatment is a major task for governments and it is a difficult skill for practitioners to learn. Reporting of child abuse and neglect had, by the mid-1980's, "clearly outpaced the capacity of most child protection agencies to respond thoughtfully and comprehensively to all cases meeting the statutory definition of child maltreatment (Schene, 1996). Most jurisdictions in North America have responded to large case loads and child deaths due to maltreatment with case management models and risk assessment tools designed to enhance practitioner skills and outcome. However these efforts were often made without a comprehensive understanding of the culture of the workplace. Staff doing this difficult and complex work are overwhelmed by additional realities of insufficient knowledge base, large case loads which frequently involve the medical or legal systems, diverse cultures of clients, and high staff turn-over (Birmingham, 1996).

One response to this reality as described by Birmingham has been the development of a method of risk estimation made from logical components which are organized according to an underlying philosophy. As such, a risk estimation process should be used to examine the many different life circumstances which children

experience when they are abused or neglected. These concepts can be embedded in a codified risk estimation process by developing clear, concise terminology which provides a language that can be understood across professions, differing communities and differing cultures (Tabber & Sullivan, 1994). However the extent to which new graduates of social work operationalize a knowledge of risk factors in the reoccurrence of child maltreatment, particularly in a cross-cultural setting, is not well known. What has been reported in Winnipeg is the membership survey results for Canadian Union of Public Employee Locals in Child and Family Services. It states:

84% of social work respondents indicated they did not currently have enough time to complete all paperwork, documentation, and/or filing.... When asked if they have the time to use the Manitoba Risk Estimation System (MRES), only 10% of social workers said yes, 27% indicated they sometimes have time to use the Manitoba Risk Estimation System. Forty three percent of social workers indicated they did not have time to use the Manitoba Risk Estimation System (Canadian Union of Public Employees, 1996, p.6,9).

Risk estimation in child welfare entails the formulation of an opinion concerning a future state of neglect or abuse of a child based upon the facts which are accessible with respect to a current, substantiated instance of child abuse or neglect. It is a systematic process of identifying and understanding uncertainty in the context of case decision-making. It does this by structuring the major topics of concern (Sigurdson & Reid, 1998), and giving weight to the findings. The objective of risk estimation is to promote systematic thinking and promote transparent decision-making in child protection practice.

The rules which apply to child protection services in Manitoba and Winnipeg are derived from the legislation governing child and family services. At the time of this study child protection operates under a number of principles. Chief among them is that the best

interests of the child are the primary consideration in service operation.

Legislation governing child and family services generally incorporates and reflects these principles. In the Child and Family Services Act (Manitoba, 1986) the principles are stated at the beginning and the legislation spells out how they are to be applied. The Declaration of Principles is intended to guide those who operate services and administer the Act. It is akin to the five principles of Medicare in Canada. The Declaration of Principles is the first topic in the Act.

1. The best interest of children are a fundamental responsibility of society.
2. The family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved.
3. The family is the basic source of care, nurture, and acculturation of children and parents have the primary responsibility to ensure the well-being of their children.
4. Families and children have the right to the least interference with their affairs to the extent compatible with the best interests of children and the responsibilities of society.
5. Children have a right to a continuous family environment in which they can flourish.
6. Families and children are entitled to be informed of their rights and to participate in the decisions affecting those rights.
7. Families are entitled to receive preventative and supportive services directed to preserving the family unit.
8. Families are entitled to services which respect their cultural and linguistic heritage.
9. Decisions to remove or place children should be based on the best interests of the child and not on the basis of the family's financial status.

10. Communities have a responsibility to promote the best interests of their children and families and have the right to participate in services to their families and children.

11. Indian bands are entitled to the provision of child and family services in a manner which respects their unique status as aboriginal peoples.
(The Child and Family Services Act, Manitoba, 1985, p.1-2)

The subtext of this set of principles is staff are expected to provide intervention services when a child is in need of protection in a least intrusive fashion. Another subtext is that the skills to provide this service are assumed to be present.

One study of child protection services described "a consolidated listing of the competencies, characteristics, and content skills necessary for an entry level caseworker to effectively perform within this new system" (Squadrito et. al., 1994). This basic set of knowledge and skills describe the quality of being competent or having competency. If one is able to work with an added degree of understanding and effectiveness, then this suggests additional skill or mastery of the work, a quality which develops after competency.

The absence of competence and mastery leads to considerable stress for new graduates. Limited information exists regarding the meaning of the work experience for this group, and the specific characteristics of those who have been successful working in this setting (Kagan, 1989).

Stress is a frequently mentioned concept in the context of child protection services. It can occur because of criticism by employer or from parents who are the subject of abuse investigation. It can also occur subjectively as a feeling of lacking the basic knowledge and skills to do the work. It appears that staff who feel they have at least competency may be able to work effectively and enjoy their tasks. It is possible that competency or mastery is a concept that describes the

essence of being able to survive and prosper as an employee in child protection work.

The current literature raises the concern that new staff are overwhelmed due to the variables of insufficient formal learning, insufficient on the job training, size of case load, and cross cultural difficulties. These variables are structural problems which go beyond just the domain of the agency. Factors which may contribute to overcoming problems in the agency domain may be peer support, supervision by a mentor, training on the job, and improved system knowledge.

Cultural construction of child protection services

Societal discourse on the subject of child abuse services is defined by a set of contributions from the professional literature, research, the media, and policy statements of government. The development of surveillance systems are also fundamental to how societies maintain order and governance. As we will see later, risk assessment developed from the discourse on child abuse and neglect. Child protection has its modern origin in the decision of The New York State Medical Society in 1871 to seek authority to act to protect Mary Ellen, a child in danger (Radbill, 1987). At that time, there was no statute or act which authorized protective intervention (McDevitt, 1998). As a short term measure, the protective authority of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was used to protect the child. This signaled the use of legislation to create child protection services which were authorized to intervene in families to protect children. Much emphasis in the early years of surveillance of children was placed on caring for orphans and reducing filth in children's living conditions (Radbill, 1990). This evolved gradually to emphasis on poverty and homelessness as areas requiring special surveillance. By the 1920's, provinces and states developed orphanages and youth detention facilities to hold and intervene in the lives of neglected

youth who were mainly lost or abandoned children because their parents were in hospitals, in prisons, or dead.

This situation continued until the years of the Second World War which represented a time when less attention was paid to the need to monitor children. However, by the early 1960's, there was a broad movement in Canada and the United States to close orphanages and increase foster care, in the community, for neglected children (Reiniger et. al, 1995).

Since then, three events have changed the character of child protection services in North America. The first was the report by the American pediatrician, Henry Kempe. He popularized in 1960 the x-ray findings of bone fractures of children due to an adult purposefully injuring a child. These findings, originally described by Caffey in 1949, were previously overlooked by physicians. Kempe's article which described the characteristic x-ray findings of "the battered child syndrome" raised awareness and was cited frequently as a reason for increased surveillance of children (Reiniger et. al., 1995). The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (U.S.) established the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in 1974 to ensure federal leadership in assisting states and communities with the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect through the allocation of funds appropriated by Congress. Eligible states received funding incentives to designate an agency for investigation; to establish a reporting system; to enact laws to protect children under age 18 years from mental injury, physical injury, and sexual abuse; and to provide guardians to represent children in the courts (Brissett-Chapman, 1997).

The second event was the emergence of the awareness that children can be abused sexually. This body of knowledge had been very much affected by Sigmund Freud's theory that childhood sexual relations were primarily a fantasy experience of the developing psyche. The time frame for the dominance of Freud's model was approximately 70 years, from 1890 to 1960. Freud's view was

seriously challenged by personal accounts and scholarly articles on child sexual abuse which emerged in the late 1960's and early 1970's. These served to raise the awareness of the reality, so often minimized or denied, that some adults have sex with children. This awareness contributed, in 1980, to the Federal Government of Canada establishing the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children and Youths (Badgley, 1984). It was chaired by Robin Badgley, and the report's 52 recommendations included emphasis on increased surveillance of offenses, offenders, and kinds of injuries, as well as major changes to the Criminal Code respecting sexual relations between children and adults.

The third major change has been the wide incorporation of case management models and risk assessment tools. These models and tools were developed, partly, in response to the criticism that child protection services lacked a rational basis for decision making. By the mid 1980's, the concept had emerged that risk factors provided a useful understanding of child maltreatment and its intervention and investigation (Herrenkohl, 1995). The American Public Welfare Association began in 1986 to publish summaries of highlights from the yearly meeting on the utility of surveillance of risk factors (Cicchinelli, 1991). This phase represented the development of the codification of risk assessment and the objectification of those factors. What was sometimes forgotten in this development was that risk assessment as a positivist social science method of thinking about maltreatment was not culturally neutral (Schene, 1996). Several years later, critiques of the use of risk surveillance methods appeared, raising concern about the inappropriate use of such tools. Critics observe that some risk factors had a very different meanings in other cultures (Courtney, 1996). Another concern was the excessive reliance on heuristic methods in complex family situations (Fluke, 1995).

In the last 20 years, a considerable body of literature has developed about child abuse and risk factors. Most of the emphasis in studying the problem has been either descriptive (Oates, 1996), with

emphasis on epidemiology, on accurate data collection, and on screening for high risk cases, or an analysis of the determinants of child maltreatment (Greenland, 1987). Much less has been written about the use of such an approach in the context of this work being performed by undertrained staff who often work in cross-cultural systems (English, 1996) with large case loads. In addition, there is limited research on the structural determinants of work barriers for child protection staff. Krishnan and Morrison observed, "Most empirical studies examined the extent of violence and abuse or described the demographic and personal characteristics of abusers and/or victims. The structural basis of child maltreatment has not been fully understood." (Krishnan & Morrison, 1995).

There is concern that the requirement of child protection services for documentation and records reduces the focus on the primary task which is to protect children. This view is supported by Gleeson (1997) who states that the procedural requirements of the system in Illinois takes precedence over effective case work.

One of these themes is that caseworkers' practice is being shaped by a child welfare system that is becoming increasingly bureaucratic and overwhelmed by its own legal and procedural demands. Caseworkers consistently indicated that much of their time was used to complete paperwork related to specific activities that are required by DCFS procedures and by settlements of lawsuits that are brought against DCFS. (Gleeson, et.al., 1997, p.818).

This perspective is also stated by Judge Gove in his analysis of the death of a child under care of the Child Protection System in British Columbia, Canada. He observed that the requirements for paper documentation involved in intake and assessment were a serious impediment to effectively responding to reports that a child may be in need of protection (Gove, 1995).

The prediction of child abuse and neglect

The difficult theoretical and applied operational problem in child protection work is how to know that one has correctly intervened in a child's life. This challenge has led to a variety of methods of risk assessment. Although there are over 20 different systems used in North American jurisdictions, they all are based on a method of analysis which is primarily consensus or actuarial (Schene, 1996). The consensus model processes the data by an analysis which requires the user to make an informed decision based on the facts of the case. The actuarial model processes the data statistically and leads to a mathematical answer about risk, or, as stated by Dawes, "To be truly actuarial, interpretations must be both automatic (that is, prespecified or routinized) and based on empirically established relations" (Dawes et.al., 1989, p.1668)

The prime function of a method of prediction is to improve the degree of certainty associated with a particular decision. It is also essential that the user be able to communicate the essence of this decision and the rational basis which underlies a particular action. The kind of data which is used to make predictions varies widely (Sigurdson & Reid, 1997), and prediction decisions can be understood as falling into one of three risk assessment methods:

1. The outcome is a consequence of understood natural laws. This is the case when the application of physics to space travel results in a satellite circling the moon.
2. The outcome is a consequence of the laws associated with randomness. The theory of probability and its applications to games' theory are illustrations of this.
3. The outcome is a consequence of a complex set of forces. Prediction within child protection work is typical of this.

Risk occurs when the outcome of a particular course of action is uncertain. As a consequence of risk being present, there is a need to identify the probable consequences of differing decisions. The choice

of an appropriate course of action is, in part, dependent on one's perception of the certainty of particular outcomes. For example, if someone is certain that a car will crash on a long journey, that person won't go. However, we are generally willing to drive long distances in the knowledge that there is some degree of danger.

Risk Estimation Systems

Child welfare practice includes five general processes: substantiation, risk estimation, general assessment, intervention, and feed-back. Generally, risk estimation is carried out after there has been a substantiated incident of abuse or neglect, or on the request of a voluntary client for assistance (Sigurdson & Reid, 1997). Data which emerges from the process of substantiation is relevant to risk estimation and the data used for risk estimation will also be relevant to the provision of services. The stronger the explicit connections between these procedures the greater the efficiency of the overall system (Reid & Sigurdson, et.al., 1995).

Risk assessment is an analytical approach to social work and it is based on an agreement on what constitutes evidence and also concerning the method of analysis.

In its most basic form, a risk estimation system must provide the following:

1. A method for determining the vulnerability of a child.
2. A continuum of likelihood's concerning future incidents or conditions of abuse or neglect.
3. A means of estimating the probable severity of any future instance of abuse or neglect. (Reid & Sigurdson, et.al., 1996, p.24).

The system which is used may be actuarial or consensus in its processing of data. Both methods are built on the judgment of

individual child protection staff. The validity of either method is based on the availability of standardized concepts which are operationalized in a similar way between staff. At the time of this study, the Manitoba Risk Estimation System was the basic risk tool for use by new staff (Sigurdson & Reid, 1997). It is a consensus model.

Risk estimation in child welfare entails the formulation of an opinion concerning a future state (the neglect or abuse of a child) based upon the facts which are accessible with respect to a current, substantiated instance of child maltreatment. It is a systematic process of identifying and understanding uncertainty in the context of case decision-making. The objective of risk estimation is to promote systematic thinking and clear decision-making in child protection. Every substantiated report of child abuse and neglect should include an estimation of current and potential likelihood of harm to the safety of a child and effective risk estimation focuses on both the strengths and deficits of the family environment.

Child protection work requires that risk estimation be done regularly and thoroughly and that action be taken regarding the protection of the child, whether or not the available methods of predicting child abuse and neglect are perfected. However, if there are inadequate numbers of staff and a relative lack of other resources there is little time to pursue alternate sources of data, thus there is great difficulty in evaluating data that can be used as indicators of predictors. It follows that any tool must be compact, based upon accessible data, logically consistent with other features of the workplace and perceived as useful by the workers.

News stories emphasize the abuse or neglect of children as a consequence of returning them to their homes inappropriately or the consequences of taking children into care when they should have remained with their parents. Popular discourse of this sort are generally premised upon the assumption that any reasonable person would have known the correct decision to make in these circumstances. These judgments are facile and ignore the genuine

absence of practice knowledge in this area. Retrospective analysis has been used extensively in instances of child deaths or near tragedy. The Gove Report regarding child protection services in British Columbia describes the many issues which staff face in child protection, based on a reconstruction of the narratives of staff who were involved in cases. This review places value on a knowledge based system. The fundamental notion of a knowledge-based system in child protection is that it demonstrates the thinking that leads to decisions. The general principles that are important with regards to the use of any estimation tool in abuse and neglect decision-making are:

- a) The method should be based on the examination of sufficient number of facts and a substantiation of events in question.
- b) There should be a rational theory and research supporting the tool. This tool needs to be linked conceptually to the dynamics of child abuse and neglect.
- c) The decision-making should be fair and ethical.
- d) The process should be accountable to the public.
- e) There should be a common-language in the system that allows for easily understood terms across different systems such as Mental Health, Education and Justice (Reid & Sigurdson, 1994).

There is a substantial methodological problem involved in collecting information as the alleged perpetrator's rights with respect to their children are at stake, as well as the potential of criminal prosecution. The danger of labeling someone as an abuser who has hurt a child is an ever present difficulty associated with child protection work. On the other hand, there is every reason to expect that caregivers who abuse or neglect their children will systematically lie and conceal their behavior so as to improve their position. It follows that any practical prediction device must be premised on data that can be objectively understood without undue reliance on the uncorroborated reports of possible perpetrators. This use of observable

events in the lives of parents is intended to reduce errors in risk estimation by reducing observer bias due to the worker placing too much intuition at the expense of the facts.

Turnell and Edwards (1999) wrote that a major problem with most risk maps is the emphasis on problems and weakness rather than resources and strengths. They stated that:

Most risk assessment maps are too one-sided: Focusing exclusive attention on the areas just mentioned is rather like mapping only the darkest valleys and gloomiest hollows of a particular territory. There can be no doubt that the child protection worker must gather information about past and potential harm and family deficiencies, but to balance the picture it is also vital to obtain information regarding past, existing, and potential safety, competencies, and strengths. This balance of information regarding family functioning allows the worker to achieve a comprehensive assessment of risk in child protection cases.

