

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK  
IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

A STUDY OF RURAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS IN THE  
INTERLAKE AND EASTMAN REGIONS OF THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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By

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to present an exploratory analysis of social work practice in the rural setting by identifying the significant characteristics of the rural environment and the implications of the rural context for professional social work practice, service delivery, administrative and service policy and professional education. A qualitative methodology was designed to meet the research requirements of the study, sources of data being a review of the more recent literature on rural social work and field study. The richest information was obtained from semi-structured interviews with social workers practising in the rural communities of the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the Province of Manitoba.

Research findings were analyzed and presented in terms of a qualitative discussion of the insights solicited from rural social work practitioners and from the social work literature, and in terms of hypotheses or generalized relations about the practice of social work in the rural setting. A synthesis of the data found in the literature and the descriptive data elicited during the interviews comprise a multi-dimensional portrait of rural social work practice. Attention was devoted not to a differentiation between urban and rural social work, but to the development

of rural social work as a special interest area. This exploratory study led to conclusions about the challenges of practising social work in the rural setting and improving human services of rural communities.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT . . . . .	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	iv
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND RESEARCH DESIGN . . . . .	1
Background to the Study . . . . .	1
Rationale for the Study . . . . .	7
Purpose and Scope of the Study . . . . .	10
Study Design and Methodology . . . . .	11
Assumptions Relevant to the Study . . . . .	26
Definitions Relevant to the Study . . . . .	27
II PRESENTATION OF LITERATURE REGARDING THE NATURE OF RURAL SOCIAL WORK . . . . .	36
The Nature of Social Work . . . . .	36
The Roots of Rural Social Work . . . . .	40
The Rural Context . . . . .	50
The Rural Context and Implications for Social Work Practice . . . . .	63
The Rural Context and Implications for Social Work Education . . . . .	82
III INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING . . . . .	120
Trends in the Rural North American Population . . . . .	120
The Rural Manitoba Environment . . . . .	129
The Delivery of Human Services in Manitoba . . . . .	139
IV PRESENTATION OF DATA REGARDING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT . . . . .	155
Preliminary Discussion of Findings . . . . .	155
Characteristics of the Sample Under Investigation . . . . .	157

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	<u>Page</u>
Subjects' Response to the Research Topic . .	160
Characteristics and Problems of the Rural Environment . . . . .	161
Practice Implications of the Rural Environment . . . . .	175
Approach to Service Delivery in the Rural Environment . . . . .	214
Policy and Legislation and the Rural Environment . . . . .	225
Implications of the Rural Environment for Social Work Education . . . . .	233
Other Issues . . . . .	245
 V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	 249
Commentary on Findings with Reference to Literature Review . . . . .	 249
Tentative Hypotheses, Conclusions and Implications for Further Research . . . .	 263
Summary and Recommendations . . . . .	274
 APPENDICES . . . . .	 278
 BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	 298

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

#### Background to the Study

Social work in rural and small communities has been largely neglected throughout the history of the profession. The power base and boundaries of the social work profession are well established in urban centres, however, social work in the rural community, whether it be a metro-transitional rural community, a rural community in a micropolitan region, a rural community in an economically depressed region, or a remote isolated community, is as yet, at a primitive stage.<sup>1</sup> The neglect of rural social work is perhaps understandable in light of the world trend toward metropolitanization and the emphasis on urban problems and issues.

The rapid industrial development in the latter half of the nineteenth century was largely a process of urbanization as well as industrialization. It is little wonder, then, that social work, spawned in this continent in the settlement houses and charity organization societies of the major cities of the 1860's, 1870's, 1880's and 1890's, has had a distinctly urban outlook. Very little attention was paid to the rural environments which provided the human raw material for this rapid and consuming process of industrialization. From the twenties of this century, until

the mid '60's, the rural environments and the populations indigenous to them have been perceived as residual, the ones left behind.

The history of the social work profession reflects an overwhelming urban orientation, to the point, it would appear, "that there is an institutional bias toward the education of people to work in rural areas."<sup>2</sup> Curriculum materials for educating practitioners for rural settings are virtually non-existent. Major social work texts draw few, if any, case examples from rural situations. As late as 1971, the Encyclopedia of Social Work commented that "there has been little systematic inquiry into the characteristics of effective social work practice in rural communities."<sup>3</sup>

The lack of curriculum materials has served to prohibit a rural social work identification. Rural social work practitioners have been left with the choice of either transplanting urban social work to the country, or trying to make alterations in the practice of social work so that its impact on rural peoples will not be as malevolent as some other industrial transplants have been.<sup>4</sup>

This is not to suggest that social work as a profession has totally ignored the rural practice community, for a number of practitioners and educators have always struggled with the problems of rural communities. Interest in rural social work has continued to grow, and today, there is a core of practitioners and educators, sponsoring the concerns of rural social workers and aiming at developing rural social work curriculum materials.

The growing interest in rural social work reflects a number of phenomena, the most evident being dissatisfaction with city life and a search for rural roots, a holistic, global and ecological awareness of human interdependence and man's dependence on nature and an awareness of changing migration patterns. This rural awareness is evident in a number of recent writings, studies and conferences.

Ralph Mathews, for example, points out that while the majority of Canadians have accepted as natural that they must live in large cities in order to have jobs, there are others who have chosen not to accept the urban dream and industrial goal. For many community residents described in his study, faced with the prospect of government resettlement, there was 'no better place than here,' because they perceived their communities, not in terms of economic viability, but in terms of social vitality.<sup>5</sup> Jane Abramson lends a note of support to this position: "the strategy was to move the rural poor and the 'excess' population relative to resource to areas of 'higher opportunity' . . . in other words, to regional growth centres and metropolitan areas in order to improve their general welfare. Yet, empirical studies of the adjustment of rural immigrants to their new locations in various countries around the world increasingly challenge the general solidity of this assumption."<sup>6</sup>

The Winnipeg Symposium of 1975 on "Factors Affecting Rural-Urban Migration" noted that "the problems of

adaptation to urban life, the decline of many rural areas and the increasing costs cities face in accommodating migrants were for all concerned cause to assure the continued viability of the rural community." The Report of the Symposium describes "a general but quite definite impression of depth of concern Canadians feel for rural areas and small towns . . . many speakers argued forcefully for measures to protect and strengthen the traditional way of life in the non-urbanized part of the country."<sup>7</sup>

Another example of this rural awareness is the statement of the Honourable Jeanne Sauve, the former Canadian Minister of the Environment, to the World Population Conference, Bucharest, 1974: "The continued existence of the human species has always depended on its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Indeed, in this interdependent world the price of not adapting is becoming increasingly dear . . . in Canada, a picture of infinite possibilities, of open spaces and rich natural resources, less than 17 percent of Canada's land space is arable and the proportion devoted to agriculture is diminishing under the pressure of urbanization . . . Today, some 90 percent of Canada's population inhabits 7 percent of the land. As a result, in the urban areas we are searching for measures to ameliorate the consequences of urban concentration."<sup>8</sup>

In recent years, there has been growing recognition nationally and within the human service professions that

urban problems are the same as or are mirror images of what are now being identified as rural problems.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Gordon MacEachern, member of the Canadian Council on Rural Development, states that "city and country are part of a whole" and suggests that a sense of rural community must be built around "a quality of life that will enhance the spirit of all Canadians . . . urban dwellers must realize that what is good for rural Canada will also be good for them."<sup>10</sup> Dr. M. W. Menzies describes this perspective in this manner: ". . . agricultural poverty cannot be solved within the farm fence, nor can rural, non-farm poverty be solved along the back concessions . . . We cannot solve urban poverty and industrial unemployment independently of an effective attack on rural poverty and unemployment, since the continuous flow of the uneducated, the unskilled, the unready and the infirm from our outposts and reservations, our farms and forests to our towns and cities creates an indivisible social and economic problem. Our many-sided poverty problem . . . can only be solved within the context of a dynamically expanding and rapidly changing national economy in which the benefits of growth are widely shared and deliberately but wisely balanced between the various regions of the country."<sup>11</sup> "The overpopulation of the metropolitan communities may be viewed as a direct result of our underattention to rural communities."<sup>12</sup>

In addition, this decade is witnessing the acceleration of a significant urban outmigration. Since



1970 the rural areas of the U.S.A. have been growing faster than its urban areas. There is evidence to suggest a similar trend in Canada.<sup>13</sup> Steady migration from the rural life, which began as far back as the late nineteenth century, was "a running toward the very real advantages of urban life with more and better jobs, money and opportunities. The affluent society was an urban society."<sup>14</sup> Urban outmigration, on the other hand, is characterized "primarily as a running away from more than a 'running toward' phenomenon . . . running away from overcrowded cities, high crime rates, intolerable levels of pollution and a growing sense of social and individual anomie associated with these conditions."<sup>15</sup>

In light of these facts and concerns, a growing number of social work practitioners and educators have turned their attention to social work in the rural context. Canadian schools of social work, in particular, Regina, Manitoba, Laurentian, Victoria and Memorial, are beginning to recognize the need for a rural emphasis in education. The following statement by the School of Social Work, University of Victoria, for example, gives recognition of the growing realities of the job market and the need for social work education to be more relevant. "Graduates of Schools of Social Work like their urban counterparts in medicine, law and education, have shown a marked preference toward practice in urban areas. This tendency has been reinforced by the fact that professional schools are located in urban

areas and that students' field placements are largely urban centred. Thus, students are not prepared for the demands of rural practice characterized by a scarcity of resources and by a scattered population. At the same time, it is becoming apparent that the jobs will be most readily available in rural areas."<sup>16</sup> This idea has been reiterated by the School of Social Work, University of Manitoba, one of the first schools to offer a rural field placement, "a reflection of the School's awareness that the job market for urban-trained Winnipeg-based social workers was shrinking and that within Manitoba the greatest potential job market was in rural and northern communities."<sup>17</sup>

#### Rationale for the Study

If the nation is to overcome its most profound social problems, it will have to attack all of them as a totality. Anything else will continue the irrational practice of solving one problem while creating another. If social workers are to make a contribution to such solutions, there will need to be a skilled cadre of rural specialists, along with the urbanologists, to effect solutions to the total problem syndrome of the era.<sup>18</sup>

Written in 1969, this statement by Leon Ginsberg encompasses the view of those social work practitioners and educators who have turned their attention to social work in the rural context. This view continues to be expressed by social workers with a rural interest.

The fact is that there is not a great deal known about rural social work, as evidenced by the limited amount of literature on the subject. The literature that exists

originates in the United States for the most part. There, the literature addresses itself to the disparities and inequalities between urban and rural life, which are pronounced and have influenced the life of the nation. In Canada, writings on the rural poor, the native population, the family farm in contrast with agribusiness, the migrant labourer and the problems of small towns and rural communities, all point to the fact that the context of rural life, and its problems and solutions, are significant, unique, and often contrast with the city.

Within the Canadian rural environment itself, there are great variations, including, to name a few, fishing villages in the Maritimes, prairie farms, remote communities of native Indian population and lumber camps in northern British Columbia. Within these different conditions, the human services exist to assist and solve the myriad of problems of rural and remote people. These attempts are written about with grave brevity; the writing that has been done tends to be descriptive, cataloguing findings about the way services are delivered in rural areas. While this is valuable, the Canadian rural scene has not been studied, described or even analyzed to any great extent. One commentator suggests that ". . . there is more of a need to gather statistical information about service providers in rural areas than service recipients . . . to launch more scientific study of the characteristics of rural practitioners and rural residents."<sup>19</sup>

Rural social work, although not markedly different from urban social work or other human services, is a special form of practice. The homogenizing effect of urban life, the cultural, social and economic situations, eliminate many variables that exist in rural areas. The factor of distance alone, for example, creates a unique set of circumstances. It is the distinct conditions that call for an awareness and an analysis of rural social work practice. Until we address ourselves to the problems and characteristics of rural communities, and the role of the social worker within that context, "we carelessly continue to assume that urban expertise, professional style and urban programs, would be imposed on areas of the country with somewhat different problems and resources."<sup>20</sup>

Firstly, a phenomenon characteristic of the social work profession is the tendency for most skillful social workers to gravitate toward metropolitan communities.<sup>21</sup> It may be fair to suggest that part of the reason for doing so is that the profession has developed its best-paying and highest status positions in urban centres. And the thrust of the professional literature--as anyone who has ever tried to research the subject of social work in rural areas knows--"has made it appear that the challenges are in the process of irreversible death pangs."<sup>22</sup> Such conclusions are not necessarily valid.

A rural focus is now evident in the social work profession: "The tide seems to be turning . . . for too

long it has been assumed that almost everyone would eventually live in a few large cities such as Montreal and Toronto, and that urban migration was an irreversible given."<sup>23</sup> For many people, including social workers, rural life has a variety of advantages, many of which outweigh any disadvantages that might exist.

### Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to shed light upon the challenges of practising social work in the rural environment and improving the human services of rural communities. More specifically, the study is designed to identify the significant characteristics of the rural environment and the implications of this rural context for professional social work practice, service delivery, administrative policy and professional education.

It is not the intention of this study to suggest that the social work profession destroy its urban bias, but rather, to be sensitive to a large body of rural practitioners and educators. As well, the intention is to sensitize those members of the profession who come into contact with rural concerns.

The objective of the study is not to evaluate the effectiveness of human service delivery in rural communities, either from a consumer or practitioner point of view. Its concern is with identifying the present state of knowledge of rural social work and providing a qualitative description of existing social work practice and delivery.

A review of the rural social work literature, a description of the rural Manitoba environment and its service delivery, and an experience survey of social work practitioners employed in the child welfare/family service program in the Interlake and Eastman regions of the province provide the central focus for this objective. Hypotheses regarding critical issues of a policy and delivery nature, competencies and professional education for rural practice are thus identifiable.

In attempting to identify issues relevant to rural practice, it does not appear helpful to assume a rural-urban dichotomy although the study will make reference to these differences, merely because the profession has for so long maintained an urban focus.

The stimulus for this study arose from the writer's social work experience in a number of rural Manitoba communities. While the demand for improved living conditions in rural areas continues to rise, it became clear to the writer and colleagues that social service delivery in rural areas is not best effected by transplanting urban trappings to the rural environment and that rural professional practice requires competencies that are not given recognition by the profession at large.

### Study Design and Methodology

In designing a research project suitable to the study of rural social work, a number of important considerations come to the fore. Firstly, the literature on

the subject area, although limited, tends to be largely American in origin. Secondly, the existing Canadian material tends to be largely speculative and written from an educator's point of view. Third, a systematic study of rural social work practice has not been undertaken in Manitoba, despite the large number of rural practitioners. Thus, the task is to design a study which identifies existing information on rural social work and surveys the experiences of those social workers employed in rural settings. The main questions can therefore be presented: what are the characteristics of the rural environment, what are the implications for social service delivery, administrative policy, social work practice and education? The major emphasis is on the discovery of ideas and insights and to clarify concepts; therefore, the research design must be flexible enough to permit the consideration of many different aspects of the phenomenon.

In light of the various research methodologies examined, an exploratory approach appears to be primarily suited to this purpose.<sup>24</sup> An exploratory approach is defined as having the major purpose of gaining familiarity with a phenomenon in order to achieve new insights into it, often in order to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses and to establish priorities for further research. The function of an exploratory study may also be to provide a census of problems regarded as urgent by people working in a given field of social relations.<sup>25</sup>

"Essentially, exploratory studies are based on the assumption that through the use of relatively systematic procedures, relevant hypotheses pertaining to a particular phenomenon can be developed."<sup>26</sup>

In view of the stated purpose of this study--to shed light upon the challenges of practising social work in the rural environment and improving the human services of the rural communities, and to identify the significant characteristics of the rural environment and implications of the rural context for professional social work practice, service delivery, administrative policy and professional education--the major emphasis is therefore upon the discovery of ideas and insights and to provide a census of problems and concepts relevant to rural social work practice. Although there has been speculative writing on the subject of rural social work, the state of the knowledge is not such to provide any precise hypotheses for investigation. Without exploratory work, designed to identify the scope of the subject area and the major variables, it would be foolhardy to investigate any hypotheses. An exploratory research design is therefore appropriate to the task.

In the Tripodi classification system, a research study should have several requisites before it can be classified as exploratory: 1) It should not be classifiable as either an experimental or a quantitative-descriptive study. 2) Relatively systematic procedures for obtaining



empirical observations and/or for the analysis of data should be used. However, the data need not be systematically analyzed in the form of quantitative descriptions; the descriptions may be in narrative form. 3) The investigator should go beyond the qualitative and/or quantitative descriptions by attempting to conceptualize the interrelations among the phenomena observed. This means that the investigator should attempt to construe his observations into some theoretical or hypothetical framework.<sup>27</sup>

The exploratory research design has as its major methodology the case study, the intensive study of selected examples, a small number of behavioural units, for stimulating insights and suggesting hypotheses for further research. Among social researchers, there is considerable controversy as to the value of exploratory/case study work. There is a tendency to underestimate the importance of exploratory/case study research and to regard only experimental work as "scientific".<sup>28</sup> Those who argue for this approach, as do Selltiz and Jahoda, express the viewpoint that "if experimental work is to have either theoretical or social value, it must be relevant to broader issues than those posed in the experiment. Such relevance can result only from adequate exploration of the dimensions of the problem with which the research is attempting to deal."<sup>29</sup>

The case study approach is regarded as "a particularly fruitful method in relatively unformulated

areas, where there is little experience to serve as a guide,"<sup>30</sup> and "as potentially the most valuable method known for obtaining a true and comprehensive picture . . .

(making) possible a synthesis of many different types of data."<sup>31</sup> The great advantage of the case study approach, as far as adding to our body of knowledge is concerned, is that it is a tremendous producer of ideas, suggestions and hypotheses about behaviour. "It seems almost an absolutely essential technique when exploring completely new fields."<sup>32</sup>

Conversely, the greatest weakness of the case study approach is "its great inefficiency in situations which are already well structured and where the important variables have been identified." This disadvantage is not as serious in "purely exploratory situations where the main goal is a rich variety of suggestions, but they can become a real handicap when attempting to draw rigorous conclusions or determine precise and specific relationships."<sup>33</sup> Another limitation cited is the tendency to generalize: "There is a tendency to forget that, regardless of the mass of data collected on a few cases, deductions are exceedingly dangerous, if not impossible . . . records are open to errors of perception, memory, judgement and unconscious bias with a special tendency to over-emphasize unusual events. The subjective data gathered by case study methods do not lend themselves to quantitative check, sampling is often omitted, and thus the formulated generalizations may have been based on data which represent atypical cases."<sup>34</sup>

Given the value as well as limitation of the case study methodology, it follows that a carefully designed research may produce results worthy of consideration. The final test of the validity of a method is its efficacy in securing the type of results sought. "The purpose in pointing out the weaknesses of certain methods is not to advocate their abandonment as long as they contribute something to our knowledge. The purpose of evaluating them is to avoid extravagant assumptions as to the validity of the conclusions which they are capable of yielding."<sup>35</sup>

Consistent with the exploratory research design, the study of social work in the rural environment will take the following steps:<sup>36</sup>

1. a review of the related and pertinent literature;
2. an introduction to the setting of the study, with particular reference to trends in the rural North American population, facts and problems of the rural Manitoba environment, and the delivery of social services therein;
3. a survey of people who have had practical social work experience in a particular area of rural Manitoba; and,
4. an analysis of the data and the development of tentative hypotheses and generalized relations regarding the practice of social work in the rural environment.

## I. Survey of the Literature

This study is concerned with a subject area for which hypotheses have not been precisely formulated and which tends to be largely speculative. The task is therefore to review the available literature of recent years with sensitivity to the hypotheses and where applicable, the conclusions that might be derived from it. A bibliographic survey of relevant articles and papers, produced by government agencies, schools of social work and professional agencies, will be undertaken for this purpose.

In this case, the development of rural social work as a special interest area has a history. Literature written by writers and organizations geared to the subject will be used as primary sources of data.

## II. Introduction to the Setting

In order to understand the rural context in which the case study is undertaken, it is important to present some of the salient features of the rural North American populations and of rural Manitoba. Facts and figures regarding rural Manitoba communities and some of the major problems of their rural people will be presented as well as a description of service delivery in rural Manitoba, with particular reference to the child welfare/family service program.

Although this study is not meant to be complete, it will draw upon some of the major descriptions and analyses of the rural situation of recent years.

### III. The Experience Survey

Only a small portion of existing knowledge and experience is ever put into written form, and people, in the course of their everyday experiences, are in a position to observe the situation at hand, they have acquired a reservoir of experience that could be of tremendous value in helping the investigator to become aware of important variables and influences. It is the purpose of an experience survey to gather and synthesize such data.

1. Selection of Respondents. As the emphasis is on the provocation of ideas and useful insights, the respondents must be chosen because of the likelihood that they will offer the contributions sought. Thus, a selected sample of social workers practising in the rural environment is called for.

In this endeavour, social workers practising in the rural environment and employed in the child welfare and/or family service program are being selected for intensive case study. The reasons for this selection are three-fold: the experiences of rural child welfare/family service workers are likely to be relevant as they encompass many issues concerning rural families and rural communities; the child welfare/family service program has a long history of service delivery in rural Manitoba; the child welfare/family service program employs the largest number of social workers in rural Manitoba.

Although random sampling of practitioners is not necessary in an exploratory study, it is important to select

respondents as to ensure depth of and a representation of different types of experience. For this reason (as well as proximity to the investigator), social workers in two regions (Interlake and Eastman) of Manitoba have been selected. Both the Interlake and Eastman regions of the Province of Manitoba offer diversity in rural environment. Child welfare/family service social workers are geographically assigned responsibilities throughout the regions.

There is also the additional consideration, in an attempt to locate diversity in experience and vantage point, that social workers in the child welfare/family service program are employed by two agencies, one public (the Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Manitoba), the other private (Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba). As well, within the Interlake and Eastman regions of the province, sub-offices are located in the rural areas, the central administrative offices being located in urban centres (Selkirk and Winnipeg).

In an experience survey, where it is believed that different vantage points may influence the content of observation, an effort must be made to include variation in point of view and in type of experience. Thus, it is advantageous to include representatives at both the management (supervisory/administrative) and field (direct service) levels.

To ensure that the study offers depth and representation of different types of experience, a sample of thirty workers has been selected, which includes a large percentage of rural child welfare/family service workers in the designated regions. This size of sample allows the introduction of an adequate variety of insights, without creating additional work and time for the investigator. A larger sample would likely result in answers falling into a pattern already familiar; at the same time, the size of sample selected allows for the development of ideas for future research.

2. Questioning of Respondents. Before any systematic attempt is made to collect the insights of experienced practitioners, it is necessary to have some preliminary ideas about the important issues in the subject area. One source of such ideas is the bibliographic survey; for this study, the predominant ideas and concepts in the literature were used to develop the interview schedule (see Appendix A). In addition, these ideas were also supplemented by the investigator's first-hand experience with rural social work practice.

Of considerable importance in exploratory research, using the case study methodology, is the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument. To meet this requirement, the questionnaire was pre-tested by interviewing three different workers with rural practice

experience (although not participants in the study example), prior to its actual use. Accordingly, revisions were made in the wording of certain questions and other questions were added.

The interview questionnaire is referred to as a schedule for purposes of this study. The schedule is regarded as an instrument that enormously extends the investigator's power of observation, while standardizing and objectifying the observations.<sup>37</sup> With the use of a schedule, the interviewer is in a position to systematically interview participants, while at the same time allowing a considerable degree of flexibility in the responses. The schedule is therefore devised with two purposes in mind: to provide the interview with structure to ensure that all participants are asked the same questions and because of the formulative and discovery functions of the experience survey, to allow the respondent to raise issues and questions not previously considered by the investigator. Open-ended questions supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression.<sup>38</sup>

The interview schedule is designed to orient inquiries to the here and now, rather than to the theoretical experience of the informant. Inquiries are also formulated on the basis of what is, as well as what should be. There are several reasons for this. The social work practitioner can be expected to be oriented to the present



but also to what is desirable. The practitioner is also likely to understand and be able to respond to a practically phrased question than to one that is worded abstractly. Also, since the investigator's concern is not only with the theoretical aspects of the rural environment, but with implications for actual practice, the variables affecting everyday practice are important. The questions on the schedule are also designed in an open-ended manner, allowing the informant to provide concrete illustrations from the respondent's own experience.

For purposes of this study, a one-hour time limitation was placed on the interview. This was seen as a necessary measure in order to gain the co-operation of workers and their supervisors. As well, in view of the quality of information sought and the time limitation, it was deemed desirable to prepare the respondent, and to this end, an outline of the major subject areas of the schedule was developed and forwarded to each interviewer at least one week prior to the actual interview (see Appendix B). Although the outline did not contain questions, it provided a stimulus to the worker's experiential frame of reference.

During actual administration of the study, the interview schedule was used as a guide by the investigator rather than distributed to each informant. Questions were frequently rephrased or modified in order to make them applicable to the informant and situation at hand. The interview guide, as a research tool, is noted to serve its

best purposes when its various details are classified and are used only to suit the particular needs of both interviewer and interviewee. This semi-structured, focused nature of the interview allowed for flexibility and depth. It also enabled the interviewer to probe, to detect ambiguity, to cross-check, as well as to achieve rapport and focus on the subjective experiences of the participants. As a method of detailing responses, both taping and note-taking were used by the investigator. Note-taking was predominant because of uneasiness of most informants to the presence of a tape recorder.

3. Analysis of Data. In addition to providing practical information about doing research in the subject area--which factors can be controlled and which cannot in the situation under study--the report of an experience survey provides much valuable information. In this study of rural social work practice, the report provides information about what variables tend to be predominant and cluster, how willing are agencies and workers to co-operate in research in the subject area, what factors are considered urgent by people practising in the rural environment and a summary of the knowledge of skilled practitioners about the validity of various approaches to rural practice. Of course, in presenting such a summary, it is clear that the survey was in no sense based on a random sample of rural practitioners, but rather, it was purposive and a case study of practitioners employed in a particular program in a

particular area (Interlake and Eastman regions) of the Province of Manitoba. Its usefulness therefore comes from the presentation of insights rather than presentation of the typical.

In the use of the case study approach, there are certain factors which make it an appropriate procedure for the evoking of insights.<sup>39</sup> A major factor is the attitude of the investigator, which is one of alert receptivity, of seeking rather than testing. The inquiry is guided by the features of the area under study, and therefore is constantly in the process of reformulation and redirection as new information is obtained. A second feature is the intensity of the study of the individuals selected for investigation. The intent is to obtain both sufficient information to characterize and explain both the unique features of the individual case being studied and those which it has in common with other cases. A third characteristic of this approach is its reliance on the integrative powers of the investigator, on her ability to draw together many diverse bits of information into useful interpretation, particularly desirable when the purpose is to evoke rather than to test hypothesis.

Thus, the selection of individuals who represent different positions in the social structure of rural child welfare/family service delivery (that is, public managers, public field workers, private managers, private field workers) helps to produce a rounded view of the rural

practice situation. Variations can be expected to be found. Individuals occupying different positions are likely to see any given situation from different perspectives; this diversity is productive for insights. The notion in exploratory research is that the research seeks discrepancies and divergent opinions in order to stimulate conceptualization of the phenomenon.

With exploratory research, it is important to remember that the study leads to insights and/or hypotheses, but does not test nor demonstrate them. One cannot assume that the discovered processes occur in cases other than those one has studied. An exploratory study is therefore a first step, and more carefully controlled studies are needed to test whether the hypotheses that emerge have general applicability.

A problem for researchers in exploratory studies is that of information overload.<sup>40</sup> The nature of the interview produced a large volume of qualitative data, and as a result, a device to categorize the data into manageable chunks was necessary.<sup>41</sup> A device used in this analysis is the "constant comparative method of analysis" where the source of certain ideas come from literature and the data (that is, the researched insights) are brought into relation (that is, compared) to each other and to the ideas in the literature. The theory that is generated is first conceptual categories and their properties, and second, hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and

their properties. The aim is to combine concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data with some existing ones from the literature that are clearly useful. In this analysis, emphasis will be on a qualitative discussion of the findings, allowing the concepts and hypotheses to become complex and rich, with the addition of raw data and literary viewpoints.

The analysis will take the following form of presentation: the qualitative presentation of the insights discovered from the interviews, with an emphasis on a comparison of the various groupings (public managers, public field workers, private managers, private field workers), and the presentation of the data in relation to literature, from which hypotheses and generalized relations will be developed. The data will be presented under the headings of various topics as they appear in the interview schedule. An important part of the analysis will be comments as to who was interviewed, the diversity in the individuals under study, how the topic appeared to informants and how conclusions were reached. The analysis requires some qualification in view of these factors.

#### Assumptions Relevant to the Study

By its very nature, an exploratory study depends heavily on assumptions. Having outlined the rationale, purpose and design, the major assumptions underlying the study can thus be formulated:

- 1) Rural social work practice is sufficiently different from urban social work practice in the areas of task environment, client characteristics, social and physical environment, and social work roles to warrant identification and description of the rural practice situation.
- 2) Urban-trained workers will have difficulty applying knowledge to rural practice and thus, the practice model must be significantly adapted to do a credible service job in rural areas. Specific competencies for rural practice can thus be identified.
- 3) In view of the great variations among rural communities themselves in economic, political, social and cultural characteristics, this study, exploratory in nature, is focused on rural generalities.
- 4) Although the study does not pay particular attention to northern conditions (those of remote and isolated communities), an argument could be made for a northern practice model significantly different from a rural practice model. No attempt will be made to address this observation.

#### Definitions Relevant to the Study

What is rural social work? Bear and colleagues of the Southern Regional Education Board, Rural Task Force,

state that there is no generally agreed upon definition of what constitutes rural social work.<sup>42</sup> Writers in the subject area have developed various definitions of rural, the similarities and differences reinforcing the view that there is no clear, universally accepted definition of rural which can be applied to social work.<sup>43</sup> A number of these rural definitions will be outlined.

Weber states that to specifically define rural as it relates to population, occupation, cultural background and so on, is inadvisable since what is rural to some areas may not be to others. She suggests that "rural refers to the environmental surroundings, the social systems, and the people who reside in areas that have a relatively low population density, usually either in the country or in small towns or villages."<sup>44</sup> Buxton uses the following definition: "an area which lags behind in population per square mile, in education, in variety of experience, and finally in the power to control its own destiny, compared to large urban areas."<sup>45</sup> Ginsberg's writings, on the other hand, identify an agricultural emphasis, inaccurately reflecting the Canadian rural scene, which includes mining and fishing.<sup>46</sup>

Abramson suggests that in 1971, the number of Canadians living in rural Canada varied between 5.2 and 8.2 million, depending on the definition used. "The point is that the area and number of communities are enormous and present special problems of time, space, communication and

costs in delivering human services. Rural communities vary widely among themselves, depending on such things as geographic area, primary resource base, historical development, proximity to larger cities and metropolitan centres and size and composition of the population." Abramson prefers to identify a number of types of rural communities, each of which has a distinctive set of social and economic problems. The types are: 1) the metro transitional rural community, 2) the rural community in a micropolitan region, 3) the rural community in an economically depressed region, and 4) the remote, isolated community. She suggests that the types are not exhaustive.<sup>47</sup>

The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, in a 1972 position paper, defined rural as that portion of the province that lies south of the 53rd parallel. The definition also includes any community that depends primarily on agriculture for its economic reason for existence.<sup>48</sup>

The Canadian census definition of rural is as follows: "(1) all parts of incorporated rural municipalities, unorganized territories and Indian Reserves having a population density of less than 1000 per square mile, (2) incorporated cities, towns and villages with populations less than 1000."<sup>49</sup>

Other writers suggest that rurality is a mentality and that the definition therefore makes little difference.<sup>50</sup> Others describe the rural community in terms of the nature of its population; in general, it is regarded as a population of the very young and the aging.<sup>51</sup>



The Canadian census definition, as do the other definitions, has certain limitations. The census definition does not take into consideration the fact that what a city dweller considers to be rural may constitute an urban metropolis to someone from a village or farm. As well, a concentration of large population may serve a wide geographic area in business and social services so that it is difficult to imagine an area which is thinly populated that is completely cut off from urban influences and services. In addition, the so-called urban area of a small town may react quite differently than an urban city. Some of the other definitions suggest a poorer quality of life and perhaps imply a perception of deprivation by rural residents.

In view of the great diversity in what constitutes rural, and therefore rural social work, this study will accept the general rule adopted by the Southern Regional Education Board: rural social work is that which serves populations residing primarily outside of cities and suburbs.<sup>52</sup>

## Chapter I - References

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## CHAPTER II

### PRESENTATION OF LITERATURE REGARDING THE NATURE OF RURAL SOCIAL WORK

#### The Nature of Social Work

Before considering the nature of social work in the rural environment, it is desirable to clarify social work's role in society and the field of operation of social work. Frequently, the terms 'social welfare' and 'social work' are used interchangeably, however, there is an important distinction. Social welfare refers to the formally organized and socially sponsored institutions, agencies and programs, exclusive of the family and private enterprise, which function to maintain or improve the economic conditions, health or interpersonal competence of some parts or all of a population. Social work, on the other hand, refers to an occupation or profession, a group of people with more or less specified training and skills who occupy key positions, along with other groups, in the provision of welfare services.<sup>1</sup> Thus, members of the social work profession are employed, although not solely, by the social welfare agencies, or as Kahn states, social work is "an institution that serves other institutions."<sup>2</sup>

The Canadian Association of Social Workers describes social work in the following manner:

. . . a profession which endeavours to foster human welfare through professional services and activities aimed at enhancing, maintaining or restoring the social functioning of persons. Its members believe in the dignity and worth of each human being regardless of individual differences. It employs a body of knowledge, skill in human relationships, and methods such as interdisciplinary cooperation, research, planning and social action to change conditions and practises infringing upon individual rights and human well-being. It is committed to creating and maintaining social institutions sensitive to human needs and supportive of human fulfillment and to changing or abolishing institutions and systems which do not serve the public good.<sup>3</sup>

Characteristically, professional social work literature has focused upon the following concerns: the social basis of the profession, its values, knowledge, methods and a common base of practice.<sup>4</sup> Howard Goldstein, in a historical analysis of the social work profession, makes the following statement of its evolution:

. . . the look backward shows that there has been an evolving cohesiveness of ideas, a gradual unification of common concepts which has tended to give the profession its gestalt, . . . altered the face of the profession from that of a limited, singular approach to the amelioration of certain human problems to that of a diverse, creative, and expansive discipline possessing the potentiality for meeting a whole complexity of human needs through a variety of services and an array of stratagems.<sup>5</sup>

Goldstein traces the evolution of social work from the preoccupation with casework to eventually include groupwork and community organization, and ultimately, in more recent years, to encompass generic and social systems principles, an integrative view of the human situation.<sup>6</sup>

Werner W. Boehm, "The Nature of Social Work", Harriet M. Bartlett's "Toward Clarification and Improvement of Social Work Practice", and her subsequent book, The Common Base of Social Work Practice, William E. Gordon's



"Toward a Social Work Frame of Reference", and other insightful articles, such as Allen Pincus and Anne Minahan's Social Work Practice: Model and Method, are milestone documents which have influenced the theoretical conceptualization of social work practice toward a more integrated versatile practice orientation. Gordon has suggested that a theoretical articulation of a single social work "frame of reference" has not only become possible, but imperative. Gordon states that defining social work in the value-knowledge realm is one of the most far-reaching outcomes of Bartlett's "working definition" and the major hope for social work's survival as a profession in an increasingly science-oriented culture. The loosening of the methodological rigidities in the curricula of many schools of social work reflect this shift, and the Pincus and Minahan book is a significant development toward a unitary method of practice. These two authors have developed a framework applicable to a variety of settings and situations.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is argued that the generalist model of social work practice is an applicable model of practice for the entire profession.<sup>8</sup>

Reference to Gordon Hearn's four social work models of practice represent the transitional nature of the shift. He suggests the following: 1) the single specialist who is competent in one of three traditional models of practice-- casework, group work and community organization; 2) the multiple specialist who is proficient in one area with a

secondary familiarity in the others; 3) the generalist who is competent to work with individuals, groups, organizations and communities as the case complex requires (a general systems theoretical perspective is often employed and generic concepts and principles of practice are formulated from a value-knowledge foundation); and, 4) the specialist generalist who has both the capability of the generalist and something more. This something more is having an integrated social work foundation and developing the unique organization of knowledge and practice wisdom required by community needs in specific fields of social welfare organization.<sup>9</sup>

The first two models have become passe as they pertain to the traditional methods of social work practice. Critics of the traditional view of practice emphasize the necessity of working across different systems (e.g., individual, family, small group, organization, neighbourhood, community) and defining services in terms of client needs rather than the other way around.<sup>10</sup> The generalist approach is based on a common value-knowledge foundation of practice, that is, the full acceptance of the realization of the human potential (the value) and an expertise based upon scientific development to the interaction dynamics between the individual and his/her environment (the knowledge).<sup>11</sup> The generalist may operate in a specific delivery system network (e.g., mental health, corrections, child welfare, grass-roots organizations), but the approach allows the study of a presenting situation with

sufficient knowledge and understanding to formulate an appropriate intervention plan utilizing various levels of intervention (individual, group, organization and community).

This brief analysis of the social work profession and its development sets the foundation upon which a review of the professional literature of social work in the rural context will be discussed.

### The Roots of Rural Social Work

Acquaintance with rural social work history, tradition and leadership seems warranted 'in attempting to discover the development of rural social work' as a unique form of professional practice.<sup>12</sup>

Social work historians point to two conceptual thrusts to explain the early development of the social work discipline: the residual and institutional.<sup>13</sup> Historically, social work practice has reflected the so-called residual approach and later the institutional approach. Both of these rationales for social work intervention are based upon problems that resulted from an increasingly industrialized and urbanized America. The residual view saw social work as a source of supplementary rehabilitative services to be utilized when natural social pressures broke down. The aftermath of the Great Depression of 1929 nurtured the institutional view, which saw welfare services as normal "first-line" functions of a modern industrial society which was itself dependent upon the service complex of larger population centres.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, social work has its roots in urban America.<sup>15</sup>

It grew in response to the social reformers who abhorred urban impacts on city dwellers; its concerns encompassed child labour, protection and equal treatment for women, the mother's pension, industrial accidents, human crowding and slum conditions.

Webster and Campbell, writing on the contextual differences in the rural social work environment, point out that Ferdinand Toennies' polar typologies of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* cultures further support the urban focus of the field of social work. They state that the *gemeinschaft* culture, based on the importance of the extended family and mutual support systems, characterized academic conception of rural lifestyles.<sup>16</sup> Rural America was seen as being populated by the idealized self-sufficient farmer, able to work the land with the assistance of his family and able to meet most of his needs on the land, requiring little outside contact and certainly no social work intervention.<sup>17</sup> The concept of the *gesellschaft* society, on the other hand, state Webster and Campbell, was based upon the industrial complex which fostered dysfunctional human systems and led to individuals with overwhelming needs for social work interventions. It was thus only natural that the focus of the emerging social work profession should be directed towards meeting the needs of *gesellschaft* society.<sup>18</sup>

In view of this urban focus, Mermelstein and Sundet point out that the attitude of the professional mainstream

to rural social work has been a conflictual one, "characterized variously by antipathy, condescension, disparagement, cool tolerance, impatience, incredulousness."<sup>19</sup> The history of rural social work is not evident, and has been "through a maze of obscure, long-ceased periodicals, re-routed briefly into sociological and even agricultural literature, suspended in professional limbo for more than a decade, and finally escorted into a flourishing albeit 'underground' community of practitioners and educators," leaving the impression of "deja vu".<sup>20</sup>

There is little evidence of rural social work in the United States prior to the Depression.<sup>21</sup> The first indication of interest in rural problems was the establishment of County Visiting Committees by the New York State Charities Aid Society in 1872, to try to improve the care of children in the almshouses. U.S. Government policies (for example, the juvenile court legislation of 1889, the 1908 Country Life Commission appointed by Theodore Roosevelt, and the 1909 White House Conference) had limited effect on rural conditions. The greatest pre-depression expansion of rural social work efforts was achieved privately by the American National Red Cross, which in World War I and immediate post-war period, claimed provision of direct casework services to thousands of rural families. Rural specialists were employed on its national staff, and rural institutes were conducted for field staff, denoting a gradual awareness that "although human problems transcend locale, their



manifestation and means for solution vary with geographic context."<sup>22</sup>

The 1927 National Conference on Social Welfare in Des Moines, Iowa, proved an exception to usual policy of assuming an urban framework for professional debate. A major session devoted to rural social work emphasized the necessity for specialized preparation. Journals such as The Family committed whole issues to rural practice between 1929 and 1933. The American Country Life Association, Rural America, was launched and various correspondence from the field reflected the spotty acceptance of the premise that rural context is different and that context shapes practice. "Education has always lagged behind practice in integrating new knowledge, and in this area, its failures were spectacular."<sup>23</sup> Social workers were not prepared to enter rural service and major problems surfaced with the importation of urban-trained caseworkers by the private agencies to staff their rural programs. One educator commented in 1938 that the weaknesses of rural social work of this period were due to lack of understanding of rural resources, institutions, problems and attitudes, all being fundamentally different than in urban areas.<sup>24</sup>

Josephine Brown, premier rural theorist and author of a classic text (The Rural Community and Social Casework, New York: Family Welfare Association of America, 1933, 1934 and 1935), reported in the 1935 Social Work Yearbook that methods of urban social work were found "not suited" to

the rural environment, and further, that rural residents resented the intrusion of insensitive outsiders.<sup>25</sup> Many private agencies retreated to the urban setting despite the praise given by child welfare experts of child placement potential in rural areas.<sup>26</sup>

Other factors in this early period reasserted and maintained the urban emphasis; these included the lack of organizational structure in rural areas from which to base social work intervention, the adoption of analytic theories of psychology in preference to the sociological bent as a theory base for the profession, and as a result, the beginning of departure from the field of social action to the acceptance of dysfunction within the medical model.

During the Depression, United States' federal intervention under Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration mandated existence of human services at all government levels, which once again refueled rural social programs, this time under public auspices. Concomitant with this New Deal legislation, American literature brought the plight of the rural poor to public consciousness. Social work writing reflected the extension of public child welfare services to the rural scene. At the educational level, the University of Minnesota added rural field sites to its practicum options and educators advocated a program for the rural practitioner including generic methods, rural field placement, and contextual courses in rural sociology, agricultural economics and farm management. Rural social work started to thrive.

However, the advent of World War II generated migration of the population to the cities and to military service, requiring an increase in farm production. The resulting rise in rural incomes and the status of the farmer tended to dim the country's concern with rural problems.

Post-war romanticization of rural life ("pristine and folksy with self-help, ice-cream socials and a sympathetic minister characterizing the rural social services scene"<sup>27</sup>) and the diversion of professional attention to rapid urbanization, veteran re-entry adjustments and refugee resettlement silenced rural voices for more than a decade. Only meagre offerings of experimentation or demonstration in rural practice appear in the journals of this period. Throughout the 1950's, psychological theories continued to dominate professional concentration and psychiatric social work ascended to pre-eminence. Mermelstein and Sundet point out that, ironically, psychiatric social workers were employed in rural locales in many state mental asylums but context was considered irrelevant to the cure of disease.<sup>28</sup>

During the 1960's, the "War on Poverty" programs were heavily oriented toward minority and low-income persons in urban areas, however, each government program included a few human service jobs for rural America. At the same time, sociology also presented new insights into rural conditions (for example, Vidich and Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society).<sup>29</sup> However, American social work during the 1960's



was concerned with recapturing its early primacy in social action, and rural social work did not come to the fore until 1969. Dr. Leon Ginsberg is credited with bringing the needs of rural America to social work practitioners and educators at the 96th Annual Meeting of the National Conference on Social Welfare.

The Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting in 1973 included a forum on rural social work education for the first time since 1960. One outcome was the establishment of a C.S.W.E. Task Force on Rural Practice with nationwide representation. Under Task Force auspices, a series of workshops and seminars for social work educators were held in 1973-1974 and a book of readings, Social Work in Rural Communities, edited by Leon H. Ginsberg, was published by the C.S.W.E. in 1976. At each national program meeting since 1973, at least two sessions have focused on rural practice and/or rural social work education.<sup>30</sup>

The American Rural Social Work Caucus was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in July 1976 at the First National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas<sup>31</sup> for the purpose of developing contacts and focusing attention on rural concerns in such national organizations as the National Association of Social Workers and the National Conference on Social Welfare. In 1976, as well, the newsletter, Human Services in the Rural Environment,<sup>32</sup> was born. Since 1976, the newsletter has been published on a regular basis. As well,

a number of conferences are held yearly on rural social work.

Since 1973, the names and writings of Leon Ginsberg, Steve Webster, Paul Campbell, Ed Buxton, Dave Bast, Louise Johnson, Bob Deaton, Charles Horeysi, Joanne Mermelstein and Paul Sundet have dominated the American rural social work scene.

The interest in rural social work in Canada can trace its humble beginnings to 1966 as well, when social workers from across the northern part of British Columbia met to hear a speaker on the subject, "Goals of Public Welfare in a Rural Community".<sup>33</sup> A number of Canadian social work educators also participated in the First National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas in July 1976.

Also, in March 1976, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work sponsored a workshop on "Social Work Education for Rural and Northern Practice", recognizing the need to educate for rural practice and the interest on the part of a number of schools and faculty to do so. As a result, a summary of the workshop proceedings and resource materials was edited by Joan Turner-Zeglinski, University of Manitoba, and published.<sup>34</sup>

The Rural Canadian Interest Group, counterpart to the American Rural Caucus, came into being in June 1976 at the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work

(C.A.S.S.W.) Annual Meeting. A workshop on "Education for Practice in Rural/Northern Areas" was held in June 1977 in Fredericton, New Brunswick with another entitled "The Canadian Rural Social Work Forum" in February 1979 in Victoria, British Columbia. Canadians have also participated in the American workshop, The Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, Madison, Wisconsin, July 1977, with addresses given by two Canadians, Joan Turner-Zeglinski (University of Manitoba) and Ken Collier (University of Regina).<sup>35</sup>

At the present time, the Canadian Rural Interest Group is chaired by Wes Shera, School of Social Work, University of Victoria, and social work educators from the University of Regina, University of Victoria, Laurentian University and Memorial University are regular contributors to the Canadian rural social work scene. The University of Regina, University of Victoria, Memorial University and Laurentian University offer social work education for practice in rural areas.<sup>36</sup> The University of Regina's School of Social Work program considers the training needs of rural practitioners and has devised a program for their benefit.

This rural interest, in practice and in education, is not confined to North America. "The developing countries, where large masses of people live in rural agricultural areas have recognized that social work curriculum drawn from traditional British and American patterns with concentration

on social casework is not sufficiently relevant to the needs of their people, to the priorities of governments, or to the context in which social workers must work."<sup>37</sup> Recent United Nations and International Association of Social Workers publications provide evidence of concern and interest in rural development, rural social problems and education for rural practice. For example, ". . . new initiatives have been taken in various countries to provide field instruction in rural settings . . . Indigenous training materials pertaining to rural welfare practice should be developed. Other methodologies for training in rural welfare, at all levels, could be adopted from the experience gained in training for community development."<sup>38</sup>

A number of International Association of Social Workers publications and recent articles in International Social Work also relate to social work with rural publications and to education for rural practice.<sup>39</sup> Claude Njimba, author of a Master's thesis entitled Social Work Curriculum for Rural Areas in Developing Countries, describes his report "as an initial step towards developing a social work educational policy and philosophical model that does not only address itself to issues relating to national goals, but specifically to the process of rural modernization or rural transformation."<sup>40</sup> As another example, the Department of Social Theory and Institutions, University College of North Wales, Bangor, is also conducting research into the delivery of social services in rural areas.<sup>41</sup>

This renewed emphasis on rural social work, "though rediscovering the truths of fifty years ago, is also moving into areas that are new and uncharted. To what extent those areas are true is the great debate, but it is a sign that rural practice is at last coming of age . . .". With the increasing trend toward reverse migration, the proliferation of service delivery systems employing social workers in rural areas, and the professional ferment, "it seems unlikely that the subject will once again go into eclipse."<sup>42</sup>

#### The Rural Context

"People in rural areas are more like people in non-rural areas than they are different from them."<sup>43</sup> However, economic, social, political and other institutions and conditions have shaped the lives of people in rural areas, producing different responses and adaptive behaviours in different rural areas, thus making rural life different from the contemporary metropolis.

When writing of the rural context, it is customary to state that there is great variance among rural people and among rural communities in style, custom, economic situation, population density, geographic location and topography. In addition, the rural scene is a changing scene.<sup>44</sup> However, there are "some dynamics of rural settings which can be posted as universals, in kind if not in degree." The range of these generalizations is growing

in social work literature as more attention and investigation are focused on practice in rural settings.<sup>45</sup> In examining questions of rural social work practice, it would seem to be of fundamental importance to establish which of the many parameters of rurality are most significant. With this purpose in mind, the distinguishable rural generalities will be presented later in this discussion.

Before presentation of the predominant rural characteristics, mention must be made of problems in the rural environment. Much of the social work literature, when addressing the question of rural characteristics, tends to describe the problems of rural areas. Gwen K. Weber's account is typical of many: "In contrast to urban populations, rural people tend to be poorer, to have higher concentrations of both children and the aged and their attendant problems, to live in less adequate housing, to more likely be unemployed or under-employed, have less adequate educational facilities and lack sufficient physical and mental health care resources."<sup>46</sup>

The fact is that rural communities have problems which are common to all communities everywhere. For example, such problems as mental retardation, physical and emotional disabilities, alcoholism, drug abuse and delinquency are not unique to rural areas.<sup>47</sup> However, many of the problems of rural areas have resulted because of the unique social, economic and political systems which have been dysfunctional, exploitative, unjust and inadequate to many persons in rural areas.

Of greatest concern, at least until recently, with the onslaught of reverse migration, has been the decline in the rural population. The mechanization of agriculture and mining, the two primary rural industries, and the subsequent loss of jobs are cited as the major cause.<sup>48</sup> The rural out-migration has generally meant the withdrawal of young people and thus their potential leadership from rural communities. "Those with the highest promise of future service leave, it is said, while less talented people remain."<sup>49</sup> In addition, government programs have, perhaps unintentionally, encouraged large agricultural enterprise and have discouraged the maintenance of the small family farm that once supported many rural people.<sup>50,51</sup>

Employment, underemployment, or lack of, is another frequently cited rural problem. Rural communities are characterized by small, widely scattered communities, with few industries and low tax base. In rural areas, there is great variation between economically viable and inviable communities. Lack of diversity in the economic base of many small communities has created employment problems.<sup>52</sup> When there are jobs, they are often located in urban areas miles away and there is no public transportation available in many areas to make the jobs accessible. The work is often of menial quality, and thus many young people prefer cities where the variety and quality are deemed superior.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, there are the problems of tenant farmers, unemployed miners or fishermen, migrant farm workers, and the native Indian population, who as a group, has a very low level of employment.