Risk assessment that becomes dominated by danger, harm, and the endless cataloging of risk factors often leads to a preoccupation or obsession with the problematic sides of family functioning, and workers become defensive in their case practice. This process is likely to limit the options for enhancing and building safety for the child.

Good risk assessment should provide a firm foundation for analysis, equipping workers with full and detailed information so that they feel secure in their ability to improve the child's situation. (Turnell & Edwards, 1999, p.101)

Section summary

The narrative of actual practice experience and the reviews of systems of care in cases of child deaths due to child maltreatment has led to an expectation that there are better ways to intervene to reduce these unwanted events. This expectation is based on the principle that greater knowledge about the factors which describe the danger to

a child will allow more effective and safer interventions to reduce child maltreatment. This is an assumption which is the basis of work in progress across North America in regards to risk assessment and safety plans. Currently there are few prospective studies, based on large data sets, that demonstrate this relationship. However, as there is no superior hypothesis, a number of areas of priority have become established. One is increasing the knowledge and skill base of employees. Another is providing tools to staff to help recognize high risk situations and to intervene earlier and more thoroughly. Another has been to develop strategies to familiarize staff with the community they serve, thereby reducing the cultural gap between worker and client. This study reports on worker experience in these aspects of their career.

Discussion of Literature Review

The relevant literature considered as a whole is a mix of historical trends, current fiscal realities, the clinical practice of child protection work, and the multi-cultural composition of communities. What is generally missing in the literature is the linkage between the risk assessment paradigms and the narrative of actual practice experience.

The historical trend of child protection services is a change from very inadequate protection of children to the organized efforts of governments and communities to focus on children's well-being by developing a surveillance capacity at hospitals, clinics, and schools. Major social changes have resulted in children being valued and protected by laws. This places government in the role of providing services to protect children. The level of abuse or neglect of children is sufficiently high that case loads continue to grow across North America. In many communities this has outpaced the capacity to provide skilled, and confident staff to do this difficult work. In recent years, once child protection staff have been employed, they are offered ongoing training with an emphasis on competency as many

new staff feel the need to improve performance skills. Competency refers to "the ability to perform", as stated by Hughes and Rycus (1989). Training programs have been organized around competency statements which describe the particular knowledge and skills that workers need to perform a job task. The leading work on competencies for entry-level child protection social workers has been done by the Institute for Human Services in Ohio and the Child Welfare League of America (Gove, 1995).

It is possible that child protection services are asked to monitor and intervene in the lives of children when many of the structural problems of society such as poverty and racism are contributing factors which make it difficult for parents to cope. This aspect of the literature, that is, the critical literature of the role of social workers in servicing state interests of social control, is limited. From this perspective, Birmingham describes how child protection regulates one of the adverse effects of the current social structure. This writer (1996) has observed that agencies in Texas charged with the responsibility of child protection and permanency planning for children have been faced with growing caseloads and increasingly complex and severe instances of family dysfunction and child maltreatment. At the same time, child welfare services are being provided by personnel with backgrounds in a variety of fields. Many of these fields are not directly related to social work. Over the past decade the number of trained social workers involved in child welfare services has fallen while the need for trained, highly specialized staff members has risen. He states :

Only 28% of child welfare staff members had undergraduate or graduate degrees in 1987. Some states do not require any degree. Thus, the child welfare services system has been deprofessionalized as a result of many forces, most notably, increased social and economic pressures on families and, paradoxically, decreased public funding of services to children and families (Birmingham, 1996, p.728)

This situation has contributed to a devaluing of the child welfare field and, not surprisingly, to high staff turnover rates. The failure of many states to provide adequate training at the entry level or to update and enhance the skills of experienced staff members compounds the problem. Thus, in Texas, high staff turnover and the hiring of staff members lacking specialized educational backgrounds have diminished the effectiveness of services delivery. Gove raised a similar concern regarding a child death in Vancouver, B.C. (1995).

Recruitment and professional socialization to become a child protection worker is affected by the general devaluing of child protection work as a career. It is a stepping stone for many to another career. Working conditions can be very difficult and staff feel poorly prepared for the work.

The mosaic of cultures and ethnicities in most North American communities has implications for child protection staff. They will be working in a cross cultural mode, more likely than not. Judge Gove raised the issue of cultural factors and risk assessment. The following commentary is directed to the need to better understand parents' care for children when determining risk:

The inquiry also heard that cultural factors affect the validity of risk assessment guidelines. For example, cultural background may influence patterns of supervision of the child. While such culturally-based behavior may differ from that of the majority culture, it does not necessarily indicate a problem in the child-parent relationship. However, recent literature indicates that, regardless of culture, characteristics in the parent or caregiver such as mental illness, substance abuse and a history of maltreatment of children are always risk factors and they are strong indicators of the re-occurrence of abuse (Gove, 1995, 2, p.74).

The notion of cultural competency, "the ability to perform" (Hughes & Rysus, 1989), applies to working with cultures different

from one's own. Cultural social work practice is described in the book Ethnicity and Family Therapy. The authors, McGoldrick et al., make the following observation:

During the past decade, we have become increasingly convinced that we learn about culture primarily not by learning the "facts" of another's culture, but rather by changing our attitude. Our underlying openness to those who are culturally different is the key to expanding our cultural understanding. Thus, cultural paradigms are useful to the extent that they help us recognize patterns we may have only vaguely sensed before. They can challenge our long held beliefs about "the way things are". No clinician should feel that, armed with a small chapter about another cultural group, he or she is adequately informed to do effective therapy with them. (McGoldrick et al., 1996, p.xi)

The child protection system has developed with limited knowledge and understanding of the people it serves. This is a major shortcoming of the system. Possibly, the gap between those protecting children and those they serve maintains a sense of foreignness to it. The observations of Zambrana (1998) are relevant to this point:

Addressing the human service needs of the Latino population requires a broad comprehensive effort that includes confronting the causes of poverty and its consequences. (p.19)...The marginal status of many Latinos means that Latino families may frequently have to negotiate a system which is both intimidating and uninformed (Zambrana, 1998, p.21).

McKenzie (1995) has raised the question whether a parallel lack of community knowledge occurs in Manitoba. This is in the context of providing social services in a system which deals with fundamental issues of poverty, substance abuse, and cross-cultural work requirements.

A method to consider the matter of cultural attunement was to examine the quality of service in a cross cultural setting. This was discussed by McKenzie (1995) in the report on Child and Family Services in First Nations people of Manitoba. He states: "Focus group participants stressed the importance of culture, including language, ceremonies, and teachings, both as a component of child welfare practice and as a method of healing their communities" (1995, p.646). A similar note was struck by Zambrana (1998) following the study of the economic and social vulnerability of Latino children and families:

Knowledge of the unique social and economic circumstances of Hispanic subgroups greatly enhances cultural competency among service providers. Competent practice represents a potentially powerful factor in enhancing the effectiveness of family welfare interventions. Recommendations drawn from the data on Latino populations point to the need for comprehensive support services that reflect local conditions rather than mimic national model practices that do not necessarily work at the local level (Zambrana, 1998, p.21)

It appears, in summary, that it would be useful to develop an understanding of the stress of working in a cross cultural setting, and to apply it to the work of child protection services.

Summary

Child protection work is complex and intriguing. Our society places recent college and university graduates in the position of making critical decisions in frightening and desperate situations of maltreatment. Often these staff are poorly prepared for child protection work. In addition, they face challenges such as interfacing with the medical and justice systems for which they are often poorly prepared. There is frequently little preparation for thinking about risk factors that might help them to make an informed decision about the likelihood of reoccurrence of maltreatment. The knowledge of how to improve protection and nurturance of children and families is

essential for children's growth and development. To do this it is essential to have awareness of the nature of culture in child protection work from the perspective of the worker, the workplace, and the social construction of these services. From the latter perspective, child protection regulates one of the adverse effects of the current social structure, and it sometimes does it with limited understanding of the people it serves. Expanding our knowledge will increase the effectiveness of child protection services staff and provide positive outcomes for the growing number of children in the child protection system.

Research Methodology and Design

Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

From the foregoing discussion it is concluded that the protection of children from maltreatment is a major task for governments and it is a difficult skill for practitioners to learn. Most jurisdictions in North America have responded to child deaths and abuse with case management models and risk assessment tools designed to enhance practitioner skills and outcome. However these efforts need to be supplemented with a wider understanding of the culture of this work. Staff doing this difficult and complex work are overwhelmed by additional realities of insufficient knowledge base, large case loads, diverse cultures of clients, and high staff turn-over.

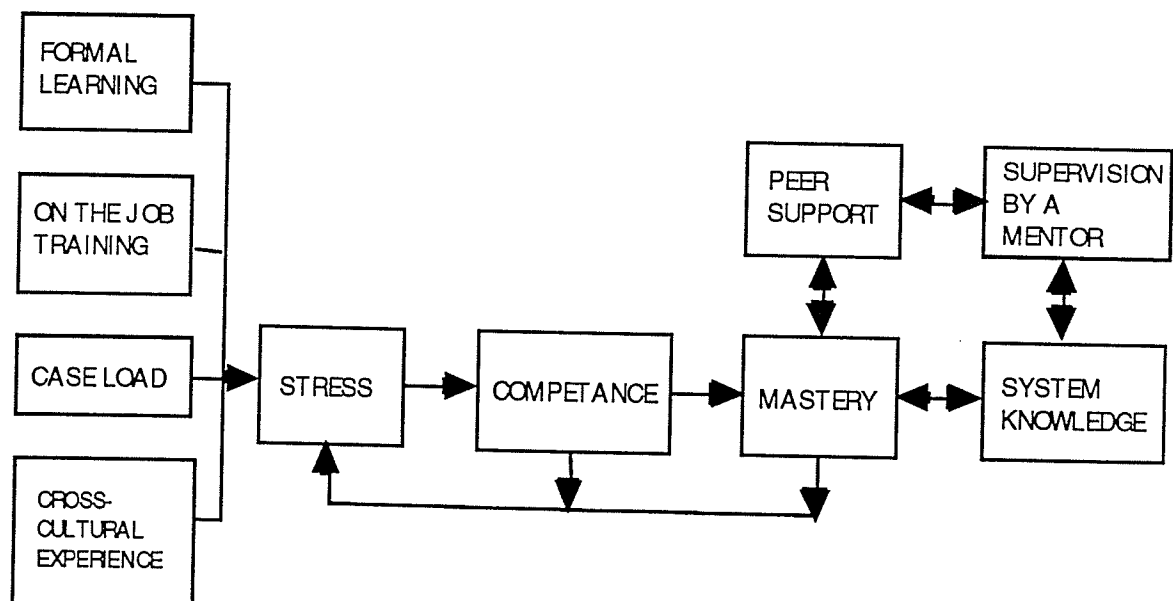
A concept which emerged in my preliminary study of the topic of worker experience in child protection which preceded this thesis was that of job stress was due in part to not being able to do work of suitable quality. Stress is a frequently mentioned concept which may be linked to an absence of competency in the skills required. The linkage between stress and lack of competency may be fear. I suggest that fear of not being good enough to do one's work well may be a key source of stress at work. Mastery used in this context refers to the state of knowledge which gives confidence to manage flexibly the uncertainty in everyday work. It is a state beyond competency. Competency is described as the state of mind which comes from the knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of a job task. It refers to being adequately qualified and meeting a basic standard. It appears that staff who feel they have one or both of these characteristics may be able to work effectively and even enjoy their tasks. By interviewing a group of informants an understanding might emerge as to the knowledge based skills needed to learn the culture of child protection work.

Based on the preliminary study I made a theoretical model (Figure 2) to show how the components in the above framework could

be related. This study examines whether new staff are overwhelmed due to variables listed on the left side of figure 2: insufficient formal learning, insufficient on the job training, large case load, and cross cultural difficulties. Factors which may contribute to overcoming these problems are found on the right side of Figure 2: They are peer support, supervision by a mentor, training on the job, and system knowledge. The components may be linked dynamically in a fashion described in Figure 1.

Figure 2

Theoretical model of the culture of child protection work



The purpose of this model is to provide a structure in the generation of a better model, one which more closely reflects the findings of this study. A new model should make explicit some of the key personal experiences of informants.

This model suggests that components on the left side are relevant to job stress. The components on the right (peer support, supervision by a mentor, and system knowledge), support the development of competence and mastery of the work. Risk estimation is nested in the components, "formal learning" at college or university, and "on the job training" at the child protection agency.

Statement of the Issue:

Child protection work in cities such as Winnipeg is complex, difficult, and demands a wide set of skills. Staff who begin to do this work are mainly recent graduates from faculties of social work, who may or may not be sufficiently prepared with the practical skills for this challenging work. There is very little information on the culture of child protection work and the adaptation that new employees need to make to this work.

This study is a description of the formal and informal training and learning of a person who recently completed 1 to 3 years as a child protection worker in Winnipeg. This study examines the cultural values that were acquired before work started and after one to three years in this occupation. In addition this paper examines some of the cross-cultural experiences of the informant. At the time of this study, the Manitoba Risk Estimation System was the risk tool used by new staff (Sigurdson & Reid, 1997).

Profile of values, assumptions, and theoretical perspectives on the problem

Child protection work is difficult, complex, intriguing, and frightening. Our society places recent college and university graduates in the position of making critical decisions in frightening and desperate situations of maltreatment. The preparation of these

staff for the work is important. Once on the job, they face challenges such as interfacing with the medical and justice systems. There may be insufficient preparation for thinking about risk factors that might help to make an informed decision about the likelihood of reoccurrence of maltreatment. This study examines the experiences of individuals doing this important work.

Design

A pretest interview of one child protection employee with two years of work experience was completed 6 months prior to implementation of this study. It provided valuable insight into the requirements to complete this project. The results of this pretest provided a list of topics to be considered in the larger study. Pretest information indicated that most of the children apprehended are Aboriginal children. Thus, this design was developed in consultation with members of the Aboriginal community. The possibility that racism may be a factor in cross-cultural issues is acknowledged at the outset. Pretest information also indicated that the cultural gap between staff and client was an important work experience.

Child protection services in Winnipeg were organized at the time of this study by 4 regions: North-West, Central, Eastern, and South.

The subject of the culture of child protection work lends itself to both quantitative and qualitative analysis. There is the value of being able to describe some of the basic characteristics of the community: the number of families in the area, the number of staff employed, case counts per worker, and general characterization of the case load. These results provide a profile of the 4 administrative regions of Winnipeg Child And Family Services.

The use of qualitative analysis enhances the understanding of the nature of the work, cross-cultural issues, how the tasks are

learned, and the impact of stress on the staff and the subtext of informants. This is very appropriately learned through discourse with an informant because this method of research facilitates an in-depth analysis of informant motivation and needs.

The Board of Winnipeg Child and Family Services was asked for support of this study and gave formal approval (Appendix A). The Board requested that a follow-up examination of the topic occur at a later date. This study was confined to observations at one interval in 1999. If a follow-up study is to be done, a separate study with appropriate Ethics approval for that will be re-submitted.

The following framework was used to collect information regarding the administrative regions of Winnipeg CFS.

Quantitative information regarding the 4 CFS regions

REGION	ALL CHILDREN 0-19 YEARS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE (March, 1999)	PROTECTION CASES	NO. OF STAFF PROVIDING PROTECTION SERVICES
North-West	32,600	772	598	43
Central	15,795	818	575	39
Eastern (not including rural district)	59,645	698	796	50
South-West	54,245	336	814	38
Total (1997-98)	162,285	2624	2,783	170

Informants from the 4 offices were chosen randomly from lists of employees separated by the region of employment. This was done to permit the variation across Winnipeg to emerge by selecting from all the regional zones.

The inclusion criteria for the study population was a group of recent graduates who are within a similar interval of 12 to 36 months completed after their first employment in child protection services. This sample was informants of different ages and different cultural backgrounds working in the 4 Winnipeg CFS regions. For the

purposes of this study, the definition of cross cultural is that the child protection worker provides more than 50% of services to families from a cultural background different from his or her own. In the original project design the time interval from graduation from college or university was 1 to 2 years. This was expanded to 1 to 3 years as the addition of 1 year of work experience considerably increased the sample population size to 60 persons

Exclusion criteria was graduates who have not worked in child protection for 1 year or more after completion of formal studies, those with 4 or more years employment, and staff who work less than 50% of their time in child protection services. Winnipeg and nearby communities are the location of employment. The employer has 4 regional offices (North-West, Central, Eastern, and South-West Winnipeg Child and Family Services). Informants were chosen randomly from the 4 offices to permit variation across regional offices. This diversity is important given the variation in the socioeconomic profile of the 4 regions.

Impact of the observer on the behavior of the informant

The informants were aware of the research that Grant Reid and I have done on child maltreatment including the use of The Manitoba Risk Estimation System as a standard of practice for risk assessment (Sigurdson & Reid, 1997). They were pleased to participate and seemed ready to describe their experiences in a relaxed and open fashion. This led to a ready flow of observations and experiences that moved from early experiences in high school and university, followed by formal training in social work and mentoring each received. A number of times the observations and concerns seemed to be particularly well crystallized. The entire interviews were tape recorded.

My goal was to minimize my impact on the behavior of the informants, as my interest might potentially bias the report towards

more discussion of risk factors and prediction of reoccurrence. Interestingly, this did not occur as many of the conversations and experiences focused on their learning the culture of child protection work and cross cultural experiences during this employment.

The pretest interview allowed for a trial of whether the impact of the observer was problematic for the behavior of the informant. This did not occur.

Clinical issues associated with collection, analysis, and dissemination of data

Access to the informants was not a problem. T. Lance Barber, Chief Executive Officer, introduced this study to prospective informants (Appendix B). I was welcomed to the offices and was given sufficient time to complete the interview. My tape recording or notes did not interfere with the flow of information. The records were available for review shortly afterward. No mechanical or computer device was used to do an analysis of frequency of words used.

As it was not possible to say which parts of the tapes were most instructive of the issues in the interview, it was necessary to type the full set of tape recordings to better know how to use it appropriately. This typing involved a considerable amount of time.

Ethics

All informants received a participant information sheet prior to discussing the consent form. This information sheet was fully reviewed with the potential informant. I explained that the informant's name would not be used and that the tapes would be erased after they had been transcribed. This has occurred. The structure of the informed consent was taken from the text book

Qualitative Research Methods for Health Professionals by J.M. Morse and P.A. Field (1995). It was modified with assistance from Dr. J. Kaufert and Dr. Sharon MacDonald. A signed consent was kept in a secure place. The identifying information regarding the informant in the quoted sections of this report were modified to protect identity. The informants were identified and contacted as described in the following section, "Sample".

All Winnipeg CFS staff learned of this study by means of a letter from The Executive Office of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, stating that participation is voluntary, that the staff interviews will occur during the work day, and that no identification of individual responses will occur. The researcher selected a random sample of names to fill in each of the sections of the survey frame. Then information sheets were given to those selected stating that the recipient has been asked to participate. This letter made it clear that employment in the workplace was not affected by the decision to participate or not to participate. When sufficient staff were interviewed to complete the sample frame, the informant group was closed to recruitment.

The consent form was read and 2 copies were signed, one for the informant and one for the interviewer, and there were very few questions about the consent form itself. A copy of this report is to be made available to the informants and to Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

Sample

The number needed to interview is set by theoretical and practical concerns. The total population of all informants is the group of new child protection workers in Winnipeg. A list of all staff employed to do this work was provided by Ms Connie Newman, Winnipeg Child and Family Services and the actual number was 60. Those who graduated in the last 3 years are the group of interest in

this study. This list of 60 new employees was arranged by the 4 regional offices. The sample for interview provides for variation across offices by randomly selecting 2 names from each of the 4 offices. Respondents were not asked at which university or college they had studied as a social work.

This study was introduced to all staff by means of a letter from The Executive Office of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. This letter stated that the staff interviews will occur during the work day, that participation is voluntary, and no identification of individual responses will occur. The researcher will selected a random sample of names to fill in each of the sections of the survey frame. The first 9 selected all agreed to be interviewed. Then information sheets were given to those selected stating that the recipient has been asked to participate. A copy of this letter and information sheet is located in Appendix C & D. This letter made it clear that employment in the workplace was not affected by the decision to participate or not to participate. When sufficient staff were interviewed to complete the sample frame, the informant group was closed to recruitment. There was no control group.

It was expected that 16 interviews would be needed. "Saturation", the point where no new themes emerged, was reached, when after the 8th interview it was observed that little additional new information was emerging which had not already been obtained. This decision to stop after 9 was made because there was ongoing review and analysis of data as the interviews took place. A decision to do one further interview was made to confirm that observation. That was the case. A total of 9 interviews were made. A more heterogeneous sample frame would have yielded more diversity. An example of a more heterogeneous sample would be to interview rural Manitoba agencies.

Original proposal for location and number of informant interviews and actual numbers

REGION	ORIGINAL PROPOSAL FOR NUMBER OF INFORMANTS	ACTUAL NUMBER OF INFORMANTS
North West	4	2
Central	4	3
Eastern	4	2
South	4	2

Instrumentation and outline prepared in advance for discussion

A semi-structured interview was used. Each interview lasted 1.25 to 1.75 hours. The following outline is a list of topics, derived from a pretest, that was prepared in advance for discussion. These topics were not followed mechanically, but rather the interview process allowed these topics or others to emerge and be discussed. As a result, the following topics did not get equal attention.

- your work
- the nature of child protection work
- formal learning
 - high school
 - college
 - university
 - child protection training
- training on the job
 - clinical skills
 - team learning
 - mentor
- life experience
 - growing up
 - volunteer experience
 - work experience
- system knowledge
 - inappropriate system responses
 - regulations
 - actual problem solving
- case load
- cross cultural experiences and issues
- racism
- risk factors in child protection
- changes for the future

The themes which emerged were analyzed vertically and horizontally by visual inspection and manual means. Some themes

which were most important to staff served as organizing concepts for the major themes of this study.

Implementation

Some notes were taken during the interview but as little as needed, so as to not disturb the flow of conversation. The tape recorder was used during the interview. The interview tapes were transcribed. Key words and phrases were recorded and quantified. As well, process notes regarding the pace, emphasis, and style of the interview were noted.

We met at the informants' offices. First we introduced ourselves, and then the nature of the inquiry was explained. The project was described as learning about the culture of child protection from the perspective of recent graduates in social work. Once we agreed to proceed the interview occurred a week later. A signed informed consent was completed at the first visit. Resources for tape recording the interview were obtained. Sufficient time was set aside for the interview, so that if it went on for longer than expected it was not interrupted unnecessarily. Steps were taken to minimize the interviewer's impact on the behavior of the informant, so as not to bias the report towards more discussion of risk factors and the prediction of reoccurrence.

As it was not possible to say which parts of the tapes would be most instructive of the issues in the interview, it was necessary to type the full set of tape recordings. These full transcripts provided the basis for developing models of themes and the relationship between themes. This process led to developing a set of major themes and subthemes which supported or expanded and understanding of the major themes.

Results

Primary themes in compiling data and framework for classifying and interpreting data

Early in the course of research design it was decided to use a traditional methodology of reading and re-reading the interviews many times to be thoroughly familiar with the context and to mechanically extract themes from that. As a result of this method, 16 major themes and 47 sub-themes were noted. The 9 interviews represented each region with one region providing 3 interviews. This covered the 4 regions of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Two informants came from each region. One additional interview was added to satisfy the impression that no new themes were emerging on additional interviewing.

The 16 main themes were:

- Practical solutions to work problems
- Clerical skills
- Emotional demands
- Work environment
- Supervision
- Social work education
- Training on the job
- University experience
- Life experience/skills
- System knowledge
- Case load
- Cross cultural experiences and issues
- Risk factors in child protection
- Client experience
- Resources
- Changes for the future

Each of these topics was supported by a set of subthemes. These main themes are not equal in importance. The reasons for

selecting 4 themes are provided in a following section on Thematic Coding. The 4 most important themes will be discussed in detail. Each informant is referenced by the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J. There was no interview with the identity I. The subthemes cluster by major theme. The following are the major thematic clusters and the supporting subthemes.

Practical solutions to work problems (solution focused practice)

- Making connection with clients
- Finding good foster homes
- Defining oneself through work
- Improving skills (competence or mastery)
- Need for flexibility with solving problems
- Understanding the nature of Child Protection work

Case work skills

- Paperwork demands
- Need better computer resources
- Court preparations

Emotional demands

- Coping with stress
- Pride in work (quality work)
- Working with uncertainty
- Unable to leave work at work
- Support from family
- Good job security

Work environment

- Staff turnover
- Professional vulnerability
- Peer support
- Work of others before / interconnectedness of system

Supervision

- Importance of good supervision
- Experience of inadequate supervision
- Experience of infrequent and informal supervision

Social work education

- High School

- College or University
- Child Protection Training

Training on the job

- Clinical Skills
- Quick immersion to work
- Team Learning
- Mentor

University experience

- 2 year program vs. 3 year program
- Practicum at University
- Insufficient preparation
- Gap between practice and theory

Life experience/skills

- Growing up on welfare
- Volunteering
- No previous experience
- Work Experience

System knowledge

- Inappropriate system responses
- Regulations
- Problem solving

Case load

- Burnout
- Caseload too high

Cross cultural experiences and issues

- Racism
- Cultural gap
- Language gap
- Mixed benefit of same culture worker
- Cultural attunement or sensitivity
- Few links with Aboriginal Community

Risk factors in child protection

- No regular risk assessment
- Child's perception
- Uncertainty in assessment because of lack of risk assessment
- Intuitive risk method

Client experience

- Valuing client insight
- Family of origin issues
- Anger at the system
- Lack of trust
- Poverty / alcoholism
- Small steps / client strength
- Mental health issues of parents

Resources

- Alcoholism treatment

Sample of case narratives involving an aggregate of data

Two informants were selected as representative of the career experience of the 2 main groups of participants, namely those who have entered child protection practice directly from the high school and university stream, and those who have returned to their academic studies after taking time to raise a family or work in another career. This grouping of respondents was made because it described a major difference between the career patterns of participants in two subgroups: those who proceeded directly from post secondary studies to child protection work and those who preceded social work studies with another career. The intent of introducing the raw data is (1) to give a qualitative feel for the narrative data and an overview of the social workers' roles using their voice and (2) to provide a commentary on the characteristics of this work and the themes which emerge from the informants.

The following is a sample of the interviews with two informants. Extended narratives describing career and professional socialization are included in the thesis to establish the tone and "voice" of the participants. As composite or aggregate examples they did not include case identifiers or detailed demographic profiles to insure confidentiality and anonymity. The letter corresponding to the identity of the informant has not been included to insure confidentiality of the respondent. The discourse of both informants has been supplemented from interviews with other informants of a similar career path to provide a composite of experience. Thematic subheadings have been added to provide signposts which indicate transitions in the themes of the two prototypic narratives. An interpretation of the comments and an analysis of the subtext is integrated into the interviews.

The first composite biography brings a set of life experiences as a new employee in child protection. This person has raised a family, worked elsewhere, and has chosen to be employed in an area of Winnipeg which is different from that person's community of origin.

Composite Interview I

Prior career and Life experience

One of the themes in child protection work is the knowledge and life experience we bring to the work and how it is modified. What proceeded your working in this capacity?

I didn't have any previous experience in child welfare. I did my field placement here and before my field placement before I even graduated I started working here. I went with a concentrated program so I had one field placement, so this is absolutely it in terms of special social worker or child welfare experience. I am pretty old, probably, for this study. I was involved in a lot civil rights and anti-war stuff in the States and then when I moved to Canada in the 70s, the Women's Movement and setting up a rape crisis centre and a women's centre, so I did have that kind of orientation and background way back.

Professional socialization

How did you prepare for child protection work at the agency?

I have a practical view, based on working in poor parts of large cities. I accept small changes and the process can be slow, no quick fixes here. I wanted to work in a disadvantaged part of Winnipeg. This is the most interesting part of the city.

Supervision

Supervision is something that has often been mentioned as being important. Could you comment on supervision.

During my field placement, I had a field supervisor who is a worker, not a supervisor within the work setting but someone who supervises students and takes responsibility for training the students. My

field supervisor was great, and we hit it off right away. I was very fortunate, I feel. She takes her job seriously, cares about it a lot and is a terrific person and we just blended, and she, I didn't have to deal with any personality stuff or she just right away would say, "Well, you do this because you are good at this", and we were tag teaming clients for interviewing and a lot of different things, and she was just always pleased to help me. She gave good directions, but we worked really well together a lot of time as a team. There wasn't really any supervision with a supervisor on that unit who didn't really have much to do with me, but it worked out very, very well for me. I also completely trusted my field supervisor and knew that she would never leave me hanging out to dry. She would always take responsibility because, of course, it was ultimately her responsibility.

Prior values

One of my questions to you is about your studies in social work. What were some of the experiences that you had in that part of your career?

I think that the university was a really good experience for me. I didn't get my first degree there, so, I hadn't been there before, and it was a good experience for me in a lot of ways. I don't think that what I learned in the social work program specifically really changed me. I would have been doing the job much the same, even if I hadn't gone, but I don't know how much of that is just me. I don't know if you would say moral issues, but some of the issues that are fundamentally important in social work that are very difficult to address in an academic setting—issues around racism and attitudes toward poverty, welfare and all of those things are more political. We think of them as being more political than academic, but they are fundamental issues around social work and so that certainly, maybe it had to be this way, but it is unfortunate that there are people who maybe had attitudes that weren't going to be helpful to them or weren't going to help them work in a certain environment, for instance, the environment of this office, and even though lecturers and in discussion maybe some of those

attitudes were addressed or challenged in a mild sense, there wasn't really any effort to really deal with it and help people work through some of those issues. It is inappropriate to expect to turn out everybody who has the same political agenda.

Formal studies

Was the course of study suitable for the challenges of this work?

I don't think so, but, of course, part of the problem is that it is a generalist degree and social work encompasses such a huge number of things that are so diverse that I don't know how you could really have a generalist program that really prepared you in depth for a particular field. There is a lot of history, which is fine with me. My first degree was in history, I liked it, I already knew most of the history, so that was easy and very natural to me. I don't know ultimately how relevant it was, and I certainly, in hearing other people, other people struggled quite a bit with the historical part of it and the political part of it, and also felt it was irrelevant. I know that I was in the concentrated program so I was only at university for two years. For the first year, the general sense of the people that I spoke with was "when are we going to learn something that is going to make a difference". So much of that first year was a lot of history, a lot of political stuff which is a good framework but it seemed that a lot of the classes started from the same point and made sure we knew it. Well, we had already done it in other classes so it was even redundant, and even if you considered it relevant, there was a lot of redundancy in those areas.

Which topic or issue have you found particularly important in this transition from a student to early practitioner?

I think most workers would in some way mention paperwork. No one under rates the value of it, because obviously it is important for a number of reasons. But, given our caseloads, I guess it really comes to caseload, it is very impractical and you spend all your time covering your butt on a caseload like we carry, or you can actually balance

it, which is what most people do with doing what you sort of think is an adequate butt-covering job, but maybe does not actually meet standards, and still being able to actually be in the field and so some work. Our caseloads are high.

This set of interviews on professional socialization and training to become a child protection worker display the benefit of drawing from life experiences rather than relying on formal training. Positive and supportive training is valued, but real life experience made the difference.

The cultural context of work

Would you speak about the cultural gap that exists between non-indigenous or non-community members working here and your views on it.

One of the things is that I don't pretend that it doesn't exist and I think that to consider that it doesn't is wrong. To consider it a non-issue is trivializing something that is very important and even if a worker doesn't feel that they have a problem with it, not to acknowledge that their clients experiences make it an issue is maybe not very perceptive. I think that it is always an issue and I don't think there is any way around that. I think that you can minimize it, but you certainly can't eliminate it.

Risk assessment

What are your views on the risks that are part of each child's life and how do you conceptualize the matter of risk?

I think that a fundamental point that I always have in my mind all the time and I say quite often to people is that we are always working on a sliding scale. It is not a risk or no risk situation ever. It is always a degree of risk and that is a hard thing to deal with. It would be easier if it were risk or no risk, but there is always degree of risk and

different people have their different lines in the sand around that.

How do you take those concepts and apply them to your work, the operation, as it were, of that concept?

We use a risk assessment scale sometimes, although not nearly as often as we are supposed to. I think the reason for that is that it is sometimes clumsy to use, for something that we already know, that in most cases I would have a pretty good sense of how I felt and what I felt the strengths were and the risk factors and the contributing factors to risk and my own sense of where that sort of was on my sliding scale. Sometimes it is helpful when you are having trouble with that, when you talk to the client you are feeling this way, but then when you go talk to the supervisor about what you are feeling, and you are really having trouble really getting your own sense of exactly where things are and where your comfort level is. Then that can be helpful. I think that one of the things that you do is learn to begin to get a little comfortable with risk, because you have to. If you can't develop a comfort level with risk, then you can't do the job because there is always risk and it cannot be eliminated by bringing the kids into care and putting them in a foster home, there is always risk. So, you just learn to accept that fact, almost as a premise, so that you are not somebody who is always trying to eliminate risk. I consider that really a dangerous thing, I don't think everybody has their point, nobody is literally trying to eliminate all risk but there are some workers that have more of a focus on trying to eliminate risk and bring risk down to zero, and I consider that dangerous, that has its own risks. It is a different use of the word "risk" but it means that maybe kids are coming into care when they would be better off at home. All those things.