Law enforcement in rural areas poses special problems, particularly for minority group members.<sup>54</sup> For example, native Indians tend to be singled out for punishment by local law enforcement officials.<sup>55</sup> Civil rights organizations, legal aid agencies and government offices that often conduct monitoring activities are often lacking in rural areas.<sup>56</sup>

Special problems of certain categories of the rural population also predominate. The isolation and plight of the rural aged are well documented.<sup>57</sup>

Rural communities have other obvious shortcomings. While the rural wealthy have been able to purchase many of the amenities of urban life and have transferred them to rural life, there continue to be serious gaps in recreation and services, including education, highways, museums, libraries, physician and dental services. "While there may be romanticized advantages to rural life, such as access to outdoor sports and freedom from big city 'pressures', the lack in basic public services are often astonishing."<sup>58</sup>

Rural poverty is a well-documented fact.<sup>59</sup> Economic displacement and a general lack of resources have left a large percentage of the rural population poor. In addition, the incidence of social problems is not randomly distributed



among the sub-groups of rural areas. When one speaks of rural people with problems, one usually means persons who belong to groups with a high degree of linguistic or cultural visibility, such as the rural Indian or Metis. Thus, rural poverty is often minority group poverty.

While there are specialized problems in rural areas, rural life has many features which make it different from urban life. The salient characteristics that predominate in the rural social work literature as having implication for practice will be presented. However, this is not intended to be a thorough sociological analysis of the rural context.

### I. Rural Ethnic Groups

In rural areas, one finds a number of identifiable ethnic groups, including, for example, Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, Scandinavians and a variety of other European groups.<sup>60</sup> In addition, there are the more typically recognized minorities such as the Canadian Indian and Metis. A certain group may predominate in some rural communities and retain their cultural identity. A number of small communities celebrate cultural heritages with annual folk festivals.

### II. Rural Religion

The church (the term "church" is used here generically) plays a major role in rural communities.<sup>61</sup>

One's religious affiliation is an important consideration for one's status in a rural community, particularly for newcomers. Rural churches are often segregated by ethnic group, social class and history. There are a number of reasons for the church's prominence. For one, it owns a building that can be used for social, recreational and educational activities. Further, it usually has an educated adult who has the time and is expected to have the compassion for helping people with their problems.

"Whereas the urban church usually operates as a secondary institution and the minister as a specialized functionary, the roles of the rural church and the rural minister are inextricably woven into the whole fabric of community life."<sup>62</sup>

### III. Smaller Scale of Living

Rural communities tend to be characterized by a smaller scale of living than urban areas. However, a smaller scale of living does not imply simplicity, for rural communities are often as sociologically complex as urban communities.<sup>63</sup> Many of their characteristics may be based upon little-remembered but nevertheless influential historical events focused on family conflicts, church schisms and a variety of other occurrences (for example, criminal behaviour) which may deserve the status of legends.<sup>64</sup>

Carl F. Kraenzel, a rural sociologist, has suggested that rural and/or sparsely populated areas are synonymous

with primary group (e.g., family) orientation, while urban and/or metropolitan ways tend to be synonymous with secondary (e.g., schools, businesses, civic organizations) and/or special interest group orientation.<sup>65</sup> Impersonal services and formal relationships are uncommon in a setting where everyone knows everyone else or at least everyone else's relatives. Taking social or political positions that differ from those dictated by the conventional wisdom of the rural community may lead to social ostracism. "Large cities have their own kind of pride but voices of dissent are not likely to be as lonely as in a small or rural community."<sup>66</sup>

Inherent in the smaller scale of living is the concept of the informal power structure. Floyd Hunter, in Community Power Structure, describes this type of power structure as a group of leaders who operate unofficially but with greater power than elected officials.<sup>67</sup> These informal power structures, or cliques, usually have interlocking membership and are the major determiners of public and social policy.<sup>68</sup> Rural communities are often not thought of in these terms, but "most small communities do indeed have an informal power structure, one that is often not easy to pinpoint."<sup>69</sup> The informal power structure reflects local values as they determine how money will be spent and what support the community will give to new programs. Vidich and Bensman, in Small Town and Mass Society, give us clues as to the rural value system. The setting is a small community in New York but the problems and responses seem applicable to most rural areas:

Neither the businessmen nor the traditional farmers invest expansion capital, and furthermore their deemphasis of business capital investments of any kind reflects a psychology of scarcity-mindedness. The non-expanding traditional farmers rationalize their emphasis on work rather than on investment by gearing their operations to possible declines in farm prices, wherein their low absolute, but not unit, costs put them in a favorable position for survival. The businessmen prefer accumulation to investment; that is, surplus funds are invested in highly liquid assets, particularly local real estate, which places them in a relatively advantageous position vis a vis deflationary movements, but in a disadvantageous position in a rising market and in an expanding economy.

In the case of the traditional farmers their psychological orientation to work, savings and investment represents a traditional attitude which was reinforced by the depression of the Thirties.<sup>70</sup>

Another phenomenon related to the smaller scale of living is the system of illusion which operates in a rural community. "Local community pride is challenged whenever someone (especially an outsider) suggests that all is not well."<sup>71</sup> This system of illusion accounts for the tendency to judge a citizen by his community image but rise to this same citizen's defense when challenged by an outsider. For example, "a sheriff may run a poor jail or a nursing home owner may have a deplorable establishment, but if they are attacked directly, people who know them as 'good Joes' in other settings rise to their defense."<sup>72</sup> This small community system of illusion is also described by Vidich and

Bensman in Small Town and Mass Society:

. . . due to the social character of systems of illusions, these dynamic processes in character occur relatively slowly. There is silent recognition among

members of the community that facts and ideas which are disturbing to the accepted system of illusions are not to be verbalized except, perhaps, as we have noted, in connection with one's enemies. Instead, the social mores of the small town at every opportunity demand that only those facts and ideas which support the dream of everyday life are to be verbalized and selected out for emphasis and repetition . . . Mutual complimenting is a standard form of public intercourse while failures and defeats, though known to all, are not given public expression. In this process each individual reinforces the illusions of the other. Only at the intimate level of gossip are discussions of failure tolerated.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the smaller scale of living, accompanied by an informal power structure and a system of illusion suggests that there is great likelihood of value consensus in the rural, small community. In describing the differences between rural and urban settings which are relevant to social service delivery, J. Ryant's statement sheds light on the nature of this value consensus: "Local, and often informal, power structures operate in the service of more homogeneous values, beliefs and attitudes. Lines of demarcation are more clearly drawn. Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are more effective since deviance (as defined by the community) is highly visible but can draw little support as an acceptable alternative life-style."<sup>74</sup>

#### IV. Rural Social Welfare Structure

"The organization of services in rural America differs markedly from the text-book model of the ideal social welfare system."<sup>75</sup> There are few agencies and few professionals and thus rural communities are under-serviced. "Only the fundamental services will be offered in rural areas, which is, perhaps a commentary on the profession's

trend toward massive services on urban levels without comparable attention to rural populations."<sup>76</sup> Health care, social services, and a wide range of goods and services readily available to urban dwellers are not as accessible to those in the hinterland.

"The availability of services is not merely a question of presence and absence," comments J. Ryant, "even when present, there may not be any choice between services, auspices for services or the conditions under which services may be obtained." Few small communities have the full array of health and social services available in larger centres. Many have only a partial representation within their own community. Many more are served by workers from regional centres on an itinerant basis, with services provided by outsiders only as absolutely required. And whereas "in the urban setting public and private auspices for social services may co-exist and even compete with one another, in the smaller rural community only the public system of social service provision is usually found to exist."<sup>77</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet, in an article entitled, "Social Work Ombudsman: A Role of the Rural Generalist Practitioner," identify a high degree of vertical system integration and control in the rural human services system. They state that vertical system integration and control is a characteristic of all levels of societal structure, most studies focusing primarily upon the economic and political sub-systems of the community. They suggest that vertical

system integration and control are also an element of the human service sub-system as well:

In rural areas, the impact of extra-community control and growing dependence upon external authority is the major cultural change and represents for many residents the imposition of an alien set of values, directly contradictory to their central ethic of independence and self-reliance . . . Vertical systems of services, whether they be child protection, public assistance, delinquency treatment and control, mental health, employment services, vocational rehabilitation, can be traced from a pyramid of central control, usually at the federal level, through successive approximations of 'community' each with evermore circumscribed authority. The 'local office', if indeed it is local at all and not regional, is tied by manuals and procedures, real and imagined, to decision-makers far removed from the site of service delivery. The focus of decision-making is further removed from the consumer and consequently, so are the effective points of administrative appeal and redress. Because decision-making is essentially a reserved function, coordination of effort and communication between parallel vertical systems are frequently also translocal forces.<sup>78</sup>

Another characteristic of the rural social welfare structure and further to this trend, claims Ryant, is that social service delivery in the rural area is likely to be vulnerable to the "trickle-down" theory of social welfare:

. . . Canadian social policy has been constructed on the premise that serving the interests of the less needy will ultimately serve the interests of those in greater need . . . A fundamental reason for this is the rudimentary state of their economic infrastructure . . . The economic base of the small community is less diversified, more subject to external forces, and much less likely to have the ability for spontaneous and internal regeneration. A number of important effects follow from these factors. One of these is that the social service system is often called upon to do that which it cannot properly do, that is, to remedy massive failures of a primarily economic nature. Another is that the social service system has much more saliency, and therefore visibility, in the small community with its simpler institutional structure. And, if there is integration between social services and a hospital-based health system, the integrated system may itself possess special economic dominance and importance as one of the community's major 'industries'.<sup>79</sup>

Another significant feature of the rural social welfare structure is the existence of natural service systems. "Once

true of all communities, and indeed a defining characteristic of the term, community, helping networks of family, friends and community institutions are believed to have been more durable and persistent in the smaller rural community than in the large city."<sup>80</sup> While informal helping networks exist in many cities, "it is perhaps more pervasive in the smaller community where fewer needs have been turned over to the professional,"<sup>81</sup> and where sizeable numbers of people have not been cut off from the assistance of family, friends, neighbours and organizations of mutual self-help, by social processes such as "geographic and social mobility, suburbanization, secularization, the commercialization of recreation and leisure, the extensive acculturation of previously bounded ethnic sub-communities, and the steep decline in the pervasiveness of the extended family,"<sup>82</sup> all well known effects of urbanization and industrialization.<sup>83</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet describe the phenomenon of the natural helping system as having the essential characteristics of a social system, of a social agency organization, and as having a blend of knowledge and values consistent with social work practice. The characteristics of the social system cited are structural and functional interdependency of its parts, identifiable boundaries, supra and sub-system relationships. Aspects of social agency organization are discernible in eligibility criteria and referral and screening procedures of some of the systems. Aspects of social work practice are evident in some systems where the reward structure for the caregiver is not



dependent upon the gratitude offered by the client-consumer but is lodged in a supra-system, for example, a church or a civil/social organization which accords public recognition and support to the enterprise and high status in the systemic network to the caregiver.<sup>84</sup>

Examples of a natural service delivery system include a retired nurse who operates a visitation service for the aged and ill homebound patients, a predominant couple in a community who act as a referral and information centre for family counselling, pregnancy and psychiatric problems. The point is that in many natural systems of service delivery there is a central figure or organization who sees himself/itself and is seen by others, "as knowledgeable about specialized services, willing to provide them and willing to facilitate use of them by individuals," and that "individuals seeking a service find it without professional intervention."<sup>85</sup>

Another facet of the rural social welfare structure is the assumption that much of the traditional rural social work has been done with the poor. As Ryant states, it is likely, particularly in an economically underdeveloped community where consensus has been achieved around values which are deviant and which encourage dependency, vice and disorganization, that social services are viewed "as an amalgam of misguided efforts to reduce the effects of social pathology and of interventions which support the community members in their shiftlessness and immorality" and

thus "clientele are defined as moral failures . . . social services are required to serve the goal of social control and . . . both the social services and their clientele are stigmatized."<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, Ginsberg makes reference to a "quasi-social welfare agency" in the rural setting, the agriculture extension program, whose history has been to advise farmers on increasing their crop yields and advising rural housewives on food preparation and other domestic matters. More recently, the agriculture extension role has been extended to rural economic and social development, in a sense, development specialists, committed to community improvement and development. Much of the current community organization theory, notes Ginsberg, comes out of the practice experience of these rural specialists.<sup>87</sup>

A review of the major features of the rural setting spells erroneous the often naive assumption that nothing is happening in rural areas. The characteristics of these features--religion, ethnic groups, smaller scale of living, social welfare structure--and a brief review of rural problems give strength to the notion that there are inherent differences in social conditions of the rural environment and hence in social work practice. The implication of these factors for social work practice will consume the next section.

#### The Rural Context and Implications for Social Work Practice

A whole plethora of theories and formulations have been advanced about the ways and means of practising social

work in the rural environment. Experimentation with new ideas and approaches has not blossomed to any great extent and although the available literature is not short of suggestions, it seems that for the most part these are still to be evaluated. A search of the literature reveals a number of common themes about rural social work practice; these themes will be presented here drawing largely on the well-known writers in the rural social work literature.

### I. Implications for the Rural Practitioner

Rural practice is often on a smaller scale than urban practice and it is therefore unlikely that more than a handful of social workers serve a program's catchment area. In fact, a rural social worker may find him/herself to be the only social worker in a particular setting or a particular community. For the rural practitioner, the smallness of the rural community and the rural social welfare structure has a number of implications.

A critical implication for the rural social worker, states Ginsberg, is the need to be self-motivated, self-directed and capable of autonomous work.<sup>88</sup> "This can be lonely and frightening, but for social workers tuned into the vitality of the small community, it is an opportunity for creativity."<sup>89</sup> The structure of professional supervision, colleague consultation, professional organization stimulation and continuing academic education are often unavailable to the rural worker. Supervisory personnel are frequently located at a distance and thus supervision takes

place infrequently in person, is crisis-oriented and takes the form of consultation. The rural worker must depend on his own resources (for example, reading), infrequent meetings or collaboration with persons who have different kinds of education for consultation and stimulation. He must be able to develop his own professional guidelines and compel himself to practice professionally. "The simple lack of others requires that the rural social worker practice his profession in a manner significantly different from that of the urban professional."<sup>90</sup>

Another implication of the smallness of the rural social welfare structure is identified by Ginsberg: the worker must be prepared to give up part of his or her privacy. In the truly rural community, it is difficult to have a daytime job with the evenings free to "do one's own thing". Scrutiny of everyone by everyone else is often characteristic of rural communities and what one does in his or her spare time in the evenings and on weekends is often a matter of public concern and discussion. In addition, there may be other implications. Housing may be inadequate, recreation facilities may be limited, shopping and specialized services may be unavailable.<sup>91,92</sup>

Another commentator, Edward Buxton, asserts that because of the smallness of rural communities and of the observability of agency interventions, rural social workers may be accepted or rejected largely on the grounds of their looks, cultural affiliation and general demeanour rather

than for reasons of professional competence. The rural worker may be visibly different in age, sex, dress, education and value system from the community with which he is working. The worker may represent unpopular and threatening external influences to the local value system, and to press for change in community structure, instead of only in the client, he suggests, may threaten local income, local mores and the elaborate systems that everyone uses to justify present and past behaviour.<sup>93</sup>

An additional implication, writes Ginsberg, is that the rural service worker may also find himself cast in a role that he or she may not choose, for example, Sunday school teacher or 4-H leader. "If one is to develop credibility with the population of the area, one must be willing to become engaged in some of the activities the population considers important."<sup>94</sup> Other writers, Mermelstein and Sundet, state that the establishment of credibility as a potentially helpful person must become the first goal of the rural practitioner in a world that values self-support and self-help and suspicions the motives of any government program of human service.<sup>95</sup>

Distance, due to the scattered nature of much of the population, and weather are additional factors with which the rural worker must contend. The rural worker often serves several communities requiring extraordinarily long hours of driving to visit clients often complicated by the weather condition.<sup>96</sup>

The smallness of rural life has implications for the traditional place of confidentiality and professional role in practice. Sherman and Rowley, among others, state that the primary group orientation of the rural community, limited resources, and increased worker visibility and extended kinship and friendship ties add dimensions to the already complex issue of confidentiality. "What is public and what remains private is differentiated by a very fine line . . . The intricate social matrix of rural life has behaviours, whether meant to be public or not, fed into it, easily, readily and steadily." The rural area lifestyle, suggest Sherman and Rowley, requires confidentiality to be redefined in the following way: "Not to worry about information or even non-information that is publicly known or assumed whether about oneself or one's client, rather to act with the client upon current, verifiable, entrusted information in the private context of the helping relationship and on his behalf as gatekeeper with all other resources."<sup>97</sup> Mermelstein and Sundet, as do Kirkland and Irely, testify to this conception of confidentiality in the rural setting.<sup>98</sup>

With regard to the professional role, Sherman and Rowley assert that "the experience of being fellow citizens overrides preconceptions about professional roles." Clients of human service agencies in the rural environment often approach their human service counterpart with friendship, for in fact, "friendship is the most familiar, the most

frequently experienced form of ongoing relationship in the rural area."<sup>99</sup> Fenby, in an account of her practice in a rural mental health setting, makes the following point: "The face that the professional puts on in the office is difficult to sustain as a discrete image in the rural community . . . Clients' overall familiarity with the worker as a person apart from the professional leaves little room for the mystification that is at times useful to the traditional therapist."<sup>100</sup>

Finally, the diversity of the rural community, in economic, political, religious and cultural dimensions, creates a challenge for the rural practitioner. Working in more than one community forces a worker to be flexible, and to adapt to the changing environment quickly. The Southern Regional Educational Board Task Force emphasized that such differences must be respected and that social workers must be sensitive to the desires of such communities, "in terms of the kind of helping person the community feels it can effectively work with and relate to if there is to be an intimate involvement with the community and its problems."<sup>101</sup>

## II. Implications for Social Service Delivery

In addition to the implications cited for the rural professional practitioner, social service delivery and approach may also take on different parameters in the rural context.

The small rural welfare structure often consists of only public, basic services. However, notes Ginsberg, these

services are often found to expand their activities to include functions that they might not carry in urban centres. For example, the welfare office might be charged with family counselling, community development and social welfare planning simply because it exists, is staffed with knowledgeable people and needs to help with local problems. Similarly, a community mental health program may be required to carry some youth service activities that its urban counterparts would leave to other agencies.<sup>102</sup>

Recognition of the place and role of the natural helping system is often referred to as a critical variable in planning and delivering services in rural areas.<sup>103</sup>

Writers allude to the notion that the informal helping system of small communities is often a highly respected resource but one that professional workers and their employing agencies frequently ignore. Ryant comments on the appropriateness of this approach: "While service delivery patterns ought to preserve and/or re-establish whatever capacities for mutual aid are possible, this need is even more pronounced in rural communities where viability as organic communities may be at special risk."<sup>104</sup> The rural worker, states Ginsberg, must be able to identify, create and use a hidden structure of social services, services that are not in the traditional sense social services; "furthermore, he must have the tolerance to assess its strengths and help it improve, rather than disregarding it because it is non-professional."<sup>105,106</sup>



The local informal power structure is also recognized as a potential ally in the delivery of services in rural areas. Buxton asserts that the existence of a local informal power structure puts the rural social worker "in a unique position to learn who does make basic decisions. In many ways, the small size of this group, the fact that they can be identified and that they can be contacted are distinct advantages."<sup>107</sup> It is recognized that it is necessary, in the rural context, for the worker to have strong support and liaison with community power sources. Buxton makes a further point: "influential people may do much in opposition to a program, but without their sanction, many 'little people' will not take a stand. Things are ever so much more difficult without the help of the power structure."<sup>108</sup> Thus, as Davies states, "'who you know' is as important as 'what you know'". Rural social workers sit on a gold mine of opportunity to bring life to that concept."<sup>109</sup> Colliver explains the different forms of community power and outlines five different approaches to identify key community people; these approaches are positional or formal leadership, reputational, social-participation, personal-influence or opinion-leadership, and decision-making or event-analysis.<sup>110,111</sup>

A community-oriented approach as a suitable model for effective rural practice is a commonly held view of the writers on rural social work. Ginsberg refers to this model as "helping people to help others". "Where there are no

specialized agencies to cope with the specialized problems of the community, the worker must help the community find solutions to identified problems."<sup>112</sup> Buxton makes a number of suggestions for effective rural practice which essentially involve a community approach: "social workers in rural areas need to re-emphasize the responsibility of communities to deal with their own problems."<sup>113</sup> In this vein, Ginsberg adds: "The effective rural practitioner must recognize that there is a network of social welfare services in every community, a network that no single social worker can hope to replace," and the rural worker must "help the community identify its needs and set up a better structure for meeting them."<sup>114</sup>

A multidisciplinary team model for implementation of the community approach is also indicated.<sup>115</sup> Brill's analysis of teamwork gives strong support to this approach in the rural setting: "It is obvious that service programs of the current magnitude and complexity require a wide variety as well as a significant degree of knowledge and skill. It is equally obvious that no one individual can encompass the needed range and depth."<sup>116</sup>

On a more practical level, transportation is another critical factor in the delivery of social services in the rural environment.<sup>117</sup> Often transportation is inadequate in rural areas. Many rural persons do not live in the proximity of social service offices, which requires additional funds for workers' travels to the client.

Transportation may also be impossible during certain seasons or clients may be unavailable during certain times of the year (harvest, for example).<sup>118</sup>

### III. Implications for the Social Work Role

"The role of generalist is the one thought to be most commonly played by social workers in rural communities." Leon Ginsberg states that this conclusion is based on both logic (when there are few social workers, each must have skills in a number of methods because all will be called upon from time to time) and the reported experiences of social workers in small towns and rural areas.<sup>119,120</sup> "It seems clear that rural and small town workers need to be skillful in working with individuals and families, with small groups and with communities."<sup>121</sup>

Ginsberg's definition of the generalist for rural practice is not particularly clear and the concept is further analyzed in the rural social work literature.<sup>122</sup>

Teare and McPheeters, in a report for the Southern Regional Education Board, define the generalist as, "the person (worker) who plays whatever roles and does whatever activities are necessary for his client at the time the client needs them" and call for the development of the generalist as the primary social work manpower concept. They do not limit their model to rural areas exclusively, but outline twelve practice roles of the generalist: outreach worker, broker, advocate, evaluator, teacher,

behaviour changer, mobilizer, consultant, community planner, care giver, data manager, administrator. They state that a generalist can perform all the roles when needed.<sup>123</sup>

Klenk and Ryan, in The Practice of Social Work, discuss more fully the generalist, moving beyond Teare and McPheeters, but using the basic inventory of roles. Klenk and Ryan state that "a generalist practitioner begins from a holistic perspective . . . and works toward the satisfaction of the client's total needs." This philosophy forms the basis for the generalist--the person who plays whatever roles and does whatever activities are necessary for the person or family when the person or family needs them.<sup>124</sup>

Webster and Campbell are of the view that the Teare and McPheeter, and Klenk and Ryan definitions "emanate from a conception of client as individual, family or group . . . a generalist intervenes in a wide variety of situations on behalf of his/her client--not a particularly unique conception of social work practice."<sup>125</sup>

Two other persons whose writings have conceptualized rural practice models are Mermelstein and Sundet. Mermelstein and Sundet stay within the generalist camp for a rural practice model, but suggest a hierarchy of roles that may be played by practitioners. They define the notion of generalist in terms of goals. "A generalist social worker assesses, within the framework of professional values, social phenomena in their various systemic ramifications and, based upon that assessment, identifies and intervenes

at whatever systemic levels are efficient and effective within the internal and external resources of the action system to bring about desired social change." They state that within this framework of generalist process, "are a series of functional categories of interventions and a configuration of characteristic sub-roles which are carried out simultaneously. The uniqueness of the generalist is not only the multiplicity of concurrent roles but that the roles compliment one another and effectiveness and credibility in any specific role is largely determined by performance of other roles."<sup>126</sup> They suggest the following roles:

1) clinician, 2) organizer, 3) program developer, 4) technical expert, 5) educator, and 6) ombudsman.<sup>127</sup> The rural generalist thus conceived takes as the client not only the individual, family or group, but the system.<sup>128</sup>

Despite these various conceptions of the generalist, the rural social work literature generally agrees that the term aptly describes the work of the rural social work practitioner. Although there is reference to a variety of roles in the literature, those put forth by Mermelstein and Sundet encompass the descriptions of the rural worker's daily practice in the literature. An analysis of each of these roles as these apply to the rural generalist will clarify the point.