This narrative on risk management displays the more realistic view and greater confidence which broader life experience provides.

The components of work

How many cases would you carry?

I am not sure what I have right now, I did have in the upper 50s.

How many of those fall into the court system?

We do a lot--10 or 20. I wouldn't necessarily be attending court at any given time but certainly more than that would be, for instance, under temporary orders, which means that you are always at some point in the court cycle.

Does court make paperwork much worse?

Yeah, it does because there is a fair amount of paper work connected with court but I don't mind the court cases or court work that much. I don't like having to sit around, most of your time is spent sitting around wasting time when you go to docket or nothing, but that is just the way it works, there isn't really much way around that. When I actually get to do court work, instead of just sitting around waiting for it to happen, I don't mind it. The paper work, I have the same duties, in that workers have to, we have to do our own court particulars. It seems to me, I mean I don't think there is any other client that a lawyer would have to do their own particulars for court. We are the clients and I am not sure why we are doing the particulars and sometimes they will be sent back to us and the lawyers will say, "Well, you know, these aren't adequate, we need more of this and more of that", well, then do something, you know, (laughs) we have even had workers, I had this experience, that had court particulars sent back from the lawyers saying, "There is too much here, you need to pare it down". Excuse me (laughs), you pare it down. You know it comes back like that, so that bothers me, I personally don't know why we are doing that, as other clients of lawyers don't do their own court particulars.

What are the things that you learned that you would wish others to learn as well, that are particularly useful, beyond what we have mentioned?

I think one would be a very specific piece of information, a sort of perception, I guess, but one of the things that is really necessary to get through this work and to deal with it effectively is to always think that there is more than one answer. It is important in terms of making the most of supervision and meetings with collaterals and community people. Never think that you are the one who just absolutely knows how it has to go down. Then you can hear those things. It also makes it easier to be flexible when you have to do something that you don't think is right, if you haven't let yourself get into the kind of mode that you are God and that you know and you can see what is right and if you never let yourself get into that, or get caught up in that, then you can not only hear other people's input better, but you can also deal better when you are required to do things that you really don't think are right.

What is the toughest part of the job?

I don't know. I know that there are few things that I dislike the most. Placement is the most critical issue followed by fostering the foster parents. I don't ever particularly want to be a foster parent or foster worker because the hardest thing for me is to deal with bad foster parents (laughs)--they make me crazy!. The clients I don't have a problem with, that's fine, but when I am dealing with a bad foster home, I just hate it and I think that if all of our foster homes were absolutely--I mean, we expect people to have to be miracle workers and people can't be and it is an unfair expectation. There is no reason to assume that just because somebody thinks that, "oh, I can help kids", that they are going to have anywhere near the skills or the perception or the insight that are needed to do the job. Because it is a hugely difficult thing and far more difficult than my job--far more difficult to be a foster parent, to be a really wonderful foster parent. We have good foster parents and we have lousy foster parents and you have a good percentage of really wonderful parents. If we had enough really wonderful foster parents, I just feel that so many things would be easier in my work.

What is the best part of the job?

I like most of my clients and I take personal satisfaction in being someone who can do a tough job. That is important to me. It is when I first started doing this job and people would ask me, my sister, a friend, whomever, if I liked it. I would say, and it was absolutely true, that is not just that I like it, I mean sometimes I don't like it. Sometimes I hate it, but not really, but sometimes I don't like it, I don't like what I have to do, I don't like what I have to see, I don't like what I have to think about necessarily, but I always like who it makes me, and who it makes me feel like I am. I feel that it has made me more myself than I ever have been before, and I think that is pretty cool to be able to say that you are doing what makes you feel like who you've always wanted to be and who you are supposed to be. I don't think it gets any better than that, and part of, I mean it, and a little embarrassing to admit, but part of that it is true that I take a lot of satisfaction being tough enough to do it. Sometimes I don't do a good thing entirely. Mostly, it is a lot of back and forth, bringing kids in and out of care, we know that is bad for them, and it is just the way whether is worse for them to be bouncing back and forth than it is for them to be home at that particular time, things like that. I believe that it is a job that has to be done, even though it is not black and white, even though you can't always be doing the right thing, even all those things, and other people making things crazy when somebody is not doing it, but I take a lot of satisfaction and pride in my work.

Language and Culture

Language is an important way in which groups define part of their cultures. This question about using different languages is addressed to a child protection worker who works in a bilingual setting after a first career elsewhere:

With regards to language, does that pose an important cultural gap or how does language enter in to your work?

I think it does quite often, particularly more now that we are centralized. When I was in that unit my supervisor spoke French so sometimes she

would intervene if that was necessary. But now, being centralized, I've come across a number of times when we have people who only speak Portuguese, or German, or French, and we need to bring in out-of-agency interpreters. Or trying to coordinate things with people within the agency who speak another language. It certainly does have an impact. My feeling is that the people who don't speak English don't receive the same level of service. Our intake unit does now have a French speaking worker, so I don't think that applies to the French clients, but I think on the whole, people with varying cultural backgrounds and different languages don't receive the same level. This is partly because myself and many of my colleagues aren't as educated or aware of what many of these issues are, what resources are available in the different communities, and what might be culturally appropriate. I don't think that we are as sensitive as we can and should be. Language is one piece of that, but there are many other pieces as well.

Another perspective on the importance of language is from a different interview with an Aboriginal social worker who had returned to social work studies and social work after raising her children. The confidence that comes from a cultural connection is apparent.

Are you expected by your clients to speak Ojibway more than you are able to?

I think sometimes. I guess it is sort of not so much the younger people, but the older people say "Why don't you know it?", and I tell them, well, I just wasn't taught.

How do you respond when someone is very positive that you have Aboriginal ethnicity and hear you speaking some of their language?

I think that there is already an element of trust then. I don't have to work as hard to try to engage them.

For some staff, one's cultural group of origin or ethnicity is a reference point in most day's work. The following informant describes the aspect of ethnicity as a factor in work with families.

Are there expectations that you experience that are different from the non-Aboriginal workers here, when someone sees or hears that you might know some Ojibway and you have that history?

It depends. I found that with some of the people I work with it can give me an edge. There is not that distrust and barriers that are right up front. They feel that they will be talking with someone who knows some of their experience. But at other times it is of no benefit at all. I am a "sell-out", "how could I go work for the big white agency that has been snatching native children for years now". So it is either-or; it is either a really good response or it is very bad. There is not really too much in between.

Is there an example of a topic that you might be able to get to that someone who wasn't speaking the language or a non-Aboriginal couldn't get to?

I think that in dealing with poverty and alcoholism. I grew up sporadically in and out of the child welfare system as well, and I think that depending on the situation, sharing a little piece of that, and being able to say: "I've been there, and I know how it is to struggle. I also know how it is to grow up in a family that struggles with alcoholism and poverty, so I know that this is something that will impact your children for years to come". I think that they hear it a little easier. It doesn't necessarily get us where we want to go any faster but I think that there is already that element of trust, and knowing that I am not going to be just another person to stomp on them the way they feel that they already have been, not only by the Child Welfare System, but by the system itself.

Another experienced child protection workers describes preparation for this work from the perspective of job stress. This person had made a career shift after 10 years working in another career. This person completed formal social work studies and began to work in child protection services. These narratives from other informants broaden the case of the experienced worker. The common thread between informants with prior life experience is the repertoire of alternative career experiences and associated solutions to job stress.

Was burnout something discussed in your formal studies?

Minimally. Very minimally. And it wasn't something that was offered as it was the people who weren't taking care of themselves, or the weak kind of workers, their burnout was synonymous with incompatibility to social work. That kind of thing: "if you did this, this, and this, then you are not going to experience burnout". That is bull s**t. Because I do the things that are asked of me, and I live a fairly healthy lifestyle. So, I mean, I am still feeling it. It is getting to be time for a holiday.

What about your caseload, and requirement for completing reports, and court requirements, and the culture of the workplace.

Well, let me say that prior to being a child protection worker, I had some notions as to what it was. I felt that it was very exciting, and that there would be great opportunity for some therapeutic-type work. And that was sort of what my goal was in being a social worker is to be able to work with people, and to assist them to making better choices in their lives. The case loads and the amount of work we have make that virtually impossible. If I am allowed to spend three hours per month per client I think that I am quite lucky. Most of that time is spend dealing with paperwork and processing funding, for them to participate in therapy or get them hooked up with school, or maybe they want to go to camp this summer, or

things like that. The culture is, I think within child protection as a whole, that we don't really have the opportunity to do what we thought we were going to be doing, and the result of that being that I think that there is a feeling that we don't really help people that much, other than process financial requirements. As the welfare status sort of been retrenching over the last 10 - 15 years, you get the feeling that child welfare work, child protection work, has sort of become the last hole in the public safety net. I am having to deal with people who have been cut of welfare because they didn't claim \$20.00 on their expense. I mean, I think that it is a very different role that we play now as opposed to maybe 20 years ago or so. It really is tough. And it can be disheartening.

This effect of workplace stress is discussed in the context of how different formal studies are from workplace realities. The following is from a child protection worker who also links "a really big missing piece in the education" with stress and being "overwhelmed". This is an interview with a second person who returned to University after raising a family.

Were there things that you learned about Child Protection that only came from being here, and what were some of those ideas or principles that you learned?

Yes. I guess more to the job was a lot of the court work. Nothing that is offered on campus really touches on any of that, and it is such a large part of what we do. I think that learning that whole process it is a really big missing piece in the education. It is very stressful. You have to know what you are doing, and I don't think that there was anything in my studies that prepared me for that. It is sort of something that you have to learn right there and then. You start working, you are handed a case load, and away you go. I think that if there had been something offered that would have prepared me better for the court work it would have gone a long way. Some of the policy courses touched on the mechanics of it, but actually being in there and doing that, and having

to prepare the papers for it, I was overwhelmed at times.

Summary of the prototypic older social worker with extensive life experience

This discourse of a prototypic social worker who began employment with considerable life experience has a subtext of modest confidence and optimism, combined with a genuine interest and enjoyment in exploring cultural diversity through work. There is, in addition, a quiet acceptance that change is often slow and families have their own resources and solutions which can be nurtured by the social worker.

The portions of the narrative involving risk assessment reveal the confidence of those who bring greater life experience to the work. It appears that a broader life experience gives a more realistic view of risk management.

Composite Interview II

This next composite biography contrasts with the first composite career narrative. It describes the experience of a person who moved directly from high school to university to child protection work. The transition to this work has been a challenge and at times very difficult for the less experienced worker.

Professional socialization

What about the theory and academic work, how well did that prepare you for your work?

It didn't at all. What I am doing now is what I learn here. But, maybe a few courses in particular, for example the "Interpersonal Communication Skills Course", that prepared me for the interviewing drills and how to deal with involuntary clients. That helped me a little bit. There is a Child and Family Services course that I took. It is one thing to learn and be in a class room and hear these ideas, but to actually put them into practice is another thing all together. What I

learned and what I am doing now are not coinciding at all.

Looking back, is there a change to the course work, to more appropriately prepare and support the first few years?

I know that the field instructors who have come out of this office, that students have been involved with, everybody is so busy that it is really hard to give 100%. My field instructor from the Parent Centre had the ability, a little bit more, to spend time with me because she didn't carry a case load. I think that instructors who come into the office, their time is very limited and it is very hard, but I know it should mean how can we help a student prepare for working in an agency. What more can you do? A student is here basically 4 times a week, that is definitely preparing them. The material that we learn at school, that is the knowledge that gives us some skills but it is totally different what we learn there and what we implement. I don't know if you can incorporate them.

What are the skills and abilities and knowledge that really matter to your child protection work now?

Definitely organization. That has definitely helped me. My tight University career helped me with the organization piece, it just wasn't Social Work. I guess the reality, for example, the Child and Family services course that I took, gave us an idea of what we would be entering into if we were to work with Child and Family Services. So that was opener there. But the thing is, we had to take that course, but there were students in that course who weren't even in that field at all. So they were there to get the credit, but that's it, because once they leave they leave. And there are some students who actually work at the agency, so they are able to kind of put into practice what they are learning, and try to implement them when they are at the office. But for some students it was very difficult because they were into another area all together.

What about the cultural differences that exist sometimes?

I did take the Aboriginal course. I did learn some stuff, but nothing that would have helped me. Working in the North End has helped me more with the Aboriginal culture, not the material that was provided for me. When I took it, we dealt with the history, and what the Aboriginal people went through, and it was totally irrelevant. It was relevant to a certain degree, but it didn't help me with how to respond to them.

What percentage of your clients are Aboriginal?

In my caseload, at least 98%.

Non-Aboriginal Worker's Perspective**Could you talk a little bit about what it is like to be non-Aboriginal and work in an Aboriginal community?**

Well, to tell you the truth, a lot of my clients think that I am Aboriginal. I have had that before where they have thought that I was Aboriginal. I have told them otherwise. But there is no comparison, obviously, with me being Italian and them being Aboriginal in experience. A lot of my clients have gone through a lot. A lot of them went through residential schools, and their children, who I am dealing with now, listen to their parents about what they went through, and in turn take it out on us. They think it is our fault. They see me as a white person.

How does that affect you?

It is very difficult in that they won't let me in. There is a lot of distrust. They are very loyal to their parents. And so they will not let us in, even though we are trying to help, and even though we say to them that "your parents or your mom went through a lot back then, but lets concentrate on now, lets concentrate on making changes now, we can improve, we don't have to deal with that." I know that some of my clients want to let me in, but then again, there is that level of trust, because

they are going to go home, and their parents are going to say to them : "What she just said to you is bull" or "there is a reason, she is being conniving". So, it is very difficult. In fact, the majority of my clients don't trust.

Gaining access and acceptance in another culture

When you are saying "let me in" do you mean trusting, or through the door?

Oh, I have front door problems as well. Not as large as the trust issue. I mean, the majority of my clients will let me in the door. But there is a percentage that refuse to let me in.

Tell me a bit about how you handle that.

Well, you get the door slammed in your face. Depending on the situation, I mean, I deal a lot with young moms, and it is their parents who won't let me in. When I try to reach out to my young moms at their schools they won't let me in because their parents warned them not to talk to me. So, basically, depending on the family situation and the dynamics, if we think that this young mom is OK even though her mom or dad are not letting us in, sounds like this person involved looks up to the school, and has other resources involved, so we will talk to that resource and say: "OK, they are not letting us in so we are going to close the case, but if there is a problem, let us know". But we just have to make sure that that client has other resources available to them, so then we can close it. But if there are some really high risk factors there, we won't close it obviously, but will continue to monitor, and if needed we will have to get assistance with that. I have not yet had to resort to that. One of my latest cases, a new one, almost came to that, but they came through, so that was good. But unfortunately, the majority of the time, perhaps you have to say that: "if you are not going to be open to working with me, then we are going to have to resort to these drastic measures, which would be getting the police involved or going to the courts."

Working with Aboriginal Workers

Do you involve child protection staff who are Aboriginal as part of the strategy if the doors close?

Yes. We try. Within our office we do have some Aboriginal workers. But they have their own caseloads, we can't include them all of the time in our case loads, because then they are too busy, it is just not fair. But the majority of our clients, if they go to school, will have an Aboriginal person involved some how, so we can reach out to them. For example, my client that I met just a little while ago is involved with a support worker for a co-op program, and she had an Aboriginal support worker. So having that support worker there helped me to get into working with her. She just asked me to get a support worker from our agency to look at her baby, so we worked together that way, so that is good.

I am interested then in finding out a bit more about what are some of your observations about child protection staff who are Aboriginal working in the same community.

The same thing, there is no difference. There is frustration, just like us, the same things, be it the legal system, be it with the schools, be it with the clients. We all experience the same thing. It is very frustrating. Nothing different. Like I said earlier, this community has a lot of history in regards to what they have experienced with the residential schools, or what they experienced with the former Children's Aid Society, and that is why they will not work with, or cooperate, with the agency. They are still very resentful, but not only is it the clients that are resentful, it is other collaterals. And that is what makes it that much more frustrating, hard to come to work sometimes actually. Yesterday I just wanted to leave. I thought, "what am I doing here?". You know, you try so hard.

So that left you...

...wanting to go home. I thought "what am I doing here!". That particular agency requested so much from us, Winnipeg Child and Family Services. We provide as much as we can and as fast as we can,

because they expected it and we wanted to provide them with whatever they needed as efficiently as we could. And then we thought that this was their intention, but then we found out that it was not going to be their intention. But there was nothing we could do about it anymore, because the child was not a ward of Winnipeg Child and Family Services any longer. So basically leaves you with the sense that there is nothing that I can do. It doesn't matter how hard we try to help these children, sometimes your hands are tied. You try so hard to work with everybody, and trust people, and they have something else in mind. And then you wonder why you just can't trust them.