With regard to the role of clinician or therapist, Ginsberg's reference to the structure of rural social welfare which "requires the worker to be particularly

skillful in initiating and nurturing short-term contacts" is an example. This is because many rural workers are responsible for several communities, or regions, where frequent, day-to-day contacts are impossible. Obviously, the intensity of such occasional contacts must be great and maximum use must be made of each meeting. "This often means that rural workers are required to have skill in specifying their objectives, planning to achieve them and implementing solutions."<sup>129</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet, in describing the therapist or manager of social treatment role, comment on how sex roles drastically affect the clinical relationship. Consideration of the female worker-female client, female worker-male client, male worker-female client, male worker-male client constellations, as they are affected by traditional male-female stereotypes and values in the rural environment, comment Mermelstein and Sundet, requires a supportive, non-demanding therapeutic strategy.<sup>130</sup>

The technical expert role is identifiable in what Buxton refers to as "the agriculture, extension model of operating, wherein the agent operates as a middleman between the centres of knowledge (such as universities) and those requiring service (such as agricultural groups). The rural social worker should come to have a broad knowledge of community problems. If he is successful in his community relations effort, he will be contacted for suggestions."<sup>131</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet's conception of the broker/technical expert role includes "brokering of services

outside the local community (legal aid, mental health, etc.), or within the community (bringing natural systems into a plan for a particular individual who would not normally have been known to them); negotiation of large trans-local systems or use of specialized skills not usually possessed by rural caregivers (such as grant writing or brokering of grant writing experts)."<sup>132</sup>

"Rural social workers are often needed as consultants or educators," writes Ginsberg. In some instances, these roles are carried out through weekly or monthly meetings with local human service persons such as teachers, ministers or the police, staff training for paraprofessionals or as consultants to parent-teacher associations, groups or adult education classes, for example. "As persons with special preparation in human relations, social workers may often be looked to by the community for special help."<sup>133</sup>

Another example of the consultation/education role is described by Held in an analysis of mental health in the rural community. He proposes that the use of consultation and education services, with existing community health systems and smaller systems of the rural population, are prerequisites for, and directly related to, the ability of the mental health program to gain entry and become a vital part of the rural community.<sup>134</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet's conception of the consultant sub-role includes as target both the caregiver

colleague as well as the potential consumer of social treatment or therapy. In the case of the colleague, they suggest that "the request for advice--no matter how minor--on the management of a client problem of the caregiver is an indication of the growing trust of the person in the worker." When the consumer of the service is a potential client, "the consultant role allows production of data the client considers relevant to the situation, and leaves choice of acceptance of the response to him."<sup>135</sup>

The ombudsman role in the rural context, developed by Mermelstein and Sundet, encompasses three sub-roles, the advocate, the consultant and the mediator. They make the claim that the ombudsman function, when analyzed in the rural context (that is, in terms of vertical control, the informal power structure, and the local value system), is frequently necessary "to ensure that clients receive the services to which they are entitled . . . to assist the local system to be responsive within the adequate supra-system guidelines . . . to mediate the inter-agency compilation, develop communication lines to minimize the inevitable territoriality and to be the catalyst for inter-statal groupings of service providers . . . to educate to the need for and efficacy of different policy and program . . . within the existing public culture."<sup>136</sup>

The organizer and program development roles have received the greatest amount of attention in the rural social work literature. These two roles have received



various conceptions in the literature on the community approach in rural areas; because of similarities in these two roles in the community perspective, they will be discussed as one. All writers speak of the necessity of this role in rural communities.

Mermelstein and Sundet state that one of the levels of intervention that the rural generalist is called upon more frequently to carry out than his urban counterpart is program development. "In rural areas, where the community system can be relatively easily circumscribed and where community systemic relationships retain characteristics of high visibility and susceptibility to scientific scrutiny, a practice approach target on the totality of a geographic 'community' and containing an inherent focus on 'enhancement of the quality of life' is not only more possible than in the complex urban megapolis but more consistent with the comprehensive definition of social work."<sup>137,138</sup> They state that no universal definition of the generic concept of program development exists, nor of its corollary, program planning; "the definitions vary with the perspective of the definer, the situation in which the definition is to be used, and often with the anticipated outcome."<sup>139</sup> They conclude, after a review of a number of definitions, that program development uses process to define long-range goals and strategies, and to design systems to attain those goals, and therefore program development is both a scientific process and a goal-time focus.<sup>140</sup> "Program planning carried

out by social workers incorporate and operationalize characteristic values such as client self-determination, partnership, right to help in times of need, etc."<sup>141</sup>

Engagement of the community in a contract for social change, state Mermelstein and Sundet, requires professional credibility in the role of change agent. In the role of generalist, the social worker has ample opportunity to demonstrate qualities of competence, discretion and commitment in a variety of role functions "which reciprocally allow the gradual accumulation of the required data for effective program development." The role of program developer is therefore "rendered more efficient and effective when conceptualized as a sub-role of the generalist rather than as a specialized function undertaken in isolation from the direct service role."<sup>142</sup>

To carry out effective program development in the rural context, "the emphasis must be on developing horizontal system linkages, not simply on improving upon or building anew the generally pre-existing vertical linkages with extra-community delivery systems, i.e., linking the welfare office and school is of greater concern than linking the welfare office to its state department."<sup>143,144</sup> Thus, as Warren notes, "no local unit, no matter how strongly integrated in an extra-community system, can function long in complete disregard of the impact which its own behaviour makes on other units in the locality."<sup>145</sup> Thus, Mermelstein and Sundet assert bolstering and support of community care-

givers is the most efficient and potentially most effective means of providing service in rural areas, and in fact, mandated by the social work value of self-determination.<sup>146</sup>

In this same vein, Webster and Campbell make a case for a new practice model--that of the administration and planning generalist. Their claim is based on a study showing that the traditions of the rural scene are changing and as government programs require more and more decisions to be made at local levels, the rural social work practitioner must be equipped with "skills for negotiating the complex fiscal system . . . knowledge of grantsmanship and program development . . . knowledge of social planning techniques," as well as how to generate "data to ensure accountability and evaluation." In addition, they conceptualize the new model to require "management skills, sophisticated financial management and budgeting skills . . . personnel management," and that "inter-organizational linkages combined with formal organization knowledge be within the scope of the practitioner."<sup>147</sup>

Ginsberg also makes reference to the necessity for these skill areas (or roles). Rural social workers "need the supportive skills associated with research, social policy planning and administration or management" such as the use of personnel, budget preparation and program development skills. "Research skills are needed because facts about rural and small-town life are difficult to obtain. Adequate programs of service require hard data on

population trends, social problems, community attitudes and other factors that will determine the nature of a given effort. A knowledge of social policy formation and modification is also crucial because on one hand so many of the problems of rural and small towns are the direct results of social policy decisions and because so many may, on the other hand, be overcome with adjustments in social policies."<sup>148</sup>

Couch, Dulton, Gurss and Serpan's reference to the specialist-generalist is essentially of the same vein. They describe the specialist-generalist as one "who has the capability of the generalist and something more. This something more is having an integrated social work foundation and developing the unique organization of knowledge and practice wisdom required by community needs in specific fields of social welfare organization. With developments in the rural scene and reformulations of social work practice, generalist practitioners are needed who can specialize by a particular delivery system area (e.g., mental health, corrections, child welfare, grass-roots organizations) and in relation to rural systematic dynamics. "In rural areas where the community is more clearly defined geographically, and where relationships are both visible and susceptible to scientific scrutiny, a practice approach focused on the totality of a community and containing an inherent focus on enhancement of the quality of life is possible."<sup>149</sup>

Thus, the role of organizer and program development, although conceptualized in a variety of ways by different authors, essentially speaks to the need for rural social work involvement in community organization and action.<sup>150</sup>

Therefore, the role of generalist and the various sub-roles described gives an overview of the implications of the rural context for social work practice. The remarks of Ginsberg aptly describes this presentation:

Since the rural worker is often the only worker on the scene, he or she must master the roles of administrator, planner, group worker, case worker, mental health specialist, resource person . . . and all sorts of other specializations that might be carried by a half-dozen social workers in the urban situation . . . The human service worker who will function in a rural community must be prepared for and willing to assume a 'general practice stance'.<sup>151</sup>

#### The Rural Context and Implications for Social Work Education

Education for rural social work, the focus of most rural social work literature, is founded on the viewpoint that rurally based social workers must be able to undertake rather different tasks than their urban counterparts and that this necessarily leads to consideration of an appropriately tailored pattern of social work education to suit rural areas. The importance of a rural focus in social work education and the necessary curriculum components will be presented as they are espoused by rural social work writers. As well, the place of continuing education in rural social work practice will be discussed.

## I. The Importance of Rural Social Work Education

It is only in the last few years, under the leadership of such people as Harvey Stalwick, University of Regina; Joan Turner-Zeglinski, University of Manitoba; Ben Ami-Gelin and Ken Bastin-Millar, Laurentian University; Jos. Laviolette, University of Moncton; and, Morris Bartlett, Memorial University, that Canadian educators in social work have begun to look at the issues involved in rural practice and how students might be better prepared for this practice.<sup>152</sup>

It is generally agreed that "providing and preparing social work manpower for practice in rural social systems is the responsibility of social work education."<sup>153</sup> However, this statement by Guzzetta particularly clarifies the need for a rural emphasis in social work education: "The school which ignores the social situation of its profession, country or geographic locale thereby lowers its impact, effectiveness and life expectancy."<sup>154</sup>

Most schools are urban based in Canada although many are located in regional centres which service a wide rural region (University of Regina, University of Manitoba, Laurentian University, University of Moncton).<sup>155</sup> It is only in recent years that Canadian schools have begun to utilize the possibilities which exist in the rural area in their vicinity. The University of Regina and Memorial University have adopted the policy of requiring all students to do one mandatory field practicum in a rural setting.

Laurentian University has developed placements throughout northeastern Ontario. The University of Manitoba, until recently, offered a rural field placement. "Too often, however, these efforts are only superficial. As most schools of social work, educators, practicum settings, professional organizations and personnel are located in the city, the profession's concerns are quite naturally directed toward urban issues. Theoretical concepts and practice models are general and exclusive of the unique conditions found in rural communities."<sup>156</sup> As Millar states, "our urban training and urban life experience leaves us ill-equipped to deal with the problems of rural areas and with the inevitable culture and value shocks experienced by moving away from large urban centres. It limits our ability in understanding the cultural and value dilemmas of dealing with ethnic and native people with whom we have had little experience or encounter."<sup>157</sup>

Steve Webster makes an important point concerning the necessity and effect of rural social work education: ". . . one of the best ways to influence the profession is to change the ways people are educated, because that determines a lot what people carry with them. If we were training workers who had a particular rural emphasis or who identified themselves as being particularly rural social workers when they entered the job market, it's our feeling that that would eventually spiral into a national concern about rural social work."<sup>158</sup> In fact, states Millar, "there

is obviously much to be said for introducing an individual to this experience while still a student rather than as a beginning paid practitioner."<sup>159</sup>

Frank W. Clark offers the viewpoint that rural social work presents a unique pattern of challenges to effective practice which in a number of respects are different from those found in more urban settings. These opportunities and obstacles can be considered as major features of the context of rural practice and must therefore also be influential in developing educational programs. He suggests that a greater proportion of educational programs need to be considered as skill development strategies, emphasizing professional actions required to achieve specific client outcomes. He states: "This feature of educational programming directly supports the requirement for rural workers to improve their abilities to produce visible benefits in clients in both micro- and macro-community systems. By demonstrating effectiveness, rural workers gain the social power and community acceptance necessary for achieving goals." Because specialized social services tend not to be available in rural areas, "social workers must have a capability for multiple roles and accomplishment of a wide variety of tasks within a comprehensive framework." He suggests that the discrepancy between an awareness of the variety of major rural needs and the worker's ability to skillfully respond to those needs is a major contributor "to role strain and its attendant



personal and professional frustration. An improved practice capability should make it possible for workers to find greater satisfaction in the services they provide as well as increased benefits for clients." Clark also suggests that "educational programs need to be developed to foster and support interdisciplinary team functioning. Little can be done by rural educators to decrease professional isolation by increasing the number of social workers. Some aspects of isolation can be reduced, however, by fostering greater interdisciplinary co-operation among rural human service personnel, by acknowledging and building on overlapping functions, and moderating (not eliminating) an emphasis on professional separateness. Teamwork in at least some aspects of service delivery increases the opportunities for feedback and learning among members and to some degree compensates for the absence of supervision found in most rural areas." Ordinarily, interdisciplinary teamwork is considered to be important because of the complementarity of more specialized views and functions. Clark also argues for the necessity of developing overlapping capabilities, particularly in rural areas.<sup>160</sup>

Millar makes a significant point with regard to education that all other writers appear to have neglected:

Rural areas are subject, if not more vulnerable, to pervasive 'future shock' change as are urban areas. Dwindling energy supplies, scarcity of food, continued pollution of the environment, increased urbanization, yet renewed interest in our rural areas (for energy and food) are all topics of social concern which our students are going to have to face . . . Students of

social work . . . must begin to think about the role they play in shaping the future. This is vital if our profession is to become a proactive rather than reactive agent of the future . . . We as educators, and particularly as educators of rural practice, must not allow ourselves to get trapped in the belief . . . that industrial society is destined to perpetuate itself indefinitely . . . Although the look of the rural community of the future is unpredictable, we can say with more certainty that it will be radically different from the present.<sup>161</sup>

## II. Curriculum Components for Rural Social Work Education

Curriculum components of education for rural social work would have a number of specific emphases. The 1976 Canadian Workshop on Social Work Education and the Practice of Social Work in Rural and Northern Areas identified components of a curriculum which would reflect "high expectations and standards, the need for a common or basic core of social work knowledge, skills and values, and the need for specifics which would prepare students for rural/northern practice." These included: 1) knowledge--differences in emphasis and specificity for students preparing for non-urban practice, including "knowledge of Canadian political, economic, and social welfare systems . . . the characteristics of rural/northern communities, and about the region, its history, geography, and special characteristics;" 2) values--"an understanding of one's own values, of social work values, and the values of rural/northern communities;" 3) skills--"critical thinking, human relationship, leadership, organizational, locating, creating and using resources, communication, adaptiveness, creativity,

innovativeness, practical skills such as how to drive a car;" 4) field work--"the primary place where teaching and learning of the specifics of rural/northern practice could occur."<sup>162</sup>

As well, Ginsberg summarizes a number of specific components that reflect the typical social work curriculum with an added rural emphasis: 1) "standard social work's curriculum emphasis on human behaviour, particularly the behaviour of groups and communities, along with a heavy concentration on community organization methodology;" 2) "the integrated practices sequence, developed by several schools," which eliminates labels such as casework, group work, research and community organization and "offer boundaries of practice concentrations," thus offering the learning of practice as a totality, 3) social welfare policy and services emphasizing "information descriptive of the rural environment and how it came to be as it is . . . effective solutions to rural problems and means of implementing them;" 4) field placement in a rural agency or situation which would "provide opportunities for autonomous practice and short-term contacts quite different from the traditional pattern of working with a limited number of cases, groups, or community committees under intensive supervision."<sup>163,164</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet, with specific reference to knowledge, state that "the knowledge components . . . lean heavily on the curriculum segment referred to as 'social

environment'--i.e., social systems theory and the social dynamics of communities."<sup>165,166</sup> Formulations such as those developed by Lippett, Watson and Wesley, Pincus and Minahan and Ripple are noteworthy examples of the integration of behavioural science knowledge into a framework for components of assessment.<sup>167</sup>

Another substantive knowledge of particular relevance to the program developer, note Mermelstein and Sundet, "is the nature of formal and informal organization including the material on group dynamics. Though the urban worker needs this knowledge as well, he usually is in an already existing organizational environment and his focus is manipulation of the target system. His rural counterpart is frequently called upon to design and construct the organization to deliver services as well as to intervene in existing systems. In addition, much of the consultation service required of the rural worker directs itself toward increasing the functioning of a wide variety of human service systems."<sup>168</sup>

A knowledge component worthy of special mention is the study of power. Mermelstein and Sundet state that "not only are naive conceptions of power the bane of program development," but "the dynamics of community power are usually susceptible to analysis."<sup>169</sup> In an address to the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work meeting in Edmonton, May 1975, Ami-Gelin highlighted the point: "Social work education for rural practice must focus on

social development, on the realignment of power, on helping rural people to organize . . . and influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives."<sup>170</sup>

As with knowledge, the skill areas are multiple. In addition to those previously cited (by the Workshop on Social Work Education and the Practice of Social Work in Rural and Northern Areas), another crucial skill identified in the rural social work literature is the ability to conduct broad-gauge systemic analysis "including demographic, ecological, cultural and historic analysis as well as assessment of systems linkage functions and supra-system relationships." This requires not only "foundation knowledge and the ability to conduct detailed action research, but a mental set of inquiry which does not accept pre-determined subject boundaries nor exclude any data as irrelevant." In rural program development, "the arena of assessment is the total environment and the occasion is every activity, professional and personal."<sup>171</sup>

Other skill areas, necessary components of rural social work education, include "skills in differentially determining and carrying out roles appropriate to the particular situation and phenomena addressed and in simultaneously engaging in multi-level role functions . . . the flexibility as well as ability to differentiate appropriate roles more quickly is even more complex for the rural worker who carries more than the program development specialty." "A specific set of planning skills . . . and

skills in brokering, mediating, advocating and negotiating system hierarchies are also basic."<sup>172</sup>

Further elaborating on skill development for rural social work practice, Weber voices the view that "social work educators and schools of social work should utilize the gamut of potential resources in rural communities for practicum experiences for students. Students should be encouraged to pursue their interest in rural systems intervention and should have the opportunity to further integrate and individualize their theoretical conceptualizations and develop skills appropriate to the rural culture through a supervised experience. The curriculum should provide a generic base of information on the rural environment and explore its problems, and will hopefully inspire more students to enter practice in rural-based agencies." She further states that an educator planning specific student assignments should be located within the rural community and be familiar with "its services, resources, problems and current interests" and will demand that "the educator be innovative in creating student projects and establishing a milieu conducive to learning."<sup>173,174</sup>

Weber also points out that "rural communities are especially good settings for community organization placements." She notes that research skills or planned informal contacts can be utilized to acquire an understanding of the social problems, needs and values of the people.

Patterns of social interaction, organization behaviour, power structures and problem-solving processes can be studied thoroughly and the support of social systems solicited to create a viable framework for joint action. Informal, personalized communication patterns help students in forming local task groups comprised of those affected by the social problem and those interested in the well-being of the community.<sup>175,176</sup>

In addition, for students, as for workers, a rural placement experience offers challenge. Barriers that traditionally cause problems in providing social services to sparsely populated areas, such as transportation problems, isolation, lack of professional staff support and consultation, lack of adequate financial resources and social agencies, also affect the student. Other factors such as a belief in the traditional structures and value systems, resistance to change, the diffuseness of a rural community's boundaries, its relationships beyond the community's natural areas also provide a significant learning environment in the rural setting.<sup>177,178</sup>

In discussing educational methodology, Mermelstein and Sundet take the view that the educational preparation of the generalist social worker requires adjustments in traditional teaching methodologies. They state: "The long-standing dichotomy between 'knowledge' as embodied in the didactic classroom and 'practice' isolated in practicum experiences is even less functional in preparing the

generalist. Integration of foundation and practice-knowledge and activity skills require devices such as team teaching, field-based seminars, modular course construction and instructor demonstration. A renewed emphasis on collaborative attitudes is needed, not only among faculty, but system wide. The apprenticeship model, the student as disciple, allows for neither the transmission of required knowledge nor acculturation to the generalist role."<sup>179</sup> In this same vein, Ginsberg states that field instruction in rural areas "require nontraditional models of education such as supervision by non-professionals, with professional consultation and periodic seminars with faculty members available to both the students and the task supervisors." Practical field experiences, wherein the rural worker must learn to function in the absence of supervision, direction and colleague support "lend themselves to effective preparation for rural practice."<sup>180</sup>

Mermelstein and Sundet further develop this viewpoint, specifically with regard to the role of program development and state that "case records, examples, illustrations, etc., which are drawn from the school's geographic locale are much more effective in enhancing the 'realness' of the educational content."<sup>181</sup> A principle of program development, namely, adaptation of the process to locale, applies as well to the teaching methodology employed.



Mermelstein and Sundet recommend a field instructional program, a collegial model, predicated upon the following principles: 1) the field instructor as role model of social intervention, 2) accountability to client-consumer, 3) autonomy of practice, 4) opportunity for collaboration with other professionals, 5) observational and analytic opportunities of sponsoring agency decision-making processes and analogous opportunities in community decision-making processes, and 6) field instructor demonstrates the role of professional learner on the assumption that continuous professional learning is the essential hallmark of any profession. Within this model, "assignments are directed to diverse target systems with flexibility in the parameters of interventive action" and "supervision is substantially different from that found in the apprenticeship model, since both the instructor and the student are actively engaged in the same intervention and evaluation of performance and suggestions for improvement are mutual responsibilities." Mermelstein and Sundet suggest that there are three principal resource requirements for this kind of field instruction: an instructor willing to take the risk of being a role model, a sympathetic organizational environment, and an educational institution prepared to support financially as well as morally both the process and the professional risk-taking inherent in generalist practice.<sup>182</sup>

### III. Continuing Education and Rural Social Work Practice

Any discussion of education for rural practice must consider the part-time student and the untrained practitioner presently working in rural areas.<sup>183</sup> Dodd, Arkava and Spivey suggest that social work practitioners who choose to practice their profession under geographically isolated conditions have an even greater need for continuing education than social workers who practice in close proximity of a training institution because "workers in sparsely populated areas are often confronted professionally with a wider diversity of social work problems."<sup>184</sup>

Millar states that in Canada the proportion of untrained workers lacking a professional degree to the professional is quite high, the reasons including the difficulty of attracting professionals to rural areas in the first place, and their high speed of departure to the city after a relatively short stay. Millar points to a number of reasons for the untrained person. "First, if we have any faith at all in professional social work education we must conclude from this assumption that these individuals will be better practitioners once having been exposed to professional training. Second, many of these people are people with 'hooks' in the rural area in which they work with established long term commitments, although a professional degree may loosen the 'hooks' and give a person the mobility he or she needs to move away from the rural area. Third, if we are to commit ourselves to rural field

placements as sound preparation for rural practice, we must consider the problems associated with doing field supervision from a campus located many miles away. It is these individuals who will become a valuable resource for ongoing supervision of students placed in their area."<sup>185</sup>

Millar goes on to say that schools of social work in Canada have been slow in developing programs to recruit and train native people.<sup>186</sup> Other writers such as Farris also criticize the failure of social work to include significant numbers of native students, faculty, or curriculum pertaining to native people. Farris states: "Paradoxically, there are many communities between the life-styles and values of American Indians and the profession of social work, yet social work and its practice and educational institutions to a large extent have failed to reach America's most deprived minority group."<sup>187</sup>

In Canada, the Universities of Regina and Laurentian have developed programs detached from their respective main campus to accommodate the education needs of the rural untrained practitioner. Millar describes both programs as having developed from a strong adult education philosophy emphasizing a relatively small core curriculum which is required, with a large elective offering, allowing the student to pursue areas of individual interest.<sup>188</sup> The University of Regina, School of Social Work's program is evidence of the direct applicability of the agricultural extension model to part-time social work education. They

describe the objectives of their program as based on values "associated with the main themes of viewing persons in relation to their community and selection of social tools and skills for problem solving in their context." Some anticipated developments of this approach, they state, is better preparation of generalist human service workers to provide services in a rural context and reduce barriers among professions in order to facilitate collaboration rather than competitive professionalized proprietary services.<sup>189</sup>

Millar suggests that difficulties abound in the offering of part-time programs, particularly when they are offered at centres many miles from the main campus. Part-time education in rural centres is an expensive proposition: "Classes are small and the Basic Income Unit is becoming of paramount concern to university officials in these times of tight budgeting. Travel costs are extremely high."<sup>190</sup>

Factors of distance and weather, notes Millar, are variables which must be included in planning continuing education projects. Two-day workshops are four-day affairs, with a day of travel time at each end.<sup>191</sup> Practitioners may relish the opportunity for classes or workshops in the winter, partially to escape "cabin fever", but may be reluctant to spend time in such pursuits in a relatively short summer.<sup>192</sup> "Although universities pay lip service to the concept of continuing education and life-long learning,

it is rarely given legitimate priority as part of their educational mission."<sup>193</sup>

#### IV. Conclusions Regarding the Rural Context and Social Work Education

Having discussed the educational implications of the rural setting, it is fair to conclude that "the profile of the effective rural social work practitioner would be characterized by a high degree of sensitivity to minority and ethnic groups, well-developed skill in community organization, an understanding of social policy development, knowledge of solutions to social problems, skills in implementing solutions, and a capacity for productive short-term relations."<sup>194</sup>

In conclusion, the consensus of writers on rural social work is the need for social work education to become "more assertive in recruiting and preparing professional manpower for practice in rural settings,"<sup>195</sup> of the need for schools of social work "to play an active role in 'enhancing life' in the rural community, in acting as catalysts for social change, and in calling the attention of the social work profession to the needs of the rural community."<sup>196</sup> Included in such a role, suggests Millar, would be such activities as working with citizens regarding social problems, improving the quality of the delivery of services, and increasing the skill and knowledge of the rural professional. "In short, it means getting out of the ivory

tower, getting out into the country, and getting our hands  
dirty."197

## Chapter II - References

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  17. A. J. Kahn, Theory and Practice of Social Planning (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1973), p. 29, cited in Webster and Campbell, "Contextual Differences," op. cit., p. 2.
  18. Webster and Campbell, "Contextual Differences," op. cit., p. 2.
  19. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 1.
  20. Ibid., p. 1.
  21. This history of rural social work draws upon Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit.



22. Ibid., p. 1.
23. Ibid., p. 2.
24. Smick, Sociology and Social Research, 1938, cited in Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 2.
25. J. Brown, Social Work Yearbook, 1935, cited in Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 2.
26. Child Welfare League of America, Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1926, cited in Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 2.
27. Webster and Campbell, "Social Work in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 1.
28. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 3.
29. A. Vidich and J. Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), cited in Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 3.
30. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., p. 3.
31. For an account of the First National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, see The University of Tennessee, Office of Continuing Social Work Education and Alumni Affairs, "Rural Social Workers Meet: School Hosts National Institute," Stimulus, Vol. 2, No. 1, September 1976.
32. Human Services in the Rural Environment is a monthly newsletter published by University of Wisconsin and more recently by the University of Tennessee.
33. M. E. Powers, "Goals of Public Welfare in a Rural Community," cited in K. Collier, "Rural Social Work: Theory and Practice" (Paper presented to the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work, 10th Annual Conference, Fredericton, New Brunswick, June 1977), p. 1.
34. J. Zeglinski (ed.), Social Work Education for Practice in Rural and Northern Regions (Proceedings of Workshop on Social Work Education and the Practice of Social Work in Rural and Northern Areas, Winnipeg, Manitoba, March 15-16, 1976) (Ottawa: C.A.S.S.W., 1976).
35. J. Zeglinski, "One Earth, A Changing World: Global Perspectives on Social Work Education for Rural Practice," and K. Collier, "Education for Rural Social Work Practice - The Saskatchewan Experience," in Reader: Second National Institute on Social Work in

- Rural Areas, ed. by E. B. Buxton (University of Wisconsin-Extension, Centre for Social Service, 1977).
36. For a description of education programs, see for example, S. Findlay and M. Bartlett, "All Around the Circle: Diversified Rural Field Practicum," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 3, No. 4, April 1978, and Zeglinski (ed.), Social Work Education for Practice in Rural and Northern Regions, op. cit., pp. 51-69.
  37. Zeglinski, "Global Perspectives on Education," op. cit., p. 2.
  38. United Nations Association in Canada, "Canada and the United Nations in a Changing World, Conference Roundup" (Conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 12-14, 1977), cited in Zeglinski, "Global Perspectives on Education," op. cit., p. 2.
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  40. C. C. Njimba, Social Work Curriculum for Rural Areas in Developing Countries (Master's Thesis, McGill University, School of Social Work, Montreal, June 1976), p. ii.
  41. G. Grant, Outline Research Plan for a Study of the Delivery of Personal Social Services in Rural Areas With a Review of Some of the Literature (University College of North Wales, Department of Social Theory and Institutions, Bangor, Gyrnedd, February 1978).
  42. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Way It Was," op. cit., pp. 3-4.
  43. Southern Regional Educational Board, Manpower Education and Training Project, Rural Task Force, "Educational Assumptions for Rural Social Work," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976), p. 41.
  44. For discussion of changes, see S. Webster and P. Campbell, "1970's and the Changing Dimensions in Rural Life - Is a New Practice Model Needed?" (Paper presented at Council on Social Work Education, Annual Program Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 1976), and Couch, Dulton, Gurss, Serpan, "Specialist-Generalist Model," op. cit.

45. J. Mermelstein and P. Sundet, "Social Work Ombudsman: A Role of the Rural Generalist Practitioner" (Paper presented at Council on Social Work Education, Annual Program Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, March 1974), p. 10.
46. G. K. Weber, "Preparing Social Workers for Practice in Rural Social Work Systems," Journal of Education for Social Work, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall 1976, pp. 110-112.
47. Southern Regional Education Board, "Educational Assumptions," op. cit., p. 41.
48. L. H. Ginsberg, "Rural Social Work," Encyclopedia of Social Work, Vol. II, No. 16, 1971, p. 1139.
49. L. H. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," Social Work Education Reporter, Vol. 17, 1969, p. 28.
50. Ibid., p. 29.
51. For an analysis of federal agricultural programs and policies in Canada, see Economic Council of Canada, Canadian Policies for Rural Adjustment: A Study of the Economic Impact of ARDA, PFRA, and MMRA (Special Study No. 7), by H. Buckley and E. Tihanyi, Canadian Centre for Community Studies (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967).
52. L. H. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976), p. 4.
53. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 29.
54. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 5.
55. Refer to a Canadian study by John Hogan, "Criminal Justice in Rural and Urban Communities: A Study of the Bureaucratization of Justice," Social Forces, Vol. 55, No. 3, March 1977, pp. 597-611. In the analysis of data from a Canadian province (Alberta), Hogan reveals that "probation officers in rural jurisdictions, as contrasted with those in urban communities, sentence Indians severely without the justification of correlated legal variables. In addition, Indians are more likely to be sent to jail in default of fine payments in rural, than in urban communities."
56. L. G. Schultz, in an article entitled "The Rural Social Worker and Corrections," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg

(New York: C.S.W.E., 1976), makes the point that guaranteeing equal application of the law in rural areas is a constant problem. Enforcement mechanisms, citizen surveillance, and adequate correctional facilities are often missing in rural areas. Children detained in adult jail facilities, limits on rights of persons accused of crimes and inadequate facilities for incarceration are common phenomena.

57. The rural social work literature addresses the problems of the rural aged. See, for example, A. J. Auerbach, "The Elderly in Rural Areas: Differences in Urban Areas and Implications for Practice," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976); R. Bohart, "Preserving the Dignity of the Elderly in a Rural Area," in Reader: Second Annual Northern Wisconsin Symposium on Human Services in the Rural Environment, ed. by D. Bast and J. Schmidt (University of Wisconsin Extension, The Centre for Social Services, 1977); M. Sebastian, "In-Service Training for Work with Elderly in Rural Areas," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 3, No. 5, May 1978.

The situation of the aged population in the United States is documented in a report by the White House Conference on Aging, "Older Americans in Rural and Small Towns," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976).

A study prepared by the Manitoba Department of Health and Social Development, Division of Research, Planning and Program Development, entitled Aging in Manitoba: Needs and Resources, 1971, is a thorough analysis of the rural elderly in Manitoba.

58. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 28.
59. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 5. In Canada, a number of references have been made to rural poverty; for example, see, Canada National Council of Welfare, Poor Kids, Ottawa, March 1975, p. 6 ("more than one in three rural children are in families below the poverty line"). For an international reference to rural poverty, see E. J. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, Sphere Books, London, p. 162 ("world poverty is a problem of two million villages and thus a problem of two million villagers"). For a reference to minority group poverty, see Manitoba Department of Health and Social Development, A Review of Child Welfare Policies,

- Programs and Services in Manitoba, Winnipeg, July 1975, p. 45 ("In Manitoba, as elsewhere in Canada, people of Indian origin by and large are poor, badly educated, marginally attached to the labour force, badly housed, and in poorer health than the rest of the population. In many cases, they are living in communities which suffer from a lack of economic viability, from social disorganization and from a variety of social problems").
60. K. Ishwaran, "The Canadian Family: An Overview," in Ishwaran (ed.), The Canadian Family (revised), Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., Toronto, 1975, pp. 26-9.
  61. For an analysis of the rural church, see W. B. Rogers and G. E. Buckmire, The Rural Church, The Farm Family (Published by the Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Alberta, Special Report No. 7, May 1967).
  62. Ginsberg, "Rural Social Work," op. cit., p. 1141.
  63. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 30.
  64. Ibid.
  65. C. F. Kraenzel, "The Place of Public Services, Including Mental Health, in Sparsely Populated Areas," in The Development of Mental Health Services in Sparsely Populated Areas (Chevy Chase, Md.: National Institute of Mental Health, 1968), cited in Ginsberg, "Rural Social Work," op. cit., p. 1140.
  66. E. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976), p. 34.
  67. F. Hunter, Community Power Structure (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1963), cited in Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 32.
  68. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Ombudsman: A Role of the Rural Generalist Practitioner," op. cit., p. 13.
  69. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 32.
  70. A. J. Vidich and J. Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 72-73, cited in Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 33.

71. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 34.
72. Ibid.
73. Vidich and Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society, op. cit., cited in Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 34.
74. J. C. Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," Canadian Journal of Social Work Education, Vol. 3, No. 1, Fall 1976, p. 8.
75. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 30.
76. Ibid.
77. Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," op. cit., p. 10.
78. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Ombudsman: A Role of the Rural Generalist Practitioner," op. cit., p. 11.
79. Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," op. cit., pp. 7-8.
80. Ibid.
81. M. Wylie, "Social Planning in Non-metropolitan America" in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976), p. 53.
82. Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," op. cit., p. 9.
83. An interesting study of the effects of urbanization on the willingness to help was conducted by H. Takooshian, S. Haber and D. J. Lucido ("Who Wouldn't Help a Lost Child? You, Maybe," Psychology Today, February 1977, pp. 68-69 and p. 88). A study was made of an emergency situation (i.e., a lost child) in several large cities and small towns, and observed that "the smaller the community in which an individual was raised, the more likely he was to help." Although the results are not conclusive or generalizable to the larger population, the study offers evidence of this phenomenon.
84. J. Mermelstein and P. Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development" (a paper presented to the Seminar on Education for Social Work in the Rural and Small Community, Council on Social Work Education, Indianapolis, Indiana, May 1973), pp. 6-7.

85. A. H. Collins, "Natural Delivery Systems: Accessible Sources of Power for Mental Health," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 43, No. 1, January 1973, pp. 46-47.
86. Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," op. cit., p. 8. For an interesting example, see "Love," Winnipeg Free Press, March 24, 1980; a small town in rural Saskatchewan has a plan to get rid of "welfare bums" and end unwanted pregnancy.
87. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 30.
88. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 8, and Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 31.
89. J. F. Davies, "The Country Mouse Comes into Her Own," Child Welfare, Vol. 53, No. 8, October 1974, p. 511.
90. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 31.
91. L. H. Ginsberg, "Planning and Delivery of Services in Rural Areas," in A Symposium: Planning and Delivery of Social Services in Rural America, ed. by W. H. Koch (University of Wisconsin Extension, The Centre for Continuing Education and Community Action for Social Service, May 1973), pp. 1-13.
92. It is noteworthy that in a study of stress factors on rural police officers, factors similar to those for rural social workers were identified. These included the sense of isolation, an absence of anonymity, a relatively powerless position to control the working and financial environment, and a need to develop strategies for stimulation. Refer to J. P. Sandy and D. A. Devine, "Four Stress Factors Unique to Rural Patrol," On Patrol in Manitoba, September 1978, pp. 8-10.
93. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., pp. 29-40.
94. Ginsberg, "Planning and Delivery of Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 10.
95. J. Mermelstein and P. Sundet, "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context" (Address delivered to the conference, "Human Service Delivery Systems in Small Communities," St. Paul, Minnesota, April 1975), p. 9.

96. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 31.
97. J. Sherman and L. Rowley, "Confidentiality: What Is Private in a Rural Area," in Reader: Second Annual Northern Wisconsin Symposium on Human Services in the Rural Environment, ed. by D. Bast and J. Schmidt (University of Wisconsin Extension, The Centre for Social Services, 1977), p. 10.
98. Refer to Mermelstein and Sundet, "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context," op. cit., p. 14, and J. Kirkland and K. Ireby, "Confidentiality: Issues and Dilemmas in Rural Practice," in Reader: Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, ed. by E. Buxton (A Compilation of Selected Papers presented at the July 1977 Institute, held in Madison, Wisconsin, published by the University of Wisconsin Extension, Centre for Social Service), pp. 142-149.
99. Sherman and Rowley, "Confidentiality: What Is Private in a Rural Area," op. cit., p. 14.
100. B. L. Fenby, "Social Work in a Rural Setting," Social Work, Vol. 23, No. 2, March 1978, pp. 162-63.
101. Southern Regional Education Board, "Educational Assumptions," op. cit., p. 42.
102. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., pp. 7-8.
103. Commentators on the value of the natural helping system include Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," op. cit.; Wylie, "Social Planning in Non-metropolitan America," op. cit.; Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," op. cit.; and Ginsberg, "Planning and Delivery of Services in Rural Areas," op. cit.
104. Ryant, "The Integration of Services in Rural and Urban Communities," op. cit., p. 11.
105. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 31.
106. For an example of how a natural helping system is utilized in practice, see C. Schultz, "Homemaker Services in a Rural Social Services Department: One Notch Above the Natural Helping Relationship," in Reader: Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, ed. by E. Buxton (A Compilation of



- Selected Papers presented at the July 1977 Institute, held in Madison, Wisconsin, Published by the University of Wisconsin Extension, Centre for Social Service), pp. 10-18.
107. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., pp. 34-35.
  108. Ibid.
  109. Davies, "The Country Mouse Comes Into Her Own," op. cit., p. 510.
  110. M. Colliver, "Identifying the Structure of Community Power - Some Suggestions for Rural Practice," in Reader: Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, ed. by E. Buxton (A Compilation of Selected Papers presented at the July 1977 Institute held in Madison, Wisconsin, Published by the University of Wisconsin Extension, Centre for Social Service), pp. 35-54.
  111. For another example of a community analysis, see B. J. Flanigan, "A Framework for Implementing Programs in Rural Areas," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 3, No. 9, September 1978.
  112. Ginsberg, "Education for Social Work in Rural Settings," op. cit., p. 31.
  113. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 38.
  114. Ginsberg, "Rural Social Work," op. cit., p. 1143.
  115. R. Deaton and T. Mohr, "Cowboy Social Work: Unique Features of Social Service Needs in the Rural Western States," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 2, No. 6, June 1977, p. 3.
  116. N. Brill, Teamwork: Working Together in the Human Services (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1976), p. 13.
  117. Ginsberg, "Rural Social Work," op. cit., p. 1141.
  118. Deaton and Mohr, "Cowboy Social Work: Unique Features of Social Service Needs in the Rural Western States," op. cit., p. 2.
  119. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 9.

120. For an example of a reported experience, see R. D. Borgman, "News and Views - Crisis Intervention in Rural Community Disasters," Social Casework, Vol. 58, No. 9, November 1977, pp. 562-567; Borgman gives an account of the various roles used by rural social workers in community disaster events.
121. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 9.
122. Mermelstein and Sundet, in "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context," op. cit., p. 13, state that "the term generalist is widely bandied, supported or condemned, is so variously defined as to reduced to nonsense syllables conveying only private meaning . . . It is called a combination of methods, a specialization, a new method, a stance, etc., by various proponents." For definitions other than those cited here, see R. Baker, "Toward Generic Social Work Practice - A Review and Some Innovations," British Journal of Social Work, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1975, pp. 193-215 and M. Siporin, "Reactions to the Conceptual Frameworks Issue - Points and Viewpoints - On the Road to Professional Unity," Social Work, Vol. 23, No. 2, March 1978, pp. 164-166, and the definition adopted by School of Social Work, University of Manitoba, see Self-Study Report, Spring 1979, p. 12.
123. R. J. Teare and H. L. McPheeters, Manpower Utilization in Social Welfare (Atlanta: Southern Regional Educator Board, 1970, p. 23), cited in L. Johnson, "The B.S.W. Delivers Service to Small Town America," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1977, p. 7; also cited in S. A. Webster and P. M. Campbell, "1970's and the Changing Dimensions in Rural Life - Is a New Practice Model Needed?" (Paper presented at the Council on Social Work Education, 1976 Annual Program Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 1976), p. 6.
124. R. Klenk and R. Ryan, The Practice of Social Work (Belmont, California: Woodsworth Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 1-17, cited in S. A. Webster and P. M. Campbell, "1970's and the Changing Dimensions in Rural Life - Is a New Practice Model Needed?" (Paper presented at the Council on Social Work Education, 1976 Annual Program Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 1976), p. 6.

125. S. A. Webster and P. M. Campbell, "1970's and the Changing Dimensions in Rural Life - Is a New Practice Model Needed?" (Paper presented at Council on Social Work Education, 1976 Annual Program Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 1976), p. 7.
126. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Ombudsman: A Role of the Rural Generalist Practitioner," op. cit., pp. 18-19.
127. Ibid.
- Also, see Mermelstein and Sundet, "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context," op. cit.
128. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," op. cit., p. 2.
129. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 9.
130. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context," op. cit., pp. 11-12.
131. Buxton, "Delivering Social Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 36.
132. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context," op. cit., p. 10.
133. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 9.
134. H. M. Held, "Mental Health in the Rural Community," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1976, p. 6.
135. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Education for Social Work Practice in the Rural Context," op. cit., pp. 10-11.
136. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Ombudsman: A Role of the Rural Generalist Practitioner," op. cit., pp. 10-18.
137. There are numerous writings in Canada and the United States on the need for and challenges of rural development. For some of these views, refer to Canadian Council on Rural Development, Views on Rural Development in Canada, ed. by W. M. Nicholls, January 1976; J. A. Draper (ed.), Citizen Participation in Canada (Toronto: New Press, 1971); Ontario Agricultural College, Priorities in Rural Development (Proceedings of Workshop held at University of Guelph,

April 1974); D. L. Rogers and L. R. Whiting, Aspects of Planning for Public Services in Rural Areas (Published by North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University, June 1976).

138. In Manitoba, the Rural Development Division of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture has attempted to implement this type of thinking. For an example of the work undertaken in rural Manitoba, see Manitoba Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Division, Rural Development in Manitoba: A Case Study Report 1978. For other Canadian examples of implementation of the program development role, see E. Smith, "Planning With People: The Gaspé Project," in Making It: The Canadian Dream, and A. and M. Patterson, "Fogo Makes a Go of It," Reader's Digest, May 1975.
139. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," op. cit., pp. 1-2.
140. Mermelstein and Sundet, in "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," summarize a variety of definitions from the following sources: J. B. Cook, "Everyone has a Stake in Community Planning" (University of Missouri - Columbia Extension Division, Columbia, Mo., 1969); J. K. Parker, "Administrative Planning," in Managing the Modern City, ed. by J. M. Banovitz (International City Management Association, Washington, D.C., 1971); M. Ross, Community Organization (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), K. Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1941).

Other notable works that deal with the community and planning, and that are useful to the rural context are: R. Warren, "The Good Community - What Would It Be?", Journal of the Community Development Society, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1970, pp. 14-23; R. Chin and K. D. Beane, "General Strategies for Effecting Changes in Human Systems," in The Planning of Change (3rd edition), ed. by W. G. Bennis, K. W. Benne, R. Chin and K. E. Corey (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp. 24-45; R. Lippitt, J. Watson, W. Bruce, The Dynamics of Planned Change (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1958); J. Rothman, "Three Models of Community Organization Practice," in Strategies of Community Organization (2nd edition), ed. by F. M. Cox, J. L. Erlich, J. Rothman and J. Trapman (F. E. Peacock, 1974), pp. 22-39; R. L. Warren, "Types of Purposive Social Change at the Community Level," in Readings in Community Organization Practice (2nd edition), ed. by R. M. Kramer and H. Specht (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), pp. 134-149.

In the rural social work literature, one commentator, Morrison, takes the position that skills for community organizing in rural areas are distinctive. Refer to J. Morrison, "Community Organization in Rural Areas," in Social Work in Rural Communities: A Book of Readings, ed. by L. H. Ginsberg (New York: C.S.W.E., 1976), pp. 56-61.

141. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," op. cit., p. 5.
142. Ibid., p. 11.
143. Ibid.
144. Mermelstein and Sundet point to tragic evidence in many rural communities of the imposition of regionally "packaged" service delivery systems which co-opted or impeded functioning of natural systems. A Canadian writer, K. Collier, in a draft for a book on rural social work, cites a number of examples of this kind: a mental health team flying into a bush settlement, carrying on their "clinic" as if they were still in an office in the suburbs, for example, by conducting a case conference, or by protecting a child from a remote fishing village in the bush by taking him to a foster home in the city or trying to carry out counselling or protection service by setting up strict office schedules in farming towns or in native villages.
145. R. Warren, The Community in America (Chicago, Illinois: Rand, McNally and Co., 1963), cited in Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," op. cit., p. 11.
146. Mermelstein and Sundet, "Social Work Education for Rural Program Development," op. cit., pp. 11-12.
147. S. A. Webster and P. M. Campbell, "1970's and the Changing Dimensions in Rural Life - Is a New Practice Model Needed?", op. cit., pp. 20-21.
148. Ginsberg, "An Overview of Social Work Education for Rural Areas," op. cit., pp. 10.
149. Couch, Dulton, Gurss, Serpan, "A Specialist-Generalist Model of Social Work Practice for Contemporary Rural America," op. cit., pp. 6-7.
150. This literature review of the community perspective is by no means exhaustive. Other writings among the rural social work literature include: S. Peacock, "Mobilizing Rural Community Resources," in Reader:

- Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, ed. by Buxton, op. cit., pp. 121-132; H. R. Baker, "The Small Community and Planning," Community Planning Review, Volume XVI, Spring, pp. 2-8; R. Deaton and A. Bjirgo, "An Appropriate Role for Social Work: Small Business Development in the Rural Community," in Reader: Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, ed. by Buxton, op. cit., pp. 61-68; L. Dunn, C. Albaugh, J. Huber, J. Cline and M. Anderson, "A Modern Rural Human Service Delivery System: An Iowa Experiment," in Reader: Second Annual Northern Wisconsin Symposium on Human Services in the Rural Environment, ed. by Bast and Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 128-147; N. Jacob, S. Lilley and E. Wynn, "An Action Scheme for Rural Community Development Practitioners," in Reader: Second National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas, ed. by Buxton, op. cit., pp. 18-35; D. Bast and E. Buxton, "Extension's Expanding Role in Social Development," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 1, No. 3, August 1976, pp. 1-5.
151. Ginsberg, "Planning and Delivery of Services in Rural Areas," op. cit., p. 61.
152. K. Millar, "Canadian Rural Social Work" (Paper presented to the First National Institute of Social Work in Rural Areas, Knoxville, Tennessee, July 1976), p. 4.
153. K. Weber, "Preparing Social Workers for Practice in Rural Social Work Systems," op. cit., p. 109.
154. C. Guzzetta, "Curriculum Alternatives," Journal of Education for Social Work, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter 1972, p. 30.
155. For examples of American Schools of Social Work, with a rural emphasis, see P. Hookey, "Rurally-Oriented Components of Social Work Education Curricula: The Report of the 1977 Human Services in the Rural Environment Readership Survey," Human Services in the Rural Environment, Vol. 3, No. 10, October 1978.
156. Weber, "Preparing Social Workers for Practice in Rural Social Work Systems," op. cit., p. 109.
157. Millar, "Canadian Rural Social Work," op. cit., p. 9.
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159. Millar, "Canadian Rural Social Work," op. cit., p. 9.
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## CHAPTER III

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

Although this investigation is primarily concerned with social work practice and social service delivery in the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the Province of Manitoba, a brief review of rural population trends, the rural Manitoba environment, and the delivery of human services in rural Manitoba will put the study into context. A description of the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the Province of Manitoba are found in the Appendices.

#### Trends in the Rural North American Population

The size and distribution of population in North America contrasts sharply with that of a hundred years ago. A century ago, more than three-quarters of the population lived in rural areas.

In 1880, the population of the United States was 50,200,000 and was mainly a rural agricultural society.<sup>1</sup> Only 21.5 percent lived in cities of 10,000 or more and 14.3 percent lived in places with populations of 50,000 or more. In 1970, the population increased to 203,200,000 and has been transformed into a predominantly urban industrial one. At the last United States census, 55.3 percent of the population lived in cities of 10,000 or more, and 36.0

percent in cities of 50,000 or more. In 1970, 73 percent of the total United States population was concentrated in metro areas and 41.5 percent lived in the greater metropolitan core or suburbs of cities of one million population or more.

In 1971, 5.2 million Canadians lived in rural Canada, and by 1976, this figure had increased to 5.6 million; urban Canadians numbered 16.4 million in 1971 and 17.4 million in 1976.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 80 percent of the present Canadian population dwells in cities.<sup>3</sup> The number of Canadian farms dwindled from 575,000 in 1956 to 366,000 in 1971.<sup>4</sup>

During the last century, the most striking feature of population mobility has been the movement of people from rural areas to urban settlements.<sup>5</sup> Technological innovations in farming, particularly the substitution of machine power for manpower, resulted in increased yields and productivity, but also created a surplus of farm-born and farm-raised people. Similar transformations occurred as the result of technological development in the other resource-based industries of forestry, mining and fishing. At the same time, growth of employment and technological advances increased employment opportunities in urban centres for surplus rural labour. Over time, the structure of industry and increasing concentration of population consistently favoured more rapid growth of greater metropolitan centres. Net outmigration from rural areas and small settlements frequently started a cycle of economic decline in areas that

were losing population, particularly in service industries that depend on the size of the local market.<sup>6</sup> The resulting poor level of service has been a factor leading to further depopulation. In urban industries, the variety of jobs, together with lower unemployment rates, offer greater financial security for workers in contrast to the wide fluctuations of income and employment experienced in agriculture and other primary industries. The greater wealth of the cities has also enabled them to provide a higher quality of education and health services, and a wider range of recreational and cultural activities. A wider range of welfare services has been made available in cities, from both private and municipal sources.<sup>7</sup>

New modes of transportation and communication also contributed to the dominance of great cities over communities in their surrounding area.<sup>8</sup> These outlying communities, formerly autonomous, became subordinate to, and integrated with, the metropolis. Thus, present society in North America is not simply dominated by urban settlements, but more specifically, by a relatively few greater metropolitan centres.

Although the migration of rural people to the cities has proceeded on a massive scale, the absolute size of the rural North American population has grown in the last century.<sup>9</sup> The number of people living in rural areas grew from 36 million in 1880 to about 54 million in 1970. However, the farm population has declined sharply during the

last fifty years from 32 million in 1920 to 9.7 million in 1970. This reflects a change in the traditional role of rural areas. The production of food has been the traditional role of rural areas, followed by other resource-based industries. These remain economically important in view of the present world market. However, rural areas are increasingly serving other functions.<sup>10</sup> Those in the vicinity of urban centres are providing dormitories for commuters; they are also serving the recreational needs of urban residents, either on a seasonal or year-round basis, and many people are finding the smaller communities to be pleasant and economical places to live.

The impact on the metro areas of rapid growth and change in the demographic composition of the population has been enormous.<sup>11</sup> The large increase in population in urban centres results both in urban sprawl and a concentration of population in high-rise buildings and crowded older neighbourhoods. Increased demands for highways and services result from this growth; their provision increases their use and further demand. There has been a dramatic increase in the cost of housing and land values during the past decade.