How do you deal with that?

A lot of venting. There was a lot of venting yesterday. Working specifically within this office, there is a lot of team work in this office, there is a lot of support and a lot of people that will listen, because they have experienced it themselves. Especially the more senior staff than myself, they are very supportive because it has happened to them as well. So they can relate. And, boy doesn't that help, just to be able to vent and swear. So, that helps a lot, for the time being, anyway. And then you try and get some sleep, and unfortunately sometimes it will affect your sleep, because it is just sad. But you wake up and do it again with another child, and you help another child as much as you can. That is the frustration. You can't describe it any other way other than pure frustration. But you do your best, and that is all that you can think about is: you know what, you tried your best at that time, you didn't realize, nobody knew that they had other intentions at the time. But you did your best.

The Context of Work

Speaking of court, how many cases would you be carrying that have court involvement?

I would say, at this time, at least half of my cases.

How many in total do you have?

I just closed a bunch, so right now I am only at about 36. Which is good in this office. So about half of those are in court process right now.

Supervision and Support of the New Worker

The following is a serious matter. A new worker describes the painful first year of employment.

**In this work, do you have a supervisor now?
Did you have one when you arrived?**

When I first started, physically I had a supervisor. This goes back to what I said to you the first time we met, that my first year of working with this agency was horrible. And it was because of my supervisor that I had when I first started.

Could you talk about that?

The supervisor at the time was not supportive at all. She was never there, as I said, she wasn't supportive at all, I couldn't trust her. Basically when you were presented with a new case, it was tossed on your desk: "there you go". When you are a new worker, you need more than that. You need to rush in, you need to discuss the dynamics of the family, what the family is all about, you know. That didn't happen. So, basically you had to fend for yourself. You weren't able to discuss anything with anybody else in the office. Everything had to be kept within our team. A day didn't go by where I didn't cry. Saturday was my only day off. And my only day off basically for crying. Emotionally and physically I was destroyed. At that time there was myself and another co-worker who was hired at the same time, so we had each other for support and to vent and talk, but we could not discuss it in the office, we had to discuss after hours. There was 6 or 7 of us on the team, but there was just the 2 of us that we could depend on. If you needed advise or guidance on a case matter, even if our supervisor was around, we still had to take care of it, and we still couldn't go to any other supervisor or any other co-worker.

Were there other things that helped you get through that, other than your co-worker?

My partner. And another thing that helped was knowing that another team in this office went through it the year before us, a year and a half prior to us they went through the same thing with the same supervisor. And even though they were told not to say anything or do anything that would help us, they were there for us and they comforted us when we needed it. But again, we were restricted as to what we could say, but they knew just by seeing us and watching us, they knew what we were going through.

Did things get better?

Yes, absolutely. That is why I am still here. The supervisor eventually left to a new job. We don't really know why. And the other workers that were on my team no longer work on my team. It is a brand new team altogether. So that has helped. Then, the higher upper management, what happened was that another supervisor within this office got fed up and went to upper management and basically told them what is going on here. Because not only did it affect the whole office with tension and stress, it also affected the other supervisors too. We were able to, on a couple of occasions, go to the other supervisors when things would just come to a head, so we would have to go to them. And when our supervisor wasn't here that was the only time we could do that. So then upper management got involved, and we spoke with them, and they helped us. My other co-worker, she no longer is here, but they did whatever it took to ensure that I would stick around. And my other co-worker, but unfortunately she had to go, she couldn't be part of it anymore. So the upper management brought in a supervisor to overlook the supervisors in this office, and he did a wonderful job.

What about the nature of supervision with the new person? Did it change?

Yes. It was unbelievable. I was afraid. Basically we were stopped at the door coming inside to talk to her. So we barely sought any supervision or guidance. Then, of course, as soon as I got a supervision, someone who was open to working

with me, I took that again, and it was wonderful. To think that you could trust somebody again was just amazing.

How did that first experience affect the quality of your work?

It was brutal. To tell you the truth, as horrible as it sounds, I am surprised there was no child death on my caseload. I was afraid of reaching out to anybody, because that would mean that maybe they might have a question for me and I didn't know how to respond, and that would mean that I would have to go to my supervisor, and I was afraid of doing that. So, that is why my caseload is kind of low right now, because I have been able to close a lot of the cases from my original supervisor, when I first started. But my job, my role, has changed.

Did you come to some conclusions about this work in the context of the other team going through a child death?

You know, it happened at a time where I couldn't even think about anybody else because I was so distraught myself. I just heard about it and that was it. But it was a matter of a teen suicide. But actually, in my caseload back last summer, I did have a baby die of SIDS death, so that is my experience of a child's death.

Assessment of Risk

Describe the nature of your work by looking at risk factors for child abuse.

Well, that is all we have on our caseloads, are high risk families. But when it comes to assessment piece we have the Risk Assessment Form which we also have to do at certain stages of our working with the family. Especially when we close them, we will go through the Risk Assessment Forms.

Does it help? What do you think about it?

It does help. It puts some perspective on the family. And it makes you feel more comfortable if you are going to close, it makes you more

comfortable and confident that I can close this now. Or the other way is that "what am I doing, I can't close this case now. This is not good". It is reassuring to have it.

Prior Life Experience

If we were to go back in time a bit, and look at your early life experiences before you went into University, are there things that prepared you for this work?

No, I never saw myself working within the Agency. I was wanting to pursue a career in law enforcement originally. But that was not able to happen because my vision without contacts is not that good. Then, I started working in the inner city with the Boys and Girls Club as a summer job, I just came across it, and I really enjoyed working with these high risk youth.

If you look into the future, what do you see for your work?

I actually see myself involved with Child and Family. It is amazing, the skills that I have acquired here and the knowledge that I have acquired here is amazing. You tackled everything here. And that is also the reason why I wanted to work within Child and Family, because as a new worker I need these skills for wherever I go. If I end up in another area, the skills that I have acquired here are phenomenal. I have thought about it, you know, do I want to go get my Masters and concentrate on something else? But right now I am really content with what I am doing. It may not be as a front line worker like I am doing now, but somewhere else in the agency. That's what I see myself doing. So whether or not it is in the North End, or not, I don't know.

What is staff turnover like here?

Well, in my team, I am the only one. The one existing from when I started in 1997, they are all gone. They have all kind of disbursed now. There are other people from the other teams. You know what, everybody else has pretty much stayed the same. They have just moved from different

positions because their term is coming up so they will go for the permanent position, so they will have to move for that. But everybody else is pretty much the same, except my team.

**How does that play out in terms of your work?
Is that a stress factor?**

It was a stress factor in that I was worried about who was going to be coming on my team. Especially my supervisor, ensuring that whomever they brought on as my supervisor I wanted to make sure that I could trust them. And also my partner, I wanted to make sure that I could have a partner who I could trust. It was the whole back stabbing issue. I didn't want that to come up again. So I was really nervous about that. But I was involved in knowing who was going to be brought into the team, and that helped me. But no, things are fine, I have no complaints now.

What do you enjoy least about your work?

I don't enjoy apprehensions. I guess there is a lot. I don't know if there is one that outweighs the others. I don't enjoy apprehensions. I don't enjoy the court work, and what's involved in it. And the potential danger and risks that we face ourselves on a daily basis actually is quite scary too. You never know what you are going to expect. Especially when you are going to a home where there are dangerous offenders there, where there are drinking parties, etc. I mean, we come across a lot of high risk people, and that is not a nice situation to be confronted with. So, it is a dangerous job.

What do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy working with my clients. It is very challenging. There is never a dull moment here. Working with my young moms specifically, there are so many opportunities for them to have a better life than they had before. And having a client actually realize that and do what they need to do in order to have this better life is enjoyable. It is few and far between when things like that happen, but I anticipate that, and I can't wait for things like that to happen. So, that makes me

want to come to work the next day and to see how things have progressed. It is very challenging, it really is.

The following narrative, from another person, describes an experience with the gap between staff and client which is not based on language, but rather barriers associated with the differences between the socioeconomic status of workers and the families they serve. This interview is with a younger person who moved directly from high school to university to child protection work. This person had little experience to help prepare for the community life of the clients.

What about poverty and violence in the community?

Especially downtown there is lots. The drinking, the violence in families.

How does that compare with your upbringing?

Well, it is very different. Our family wasn't rich, but I guess we were middle-class. It was very different. The whole culture of how things are done downtown, the drinking parties, etc., was not a part of my family at all. And even the community itself is very different.

How does that affect you as a child protection worker?

A lot of it I just don't understand. I haven't been addicted to alcohol, and I don't know what its like. Its frustrating for me because these parents can't, knowing what they are doing, and seeing the damage that they are causing to their kids. And that these parents don't stop. And I find that very frustrating because I don't understand it, and they don't understand me, and it is not a part of my experience. I don't know what it is like, and I don't understand where they are coming from. So, sometimes I can't relate as well. And the violence too, the women just keep returning to their abusive partners. This has not been a part of my

experience, so I don't understand the reasons why they keep doing it. You know the reasons why they are doing it, but it is hard to put yourself in their shoes and empathize with where they are coming from.

External Structural Factors

The cross cultural experience affects the development of competence and mastery of the workplace skills. In this interview the cross cultural experiences centred on developing trust with community members. This other informant observes some success in a new job through developing cultural connections.

Could you give me an example of a situation where knowing French and the French culture might have made a big difference in your success or effectiveness in child protection?

I think that there was just initially, coming in, knowing that my mother's maiden name was French. I was actually interviewed several times on what is my experience and what do I know about the French culture, etc. And that seemed to free up collaterals. I found it more so with collaterals than with clients; that it made a bigger difference to the individuals in the community who felt that it was their duty to attempt to preserve this culture. I think they really wanted to know what level I was at, and where my comfort was, and what was my family history as far as the culture. So, I think, again, that seemed to make all the difference in the world coming in, with the ease at which they would work with me and trusted me to work with the children in the community, to know that I did have at least a respect for the culture, if not a full knowledge and appreciation and wasn't necessarily living in it.

The workplace of child protection services has its own culture and effects on new staff. The following is a series of observations on the topics of preparing for and living in a stressful work environment.

Were there things that you learned about Child Protection that only came from being here, and what were some of those principles that you learned?

Yes. I guess more to the job was a lot of the court work. Nothing that is offered on campus really touches on any of that, and it is such a large part of what we do. I think that learning that whole process it is a really big missing piece in the education. It is very stressful. You have to know what you are doing, and I don't think that there was anything in my studies that prepared me for that. It is sort of something that you have to learn right there and then. You start working, you are handed a case load, and away you go. I think that if there had been something offered that would have prepared me better for the court work it would have gone a long way. Some of the policy courses touched on the mechanics of it, but actually being in there and doing that, and having to prepare the papers for it, I was overwhelmed at times.

From another informant the effect of workload is emphasized as a prime issue in the workplace culture. The experience of this person has been to seek to do quality work. This idea is consistent with the concept that work stress affects competence and mastery of work.

What would be the most stressful aspects of your current work?

I think it has mainly to do with workload demands. I think that giving a 100% is not enough. You cannot get this work done and that is something that has been very, very stressful for me. I think that my clients have a right and the children that I have contact. You need to have monthly contacts with these kids, and it is almost impossible to do and that. If I can think of the most stressful things, it is not the family situations, it is not the not knowing, it is not the uncertainty, it is not having to constantly reformulate plans, it is the workload demands and not having the resources. It is like having to make

a gourmet meal without getting the recipe. It is seeing that these kids need to come into care and lately I have been really grappling with apprehending the children, so I am saying to these families that we have something better to offer your kids basically, that I am going to put them in something that is safer. You know, just in that respect this is sort of a commitment I am making to families and so I come back to the office and call the placement desk and they say there is nothing. And that is it. That is the bottom line. There is no more discussion about it and I have kept all the pink notes and stuck them in to the files, stating that there is no placement available and I wonder how I am supposed to do my work and what message am I giving to children and what are they going to remember about this process. And, it is heartbreaking and it is stressful and that is what I have the hardest time with.

What resources are you most short of?

I think a shortage of foster placements. Definitely I see that very clearly. I have seen shortage on a number of levels. I think that some of the resources are out there but we haven't learned how to adequately access them. For example, I mean, counselling or therapy or culturally appropriate access to elders, things like that, it is a really difficult process to access these things in a timely manner.

What do you enjoy the least about your work?

I think again not having the time to do the quality of work that I feel needs to be done. And, again, to be having to remove kids from their homes and I certainly wouldn't do it if I didn't feel that there was a need and that there was something more stable to offer but it is still, not in most occasions, but in some occasions, I still think that I have taken them out of something but I don't have anything that even approaches what they need to offer them. And that is the hardest part.

Summary of the Prototypic Younger Worker without prior work experience

The discourse of people in this group reveals greater variety in subtext than the life experienced new social workers. This group is more exquisitely affected by the quality of university or community college instruction. It is keenly concerned about the quality of field placement supervision before graduation. It is more affected by the quality of supervision in the actual practice setting. If teaching and supervision are good, work is more likely to go well. If they are poor, things can go very badly. This is in contrast to the life experienced older group who have a wider repertoire of options and solutions to access.

A common subtext for both groups is the value placed on cultural attunement. The closer one is to one's community, the better things go. This closeness to community can occur by birth, language, or a set of developed skills, a kind of cultural competence from expanding one's horizons.

Thematic Coding

The 9 interviews were re-read many times to become familiar with the voice and subtext of the informants comments. First, the major themes were established by reviewing the pre-test findings and then abstracting the primary issues from commentary. The informants raised some topics frequently and strongly. These were issues with clear, strong views which were emotively experienced and strongly expressed to me. Four themes stood out clearly above the rest. One was the gap between academic preparation for child protection work and the real work experience, referred to as the gap between theory and practice. Another was the cross cultural challenges and difficulties in this kind of work, referred to as cross-cultural experiences in child protection work. The next was the varieties of kind of supervision, having both a positive and a negative effect on the staff person. This is referred to as the importance of supervision. Lastly, informants had much to say about the requirements for a knowledge base to do this work and the usefulness, or not, of a risk estimation methodology.

Each interview was coded when major themes emerged. Later, subthemes or supporting components of the 16 major themes emerged from the analysis.

A total of 47 subthemes were defined. To illustrate the range of subject matter and the distribution of topics, the following pages display the informants and the frequency with which a subtheme was present. The most commonly mentioned subtheme was the cultural gap followed by the importance of good supervision and the gap between practice and theory. There is no intent to draw conclusions about the significance of these themes based on frequency of distribution across the informants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and J.