One study estimates, for example, that if 10,000 farmers leave rural Manitoba, at least 4,000 non-farm rural jobs are also lost. If those 14,000 families move to Winnipeg, it will increase the city's population by about 56,000 and its operating costs by approximately \$55 million per year. If the new arrivals pay the average per capita

tax, they will contribute only \$6 million to city revenue. The remainder of the increase must be borne by other Winnipeg residents.<sup>12</sup> Much the same formula could be applied to any metropolitan centre in Canada. The costs of urban services rise disproportionately with increasing population so that the average cost of services becomes much higher than that which existed prior to the increase in population. Because of the character of the migrant populations, the burden of these costs is disproportionately borne by the earlier residents.<sup>13</sup>

The Winnipeg Symposium of 1975 on "Factors Affecting Rural-Urban Migration" commented on the difficulties encountered by rural peoples in adapting to the urban situation. Although differences between rural and urban lifestyles are decreasing, "this does not mean, however, that rural people can step into an urban milieu with no problems of adaptation." For example, native peoples move to the city to increase their employment choices and earning power, but "suffer the most in making the change from life on the reserve to life in the city . . . People often move to the cities with a set of aspirations which cannot always be met . . . the advantages of urban life have been oversold."<sup>14</sup>

The difficulty of keeping up with the demands of rapid growth are straining the adaptive capacity of metropolitan areas. "When these demands were occurring in the context of a change in the demographic characteristics

of the population so that there was a declining tax base and an increasing demand for welfare services and aid, the cities entered what might be considered a long-term build up of a crisis situation."<sup>15</sup> The crisis is not only a financial one, but also involves social conflict between peoples of different colour, socio-economic class, ways of life, attitudes and values. Crime rates in the cities have soared and overburdened services become undependable. While the metro areas continue to have more employment opportunities and offer higher incomes than can be found in smaller urban centres and rural areas, the costs of living have also risen, and other indicators of the level of well-being have fallen.

Some aspects of rural life have also changed since the beginning of the 1970's.<sup>16</sup> The world market for food and prices of agricultural products have risen, and along with them, farm incomes. Land prices in smaller cities and villages are considerably less than those in the metro areas and many of these communities have experienced a great demand for serviced lots and housing construction at a rate considerably greater than in the past several decades. In some rural areas that have lagging economies, governmental programs of social and economic development were initiated in the 1960's. Their objectives are to increase productivity of primary industries, help new industries to get started and conduct programs of human and community development.



By the end of the 1960's, there was some evidence that the gap between rural and urban incomes in Canada had narrowed.<sup>17</sup> However, the improvements in the condition of rural people have not solved the problem of rural poverty. The Special Senate Committee on Poverty in 1969, for example, recognized the poverty in rural Canada. It states: "the highest percent of poverty is definitely found in rural areas." Another testimony states that among rural people, "the poorest of the poor were the people of native ancestry."<sup>18</sup> A 1976 study of low income farm families demonstrated that 28.3 percent of all farm tax filers in 1976 were farm families with low or inadequate incomes, with over half of the full-time, low income farm families located in the Prairie Provinces. This same study suggests that farm poverty has also affected the welfare of non-farm families dependent on the farm sector.<sup>19</sup>

Until recently, the long-term trend of population flow to metropolitan areas and their fringes seemed to be regarded as a "natural" consequence of economic development and as an irresistible and irreversible force. Today, this conclusion can be seriously questioned in view of recent information on population changes in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of the United States.<sup>20</sup> Since 1970, there has been a dramatic reversal in long-term population trends. In a study prepared for the United States House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, Peter A. Morrison provides evidence that entire metropolitan

areas in the United States, not merely their central cities, are registering absolute population declines in the 1970's. After declining for most of the century, the rural areas of the United States have been growing faster since 1970 than its urban parts.<sup>21</sup>

There are indications of a similar turn-around in Canada.<sup>22</sup> The annual rate of growth in urban areas dropped from 3.2 percent during the first half of the 1960's to 2.3 percent during the second half, and to one percent in the early 1970's. The rural farm population was still dropping at an even faster rate during the later period (average growth rate -1.5 percent between 1961 and 1966, -5.2 percent between 1966 and 1971, and -12 percent between 1971 and 1976). However, the rural non-farm population which registered an annual growth rate of -.5 percent between 1961-1966 showed an average annual growth rate of 2.2 percent between 1966-1971 and 12.7 percent between 1971-1976. No doubt, much of the gain in the rural non-farm population could be accounted for by the movement of farm families into nearby villages. However, recent data provided by a Canada Manpower and Immigration report states that, "the rural to urban flow that dominated early migration is less significant today. Generally, the present pattern is from small to medium and from medium to large urban centre."<sup>23</sup>

It is too early to tell whether this is a long-term or short-term adjustment in the way the population will

eventually distribute itself.<sup>24</sup> The recent trend toward the rural appears to be motivated by the desire to get away from the increasing stress, hazards, costs, inconveniences and limitations of city life, the hope of improving one's level of well-being in one or more respects often creating stress on the rural local economy or infrastructure, and its social structure. Despite this trend and its concomitant stresses, the fact remains that throughout Canada, the rural areas continue to produce more people than jobs, making it necessary for people to migrate in search of employment and other opportunities.<sup>25</sup>

"The very high rate of outmigration from rural settlements and the surrounding population has for decades been a selective process tending to drain off the young, better-educated, less traditional minded adults."<sup>26</sup> While this has been a necessary adjustment of a population with high fertility rates to absolutely declining employment in primary industries, it tends to become in itself a factor leading to further economic decline and social disintegration of rural communities.

Those who migrate to urban centres for job opportunities are often ill prepared to adjust successfully to an urban-industrial environment. In fact, studies of rural migrants to cities show that compared to the total city population they more often tend to be employed at the lowest occupational levels, suffer a greater incidence of unemployment and underemployment, and tend to have a lower per capita income and many also have symptoms of

psychological distress.<sup>27</sup> Canadian Indians, for example, who have moved in large numbers to cities, have had great difficulties with adjustment.

As well, rural people themselves express a high level of dissatisfaction with the options--staying in their present situation or migrating to the city. Many object to the city and its conditions; however, the rural situation does not meet their needs either.<sup>28</sup>

In light of this dilemma, more and more people are coming to believe that the problems of rural poverty cannot be solved simply by moving people from rural to urban environments, and that the problems of cities cannot be solved by eliminating blighted areas and their residents. The trends within and realities of both situations provide impetus for this growing viewpoint: "Rural and small town are only part of the whole and attempts to improve city life without also attending to the needs of rural (people) exacerbate the problems of both;"<sup>29</sup> "city and country are part of a whole."<sup>30</sup>

## The Rural Manitoba Environment

### I. Introduction to Manitoba

The Province of Manitoba is relatively small in terms of population (approximately 1,000,000), however, it has a wide variety of living environments. The range includes a major city (the provincial capital, Winnipeg), with a population of 500,000, a large agricultural area and a large wilderness area in an almost natural state. The

composition of the province's economic base includes mining in the north, agriculture in the rural south and manufacturing and industry in a number of urban centres. A wide variety of ethnic groups are represented in the population, including a large group of registered Indians living on reserves or in Winnipeg, and Metis, or unregistered Indians, living in Winnipeg and spread throughout the province in small communities, mainly in the central and northern portions of the province.

Rural Manitoba has undergone many changes in character and lifestyle since the days of major settlement in the 1800's and early part of this century.<sup>31</sup> Many of these changes have been beneficial. Rural people enjoy better living standards; recreational, cultural and social amenities are more readily available. On the other hand, some of the changes which have taken place in rural Manitoba society have not been for the best. In general, while incomes have risen, they have not kept up with urban wage levels. Unable to make a living in rural Manitoba, many thousands of people have been forced to seek opportunities elsewhere. This depopulation of rural regions has resulted in a changed rural environment as cultural, religious, economic and interpersonal ties have been uprooted and broken down. There is an air of uncertainty, of questioning, on the part of rural people about the future of rural Manitoba. For example, a Position Paper on Rural Development prepared by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce

(March 1972) states: "We believe that the number one economic problem facing Manitoba is that of the declining rural population. Today, there is a serious imbalance between the economic development of a few urban centres and the remainder of rural Manitoba. If this trend continues, rural life in Manitoba will become almost non-existent and the socio-economic problems in the major urban centres will border on the intolerable."<sup>32</sup>

This uncertainty did not exist at the turn of the century. At that time, a great deal of activity took place in agricultural Manitoba--the vast stretches of farm land and brush in southern Manitoba. Settlers poured into Manitoba and the west from European centres and from Eastern Canada and most of the good land suitable for farming was rapidly occupied.

During the years of settlement and the major period of agricultural development in rural Manitoba, particularly before the First World War, the southern Manitoba countryside was relatively populous. The family farm was the central influence. Rural Manitoba flourished with vibrant communities, the structure often close-knit, offering a peaceful, although difficult, existence.

The prairie communities of rural Manitoba grew up as a system of small villages located along rail lines. With few exceptions, the 350 hamlets, villages, towns and cities of rural Manitoba lie alongside railway lines.

Transportation factors, for the most part, determined the spacing of communities. Settlements became spaced at an average distance of nine to ten miles. This proximity pattern is still visible today. Those settlements located at intersections of main highways and railroads where automobiles, trucks and trains converged, were favoured for growth. These settlements grew to become prairie centres and provide a wide variety of goods and services to a widening consumer population. In Manitoba, some twenty-five communities developed into centres of prairie activity or major towns, tending to be spaced about thirty to forty miles apart.

There are now 350 settlements in rural Manitoba which vary in size from 50 people to 32,000 people. The smaller centres act as focal points for everyday local needs such as food purchases and minor automobile upkeep. The larger centres, in turn, act as district centres for higher level services.

## II. Problems of Rural Manitoba

The old patterns of rural life have been altered by technological change.<sup>33</sup> Transportation and communication networks have been improved, bringing rural residents into closer touch with their neighbouring communities and with larger urban centres as well. Electrification, sewer and water development, and other amenities, have become more widespread in rural Manitoba, making for a more comfortable home life. Mechanization has reduced the amount of manual

labour involved in farm operations and has freed time for leisure activities. Rural communities have worked to develop recreational facilities for their citizens to increase the range of social activities available.

Educational opportunities in rural areas have increased as a result of improved facilities, expanded programs, and the ease of transportation to rural centres from outlying districts.

All of these things have done a great deal to reduce the hardships of early pioneer life in rural Manitoba. However, the extent and rapidity of technological change have also caused problems for rural areas. Some of the more significant problems of rural Manitoba include a declining population (particularly the youth population), a declining economic base, unemployment and underemployment, fewer health and social services, limited educational opportunities, poorer quality housing, transportation problems and poverty. These problems are present in all areas of rural Manitoba, including the Eastman and Interlake Regions, although their magnitude in the various rural areas of the province depends upon the region's particular population composition and economic base. The following presents a review of these predominant rural problems.

With respect to the problem of declining population, mechanization and cost-price relationships are regarded as being largely responsible, forcing many families out of primary industries (farming, fishing, mining) to seek



employment elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> It is suggested that approximately 1,000 families leave farming each year in search of better opportunities.<sup>35</sup> In addition, non-farm residents have also left the rural areas as farm-dependent service sector employment has declined. (In the years 1976-1977 alone, persons over the age of 65 increased to 13 percent in areas outside of Winnipeg.<sup>36</sup>) The age structure in rural areas has changed as more young people have moved to urban centres to obtain employment or to further their education. Since such a large proportion of the remaining population is retired or of school age, local governments find it difficult to raise adequate revenues to support essential public services.

Thus, the population decline in rural Manitoba has produced a decline in the rural economic base. The smaller centres of rural Manitoba have been adversely affected by migration of people from farm to city.<sup>37</sup> Historically, the economic base of smaller communities has been the provision of goods and services to the surrounding hinterland as opposed to manufacturing and related activities, however, over the last decade, the service roles of many of the smaller trade centres have been changing. With improved highways and public transportation, many small towns are bypassed for major purchases. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce points out that some communities in Manitoba have lost their economic reason for existence and others are in serious danger of losing it.<sup>38</sup> As well, individual

businessmen have been forced to close as rural communities lose population and the tax base has become attenuated.

The third identified problem, that of unemployment and underemployment, is also related to the decline in population and economic base.<sup>39</sup> Many service sector jobs are contingent, to a large extent, upon the future of the primary industries in the surrounding district. Migration out of the rural regions has thus resulted in the loss of existing or potential service sector jobs. Just as significant a factor has been the loss of jobs in the primary industries to mechanization and industrialization. The problem in rural areas is also one of underemployment--work in many areas is seasonal and subject to wide fluctuations.

A fourth problem of rural Manitoba concerns health and social services. Many rural residents do not enjoy as good access to health care facilities and services as do their urban counterparts.<sup>40</sup> For example, the Manitoba White Paper on Health Policy demonstrates the concentration of physicians and dentists, home care and homemaker services in major urban centres.<sup>41</sup> The document further points out that some regions, such as eastern Manitoba, stand out as being very deficient in extended and acute care hospital facilities in relation to other regions in the province. Other significant points made by the study are as follows: a Winnipeg resident has far better chances of obtaining adequate dental care than has his rural counterpart; there

are gaps and deficiencies in dental services in rural areas; persons requiring mental health care in a community located some distance from the mental health institutions must rely for care on periodic sessions with a visiting mental care team or face institutionalization far from his community and family; and, the level of income support is dependent upon the municipality in which the applicant resides. In fact, the accessibility to family and social services is limited in some rural areas of the province because of limited supply, financial barriers, social stigmas attached to the receipt of certain services, and geographical disparities in service.<sup>42</sup> This situation is further aggravated in the case of native rural communities where services may be poor because of geographic isolation, difficulty of transportation and a lack of clear-cut policy with respect to services for native persons.<sup>43</sup>

Another problem concerns education. There are wide variations in school facilities between different rural regions and between rural Manitoba and larger urban centres. In many rural Manitoba centres, there are good facilities and teachers, and a wide variety of course offerings, but in many other rural communities, the choice of courses is limited and facilities inadequate. As well, perhaps more important, programs in some schools do not reflect local priorities and aspirations.<sup>44</sup>

Housing also reflects a significant difference in quality between rural and urban areas.<sup>45</sup> When settlement

took place in the late 1800's and early part of this century, housing was newly built. Since then, a "second generation" of rural housing has replaced the pioneer home. Many of these "second generation" homes are in need of renovation or replacement. A Department of Agriculture survey in 1971 revealed that 23 percent of rural Manitoba housing was constructed before 1920, 35 percent prior to 1930, and 50 percent before 1945. The survey reported that 59 percent of all rural homes are in need of renovation.<sup>46</sup>

The availability of rural transportation facilities seriously affects opportunities for employment and recreation in rural Manitoba.<sup>47</sup> The present vast road network of rural Manitoba (3,450 miles of trunk highways and 6,800 miles of provincial roads) reflects the high mobility of residents from both the rural and urban areas of Manitoba. However, a study of provincial roads in rural Manitoba reveals a number of inequities. Population per mile of provincial road and trunk highway varies considerably among municipalities, resulting in differences in the standards of service to rural Manitobans. The road network, oriented as it is towards Winnipeg, provides insufficient and unsatisfactory access for travel within rural Manitoba. Bus service, as an alternative to the automobile, with the decline of trains, varies considerably from community to community. Prior to 1979, air service to the larger centres of Brandon and Dauphin were nonexistent, and thus, there was no encouragement for the location of industry and business in these centres.<sup>48</sup>

Poverty in the rural areas of Manitoba is a well-documented fact. The Report on Welfare Policy in Manitoba (1972) noted that a disproportionately large number of all units in poverty live in rural areas.<sup>49</sup> A 1976 report on low income farm families demonstrated that 15,415 low income farm families represent 36.6 percent of the total number of farm families (42,075).<sup>50</sup> As well, A Review of Child Welfare Policies, Programs and Services in Manitoba pointed out that people of Indian origin by and large are poor, marginally attached to the labour force, badly housed, in poorer health than the rest of the population, and in many cases, they are living in communities which suffer from a lack of economic viability, from social disorganization and from a variety of social problems.<sup>51</sup>

A brief review of the predominant problems of rural Manitoba demonstrates that rural Manitoba is suffering from a declining population, a declining economic base, unemployment and underemployment, lower levels and deficiencies in education, health and social services, housing and transportation problems and poverty. The problems of rural Manitoba have serious implications for its residents, and as a result, rural Manitobans point to the importance of "rural development" as a solution to the "present rural dilemma".<sup>52,53</sup>

## The Delivery of Human Services in Manitoba

### I. The Federal/Provincial Social and Health Service System

Under The British North America Act, by which Canada became a self-governing federal state in 1867, charities and charitable institutions--the modern equivalent of social welfare--were assigned to each province, along with responsibility for public health. While these two areas were by and large considered the responsibility of local government, the Federal Government, particularly within the last forty years, has increased its involvement both through the direct establishment and administration of certain social security programs as well as through cost-sharing of provincial programs. While the Federal Government does set some basic criteria that must be met before it will share costs, it does not establish any operational guidelines that must be adhered to in the delivery of services.<sup>54</sup>

A number of major social security programs have been initiated by the Federal Government over the past decades which apply to all Canadians. An example of two contributing programs are the Unemployment Insurance Plan, which covers Canadians in the work force who temporarily find themselves unemployed, and the Canada Pension Plan, which provides a basic pension for an employee when he retires from the work force, or for his widow and dependents when he is deceased. An old established program is the Family Allowance Program, which provides an allowance for all Canadian children. Additionally, the Old Age Security Plan

provides a pension for all senior citizens over the age of sixty-five, while the Guaranteed Income Supplement, a needs-test, provides additional pension for seniors where warranted.

On the provincial scene, a federally cost-shared, provincially administered health services plan provides complete medical and hospital coverage for all citizens at a nominal premium rate; in fact, the premium has been abolished in Manitoba.

Thus, the Province of Manitoba develops and directly delivers various forms of income maintenance and social and public health services. Except for general short-term assistance, which is provided by the municipalities, the Department of Community Services and Corrections (formerly, Health and Social Development, and Health and Community Services) is responsible for providing social allowance to all eligible persons. Probation, child welfare, vocational rehabilitation, family counselling and public health services are delivered by the Department as well. However, in portions of the province, delivery of some of the services are provided by private agencies.<sup>55</sup> An example of this is the provision of child welfare services by children's aid societies in certain sections of the province.

In summary, the Canadian scene is characterized by two levels of government involved in the public welfare and public health fields, with the major responsibility for developing and delivering direct services resting with the province.

## II. The Manitoba Social and Health Service System

In Manitoba, it is important to understand the structure of the Department of Community Services and Corrections in order to understand the working context of the rural social worker.<sup>56</sup> There have been many changes in the Department of Community Services and Corrections over the last decade.

In 1968 the respective departments of health and welfare and the corrections, probation and parole programs of the Attorney General's Department were combined into one department, Health and Social Development. This department contained the following divisions: public health, mental health, social services (including probation and parole), corrections, administration, planning and research. At about the same time, vocational rehabilitation services, community development services, probation, child welfare and the social allowance program were integrated into the social services division regional structure. The health units scattered through the province continued to provide the public health services.

Subsequently, during 1970-71, major steps were taken in the creation of a single unit delivery system. A departmental structure was created which included four major components or divisions: Community Operations, Inter-Regional Operations, Resources, Research, Planning and Program Development. The province was subsequently divided into eight regions and a regional director was appointed for



each region (see Appendix E). The former social service regions and public health units were brought under the administrative control of these directors, and at the regional level, delivery systems for the various social services<sup>57</sup> and public health programs were integrated.

Social workers, probation officers, public health nurses, mental health workers, vocational counsellors, medical retardation workers and medical officers of health were formed into regional personal service teams, reporting to a single team leader for their caseload and to a senior worker in their particular discipline on issues of professional concern.<sup>58</sup> Neither "teams" nor the concept of "teamwork" were initially defined, and the personal service teams were expected to work things out as they went along. The field workers in the Department took very seriously the integration of public health and social services.

Accompanying the Single Unit Delivery System process, several competing versions of teamwork come to operate within the province, none appearing to be inappropriate to the needs of the catchment area being served.<sup>59</sup> As well, case management systems emerged, needs being met by some combination of consultation between colleagues, collaborative interventions and/or internal referral. Accompanied with the process was the progressive decentralization of services to smaller regional centres. Some sub-offices carry full complements of departmental services and others offer limited service, calling in

required services from the regional office. The plan was, as well, for the creation of district health systems throughout the province, to include a catchment area of a number of rural communities. A number of district health systems have come to be operational across the province, offering both public health and social services, those services usually delivered by regional and/or district offices of the department. With the peculiar distribution of population in a large number of very small population centres, even this decentralization beyond the regional office level cannot make services locally available to all Manitobans.

In addition to the existence of regional and district offices and district health centres, each of the social service program areas has a central office program directorate. Their functions are to set standards, to monitor program quality, to offer consultative services to the regions, to conduct staff development programs, and to offer professional leadership in the respective areas. However, with the exception of the social allowance and the probation program, there is no line of accountability from the field to the central office program directorate.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the change of government in Manitoba and a split into two departments (Department of Health and Department of Community Services and Corrections) in October 1977, social and health service delivery in the province continues to be from a decentralized team basis. Restraint

has been the policy of this present government, and as a result, although the variety of services has not been deleted, several of the programs are experiencing rather severe cutbacks in their budgets, thus limiting services.<sup>61</sup>

To summarize, the Department is large and complexly organized. The Regional Office is the seat of service delivery, and the Regional Director is the planner and manager for the region. Consultative specialist support is provided by the central office directorates. The major vehicle of service delivery is the multi-disciplinary staff group. Services are usually decentralized beyond the level of the Regional Office but are not uniformly developed in the district sub-offices.

### III. The Child Welfare/Family Service Program

In order to understand the child welfare/family service program, it must be understood within the larger context of the social service system of which it is a part.<sup>62</sup> Child welfare is a sub-specialty within the social services. Child welfare's present-day leadership comes from the social work profession and the dominant ethic is a casework orientation.

When we speak of child welfare, we are usually referring to those statutory services which are defined by a child welfare act. These include protection services to abused, neglected and abandoned children, the provision of foster home and group home care to children in the temporary or permanent guardianship of a child care agency, adoption services to applicants for adoptive parenthood, services to

unmarried parents, treatment services in group homes, and institutions for children who are emotionally disturbed, unmanageable by their parents or delinquent. Most of these services are involuntary in nature. Despite the emphasis on involuntary statutory service, several provisions of a preventative nature have been incorporated into the present Child Welfare Act (1974), and thus, the family services part of the program.

In Manitoba, child welfare/family services are delivered both by private agencies and by regional offices of the Department of Health and Community Services. Historically, child welfare responsibilities were undertaken first by private agencies; government's original involvement was only the granting to the private agencies the authority to act on behalf of neglected and abandoned children. This was soon augmented by the assumption of parallel responsibilities for children in areas not served by any private agency. The vast expansion of governmentally-sponsored and publicly-delivered social services in all areas of the province is a much more recent phenomenon.

Four children's aid societies (C.A.S. of Eastern, C.A.S. of Central, C.A.S. of Westman, C.A.S. of Winnipeg) and the Jewish Child and Family Service are delegated responsibility for the delivery of child welfare services. Each society has a designated catchment area in which it is the exclusive carrier of child welfare responsibilities. Where there are no children's aid societies, these

responsibilities are borne by the regional offices of the Department of Health and Community Services; while the areas served directly by the Department contain urban centres, they are largely rural and northern, with a population which is geographically dispersed to a considerable extent.

Translating the coverage of private agencies into regional terms, there are two regions--Central and Westman--which are not required to offer child welfare services. Two others--Winnipeg and Eastman--provide child welfare services to the part of their catchment area not served by a private agency. The remaining four regions--Interlake, Parklands, Norman and Thompson--are fully responsible for the delivery of child welfare service within their boundaries.

Outside of Winnipeg (where alternative sources are available), the provision of non-child related family services is also provided under public auspices. Counselling services to families (including the elderly and individuals) are available from all regional offices in the province. In general, private child caring agencies provide family services only when child protection is a real or highly probable issue.<sup>63</sup> More general family services need to be obtained from outside the private agency. Thus, in those areas of the province where a children's aid society operates, family services are supplemented by the regional offices.

Private agencies are legally corporate entities, under provincial charter, governed by a board of directors, and funded by the Provincial Government to provide child

welfare services. They are also free to receive funds from the community as well. The staff of each agency are employees of the board, not civil servants.

In the fulfillment of the responsibilities for statutory child welfare services, the private agencies are, as are the regional offices, subject to the definitions, procedures and regulations set forth in The Child Welfare Act, its Regulations and the administrative and programmatic procedures established by the Director of Child Welfare or the Minister. They are bound as well to the funding principles and budget procedures set forth by government, and these, in turn, are affected by the cost-sharing provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan. Within these parameters, the private agencies operate autonomously with respect to administrative structure, staff deployment, program content and the sets of professional decisions bound up in the conduct of the work. Inasmuch as the regions carry responsibility for the delivery of services other than child welfare, regional offices are bound to administrative structures and modes of staff deployment with the capacity to deliver a broad range of programs.

To summarize, child welfare services are delivered by private agencies in the more heavily and densely populated areas of the province and by regional offices of the Department elsewhere. Where child welfare services have been delegated to children's aid societies, family services

which do not have child protection implications are delivered by other agencies, and outside Winnipeg, almost always by the Department. All child care agencies, private and public, are uniformly subject to the legislative, fiscal and programmatic requirements of the Department. Although they are autonomous corporate entities, the private agencies are almost totally dependent upon government for their operating budgets.<sup>64</sup>

Chapter III - References

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## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA REGARDING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

#### Preliminary Discussion of Findings

The following discussion entails the comments, insights and ideas of the sample of rural social work practitioners under investigation. Insights, ideas and comments were solicited by a personal review with each of the thirty practitioners. The format of the interview was open-ended; discussion was prompted by the investigator with the use of a prescribed schedule outlining the areas of inquiry.

The interviews were undertaken during a limited time period, from December 12, 1978 to January 10, 1979. The responses therefore represent the thoughts and opinions of the thirty rural social work practitioners at this particular period in their careers. It is also important to again note that the sample of rural workers under investigation represent employees of the child welfare and/or family service program (herein referred to as child and family services) in the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the province. Practitioners were selected on the basis of having a rural caseload and/or responsibility for a rural catchment area. In fact, the practitioners interviewed included all of

the workers employed by the child and family services program in a rural area of the designated regions at the time of the interview.

The insights and comments to be presented in this chapter are responses to questions/topics posed by the investigator. Throughout the interviews, the investigator took notes of the discussion, and following the discussion, responses were categorized in the appropriate topic areas. Some of the comments elicited during the interview, upon analysis, were found to fit into more than one topic area. When this occurred, the comments were categorized into the topic area deemed most appropriate. Each of the topic areas--characteristics of the rural setting; implications of the rural setting for social work practice; approach to rural service delivery; policy, legislation and the rural setting; implications of the rural setting for social work education--will be discussed separately. A final category, entitled other issues, will present additional ideas. Further, in keeping with the content analysis format, the topic areas will be presented by major grouping of the sample under study, that is, in terms of the views of public field/direct service workers, the views of the private field/direct service workers, the views of the public management/supervisory workers, and finally, the views of the private management/supervisory workers.

The comments, ideas and insights to be set forth are those of the respondents. Where possible, the particular phrases of the respondents will be used. As well, where a

similar comment or idea was made by more than one worker, its frequency will be noted.

### Characteristics of the Sample Under Investigation

Thirty social workers practising in the rural environment were utilized as the sample for study. The thirty workers represent two agencies, rural workers employed by a private agency, The Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba, and rural workers employed by a public agency, the Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Manitoba. In addition, both the public and private agency employees were practising in a particular area of Manitoba, those geographic areas defined as the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the Province. For the most part, the private agency workers practice in the Eastman Region, except for a small geographic section of the Interlake Region which is also serviced by the Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba. The public agency employees practice in both regions.

In terms of numbers, the thirty workers interviewed represent 40% private agency and 60% public agency or twelve private agency employees and twenty-one public agency employees. Of the eighteen public employees, six were practising in the Eastman Region and twelve were practising in the Interlake Region. In addition, a mix of both field/direct service and management/supervisory personnel were



selected,\* twenty-one from direct service (70%) and nine from management (30%). Of the twenty-one workers employed in direct service, nine (43%) were from the private agency (Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba) and twelve (57%) from the public agency (Department of Health and Community Services). The management/supervisory personnel included six (43%) from the public agency and three (25%) from the private agency.

The sample of thirty social work practitioners range in age from the mid-twenties to the mid-forties, the largest group (numbering twelve) representing the mid-thirties. As well, the sample includes various combinations of educational background, the majority (thirteen) holding a M.S.W. degree, followed by ten holding a B.S.W. degree, two with both a B.S.W. and an M.S.W., two with a B.A., one with a B.A. and B.S.W., and one with a Community College Certificate. There is no discernible difference in age or educational background of workers employed in the public as opposed to private agency, however, the management/supervisory personnel tended to be older (mid-thirties to mid-forties).

In terms of work (social service) experience, by far the largest group (nineteen) had a significant number of years of rural experience, the average being thirteen years.

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\*For purposes of this study, rural practitioners with caseloads and/or direct client service responsibilities are defined as field workers, whereas practitioners with administrative and/or responsibilities for supervision of other (field) workers and program planning are defined as managers.

Those who had both rural and urban work experience numbered eleven, averaging four years rural and three years urban experience. Again, there was no discernible difference between public and private agency employees, with respect to work experience. However, the management group tended to have the greatest number of years of experience, an average of fourteen. Those managers with both rural and urban experience numbered three, averaging eleven years rural and five years urban experience.

The sample of workers was also polled in terms of their residence, that is, whether or not they lived in the rural community in which they worked. Thirteen workers of the sample of thirty lived in, with the remainder (seventeen) living outside of their rural working community. The residence question makes no particular distinction between public and private agency employees or between field and management personnel.

The workers were also questioned as to length of service in the particular region in which they worked. The average for public field workers was 7.5 years, for private field workers, 2 years, for both public and private management, 10 years.

The sample of workers represents thirteen females, that is, twelve female field workers and one female manager, and seventeen males, that is, nine male field workers and eight male managers.

### Subjects' Response to the Research Topic

Prior to the presentation of insights emerging from specific topics under discussion, a number of comments regarding the response of the subjects to the inquiry appears appropriate. Generally, the response of social worker respondents can be characterized as one of enthusiasm for and interest in the subject area. It is perhaps significant, from the investigator's point of view, that a majority of respondents commented on the uniqueness of the study, with a minority further indicating that they enjoyed the inquiry. From the perspective of obtaining information about doing research in the subject area, the investigator encountered co-operation from both the public and private agencies in carrying out the study. The co-operation not only included permission to interview employees, but both agencies went so far as to provide transportation, interviewing space and arranged specific times and dates for the interviewer to come into the agencies to discuss the study and subsequently to interview employees.

Perhaps one of the major considerations in a study of this sort is the need for the investigator to be cognizant of the fact that rural workers are busy people, and as such, timing of the interview is important. As a result, some workers were able to spend more uninterrupted time with the investigator than

others. Nonetheless, it appeared that a significant number of workers had prepared for the interview by giving consideration to the topics outlined in the introduction to the study (see Appendix B) circulated to participants prior to the actual inquiry.

### Characteristics and Problems of the Rural Environment

Questions and probes were directed to the thirty practitioners, with two particular themes in mind, namely, the social conditions and/or problems encountered in the rural setting, and the characteristics of the rural population. These particular inquiries were made with the intention of drawing upon the first-hand knowledge of the rural practitioners as they came into contact with rural people, rural communities and rural lifestyles.

### Views of Public Agency Direct Service

#### Workers:

One predominant characteristic identified by a large number of public field employees (six) concerned the perception by rural communities and rural people of social work and income maintenance as being one and the same, that is, child and family services as being a service for people receiving welfare. One worker suggested that this

perception was sound and healthy, and encouraged the view that social problems cannot be isolated from financial problems. Other workers suggested that this perception of child and family services as a service for families receiving welfare creates a reluctance for rural people to voluntarily refer themselves or each other because of the perceived stigma to being involved with the service. In rural areas, as opposed to urban centres, one worker commented, the stigma attached to receiving service as well as the fact that fellow rural residents know that their neighbour is receiving service, has the effect of service being accepted only as a last resort and/or at the point of crisis. It was suggested that word as to who is receiving service gets around quickly in small communities, and as such, people tend to seek out assistance from other community people for problem-solving rather than from professional social workers. In addition, rural communities are often unaware of the existence of formal services (i.e., child and family services) in their community, or if they do, tend to see it as a service solely designed for welfare recipients. As well, one worker suggested, there is a tendency for some people to travel to an urban centre to obtain service rather than accepting service locally where a service recipient cannot remain anonymous. However,

another worker suggested that this was not always true, as she noted a particular reluctance among long-term, strongly ethnic-oriented residents to go outside their community, particularly to an urban centre, for service.

In this same vein, one worker also suggested that child and family services are viewed as being akin to legal enforcement, rather than as a voluntary, non-statutory service. In rural communities, it was recognized by public direct service workers that the traditional care giver is the local family physician, rather than professional social workers. As well, the church was also considered (by two workers) to be a major caregiver in rural communities. One worker noted that a religious organization has had powerful control over many rural families, often to the point of abusing the clients' rights.

Related to the viewpoint of child and family services as being akin to welfare and legal enforcement is the identification by two rural workers of the natural helping system in rural communities. Two workers commented on the use of natural helpers in the community who were sought out and utilized by local residents, rather than the formalized services. None of the workers elaborated on who the natural helpers were in rural communities.

A second characteristic cited by rural social work respondents (three in total) concerned the lack of formalized resources in rural communities. The lack of resources, for example, alcoholism and child guidance

programs, it was noted, affects both the community residents as well as the workers.

A third characteristic, identified by five rural public field workers, is the tendency towards a conservative ideology expressed by rural residents. The conservative ideology of rural people, suggests one respondent, is expressed in the lack of tolerance for deviant behaviour, that is, people who lead "immoral" (perceived) lifestyles tend to be ostracized and questioned by the community. Another worker described the abundance of child abuse complaints that can be received concerning a family who does not function by the normal community standards. A third worker added that there is great variation among rural communities, with some communities being more accepting of deviant behaviour.

Related to the conservative tendency, one public field worker identified the existence of a strong sense of family in rural communities. This worker suggested that this strong sense of family produces coherent family models to act as examples for the younger generation. As well, rural families relate to members of the extended family. Thus, states this worker, in comparison to the urban experience, the rural family bonds are stronger, the children are healthier, and the extended family is in more control of the children's behaviour.

Also related to the conservative ideological tendency in rural communities, another public field worker

identified the prevalence of a social distinction between upper and lower class families in rural communities, resulting in certain individuals and/or families being scapegoated by the rural community. This worker described the existence of such strong attitudes in a rural community as preventing the integration of the two groups in a local school, creating a situation where the two groups co-existed with little interaction.

A sixth significant characteristic identified by rural public field workers (four in total) is the strong identification by the rural residents with the rural social worker. Also related to this identification is the nature of interaction between the rural worker and the rural client. Clients expect the worker to be informal in his/her professional relationship and secondly, to be available at all times (e.g., evenings, weekends, etc.). The nature of rural interaction, suggests one worker, dictates that the worker approach his job with informality. This worker suggested that rural people do not relate to a "city slicker" image. Another worker, commenting on the identification with the social worker, stated that this identification carried with it the expectation that the worker is always available, can solve all problems and can be called upon. A third field worker stated that rural communities "mourn" when they lose "their worker" and as such, rural people are often hesitant to involve themselves with the social worker if there has been a high rate of



turnover in social work staff. Farm people, suggested another respondent, particularly the isolated resident, relies upon the social worker for information.

In describing the social conditions and/or problems encountered by rural field workers, it is significant that two public employees argued that rural social problems/conditions are similar in nature to urban social problems. In general, public workers identified social problems to include family relationship(s) dysfunctioning, truancy, acting out and behaviour problems in school and at home (including children of both lower and middle income families), alcohol abuse, isolation of the elderly, child and husband/wife abuse, parent/child conflict, and marital separation. A number of workers (four in total) described other social problems/conditions to be largely related to the rural environment. For example, two respondents described the existence of small communities consisting largely of one ethnic/cultural background, suggesting that rural communities which have congregated around a particular ethnicity clash with other ethnic communities to maintain their separate identifies. Each community has its own belief system, lifestyle and pattern of interaction. One worker suggested that inter-cultural marriages often create real value clash for the couple. A second rural condition identified by one worker is the seasonal fluctuation in caseloads. For example, fall is traditionally a season of heavy caseloads, because of the migration of people to towns

and villages from nearby reserves and isolated communities. A third rural condition, identified by three workers, is physical isolation of certain rural people, creating a lack of community supports and transportation problems. A fourth rural problem, identified by another worker, is the effect of the consolidation of rural schools. He attributes a breakdown in the functioning of rural communities and residents to the consolidation of schools. Schoolmates frequently cannot associate with each other outside of school hours because of distance which, in turn, contributes to school and community drop-out, with young rural residents seeking opportunities and friendship in larger centres. A fifth rural problem identified by three public field workers is the problem of transportation, problems in transporting people to services and employment opportunities. Transportation problems are usually more difficult for low income families and the elderly.

Lack of employment opportunities, few resources, poor land and suitable housing were also cited by two other workers as problems encountered by rural residents. One worker noted that problems associated with these conditions tended to be generational, e.g., alcoholism, unemployment. In addition, two workers identified a noticeable decrease in the availability of foster homes in rural areas. This decrease was related to the increase in female employment among rural residents, as well as high expectations with little financial or emotional support given to rural foster

parents. Accompanying the decrease is the noticeable trend of elderly people expressing the greatest interest in foster parenting. The elderly was also seen by four workers to be a major problem group in rural areas, compounded by problems of transportation, lack of recreational, social and health resources.

Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

One major characteristic identified by private employees (six) concerned the variation among rural communities regarding the acceptance of child and family services. Private workers also described a stigma being attached to the receipt of child and family services. Two respondents expressed the view that the private agency has more positive acceptance in rural communities than does the public service, although there is a tendency among rural people to attempt to manage their own problems because of an inherent pride and concern with others finding out that you are a recipient of service. Two workers indicated that often other professional people in communities (e.g., teachers) view child and family services as related to the receipt of welfare.

A second predominant characteristic identified by private field workers (five) concerned the lack of confidentiality and anonymity in rural communities. One worker indicated that confidentiality, as traditionally known in social work, tends to get lost in the rural

community. Another worker suggested that word as to who is receiving service travels quickly in a rural community.

"Everybody knows everybody else's business" was a phrase frequently used by workers in describing the lack of confidentiality and anonymity in the rural community.

Third, a frequently (five workers) cited characteristic by private agency respondents referred to the lack of formal resources and the existence of informal services in the rural setting. Workers suggested that a natural helping system consisting of family, friends and social (neighbourly) contacts exists in rural settings. One respondent suggested that the existence of informal resources precludes the utilization of formalized services. It was also pointed out that rural people seek service only when their situation has severely deteriorated, suggesting a tendency to first seek out community people for problem solving.

A fourth characteristic identified by two private field workers concerned the conservative opinions/beliefs articulated by rural residents. Respondents defined this characteristic as unwillingness to change or to accept events/opinions out of the ordinary. Examples of "new" thinking cited included the development of day care centres, big sister organizations and parenting programs. These workers suggested that rural residents believed that people should be able to handle their own problems and therefore social resources were not required. They also described the

conservative tendency as being reflected in the value placed on the work ethic, the pride existing around the acceptance of service, particularly financial assistance. These same field workers identified a reluctance on the part of rural people to admit to the existence of problems in their community. For example, they described a situation wherein this reluctance resulted in the removal of problem children from the community by placing the children in the home of a relative in another community. As well, certain families and/or individuals are scapegoated as a result of the reluctance to admit to problems. The reluctance, it was also identified, appears in the unwillingness of some rural residents, particularly in wealthy communities, to admit that there is poverty and therefore the need for service.

Related to the conservative viewpoint, these same private agency workers identified a stigma attached to certain members of the community which precluded their acceptance as foster children. However, one worker suggested that there is considerable variation among rural communities, with some communities being more accepting of deviant behaviour.

Four private agency workers identified a fifth characteristic, namely, the existence of a strong sense of family in rural communities. These workers described the influence of the extended family, who are frequently counted upon as natural helping agents.

A sixth characteristic, identified by three workers, is the social distinction between upper and lower class families in rural areas. One worker identified difficulties in locating foster home resources for children whose families are considered to be on the lower rung of society.

The nature of rural relationships was described by three respondents. These workers described rural life as being "pure", less formalized, more personal and untainted by urban sophistication. Rural people were also described as being friendly and interactions between people were described as personal. One worker went so far as to suggest that when there is a problem, concern tends to be community-wide.

Two other characteristics identified by private agency workers (four) concerned the roles of religion and ethnicity in rural communities. These workers suggested that cultural values and religious values are important to rural people and are reflected in their daily lives. As well, it was noted, each community has its own life and way of interacting which reflects the dominant religious/cultural beliefs in the community.

With respect to the social conditions or problems in the rural community, it is significant that a large number (six) of private agency workers described rural problems as being the same as those found in urban centres, the major problems/conditions which included family relationship problems, child and husband/wife abuse, incest,

alcohol abuse, particularly with juveniles and adults, marital separation and teenage sexual promiscuity. These problems were seen as encompassing a wide range of the population and often found to be long-standing within families. Private agency respondents also commented on other problems associated with the lack of resources and lack of employment opportunities. Two workers suggested that rural people are not as dependent upon services (in comparison to urban dwellers) and tend to arrive at their own solutions with the assistance of informal resources. One worker suggested that this trend was changing with more government intervention.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

Two public agency managers commented on confidentiality (or lack of) as being a major problem in rural areas. The general sharing of information among rural residents was recognized as preventing people from coming forward to seek service.

One manager expressed the view that demands and expectations placed on services are increasing. The noticeable trend is toward the middle class seeking and using child and/or family services, although there tends to continue to be an embarrassment and a small-town attitude attached to requesting/accepting service. This manager described the referrals from the middle class as being self referrals and crisis in nature. This same manager also commented on a

sense of frustration expressed in rural communities--these communities want service but distance prevents the government/agency program from offering the complete range of services that are available in larger or urban centres. For example, he cited difficulties with offering ongoing marital therapy to residents in a community some sixty miles from the resource centre.

One public manager commented on a recent trend in rural communities. Over the years, he stated, there has been a continuous growth and development in resources as part of the government's decentralization thrust.

The great mix of cultures, races and classes in rural communities, cited one manager, creates considerable prejudice. Another manager commented that there is considerable variation among rural communities with respect to child care standards and beliefs.

In describing social conditions or problems of rural communities, one manager commented that he did not see problems in rural areas as being any different than those found in urban centres, with the one exception that there are not as many chronic (i.e., long-term) clients in rural areas. He expressed the view that the needs and demands of rural residents are the same as those of urban residents but the difference is that there are not as many clients. Another manager described rural social problems/conditions to include alcohol abuse, a sense of alienation on the part of rural residents, low physical standards with



respect to housing, recreation and income, and suicides. One manager commented that problems with transportation are not any more difficult for the rural than the urban resident.

Views of Private Agency Managers:

Two private agency managers cited the view that there is a significant gradation of socioeconomic groupings in rural communities, which results in the ostracism of certain people by the community. One manager went on to say that ostracism of certain people leads to the well-known phenomenon of rural-urban migration. Added to ostracism, he suggests, is the lack of employment opportunities, particularly for people with marginal farm operations, further encouraging the migration trend.

One manager commented on what he described as three underlying characteristics of rural communities which affect service delivery: the close-knit nature of relationships, a sense of pride, and therefore, degradation attributed to receiving assistance, and physical isolation. This manager also suggested that there is great variation among rural people and rural communities as to the use of, and attitude to, receipt of service. He suggested that the traditional viewpoints, for example, the failure of the work ethic, are reinforced by government restraint policy.

Other characteristics cited by private agency managers included the existence of the natural support

system, the importance of tradition, the traditional pattern of living exemplified by the existence of the extended family, and the close-knit "everyone knows everyone else's business" phenomenon.

### Practice Implications of the Rural Environment

#### I. Rural Worker Residence

The thirty respondents were posed a variety of questions concerning the practice implications of the rural environment. The first question concerned residence in the rural work community. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they lived in the rural community in which they worked and to cite implications of their residence location for their practice.

#### Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

Of the twelve public field workers, five lived in the rural community in which they worked as opposed to seven who did not at the time of the interview. Of the seven who did not live in the rural work community at the time of the interview, one respondent had previously lived in the rural work community.

Eight of the twelve public agency respondents cited concerns regarding the difficulties associated with living in one's rural work community. These concerns ranged from difficulties associated with socialization to difficulties associated with being "on call at all times". One respondent, a single person, expressed the view that the

rural community is often unsupportive of the single individual. As well, this respondent cited the presence of social cliques and cultural conflicts which create difficulties in relating to people on a social basis. Also, she indicated that there was a sense in the rural community of not wanting to socialize with the local social worker, as well as a feeling of discomfort on the part of the social worker who was likely to frequently run into clients on social outings. Another respondent cited these encounters as frequently being of a negative nature. This worker also cited a sense of discomfort with being phoned at home for assistance in the "off-duty" hours. Another respondent cited the effect of burn-out on several workers who had lived in the rural working community.

Concerning the disadvantages associated with living in the rural work community, a third respondent expressed the view that it is difficult to educate people not to call you in the off hours, often resulting in wearing effects on the worker. A fourth worker took the view that one's personal life is greatly hindered if living in the rural work community in addition to the fact that people take advantage of the worker's presence. Responding to the disadvantages with rural residence, another respondent indicated that because of her rural residence, she was forced to have an unlisted phone number because of off-hour calls and that she was always extremely conscious of her behaviour in the community. Another disadvantage cited was the sense of social isolation

expressed by rural resident workers, with one worker indicating that his life was private and social activities were limited to a small group. Another respondent cited the pressures of expectations to become a member of certain groups and/or organizations in the community.

Advantages to living outside the rural work community were cited by four respondents. The advantages cited included the ability to remain objective, the ability to maintain one's respectability in the community, the ability to relax and leave work concerns behind during the off hours, and the ability to maintain one's privacy. Three of these four respondents cited a further advantage, the view that certain people/clients appreciate the "outside" objective person as being more helpful. They all stated that the resident worker's proximity and close awareness is often perceived as detrimental by the client and as a result, certain people would not request or accept service if the worker is a resident of the community.

Disadvantages to living outside the rural work community were also cited by three workers. These included the difficulties associated with commuting from residence to work location and long-distance travel over time. Other disadvantages included the inability to intimately know the community, particularly the informal local resources and to identify and/or "relate" to the community. One worker indicated, however, that some workers have also been able to develop credibility in the community because of the length of service in the area.

Advantages to living in the rural work community were also cited by three respondents. Advantages cited were largely philosophical, based on the notion that living in the community was beneficial to practice. Ability to intimately know the community was cited as the major advantage.

When probed as to the position taken on the question of residence, three workers responded with the view that the worker's residence did not have any particular significance for practice and that it is very much a question of an individual's ability to cope with either living situation. Three workers responded with the opinion that it is helpful to live in the rural work community, whereas the remainder (six) expressed the view that there were many disadvantages, of both a personal and professional nature, to living in the rural work community.

Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

Of the nine private agency direct service workers, four lived in the rural community in which they worked as opposed to five who did not live in the rural work community at the time of the interview. One of the non-residents had previously lived in the rural work community.

Four private agency direct service workers cited disadvantages to living in the rural work community, whereas five expressed the view that living in one's rural community is a positive experience. One respondent made the point

that there is a tendency to always being seen as the "social worker" by residents of the community. This respondent also added that making friends, as a result of this image, was difficult and she personally had attempted to use membership with the local community club as an inroad to gaining community acceptance as an individual in her own right.

The respondent who had previously lived in the rural work community expressed the view that rural residence is a good way of serving people despite its disadvantages. The disadvantages cited by this worker included the demanding nature of the work and residency, and the tendency to be "abused by" local citizens (e.g., distress phone calls in the off hours, etc.). This worker cited the advantages as being the opportunities for relationship-building, the tendency to be viewed in a more positive light and to be accepted as part of the community. Again, the point was made that some communities view worker residency as a necessity.

A third private agency respondent expressed the view that as a rural resident, she is viewed as an integral part of the community. Although she had the feeling that she could not escape from the demands, she advised that this was not a major problem for her, nor did her rural residency detract from her ability to make friends.

Another respondent who lived outside the rural work community to maintain a sense of distance and therefore personal safety described a problem with confidentiality as a resident worker. The view was that some people may be reluctant

to disclose themselves on the notion that the information would not be maintained as confidential. This same respondent cited advantages as having extra time and access to the community when living in the rural community.

Only one of the nine private agency direct service workers cited advantages to living outside the rural work community. The advantages cited were the ability "to switch off" from work concerns as well as the expression of confidence by rural residents in having an "outsider" as their social worker.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

Of the six public agency managers, four were residents of the rural work community, whereas two were not at the time of the interview.

Three of the resident managers and one non-resident manager expressed the view that there are difficulties associated with living in one's rural work community. These difficulties cited were the inability to develop a social life because of one's position in the community, the demands on free time, the lack of distinction by the citizens between the professional as social worker and as an individual citizen, the pressure to "play" one's job role, even in the off hours, pressures in social situations, and to provide extra service on an emergency basis in the off hours.

Two public agency respondents indicated that the residency question is serious, one that is not totally

resolved and the success with residency in the rural work community depends very much on the individual worker. In contrast, two managers expressed the view that it is helpful and desirable if the worker lives in the rural community. One manager stated that residency should be part of the job expectation because of the necessity of handling after-hour emergencies. This same manager expressed the view that residency helps to alleviate a high turnover rate of staff in that a commuting worker quickly grows tired of the travel and begins to look for another job.

Other views expressed by public agency managers include the notion that rural resident workers have a great need for social contact because of an isolated feeling and that if a worker is "on top" of the caseload, additional pressures of emergency and evening calls can be reduced.

#### Views of Private Agency Managers:

All three private agency managers did not live in the rural communities in which they worked.\* The views of private agency managers were mixed, with one manager indicating that residency in the work community provided stability in the service. The second manager was of mixed opinion on the subject, while there was no comment on the subject from the third manager. Also, it was noted that the resident worker is often viewed as a person "who understands"

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\*It is noted that the private agency has its central office in an urban centre (Winnipeg) and therefore private agency managers are not located in the rural community.



rather than as a "professional", although some communities prefer an outside worker which gives them the feeling that confidentiality is being protected. This manager also expressed the view that worker residency allows for "feeling" the way people interact in rural areas and therefore being able to intervene effectively. Another view concerned the resident worker who has grown up in his/her rural work community, which often results in rumors, a loss of credibility, etc.

## II. Rural Worker Experience

A second line of inquiry concerning implications of the rural setting for social work practice concerned the respondents' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages to rural practice. All thirty respondents were asked to define the pressures and/or pleasures related to rural practice and the specific characteristics of their practice, the emphasis being on soliciting day-to-day experience with rural practice.

### Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

The factors of distance and weather were cited by seven public agency workers as having a significant effect on rural practice. The considerable amount of travelling required to meet with rural clients is regarded as highly stressful and in addition, many days are lost to inclement weather. These two factors were noted to undermine the endurance of the worker, and therefore, the frequency of

contact with rural clients. One respondent suggested that a worker's credibility can be affected by his/her driving ability and, therefore, service capability can be impaired.

Geography of the rural area also has implications for social work practice as identified by seven public agency respondents. One worker described the necessity of service being delivered on an itinerant basis because of geographical factors. Distance to the worker's office, stated another worker, and transportation difficulties (particularly for low income families) forced the rural worker to go out to people. Geographical factors were also noted to create a situation of lack of supervision and support for the rural worker in that a rural worker is in the field for two to three days at a time with little or no access to supervision. The sense of isolation, accompanied with distance from the worker's central office, results in a lack of professional stimulation and lack of involvement with "the rest of the social work world". This isolation and lack of supervision and stimulation is regarded by these respondents as being most difficult for the new worker. The geographical nature of rural practice, cited another worker, requires that client contacts be prioritized and that time be allowed for travel.