Themes	Informants									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	TOTAL
Practical Solutions to work problems (solution focused practice)	1									20
• Making connection with clients		1					1			2
• Finding good foster homes	2					1	2			5
• Defining oneself through work	2									2
• Improving skills (competence or mastery)		1		1		1				3
• Need for flexibility with solving problems	2								1	3
• Understanding the nature of Child Protection work	1			1		1	1			4
Case Work Skills										21
• Paperwork demands	1	1				2	1	2	3	10
• need better computer resources		1								1
• Court preparations	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1		10
Emotional Demands of Work							1			25
• coping with stress	1				3	1	2		1	8
• pride in work (quality work)	1			1		1				3
• working with uncertainty					1		1		2	4
• Unable to leave work at work	1						1			2
• Support from family					2		1			3
• good job security		3						1		4
Work Environment			1							14
• staff turnover		1	1			1		1		4
• Professional vulnerability	1				1					2
• Peer support						1	1	1	2	5
• work of others before / interconnectedness of system	1				1					2

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	TOTAL
Case Load		1			1	3				11
• burnout						1				1
• caseload too high	2		1	1			1			5
Cross Cultural Experiences and Issues							1		1	45
• Racism						3			1	4
• Cultural gap	1	2	1	1	1	2	3		2	13
• Language gap			1			1	2	1		5
• mixed benefit of same culture worker				1	2		3	1	2	9
• cultural attunement or sensitivity	1		1	1		1	1	1		6
• Few links with Aboriginal Community		3			1		1		1	6
Risk Factors in Child Protection		1					1	1		16
• No regular risk assessment	1	1	1			1	1	1		6
• Child's perception		1	1							2
• Uncertainty in assessment because of lack of risk assessment	1						1			2
• Intuitive risk method	1						1		1	3
Client Experience			1		1				1	35
• Valuing client insight	1	1	1			1	1	1		6
• Family of origin issues						1				1
• Anger at the system		1							1	2
• Lack of trust				1	1	1	2	1	2	8
• Poverty / alcoholism				2	1	2	2			7
• Small steps / client strength					2		2	1	2	7
• Mental health issues of parents								1		1
Resources										6
• alcoholism treatment				3			1			4
Changes for the future						1	1			2

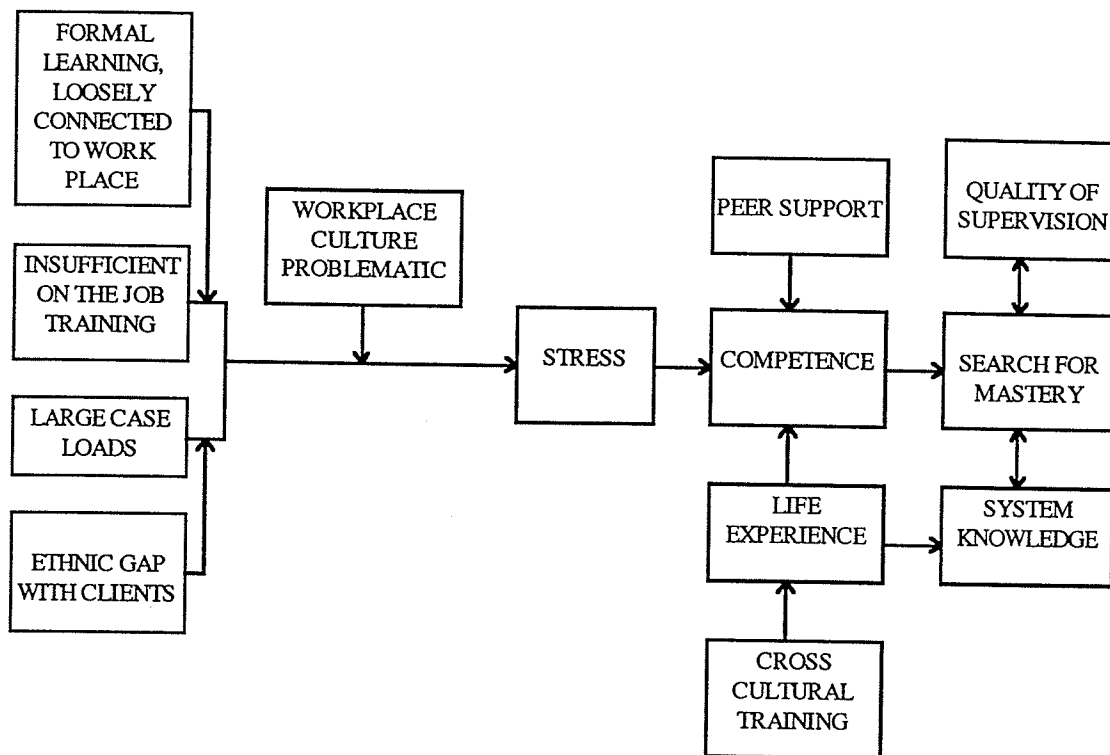
Analysis of 4 themes

I have chosen 4 major themes for the following reasons. Staff felt most strongly or passionately about these themes. They were reflective of my personal interest based on studying and teaching aspects of risk estimation in child protection services. Lastly, these 4 themes were present in all 9 interviews. As the subtext was found in each interview, I have interspersed verbatim comments from interviewees throughout the analysis sections.

At this point I will return to the theoretical model presented earlier and add themes to the model as they appear to best fit. The revised model is reflective of the data and it integrates the findings which increase or decrease the amount of stress experienced by the new employee.

The stressors appear on the left side of the model. The protective factors are on the right. The model suggests that if the factors contributing to stress are lessened and those facilitating factors on the right are increased, then staff are more competent and able to obtain some degree of mastery of their work.

Revised model of the culture of child protection work based on interviews with informants



1. The gap between theory and practice.

Respondents to this survey commented on the separation between theories of social organization and social activity taught in college or university and the reality of everyday practice of child protection work. The body of knowledge on the tension between theory and practice includes the work of Hagel. His dialectical approach focused on the progression of an individual from understanding objects and things to an understanding of self to an understanding of one's place in the larger scheme of things (Ritzer, 1996). This dialectic or action of opposing social forces is relevant to the gap between theory and practice, namely whether it is preferable to be widely educated or narrowly job trained. Respondents looked for a blend of general knowledge and practical skills.

Are there things that you have learned in your formal studies that seem to be quite at odds with the real world as you are experiencing it now?

Yes. Just the fact that working as a child protection worker I don't get to do social work, I don't believe that I do social work. Not that I don't do social work, because I do hook up with systems, and I am a conduit between systems, but I guess more the individual type of work, the therapeutic stuff that really attracted me to the profession is something that I am finding that I don't have a lot of opportunity to do. When I do get to do it, I find that I am pretty successful at it, the results are pretty positive. But, I just don't have the time to do what I feel should be done in regards to assisting my clients or empowering them to make better choices.

The matter of how professional training evolves to approximate the needs of the various professions which are taught at colleges or universities is a part of the academic tradition of universities which includes the emphasis on thinking and writing independently. This is in contrast to the trade school issues of preparing students to become a member of a profession such as a teacher, engineer, or

physician. Most of those interviewed commented favourably on their education as the source of general knowledge on social structure, racism, feminism, family violence, and child's rights. The following response is an example of the view that the mission of the university is not preparation for a specific job, but rather to develop ways of thinking.

I think what the education and training program did for me was further develop who I was, and what my values were, what my philosophies were, what's right and what's wrong, and how, as a social worker, you respond to people's beliefs. So I think that it was more general things that I got out of it. It would be hard for me to sit down and identify a year later, "what did I learn in the BSW program?". I don't even know if I could have written one page on that, because the specifics I didn't know. But I think that a lot of that stuff became ingrained in to how I function, how I work, how I approach my life, and who I became.

Respondents were less generous about how those ideas were translated into the critical skills of being a child protection worker. Some felt aware of their own deficiencies in social work and practice skills as they started employment. Credit was given to many of the individual supervisors who guide social work students in their field placement. As no distinction was made in terms of coding categories for location of social work studies, no comments can be made about a specific Faculty of Social Work or specific Community College.

Several specific areas emerged as needing improvement to better prepare students for child protection work. These included the experience of working with many post-mentally ill parents whose condition affects the care of children. This was something which an informant wished to have studied.

Are there any other characteristics of this community that strongly influence the nature of your caseload?

There seems to be quite a lot of mental health issues in this area.

What are some of the diagnostic considerations in mental health problems of your parents?

A lot of depression and Bipolar diagnoses. It is mostly the depression that seems to be what I have run into most frequently.

Would this result in parents being incapacitated to look after children?

At times, it is hard to know where to draw that line, because they usually can function as long as they are taking their medication and they are taking care of themselves, but quite often you have to be careful, because they can tell you they are taking their medication, but you don't know, and things can fall apart quite easily.

How do you think through some of the particular issues of parents with mental health problems. Is there a particular strategy or method you use?

Well, not that I would know of. At this time, if I was to get a case like one I had already gotten transferred to me that involved mental health issues, the particular worker had done up a plan where there was communication between a worker and the psychiatrist, insuring that this person was still taking the medications, still going for weekly sessions, just to try to keep on top of things. There was a plan set out for that. As well a support worker was put into the home to help them learn parenting and how to deal with their stress and their own self-esteem.

What was your preparation for that in your social work studies?

I actually had a little bit of experience. My placement was at Misericordia Hospital, the mental health department there. So, I did spend a month there, sitting in on groups, different group therapy, support groups and also sat in some

individual interviews and meetings. So, I had a bit of experience, but not at school. None of my classes went into mental health issues. There was a class that was an option if you were going into that field of work. I think it was just called "Mental Health". We had different choices. I took "Health" and "Child and Family", those two options. But "Mental Health" was another one of the options you could take if that was an area where I was going to work with everybody who had mental issues. That would have been a course I would have taken. But, in the general course studies there wasn't anything that really focussed on mental health.

Another group of parents who were chemical or alcohol dependent was identified as a subject area requiring better understanding through study at university. In addition, lack of preparation for working in the court system and inability to cope with paperwork requirements of child protection were cited by informants.

What about court work. Could you talk a bit about that.

I am finding a tremendous amount of court work. I think a lot of the matters can be resolved at docket. I have found that in working with the families, the only matters that I have actually had contested were the matters where I have been seeking permanent orders. There was one case prior to my coming on where it had to go to trial but now I have been able to resolve most matters, at least nothing that has gone beyond pre-trial. I have a matter that is going to be going to trial in the next little while, but, yes, a lot of court work for sure.

A major topic which emerged in the interviews was the issue of decision making and risk factors. There was a common view that methods of analysis of case characteristics were interesting topics but not practical for the real world. This gap between theory and practice was likened to having tools for risk assessment filed on a shelf, but not used and referred to in one's work through regular application.

The idea that theory and research could inform practice decisions was not common. The idea that a variety of assessment tools, including risk estimation, could be used regularly and become a part of improved skills was not typical. Instead, there was an acceptance that the gap between practice and theory was there and not much would overcome that division.

Some informants faulted the training at university for not being practical enough.

One of my questions to you is about your studies in social work. What were some of the experiences that you had in that part of your career. Could you speak about that first?

I think it was a really good experience for me. I didn't get my first degree there, so it was a good experience for me in a lot of ways. I don't think that what I learned in the social work program specifically really changed me. I would have been doing the job much the same, even if I hadn't gone, but I don't know how much of that is just me. I don't know if you would say moral issues, but some of the issues that are fundamentally important in social work that are very difficult to address in an academic setting—issues around racism and attitudes toward poverty, welfare and all of those things are more political. We think of them as being more political than academic, but they are fundamental issues around social work and so that certainly, maybe it had to be this way, but it is unfortunate that there are people who maybe had attitudes that weren't going to be helpful to them or weren't going to help them work in a certain environment, for instance, the environment of this office, and even though lecturers and in discussion maybe some of those attitudes were addressed or challenged in a mild sense, there wasn't really any effort to really deal with it and help people work through some of those issues. It is inappropriate to expect to turn out everybody who has the same political agenda and view, too, but I think that was a problem sometimes.

Suggestions for reducing the gap between theory and practice were made. These included course work at college on expected fields of practice: post mentally ill parents, substance abuse, the nature of guided decision making, the recognition of the possibility of observer bias when interviewing, and the court system. Field supervisors from university are a strong asset for the students. Perhaps the gap between theory and practice at an entry employment level is lessened for junior employees when they see and participate in structured case reviews and analysis. Good supervision of new employees is essential to the success of a child protection service. Only a few supervisors develop concepts beyond the immediate service needs. This focus maintains the gap between theory and practice. But some supervisors do develop and strengthen theory in supervision. These are abilities valued by informants.

So, if you are not doing as much social work as you thought you would, is it something that you are setting out to change, or is it not changeable?

Well, I have to believe, because of my theoretical orientation that it is changeable. But, it seems at times to be just a little too overwhelming. The more time that you spend trying to change the system means the less time you spend processing bills and doing the things that should be done. So, it becomes a trade off at times. But, hopefully in empowering people in a very minimal way, maybe that is sort of changing the system. I hope.

A related theme in respondents' narratives is how life experience prior to university studies is more important than theory or field placement practice prior to child protection work. Some respondents began their studies after other life work, such as raising a family, working in unrelated employment, or having an upbringing very different from other social work students who have studied as high school students in suburban Winnipeg and then proceeded directly to university and social work. For this group, the gap between theory and practice is of less concern. They look for ideas or

actions which work or are successful in coping with practice demands.

Another group mentions that the nature of a university faculty, like Social Work, is to educate generally about social construction, political realities, and major concepts like racism and poverty.

Did you develop a philosophical or theoretical view of child protection work in your formal studies? How is it we organize our activities this way, and is it the right way to do things? Is that something that emerged at that time in your studies?

Not specifically in child welfare. But my views of child welfare were that child welfare and the child welfare system had a lot that was wrong with it, and a lot that had to be changed, and the needs of the people that it served weren't necessarily what was guiding the system. Those were my thoughts on the system prior to becoming involved with it on a much more intensive level. I guess I would consider myself as a social worker who comes from a structural type of orientation, that is my theoretical position in regards to what I do as a social worker. I believe that there can be a dual focus, both individual and systemic, and that the way to change the system is to empower individuals and engage them in changing the system as opposed to more of a problem solving type of orientation, which is the more traditional type of social work approach.

Informants spoke of their work, at times, as self-defining their own lives through the struggle to work well or effectively. They described the meaning of the events in their work as a personal compass to life. For this group problems, crises, pain, and child maltreatment are a grand struggle to be overcome with sufficient confidence and support.

2. Cross-cultural experiences in child protection work.

Every respondent described this topic in detail. Most child protection staff face cross cultural issues daily or weekly. This occurs because most children in care are Aboriginal and most child protection staff are not Aboriginal. But within this generalization there are many cross cultural variations, like as a staff of Italian background working with a Salvadorian family, a French Canadian staff working in a German Mennonite community, a Sioux staff working with a Cree child. The norm is that staff work with different cultures, and sometimes in different languages.

Could you talk a bit about working in a different culture?

I guess the most important thing me to work in this culture is to first of all come to terms and be aware of my own cultural biases. I come from a dominant culture - the white Canadian English speaking culture, and as a result of being socialized in that culture, I have some biases towards all other subordinate cultures in our society. So, first of all, to be aware of my biases. Second of all, to respect the cultural values or the cultural component of working with people in this community.

Preparation for this varies. Some have learned other languages before university, some have traveled to other countries and lived in another culture. But many staff have not had much experience with other ethnic groups. This is more likely in the group of students who have moved directly from high school, to college, to social work studies.

Informants comment how racism affects the lives of their clients and themselves.

Would you speak about the cultural gap that exists between non-indigenous or non-community members working here and your views on it.

One of the things is that I don't pretend that it doesn't exist and I mean it does and I think that to consider that it doesn't. To consider it a non-issue is trivializing something that is very important and even if a worker doesn't feel that they have a problem with it, not to acknowledge that their clients experiences make it an issue is maybe not very perceptive. I think that it is always an issue and I don't think there is any way around that. I think that you can minimize it, but you certainly can't eliminate it.

Aboriginal children in need of protection will comment on how it has been so painful to be teased because of one's ethnicity. Some staff protecting children are devalued as persons because of their non-aboriginal status. They are seen to represent prior eras when white social workers took children away to the United States. A cross cultural dynamic is often just below the surface of interaction between any child protection staff and his or her clients.

There is variation in the skills among staff in working with the reality of ethnic diversity. One which emerges frequently is the use of humor and a self-depreciating stance. Some use humor to comment on the obvious, such as, saying "I'm not the same colour as you are on the outside, but we are the same inside". Others draw on an educational approach, saying that all cultures value children, and that is what the visit or apprehension is all about. This theme was mentioned by an Aboriginal social worker who was criticized by an Aboriginal parent for doing child protection work.

There is a note of sadness and frustration which is activated by cross cultural relations. In Winnipeg, most children apprehended are Aboriginal. The difficult work of child protection means that questions of motive and cultural insensitivity are directed to many

staff. It is a major stressor for staff. Peer review and support from colleagues is important relief from the possible criticism for decisions on the basis of ethnicity. A skill described by staff to cope with cross-cultural work is the idea of finding a common ground or life experiences which briefly joins the staff and the client in a shared experience. This may be a comment about the challenges of being a parent, living on a fixed income, or being the subject of racism. This skill in joining with a person from another culture is at the heart of effective practice. It is a skill appreciated as a good concept in university studies but it has become refined through the experiences of cross cultural work which can be very challenging.

In your practice, how do you work through the issue of non-community members working here?

Well, certainly, first of all, with some people you can't, so anything I say doesn't assume that I am always successful at that. You have to assume from that start that I am not always successful. But, I think that when I am successful at minimizing those differences and helping people feeling comfortable, at least as much as possible in such a terrible situation. There are political correctness things, there are a lot of things that you can do and that I think we all try to do and be conscious of the things that you can do. But I think a lot of it just gets down to personality. It really just gets down to whether when you sit across the table from someone, if you really are focused on them and if you really do see them and you are able to feel the connection first, then our chance of having a client feel it back, of course, is far greater. We don't necessarily have control over the client's experience and whether they are going to open up to us, so we don't have direct control over whether they will feel a connection with us, but I think certainly that if you can feel in yourself the connection with them, then there is a possibility for that to happen. And I think that people generally do respond. They might not very often identify it that way or be aware of it, but you become aware when you are talking to people that they are responding.

Most Caucasian staff who were informants do not have regular connections with the Aboriginal community. There is interest in getting more information and perspective from Aboriginal staff, but this happens infrequently. Staff also do not have regular access to Aboriginal community leaders in the locations they serve in Winnipeg.

Many staff have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of cross-cultural work and seek to improve links with other ethnic groups. Staff frequently comment that they had a narrow view of some other cultures before working in child protection. Informants stated that ethnicity or cross-cultural communication was taught or emphasized in the social work curriculum. Cross cultural matters is not a topic which staff expect to learn primarily at college or university. It is seen as an experiential reality of child protection.

3. The importance of supervision

The topic of supervision is one raised by each person who was interviewed. Supervision is linked to the role of the mentor. In terms of organizational traditions of work, this person is someone who has 5 to 10 years of experience in the field and who shares this knowledge with new staff. The mentor normally has a role of being the person who completes employee evaluations, but it is not a requirement of a mentor. This relationship is a part of most professional training programs. It is found in training situations as diverse as becoming a public school teacher to becoming an airline pilot. This relationship brings knowledge and confidence to a new student.

Mentorship for child protection staff usually begins at university with students receiving a supervision at the practicum sites as part of year 2 or year 3 of studies. This experience introduced students to Winnipeg Child and Family Services

supervisors during the social work student's field placement. Informants spoke positively of the thoughtful and supportive guidance from faculty of social work staff. This experience was mostly positive.

How did supervision change with the new person?

Well, the supervisor that was hired to overlook the other supervisors, he has a very wonderful reputation within the system. And so, of course, the supervisors here, the existing ones, were definitely appreciative of him coming to this office, so that was welcomed and he was welcomed within our office. And as soon as he was hired he became my supervisor in the interim until we hired a new one. That supervisor involved me in with regards to hiring a new team, hiring a new supervisor, checking up on me. Not only being my supervisor, but making sure that I was OK. And part of that was making sure that I didn't get any new cases until I was more stable emotionally. And so they really took care of me. I'll never forget him for that, as well as the other supervisors who took care of me, and the other co-workers who were really supportive.

Staff described gaining competence through guidance from their supervisors.

How important is it to have a good supervisor from your experience?

I think it is very important, because I would not be comfortable making some of the kinds of decisions that we make on my own in that I need assurance that I am doing it well.

The transition from social work student to child protection worker is highly dependent on the quality of supervision at the first work site. Informants commented on 2 differing kinds of supervision. The first was the example of an interested, amiable, and flexible mentor. The quality of supervision was modified to the new employee's needs. The relationship was seen as positive, supportive,

or valuable. The second was the opposite experience of inadequate or unsatisfactory mentorship. Informants who had this experience were not able to develop and maintain a mentorship relationship. Informants described responding to verbal and visual cues which said in effect that the new employee was on his or her own and that supervision was not a critical activity. It is this set of experiences which contain some important comments. One observation was that the disorienting effect of inadequate supervision could have been contributing to low quality case work. Some felt that they were fortunate to not have the tragedy of a child death on their hands.

How would you evaluate the quality of the supervision?

A little lacking.

What do you mean?

Being new to the system it would be good to have had someone to go through each case. Usually what I do now when I have a question, I will go to one of the other workers who has been here also for a very long time who is also working with that line and dealing with the same sorts of issues.

Observers commented on the capacity of the supervision system to change for the better. A situation of deeply flawed supervision was addressed and vastly improved with a change of supervisor.

Supervision has both a relationship component as well as a content component. The content part asks: "what are the facts?". Informants placed greater emphasis on the relationship component of supervision. New employees experience the work as complex and demanding. As a way of coping with the workplace, staff value a relationship with a mentor which promotes discussion, shares experiences, and provides curiosity regarding finding solutions. This describes the traditional relationship of a junior person to a mentor. The supervisor who can provide timely advice regarding content such

as standards of practice as well as coping with case load is seen as a valuable resource.

Is there emphasis placed on case loads? Does it emerge in your supervision or your work here as a topic that people spend time on and work on?

Yes, caseload is a big issue. Simply now in the reorganization.

How has it been expressed as a big issue?

The workers are stressed out, and just can't keep up with their demands. Especially when they put requirements like "you have to do this". Like we do family assessments, and you need to do one within a certain number of days, and do another one within 60 days. Things like that with we often can't do because it is a waste of time. So, we always say: "Well, if we had 20 cases, then we could do that?" But unfortunately there isn't time, and those aren't the priorities. It is important to do your paperwork, but families are going crazy, so you can't really say: "Oh, I am doing this assessment, and so I can't deal with that." You have to deal with the crisis. So, I think that it is just that the workers are stressed out, and just can't cope as much.

Mentors help new employees navigate through complex areas of court requirements, interface with the medical system, and completion of agency forms. Most new staff are interested in developing confidence and insight as they learn the detail of the location of resources and the right page of the manual for the appropriate case-work standard. This concept has been described by Charlotte Reid as "good teaching or supervision is showing someone where to look, not what to see" (personal communication). Another supervising skill is guiding new staff from theory to practice. This view places emphasis on strengthening the new staff's confidence to do a good job and not be obsessed with a perfect job. This leads to confidence to make a difference in the lives of families served.

In summary, respondents uniformly described the importance of good supervision in making a successful transition from university to work in an agency. The supervisor is the person who passes on the culture of the agency. This does not replace formal inservice, education on the job, or workshops staged by the agency. Rather, it provides an anchor of emotional and cognitive support for new employees.

4. Variation in the use of a methodology for risk assessment

The crises and problems of day to day child protection work easily take over the attention and activity of staff. In this context it is not surprising that a structured decision making tool, such as a risk estimation method, is used irregularly. In this reply the informant says that no formal risk tool is used.

Did you use any method to rate your cases by risk. Did you use any risk assessment methodology under the circumstances of very inadequate supervision?

I know that the Manitoba Risk Estimation System is in place - but it certainly wasn't widely used, and I would mostly be consulting with senior workers but, no, there was no formal mechanism used.

Another interview revealed awareness of a method of risk estimation but no familiarity with it.

Regarding the level of risk, severity of danger to the child, have you used any method of risk assessment in your work and, if you have, could you tell me a bit about that?

Actually right now I have been reading about it. My supervisor had given me some material to read over. The model we use is the MRES, so at this

point, I am still just learning about it and, yeah, I don't know a lot about it yet.

Informants indicated that some supervisors encourage its use and employ it to structure supervision or discussion of cases for court. These are ideal uses of it. Other supervisors do not feature a regular method of case discussion or analysis. Staff describe this kind of supervision as idiosyncratic. Some are fortunate get very good supervision; some are not as fortunate and are left to their own devices. In these instances of infrequent or insufficient supervision the use of a structured method of case analysis and decision making is a distant concept and not a goal.

All staff interviewed were employees with 1 to 3 years experience in child protection services. The lack of experience of the employees may have an impact on how they perceive the risk estimation process. If this is the case, then a study of more senior employees doing the same work might reveal differences related to work experience. It would have taken a more ethnographic study of all works in regional offices to have sorted out systematic issues. Some staff have used a method of risk assessment which is based on intuition. The worker gets a "feeling" there is some danger to the child and the case is labeled as high risk.

How do determine if it is high-risk? What is the process to saying this one needs a lot of my time.

You know, I don't think we have a particular tool that says, "this is a high risk case", but you certainly can tell if it is a young child and a young mom and mom may have gang involvement or may be drinking and she's got a newborn, that would definitely be a high-risk, or one where you are suspecting sexual abuse or you are suspecting that the children are being neglected or abused.

This approach is one which usually existed in the staff's mind prior to college studies. Informants recognize that this method does,

more often than not, result in most cases being labeled high risk. One unfortunate consequence of this is inappropriate apprehensions.

Is there a benefit for using a methodology with cases that is standardized, such as risk analysis or risk assessment?

I believe that yes, in the same way that the psychiatric professional would use the DSM or something like that. More to translate language, to make people aware of what you are dealing with, those quick types of risk assessment tools can be quite effective in transmitting the essence of the case to another worker or to a professional that you are working with in a very short period of time. They can be effective in that way. But they need to be validated, they need to be reliable, and culture has to be a part of that validation process, and the reliability testing.

Staff describe learning that different meanings can be attached to the same parental behavior by different cultural groups. This is a topic which was not frequently mentioned but one which is very interesting. Staff were concerned that they not label behavior as abusive if what they as observers were reacting to was the appearance of differences due to poverty. Working in the core area of Winnipeg or areas with much poverty was a source of challenge and pride for some staff. They saw most of their families as being in a high risk category. These staff viewed being able to survive and cope in these settings as a personal accomplishment. For some, working elsewhere, with less poverty and fewer apparent problems, was just not interesting.

For most potential users of a risk methodology, it was not possible to separate the tool from the time and paperwork to complete the analysis. This was often given as a reason for not doing a risk assessment. Few could see savings in time and effort to do a thorough analysis at the onset of a case. There were no staff who thought a computer version of the Manitoba Risk Assessment System would lead to more regular use of such a method of analysis.

Risk estimation and other methods of case analysis are experienced as an "add on" or intrusion to clinical work. The informants likened risk assessment as a tool which sits on a shelf rather than being used daily. The example of the tools used by drivers comes to mind. The steering wheel, brake, accelerator, mirror, are effective tools when driving a vehicle. They work because we use them and their precision comes from refinement of use over time. Few staff see risk assessment in this light. It is something which might not be used for months or years. In that instance, after a few years, its location is forgotten. As stated by Strathern (1995) in describing the topic of standards used by child protection staff in New Zealand:

The majority of cases coming to the attention of the Children and Young Persons Service are of children who have already been abused, or are suspected of having been. Current research suggests that the indicators which predict re-abuse may be different/separate. Considering risk indicators in this context requires a certain mind shift from those traditionally relied upon. (Strathern, 1995, p.2)

Some staff resist careful analysis of cases, preferring instead to focus on some element of the case. One staff found that if the child experienced fear then this fear was a prime risk factor.

Speaking of high risk, how do you work through those questions about the components of risk?

A lot of it is still not done in any really planned way. A lot of times, again just looking at the two models, the MRES and the Competency Based Assessment Tool, I haven't been to the Competency Based yet, but in the intake unit we do use the Assessment Tool. I guess just looking at those factors, like the age of the child, the severity, the frequency, the conditions that are affecting the parents or the caregivers. I guess a lot of times I tend to leave a fair bit of that up to the kids. Once

they are about 10 years old or so, to help me understand what risks they are facing, and whether they are scared. A lot of times I end up bringing kids into care who I might not think is always necessary, but when a child is really scared, I listen to that more than the actual factors sometimes. I think how the kid perceives the situation is sometimes needs to be attended to more than the specific facts. So, I try to balance those things.

This is a valuable insight into the matter of risk estimation. This method is not sufficient for all cases. Risk assessment is a higher order function of child protection. It is built from basic interviewing skills and a knowledge of factors in a child's life with respect to whether maltreatment will occur or not. It is not surprising that in the context of new staff with other more pressing issues that this function is left mostly unattended.

Summary of 4 themes

These four themes, chosen for more detailed analysis, have added to the understanding of the work of recent graduates of social work who are beginning to serve in the role of child protection workers.

The first theme, the gap between theory and practice, is found in experience of many professions. It is one which deeply concerned those informants for this study. Respondents felt well prepared in the theory of social work, but less well prepared for actual work once underway in employment. There was wide agreement that the quality of field supervision as a student or the quality of supervision, once employed, was critical to the narrowing of the gap between theory and practice, and in the development of competence and mastery of the necessary skills and attributes of a child protection worker. Those with significant prior life experience appeared to be more able to adjust and manage their work when supervision was not sufficient or

of appropriate quality. The revised model of the culture of child protection work on page 95 reflects these findings.

The theme of cross-cultural experiences in child protection is a defining characteristic of the work in Winnipeg. The common experience for informants is thinking about and acting as a person of a culture different from those who are served. This happens because most children in care are Aboriginal and most child protection staff are not Aboriginal. However, in addition, there are numerous other cross-cultural variations. The skills needed to work in this context are important and it appears from informants that much more can be done during one's education or employment to help staff work effectively with this requirement. The revised model on page 95 also reflects this set of observations.

Supervision is another hallmark in the development of a knowledge and skill set to work with competence as a child protection worker. The mentorship of a senior person is vital to the development of a flexible and informed employee. The subtext of the informants' views on this topic is that regardless of prior education and field experience as an undergraduate student, some aspects of the work are best learned from someone who has done similar work previously. It appears that good supervision enhances confidence and preparedness to take on new challenges. As outlined on page 95, the quality of supervision develops and maintains the search for mastery of the work.

Risk assessment is a form of a standard of service, against which a person's work can be measured. It is intended to be a knowledge based approach to service. The subtext of informants on this topic is to reduce the priority of this topic to optional activity rather than a first order of priority. Various reasons for this decision are offered: not enough time, too long to do, not clearly a value added activity, insufficient emphasis by supervisors and managers that this is important, and disagreement on what factors are truly high risk and those which are lower risk. Here the workplace culture is

problematic for a change in perspective from avoiding use of risk assessment to one of using it regularly. The subtext supports a go slow view of the topic. The application of the model on page 95 leads to the observation that employee stress will be affected by a workplace where the office culture de-emphasizes a knowledge based method of case analysis and case planning. The experiences of informants in Winnipeg mirror the findings from the locations where risk assessment has been introduced. As reported by Schene in her analysis of risk assessment implementations:

A fundamental issue in implementation includes the early and continued awareness that staff often do not use risk assessment to guide their decisions, but see it as just another form to complete. What has been learned in many jurisdictions is that the attitude and support of supervisors are the crucial variables in how staff use risk assessment.

Another important and ongoing implementation issue has been the level of training needed with staff to facilitate and foster utilization. This issue has taken many forms. The involvement of staff in the development of the risk assessment instrumentation has proven to be very important to the content and message of training.

The focus of all training and utilization work is to support the worker's capacity to make sound decisions... We need to help workers digest and process risk assessment information into case decision making. This is not automatic or always obvious to caseworkers. This is a training issue, a supervisory issue, but also an issue of conceptual development. We seem to need greater clarity of implications for specific decision making, service planning, and shared or common assessments across agencies working with the family.

A process of ongoing training with continued feedback from staff using risk assessment has proven valuable in Texas. Continuing dialogue and management responsiveness to emerging issues for workers utilizing risk assessment contributes to its effectiveness. Identifying a group of key people in the system who can be resources to staff on a continuing basis, and providing a network of ongoing support, is vital. In short,

training can be a more dynamic circular process, not linear or fixed in time (Schene, 1996, p.6-7).

This perspective from the combined experience of many jurisdictions is thematically similar to the discourse of staff in Winnipeg.

In closing, the views and experiences of new staff as expressed in the four main themes bears a remarkable similarity to a much larger set of experiences as published elsewhere.

Summary and Conclusion

This study set out to learn about the culture of child protection work from the perspective of informants who volunteered to provide that information. As a consequence of that interest, three associated themes emerged from the study, namely the role played by ethnicity, workplace culture, and the social discourse on child protection.

The new employees of Winnipeg Child and Family Services were quite interested in participating as each person who was contacted agreed to the interview. The informants belonged to one of two general career and life paths. Most of those interviewed were younger, recent university graduates who had progressed from high school to university to child protection work. The other group were those who had become established in a marriage or family or other employment before returning to study social work. This group was older by at least ten years and was more able to distance their personal life from the workplace. Common experiences for both groups included the difficulty and stress of child protection work and the frustration of not being able to do the kind of quality work they wished of themselves. Another common experience was the high value placed on good supervision by a person who acted as a mentor in the transition from being a student to being a social worker for Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Inadequate supervision more adversely affected younger employees. Both groups encountered new challenges for which they were not particularly well prepared, such as court work and working with parents with mental illness.

The interview expanded the observer's knowledge of the topic and has led to interesting possibilities for expansion of research initiatives including the refinement of a model which shows the interrelationship of the workplace components and its effect on worker competence. The proposed model of the factors most relevant to job success was modified by the interviews with informants. Prior to the interviews, it was less clear what factors increased worker stress and delayed the acquiring of competence in the job. Informants

used the word "stress" frequently to describe many problematic work experiences. Some staff referred to competency as a goal of one of the on-the-job training programs available to employees. Another way that the competence idea emerged was through the reference to the wish to do quality work. While the refinement of the model was not a primary goal of the research, making a modified model based on interview served the purpose of crystallizing the concepts into an object which displays some of the new knowledge from the interviews. Work stress is significant, and one capacity which child protection staff seek is possession of sufficient knowledge and skills to do the work with competence or mastery; life experience and cross cultural training are both relevant as factors which help in the development of competency in child protection.

These interviews have enhanced the understanding of the culture of child protection work and have led to the identification of a possible organizing model for further research. The use of a three part view of child protection culture is a somewhat arbitrary way to organize the vast amount of information in the field of child protection services, namely training to be a social worker, community values and ethnicity, and the social construction of child protection services. The categories of ethnicity, workplace, and societal discourse serve the purpose of arranging the vast number of contributions to this topic and could be used to develop a university course on the topic of what it will be like when someone begins this work. Another possible use of this three part view would be to organize a discussion on how to improve new employee experience. In the real world what matters is that the three components of the culture of child protection exist concurrently in the social worker who responds to a phone call about a possible case of child abuse or neglect and while the case does not exist in the three divisions of ethnicity, workplace, and societal discourse, all three can be found in most cases of child abuse investigation.

It appears that new employees are too overwhelmed with case work urgencies to spend much time of risk estimation. Perhaps this

topic is best left for an interval after the immediate challenges of the work are met and resolved. As an example, it makes little sense to emphasize risk estimation if the new employee does not have good supervision. Some staff made interesting observations about the nature of risk, such as the emphasis placed on fear as a proxy for danger to the child.

The study has provided a face to the work by hearing from people who have begun the process of acculturation with remarkable grace. It is truly impressive to meet and listen to people who have started to work in a line of work that has so many demands, frustrations, challenges, yet offers the chance to make a real difference in the life of a child. Most informants quietly accept that their career calling is to step into the breach and respond to the painful cries of children who are being abused or neglected and be subject to considerable personal difficulties as this work is done.

The experience of being a social worker from a different culture or socioeconomic group has brought informants into a discourse on the origins of poverty, alcoholism, and child maltreatment. For those social workers who have moved easily from a suburban upbringing to work as a social worker in a tough neighborhood, the effect is to come face to face with powerful social forces which were much less visible in their communities of origin. Poverty, alcoholism, and child abuse are a part of the culture of many of the clients and the transition to working in this environment is not easy for new child protection workers. This experience is an introduction for some informants to the discourse on the social construction of child protection services. The matter of how society organizes itself for the surveillance of families for indications of child maltreatment has a long history which continues to evolve. One current form of that surveillance is by the development of risk assessment methods.

Four themes emerged as common and substantive to the participants: the gap between social work theory and practice, the central role of cross cultural experience in this work, the importance

of supervision, and lastly the variation in the use of a risk assessment methodology. The gaps between social work theory and practice will always exist to some degree. The idea of a unity of experience, one where both theory and practice are more closely approximated seems to be a reasonable goal for those who teach theory or practice skills. This view is well supported by the findings from the informants.

It is more likely than not that a child protection worker will start off his or her career working with a child from another culture. This practical reality is a setting with the special demands and skills required of those who do child protection work. The work is difficult at the best of times, even in one's own culture. Add another factor, namely working in a different culture, and the stage is set for very demanding work.

Supervision may be the most critical component to a good transition to this kind of work. The informants told of success or failure as an employee stemming from this relationship. Training programs designed to strengthen supervision seem obvious. While good supervision is highly valued, the same can not be said for risk estimation. It is recognized as useful but not as a priority nor as an item for the first step in the new career of child protection workers.

The challenges and frustrations of child protection have been described, but it is important to finish on a note of optimism for this view is one which emerges in the interviews. One staff, when asked "What do you enjoy most about your work?" replied:

Certainly seeing the strength in people, seeing that despite everything that goes on in this world and in these people's lives...I think that I have been able to find something outstanding about everyone that I have worked with and something really exciting. I think that I have learned a lot from my clients as I try and help them learn from what I have been able to gather here in life so far. I've certainly learned from them and they have gained a lot. So, being able to get into people's

environments and to work with them to achieve something, to see something better for families and for children and I think that there is just no way of even describing accurately of how that makes me feel. To see when something good does happens from the work that I have done with the family.

Appendix A

Approval of Wpg. CFS



WINNIPEG CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
SERVICES À L'ENFANT ET À LA FAMILLE DE WINNIPEG
EXECUTIVE OFFICE / BUREAU ADMINISTRATIF

September 14, 1998

Dr. Eric Sigurdson, M.D., FRCPC
Department of Community Health Sciences
Faculty of Medicine
University of Manitoba
750 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3E 0W3

Dear Dr. Sigurdson:

I have presented your proposal to Executive Management who have endorsed our participation in your thesis study. There are several points we would like to confirm. First, we would request that staff interviews occur during the work day. Second, that the study be longitudinal (as we previously discussed). Third, that at the appropriate time, the Agency will send a letter to all staff noting your thesis study and advising that participation is voluntary.

I look forward to the start of this very interesting study.

Yours sincerely,

J. Lance Barber,
Chief Executive Officer

JLB/dr



WINNIPEG CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

EXECUTIVE OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM: J. Lance Barber, Chief Executive Officer

DATE: December 2, 1998

RE: **THE CULTURE OF CHILD PROTECTION WORK**

Dr. Eric Sigurdson from the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Community Health Sciences, is currently working on a project "*The Culture of Child Protection Work*". The Executive Management of the Agency has endorsed the Agency's participation in his thesis study and this study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Manitoba. The purpose of the thesis is to learn about the nature and culture of child protection work in Winnipeg from the perspective of recent graduates of the Faculty of Social Work.

The objectives of the study will be to describe the formal and informal training and learning of employees who have recently completed 1 - 2 years as a child protection worker in Winnipeg. Also to explore, in a retrospective fashion, how they perceive their values have changed from the cultural values that were there before they commenced work as a Social Worker for Winnipeg Child and Family Services and after 1 - 2 years in this occupation. A Participant Information Sheet is attached for your information.

To commence this process, we selected from our payroll system employees who have been in the employ of the Agency for under 3 years and who, to the best of our knowledge, are recent graduates from the Faculty of Social Work. In order to meet the participant criteria, prospective participants must possess either a B.S.W. or an M.S.W. and are recent employees to child protection work. From the information we compiled, it appears that you meet the criteria that Dr. Sigurdson was looking for to complete his research. Dr. Sigurdson will select randomly from the names provided and will be in touch with you to canvas your interest. Participation is voluntary and is confidential. If selected, Dr. Sigurdson will arrange a personal interview for 1 1/2 to 2 hours of duration which will be conducted on Agency time. I would like to stress that your responses are confidential and for the sole purpose of assisting Dr. Sigurdson with his research.

J. Lance Barber
Chief Executive Officer
Encl.

Appendix B

Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

FACULTY COMMITTEE ON THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

NAME: Dr. E. Sigurdson

REFERENCE: E98:280

DATE: October 2, 1998

YOUR PROJECT ENTITLED: The Culture of Child Protection Work

- Research Study (undated)
- Participant Information and Consent Form (undated)

HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE AT THEIR MEETING OF:

September 28, 1998

COMMITTEE PROVISOS OR LIMITATIONS:

Approved as per your letter dated September 22, 1998

You may be asked at intervals for a status report. Any significant changes of the protocol should be reported to the Chairman for the Committee's consideration, in advance of implementation of such changes.

The Faculty Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research of The University of Manitoba operates in accordance with GCP guidelines and any applicable laws and regulations.

**** THIS IS FOR THE ETHICS OF HUMAN USE ONLY. FOR THE LOGISTICS OF PERFORMING THE STUDY, APPROVAL SHOULD BE SOUGHT FROM THE RELEVANT INSTITUTION, IF REQUIRED.**

Sincerely yours,

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Dr. S. Macdonald

Chair,

Faculty Committee on the Use of
Human Subjects in Research

Please quote the above ethics reference number on all correspondence.

Inquiries should be directed to Theresa Kennedy

Telephone: 789-3255 Fax: 789-3942

E-mail:

Appendix CUNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: The Culture of Child Protection Work

Investigator: E.S. Sigurdson MD FRCPC Phone: (204) 787-7469

Purpose To learn about the nature and culture of child protection work in Winnipeg from the perspective of recent graduates of social work.

Objectives There is very little information on the culture of child protection work and the adaptation that recent graduates, who become employed in this field, must make. It is important to learn more about the culture of child protection services, particularly from a perspective of learning about how staff develop knowledge in a cross cultural setting. Thus the objectives are:

- (1) to describe the formal and informal training and learning of employees who recently completed 1 to 2 years as a child protection worker in Winnipeg.
- (2) to explore in a retrospective fashion how they perceive their values have changed from the cultural values that were there before work started and after one to two years in this occupation by looking at the narratives of the informants.

Process This study was introduced by means of a letter from The Executive Office of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, stating that the staff interviews will occur during the work day, that participation is voluntary, and no identification of individual responses will occur. Meetings will occur at the participants' offices or a private room in that office where the interview can occur without others listening. First we will introduce ourselves, and then the nature of the inquiry will be explained. If we agree to proceed, the Consent will be signed and the interview will occur a week later. Arrangements will be made to have sufficient time set aside for the interview that if it went on for longer than expected, it would not be interrupted unnecessarily. The interview will last between 1.0 to 1.5 hours. Some notes will be taken during the interview, but as little as needed, so as to not disturb the flow of conversation. The tape recorder will be used during the interview. The notes will be reviewed shortly after they are written, and a preliminary report dictated that day from those findings. The interview tapes will be transcribed. The tapes will be kept in a locked secure container when not used for transcription. The container will be left in a locked room, to which the public does not have access. Once transcription has been completed, the tapes will be erased. If direct quotes are used, they will be provided without speakers names, nor with identifying data as to who said it.

This study will aggregate the data of individuals and have no effect on employment.

Appendix DUNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
Informed Consent Form

Project Title: The Culture of Child Protection Work

Investigator: E.S. Sigurdson MD FRCPC Phone: (204) 787-7469

The purpose of this interview is to increase understanding of practitioner experiences in child protection work. There will be one interview. Questions will be asked regarding your work and training for it. Some of the interview may be taped. This tape will not be shared with others, but the final report, containing anonymous quotations, will be accessible to you at the end of the study.

There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant of this study, but there may be changes in the understanding of child practitioner work following the completion of this study.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I, _____ (print name), hereby agree to participate as a volunteer in the above-named project.

I hereby give permission to be interviewed and for part of it to be tape-recorded. I understand that, at the completion of the research, the tape will be erased. I understand that the information may be summarized in report form, but my name will not be associated with the research.

I understand that I am free to not answer any specific questions during the interviews. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time, without penalty.

I have been given the opportunity to ask whatever questions I desire, and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Changes (if any)

Participant

Researcher

Witness

Date

Appendix E

Number of Children by Present Status Who Have Been Placed¹ By Reporting Agency

as at March 31, 1998 (numbers include both federal and provincial responsibility)

Service Providers	1995/96			1996/97			1997/98					
	Wards	VPA ²	Other	Total	Wards	VPA ²	Other	Total	Wards	VPA ²	Other	Total
Child and Family Services Agencies												
Winnipeg Child and Family Services	1,486	551	593	2,630	1,506	497	569	2,572	1,512	435	522	2,469
Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba	115	17	0	132	69	30	49	148	64	29	54	147
Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba	143	17	0	160	132	16	28	176	121	13	24	158
Jewish Child and Family Service	6	4	4	14	6	4	2	12	5	4	1	10
Churchill Health Centre	13	1	0	14	9	3	1	13	4	0	8	12
Sub-Total	1,763	590	597	2,950	1,722	550	649	2,921	1,706	481	609	2,796
Native Agencies												
Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services	160	13	28	201	140	21	71	232	158	16	65	239
West Region Child and Family Services	160	31	42	233	157	49	28	388	161	51	56	268
Southeast Child and Family Services	166	198	1	365	164	214	10	135	208	219	1	428
Anishinaabe Child and Family Services - East	85	38	10	133	79	42	14	216	90	52	9	151
Anishinaabe Child and Family Services - West	108	73	15	196	115	79	22	267	127	49	24	200
Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba	158	51	48	257	154	75	38	183	89	96	46	231
Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency	125	31	34	190	112	46	25	n/a	136	45	47	228
Island Lake First Nations Family Services ⁴	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	38	15	23	76
Sub-Total	962	435	178	1,575	921	526	208	1,655	1,007	543	271	1,821
Regional Offices												
Eastman	33	54	19	106	41	19	25	85	46	22	14	82
Interlake	49	30	12	91	39	26	21	86	50	31	10	91
Parkland	88	5	24	117	80	11	24	115	77	6	14	97
Norman	54	11	15	80	35	8	16	59	31	16	22	69
Thompson	165	21	65	251	155	11	116	282	177	10	84	271
Sub-Total	369	121	135	645	350	75	202	627	381	85	144	610
TOTAL	3,114	1,146	910	5,170³	2,993	1,151	1,059	5,203³	3,094	1,109	1,024	5,227³

1. "Placed" refers to those placements other than the home of the child's parents or persons in whose care the child has been at the time of agency/regional office placement.
2. Voluntary Placement Agreement.
3. 198 children in 1995/96; 199 children in 1997/98 under Orders of Supervision are not included in this total.
4. Island Lake First Nations Family Services was incorporated as a child and family services agency on April 17, 1997.

Report on Alleged Physically & Sexually Abused Children in Manitoba

Source	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Child and Family Services Agencies			
Winnipeg Child and Family Services	848	971	1,291
Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba	195	159	371
Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba	98	54	86
Jewish Child and Family Service	16	17	14
Churchill Health Centre	0	0	0
Sub-Total	1,157	1,201	1,762
Native Agencies			
Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services	207	116	199
West Region Child and Family Services	156	183	213
Southeast Child and Family Services	72	83	115
Anishinaabe Child and Family Services - East	28	41	33
Anishinaabe Child and Family Services - West	15	21	32
Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba	-	-	-
Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency	174	-	89
Island Lake First Nations Family Services ¹			-
Sub-Total	652	444	681
Regional Offices			
Eastman	15	6	4
Interlake	117	66	88
Parkland	89	85	90
Norman	75	49	89
Thompson	106	72	91
Sub-Total	402	278	362
Total	2,211	1,923	2,805
Age of Child			
Under 1 year	31	34	63
1 - 3 years	250	231	276
4 - 10 years	968	880	1,363
11 - 15 years	600	572	809
16 and over	102	157	294
Unknown	260	49	0
Total	2,211	1,923	2,805
Sex of Child			
Male	790	847	1,139
Female	1,227	1,064	1,666
Unknown	194	12	0
Total	2,211	1,923	2,805

¹ Island Lake First Nations Family Services was incorporated as a child and family services agency on April 17, 1997.

Service Statistics for 1998/99

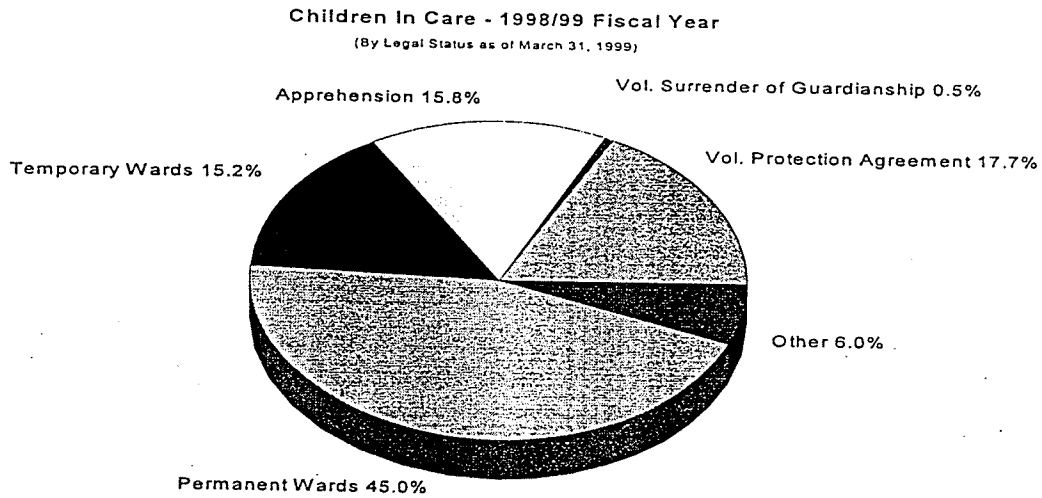
Open Caseloads as at March 31, 1999

	1996	1997	1998	1999
Community and Family Services				
Voluntary Family Services	1,022	280	347	220
Post Legal Adoption Services	2,039	1,490	1,514	1,562
Expectant Parent Services	550	160	138	121
Total Voluntary Service Open Cases	3,611	1,930	1,999	1,903
Protective Family Services				
Protective Family Services	Not Available	2,926	2,837	2,309
# Children Involved	Not Available	7,110	7,287	6,691
# Children in Care	Not Available	1,376	1,285	1,398
# Children Not in Care	Not Available	5,734	6,002	5,283
Expectant parent Services	Not Available	130	170	152
Total Protective Service Open Cases	Not Available	3,056	3,007	2,461

Note * Children in Care Cases at end of the Fiscal Year include 31 children under Orders of Supervision (for other Agencies in the Province) and 106 children under Court Orders of Supervision.

SERVICE STATISTICS 98/99 (Cont.)

	1996	1997	1998	1999
Children In Care Open Cases	2,707	2,683	2,589	2,620
Total Days Care for the Year	753,448	749,474	758,525	757,975
Total Select (Agency) Adoptions during Year	92	86	71	78
Licensed Foster Homes and Places of Safety Managed by the Agency	1,152	1,007	1,002	1,031



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