Pressure from the community was cited (by seven respondents) as an additional factor in rural practice. Pressure takes the form of demands from clients, as well as

from other professionals who may have different goals and philosophies. In addition, pressure may come from community residents, for example, they may place pressure on the worker to take action with respect to a certain situation, while at the same time, the worker is confronted with protecting the clients' right to self-determination. As well, the rural social worker is noted to be expected to over-extend him/herself to rural clients, that is, for example, to be available for evening work. Rural workers, it was noted, are often more willing to extend themselves as a result of a need to develop credibility. Two respondents noted that there is a tendency for a worker's activities, both social and professional, to be well known and scrutinized. A worker's lifestyle, they stated, is in full view to the community, and therefore, it is important that a worker's life be a role model for others. Pressure also takes the form of an expectation that you are always a social worker, despite the fact that you may be involved in activities in the community (for example, member of the local school board) which are not professional roles.

The lack of resources (often taken for granted in the urban centres) in the rural setting was also cited as a major factor by all twelve public agency direct service workers. The lack of resources, noted one respondent, creates a dependence on the urban centre for specialized services, as well as the need to develop local informal resources, such as emergency foster homes. The development

of local resources, reported a second respondent, is a major challenge for the rural practitioner. The major resource in the rural setting, suggested two other respondents, is the social worker him/herself. The social worker is often the child welfare worker, family services worker, school counselor, alcohol counselor, and mental health worker all rolled into one. Another worker suggested that the lack of resources is the major difference between rural and urban practice.

A further implication of the rural practice setting experienced by seven direct service public agency workers is a sense of isolation requiring independent decision-making. The necessity of making decisions in isolation of supervision or peer support was noted by one respondent, which results in the development of either a very competent worker or one whose professional output is diluted. In addition to the lack of supervision, this respondent also noted that workers in the rural setting are often victims of a very poor system of orientation and ongoing staff development, and are even confronted with poor peer support when philosophies are different. Another respondent described on-the-spot decision-making as a very real pressure for rural workers, whereas two other respondents noted that a rural worker often needs encouragement, although it is often not received. A fourth respondent expressed the view that the independence associated with rural practice is an advantage. Coupled with a lack of

formal resources to which a worker can refer, a fifth direct service worker noted that the worker has to take the responsibility for a decision. Also, independent decision-making, noted a sixth worker, requires a worker to be fully aware and knowledgeable about the policies and programs available. Another respondent stated that the independence factor often creates worker burn-out and a high rate of staff turnover. He noted that the decentralization of offices has further isolated workers, and "slip-shod" practice, "energy-less" service giving has often resulted. This respondent stated that rural workers need to be told that they are doing a good job.

Related to the expectation of independent decision-making, eight direct service workers discussed the importance of developing good peer relationships. Good interdisciplinary working with a variety of professionals is a common phenomenon in rural areas, noted one respondent. There is a very real advantage in that workers get to know each other and, in fact, can become political and press for change. Two other respondents were of the opinion that because of lack of appreciation of the difficulties encountered in rural work by the centralized administrators, rural social work professionals have a tendency to seek support from other professionals, and in fact, these peers are often the greatest source of support for rural workers. The team approach is a sound approach to rural delivery, noted three other workers; the benefits of sharing clients

result in the community viewing the social worker and the nurse, for example, as a team. Frequently, noted these respondents, personalities interfere with team delivery, but the team approach allows the choice of an appropriate intervention based on team members' particular styles and abilities.

In addition to professional involvement, social work practice also requires personal involvement. This opinion was expressed by six public agency direct service workers. As an example of both professional and personal involvement in practice, one respondent noted that the rural worker on a home visit is frequently expected to stay for a meal; for many rural people, accepting a meal is a sign of acceptance of the clients' cultural values. In addition, this respondent noted, rural people want professional service, however, they do not want a worker to relate merely in a professional manner, but also on a personal basis. In rural settings, noted two other respondents, there is a tendency for professionals to socialize with clients, which creates a considerable dilemma for many workers. A third respondent stated that once a worker is known in the community, contacts become more personal and as a result, it may be difficult for the worker to remain objective. This respondent also pointed out that rural clients have considerable contact with the worker, and relate to the worker with a whole variety of needs and with expectations from the worker.

Related to the personal involvement expectation, rural workers (five) discussed the informal attitude of rural communities and clients. One respondent noted that workers are very important to their clients and often refer to the worker on a first-name basis. In fact, stated three other respondents, some clients also expect the worker to be a friend.

Another implication of the rural setting for social work practice, noted nine respondents, is the importance of knowing the community and being able to use the resources, particularly those of an informal nature. One respondent stated that if a worker knows the community well, there is a greater opportunity to be aware of the activities and power relationships in the community, and thus be in a position to use them for the betterment of clients. In addition to using the informal resources, a second respondent stated that if a worker is known in the community, his/her opinion will begin to be accepted by the local people. Two other workers indicated that the ability to connect with and maintain the use of informal resources is frequently dependent on the worker's personality and presentation to the community. One other respondent was of the opinion that a worker requires at least six months to "get a handle on" the working of a community, and that to gain "sureness and credibility" in the community, one's "track record" with the community is important. A seventh respondent stated that a low level of exchange can be expected from some rural

communities, particularly Indian reserves, until a relationship is developed with the community. As such, noted this respondent, a lot of worker time is required in building rapport with people through talking with them at their own level, without the use of a sophisticated terminology. Another respondent noted that there is an expectation upon the worker to discuss local concerns such as the weather.

Confidentiality was noted to be an important issue in the rural setting. Five direct service respondents commented that maintaining confidentiality in the rural setting requires that the worker know the area and the local values of its residents. For example, noted two respondents, clients are often concerned about the confidentiality maintained by the secretary of the social service agency, a person whom they may know well.

Public relations was cited by four respondents as an important consideration in rural practice. Two respondents noted that there is a tendency on the part of the rural worker "to be everything to everyone"; workers feel an obligation to give service and not to readily dismiss people, partly because their employer, the Department of Health and Community Services, is frequently viewed as the primary government agency in the rural setting. As well, these respondents noted that as a worker's credibility is established in a rural community, there is an expectation for more service. Two other respondents indicated that



rural workers tend to go where the client is, as they are aware of the distance barrier and the need to be in touch with people due to the lack of other helping resources. They noted that there is a tendency on the part of rural workers to be involved in outreach. As well, these two respondents also noted that there is a feeling that a client cannot be refused, as the Department operates as a total community service and this philosophy places considerable onus and responsibility on the local rural worker. As well, a reluctance on the part of rural people to self-refer was noted another worker, because of the stigma related to the service. As a result, there is required considerable initiative on the part of the worker to locate problems. A worker's first encounter with the community and the clientele, noted another respondent, has significant implication for the worker's future credibility.

A significant insight into rural practice expressed by seven public agency direct service respondents is the usefulness of the generalist approach to rural practice. A "jack of all trades" was cited as the major role of the rural worker, largely because the rural worker is the only link to resources. One respondent stated that a rural worker does not provide "treatment", but rather, his/her strength lies in the ability to assess and channel people into appropriate resources. This respondent also noted the further away a worker is located from the regional/central office, the more he is expected to innovate and provide a

whole variety of resources, relying on one's knowledge of the local community. Involvement with the local care-givers, that is, the interdisciplinary group, noted two other respondents, allows a rural worker to have influence on the local, formal resources such as income maintenance (e.g., who receives welfare) and local doctor (e.g., pressure to get immediate service for a needy child) and other resources such as the police. The advantage is that these other professionals get to know the worker as a person and as a result, a close relationship develops between the community professionals. Another worker described the generalist approach as the ability to pull in resources and to give reassurance without necessarily knowing all facets of social work intimately. In this regard, another respondent suggested that the major role of a rural worker is that of an advocate; people do not know where to go for services and the worker is required to dispense information and seek out services on behalf of clients. The generalist approach, noted two respondents, sometimes appears to be "menial running around", as opposed to involvement in therapy relationships with clients. These respondents indicated that short-term counselling and work with the community were predominant activities, whereas intense family therapy is not an appropriate intervention technique with rural families.

With respect to the generalist approach, information giving was cited by another respondent as a major activity.

The social worker is often the only professional contact for rural, remote families, and as a result, these families rely on the worker for information. As well, noted this respondent, the intake process is informal, the worker is visible, part of the community, and as a result, referrals come through "word of mouth".

Finally, a variety of other characteristics of rural practice were noted by a minority of public agency direct service respondents. One worker commented that the pace of social work practice is slow, although people sometimes expect a considerable amount of service. Voluntary clients, she noted, often attempt to resolve their own problems, recognizing that the worker will not always be physically available. The advantage to the rural setting for this respondent was the proximity of the community network, although knowing one's strengths and limitations (the ability to know when to say no and when to refer) were regarded as crucial factors in effective rural practice as well. A second respondent noted that practice experience is an advantage because of the independence factor; he noted that it is much harder for a new worker to deal with the great variety of work found in the rural environment.

A third respondent referred to the requirement that a rural practitioner may have service responsibility for a number of communities, and in any one day, the worker may be required to make a number of cultural adjustments. In addition, noted this respondent, there are often

insurmountable problems for a new worker: professional isolation, lack of support coupled with an expectation by the employer to be a "miracle worker". A great deal of psychic energy is required on the part of the rural worker to survive and to deal with the red tape in light of the fear of making mistakes and a lack of encouragement. A fourth respondent cited pleasure with rural practice because of the great variety of cases, the freedom to use a variety of intervention techniques and the involvement with a small community.

Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

With respect to their experiences with practice in the rural environment, seven private agency direct service workers responded that the factors of distance and weather affect workers' endurance. Two respondents noted that travelling time is crucial in that it is exhausting and a psychological reality for a rural worker. They cited the high rate of burn-out in rural practice as attributable, in part, to travel. Travel, as it relates to the factors of distance and weather, was described as exhausting and as a major issue for rural workers.

Another important consideration in rural practice cited by these workers (seven) is the pressure from the community. The social worker is often the only helping resource in the community, noted one respondent, and therefore, the worker is required to take responsibility for

more intervention, for example, alcohol counselling, family counselling, recreation and nutrition. The relationship with the worker, noted this respondent, is also important to remote people. A second worker noted that rural clients tend to relate to the worker rather than to the agency, and as a result, there is considerable pressure on the worker to establish a strong relationship with the community. The development of one's credibility, through outreach, noted a third respondent, is important work for a rural practitioner. Credibility is established by talking to parents, schools, clubs, storekeepers, Al-anon meetings and church groups. This respondent also noted that credibility is established by coming across as one of the people through involvement with local activities.

With respect to community pressure, another respondent stated that local people make referrals, sometimes out of a sense of maliciousness and sometimes out of concern, requiring that the rural worker be sensitive to the issues involved. Due to familiarity with the community, he noted, the rural worker is often aware of the family or the situation before the referral is made. A fifth respondent stated that expectations from the rural community and establishing rapport with a community are often a hardship, and as a result, workers tend to get exhausted and rundown.

A lack of formal resources was also noted to be a common feature of rural practice by six direct service

workers. As previously indicated, two workers commented that the social worker him/herself is often the only resource in a community, whereas another respondent stated that formal resources in a community are of little value, particularly when informal resources are sought out and maintained. A fourth respondent stated that she relied on informal resources provided by local residents, relatives and friends of the family, and as a result, a lack of formal resources is not a major problem. Two other respondents suggested that formal resources, particularly those offered by the government, are often viewed as stigmatizing by the community, indicating the importance of using the local resource network. For example, these two respondents cited the use of the local minister as a family therapy resource. Another respondent stated that the lack of formal resources is frustrating, particularly for workers accustomed to urban practice, and as a result, rural professionals pull together as do rural residents and rely on the network of family and friends--the informal resources.

A further implication of the rural practice setting experienced by four direct service workers of the private agency is the sense of isolation and responsibility for independent decision-making. Isolation is described by one respondent as a definite disadvantage in that the lack of co-workers to fill social and personal needs makes the rural worker feel lonely and unsupported. Two other respondents stated that rural practice is independent work, marked by a

lack of peer and supervisory consultation, and as a result, loneliness and the weight of independent decisions play on the rural worker's energy. Sharing the workload with other social work professionals in a particular geographical area has assisted one respondent, and as such, he is less aware of the lack of supervision. A high rate of staff turnover was attributed by one worker to the factor of isolation.

The importance of getting to know the community and thus being able to tie into informal resources was regarded by six respondents as being a major implication of rural practice. One respondent stated that a rural worker can be quite effective once the formal and informal network of the community is known, although it requires time to become familiar with the community. This respondent also noted that rapport is easier (in comparison to the urban setting) to establish in rural areas because the nature of rural life is more personal, residents are less threatened and as a result, a worker is able to relate on the client's "home ground". The less formalized and more personal nature of rural communities allows a worker to be more effective in breaking through rural social systems, however, at the same time, the more conservative nature of the community may pose a considerable hardship for some individuals and families. The visibility of the rural worker, noted two other respondents, allows for a close relationship between community residents and the worker, although this familiarity may be detrimental to the worker's objectivity.

These respondents indicated that the greatest amount of time spent by a worker is in face-to-face contact with clients and the community, and as a result, the worker's personality may influence who requests service. This contact, however, they noted, helps to build relationships and an effective worker can utilize these relationships to the advantage of the clients. A fourth respondent noted that assessment is difficult for the beginning worker until the norms and standards of the community are understood.

Coupled with community involvement, four rural private agency respondents noted the informal nature of the rural community. Two respondents suggested that there is an openness between the rural worker and the rural client, insofar as clients will indicate if they are dissatisfied. Relationships are much more personal and the attitude is informal, they noted. Another respondent indicated that a worker of rural background and/or familiarity with the community has the advantage of being able to sit down with clients/residents and discuss problems openly. Work with families was also noted by another worker to be of an open nature because "everyone knows what is going on". The informality required, noted by these respondents, is that of a "down-to-earth" approach, relating to people at their level.

Confidentiality was regarded by six direct service workers to be a major issue in rural practice. Three respondents noted that local people are not closed about



problems, although it is necessary for the worker to remain "close-mouthed", to acknowledge concerns expressed by citizens while at the same time preserving the prerogative to determine the appropriateness and validity of the information offered. Another respondent suggested that because everyone knows "everyone else's business", receipt of any kind of service (for example, big brother) automatically sets in motion a suspicion of problems. Two other respondents added that rural people are seriously concerned with the worker who may divulge information. As well, they noted, the referring person (the community person noting a problem) can best be handled by asking for his/her involvement in bringing the prospective client to the point of asking for service on his/her own volition.

Private agency direct service workers (six in total) described the generalist approach as an effective means to delivering service. Two respondents noted that the rural social work role is frequently one of education, particularly of other professionals (e.g., teachers and health officials) and families, and relationship-building with the local community. A second respondent suggested that a rural worker needs to be an advocate for the client, that is, to manipulate the system. Other respondents noted the importance of the outreach role in rural areas, the use of community resources including local churches which are often not utilized in traditional social work, public relations in terms of making people aware of the service, as well as the

use of the roles of advocacy counselling, referral and teacher. Finally, two respondents described the job as being a "jack of all trades".

Other insights reported by a minority of private agency direct service workers included the importance of maintaining contact with mobile rural residents who are transient members of both urban and rural areas, the importance of a trust relationship between a community and a particular worker which can destroy program effectiveness when the worker resigns, the critical nature of worker dress in establishing credibility in the community, the view by the community of the rural worker as always being the social worker, the ability to make realistic assessments in light of one's familiarity with a community, the importance of accessibility and availability in rural practice, the strong co-ordination developed between rural professionals, in an attempt to avoid duplication of services, and the considerable freedom and flexibility involved in rural practice.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

Public agency managers (five) reported that a major implication of the rural setting for social work practice is the pressure on the rural worker from the local community. One manager commented that there is considerable social expectation on the rural worker "to do the right things and to be seen at the right things". People know who you are,

he stated, and as a result, the worker is expected to conduct him/herself professionally at all times. Another manager stated that a worker's credibility is important in a rural setting because of close public scrutiny. A third comment suggested that community pressure can be strongly negative against the worker, particularly if an unpopular decision is made. In fact, noted this manager, a worker is not always in the position of being able to defend his decision and therefore his credibility, because of a need to protect clients' confidentiality. A fourth manager expressed the view that there is a need for a rural worker to be part of the community and as such, management should give positive support for community involvement, while at the same time recognizing the pressures that this involves. Finally, a fifth manager gave recognition to the pressures involved in living in the work community, largely because social situations involve clients. One of these managers suggested that it is necessary to structure an informal day-off system to prevent worker burn-out.

Geographical and weather factors were cited by two public agency managers to be major concerns in rural practice. Travelling, bad roads and storms were cited by one manager as significant pressures. A second manager pointed out that the distance factor often means that people tend to get badly underserved, having the effect of problems being developed into crisis proportions or rural

clients coming up with their own solutions with the assistance of the informal helping system.

The lack of formal resources was cited by three managers as an additional implication to rural practice. One manager commented that the rural setting offers little opportunity to develop formal support services such as day care and homemaker services, largely because the population size does not warrant these kinds of services. A second manager interpreted the lack of formal resources to be a definite benefit to rural practice, because resources can be utilized informally, while at the same time recognizing that a new worker in a community requires considerable time to "lock into" the family supports and informal helping system. A third manager's comment reflected the view that the rural worker is his/her own largest resource, while a fourth opinion stated that a lack of resources is not a major issue. As compared to the past, the rural areas have a lot of resources (for example, mental health and child development resources), although there is not the choice or breadth that is found in the urban centre.

The factor of isolation, necessitating independent decision-making, was regarded by three rural managers as another significant implication to rural practice. A real crisis in rural social work is the isolation of workers, commented one manager, requiring independent decision-making in critical situations. This manager suggested that family intervention by dyads or triads of workers can relieve some

of the pressures on an individual worker. A second manager applied the phrase, "thinking on one's feet", as a description of rural, isolated practice. He described the burden as one of being "on top of the problems at all times" because of the emergency nature of problems. A third opinion stated that remoteness from central decision-making means limited impact on policy decisions, but at the same time, being able to operate somewhat independently, such as structuring time off as a measure of pressure release, and ability to use a variety of intervention strategies. One manager did not recognize the supervision and isolation of the rural worker as a problem.

The generalist approach was described by two managers as being highly applicable in the rural setting. One manager indicated that he felt strongly about the generalist approach, an approach encouraging worker availability to the community to handle all or most situations, largely because a social worker is often the only available social service resource. A second manager described the generalist approach as one of high worker visibility in the community, encompassing a wide range of people and problems. Although a third manager did not use the term "generalist", she described social work as having an important role to play in the rural community, including a systems and community approach, case management, identification of community helpers, and multi-disciplinary practice, with the purpose of helping families to use local community systems.

In addition to these comments, three managers had positive comments to make about rural practice. These comments included the autonomy in rural practice, such as the ability to run one's own foster home program, to employ whatever casework approach appears appropriate, the general casual and relaxed pace of rural life, the opportunity to learn from a mix and variety of classes and races, and less pressure (psychological) from clients who often find their own means to solve problems. Comments on rural practice also included negative aspects such as the personal adjustment to a rural lifestyle, the physical demands, and the lack of differentiation between the worker as worker and worker as citizen reflected in the demands on free time and expectation to continually play the job role. A minority of comments addressed the necessity to be highly adaptable and flexible to meet the rural demands and the issue of confidentiality as a problem.

#### Views of Private Agency Managers:

Private agency managers (three) recognized the pressure from the local community as a major implication of rural social work practice. One manager stated that worker credibility is important in rural areas, particularly with reference to what the worker says and how it is phrased. A second opinion also concluded that the ability to handle community pressures varies with individual workers and the job description. He noted that rural people remember what

the worker does, particularly the actions of those workers who were not sensitive to rural concerns. A third manager remarked that a worker may come to identify with a certain group in the community, and in so doing, isolate him/herself resulting in a loss of objectivity and professionalism. He cited this phenomenon as a quandary for all rural professionals. In addition, this manager also noted that the intrusion of a professional worker is often seen as a threat to a community, who has developed its own way of dealing with problems and therefore the establishment of credibility often requires considerable time and effort. In addition, the high visibility of the rural worker and the pressures of distance and travelling were cited by one manager to create the tendency for rural workers to gravitate to urban centres for employment.

In this same vein of thought, public relations was cited by two managers as being important to rural practice. One manager cited the importance of developing a long-term relationship with a community, being fully aware of one's credibility in so doing. He also interpreted public relations to include the need to work with other agencies and seek support from these workers. A second manager commented that public relations requires skill, tact, awareness of how one works in a community, and personal relationships with informal resources.

Benefits and/or advantages to rural practice were cited by two managers. These included the ability to know

the community, its beliefs, values and child care standards allowing for sound assessment and relationship-building as part of the intervention strategy. Also cited was the slower pace which allows more time for assessment, often resulting in clients coming up with their own resources (through the use of the natural helping system) or the recruitment of local people by the social worker to assist in crisis situations.

A limited number of formal resources was cited by one private agency manager as having the effect of creating a dependency on urban centres for specialty assistance, such as psychiatry. The ability to "plug into" natural supports and use them effectively on behalf of families was cited as a major resource uncommon to urban practice.

The generalist approach was cited as important by one manager, while the other private agency managers cited the roles of education, particularly with other professionals, counselling and community organization/development to help the existing institutions to fill the gaps, as major rural social work activities. One manager suggested that the philosophies and technologies specific to rural community development were still unknown.

Finally, the issue of confidentiality was cited by one manager as a major concern of rural practice, and that considerable skill was involved in diplomatically recognizing citizens' concerns without jeopardizing the clients' rights.



### III. Competencies for Rural Practice

A third line of inquiry concerning implications of the rural setting for social work practice concerned the respondents' perceptions of the competencies required for rural practice. Competencies were defined as the skills, values, knowledge, attitudes and personal traits required to practice social work in the rural environment. The emphasis during this line of inquiry was not on obtaining academic responses to the questions, but rather, on soliciting responses regarding day-to-day experience with rural practice.

#### Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

In terms of skills necessary for the practice of social work in the rural environment, eight public agency direct service workers responded that rural workers are required to have a variety of skills, emphasizing both assessment and intervention skills. One worker commented that the important thing in rural practice is to know one's orientation and to develop skills within that orientation. This worker suggested that use of systems theory is extremely useful for assessment and intervention. A second worker interpreted skills to mean roles, and advised that a variety of roles, including broker, advocate, educator and counselor, were particularly useful in small communities. A third opinion stated that it is important to assess clients within their own cultural context and cited the use of the advocate role as important in upholding clients' rights to self-determination, in spite of the expectations

from the community. Two other opinions indicated analytical ability using human behaviour and systems theory, and counselling as important skills. Skills cited as necessary by a sixth respondent included listening and short-term counselling. This respondent stated that therapy is a middle-class notion; it is not workable and its effectiveness is limited in the rural setting. Another respondent stressed the ability to use assessment and interview skills in a "practical sense" and "based on theory".

With respect to skills, six workers made special mention of relationship skills. One comment emphasized relationship-building, particularly with members of the native culture, as a means of crossing cultural barriers. Two workers indicated the ability to relate to "where the person is at" as particularly important in rural practice.

With respect to a value base for social work practice, four respondents commented that the values of a rural practitioner must be sound. One worker suggested that the value base should include a personal commitment and a philosophical position regarding the rural environment and native children, as well as an appreciation of different beliefs/norms in the areas of employment habits, housing, physical space allocated within family homes, etc. Two other respondents suggested that the worker's value system has to be representative of the total community, that is, exemplify all of the "good" values of the community, particularly crucial because of the visibility and

credibility issue surrounding a practitioner in a rural community. A fourth respondent referred to an awareness of spiritual values often held by rural residents. Related to values, this respondent also commented that a social worker should know where he/she stands on a range of problems such as death, abortion and drugs.

An awareness of cultural differences was considered important by two rural practitioners. One respondent suggested that these differences, as interpreted in everyday life, must be understood, whereas, another made the comment that a knowledge of native culture, rural belief systems and the expectations/change potential of rural people was an important asset. This respondent suggested that rural people tend to be less mobile and therefore perhaps resistant to change.

Knowledge requirements for rural social work practice, cited by public agency direct service workers, included an emphasis on the generalist approach, systems theory, and community and group dynamics.

With respect to the generalist, the five workers interpreted the approach to mean "a jack of all trades" and a "go-between with resources". Systems theory was cited by six direct service workers as an important piece of knowledge for rural practice. One of these respondents added that the systems approach is important because of the lack of formal resources in a rural community. Community and group dynamics were referred to by six respondents.

Reasons cited for the importance of knowledge concerning community dynamics centred on the ability to get to know and develop working relationships within the community because of its size.

Other pieces of knowledge referred to by four rural workers included such practicalities as a knowledge of child and family services' policies and procedures, of other programs such as unemployment insurance, housing, public health, corrections, income tax, and file recording and administrative procedures. One other respondent suggested knowledge and/or a general perspective on rural as compared to the urban social fabric, and belief system, important in practical terms when making social assessments. Another suggested a knowledge of native cultures, and finally, one respondent suggested knowledge of child care and developmental needs of children, particularly as they are interpreted by different classes and cultures.

With respect to other attributes required of a rural practitioner, public agency direct service workers commented on factors such as a commitment to rural life, a broad approach, an ability to work independently, and an ability to be flexible. Four respondents discussed a commitment to rural life as an important attribute, whereas, one respondent suggested that a broad approach, with a focus on social as well as mental health problems, was important. The attributes of flexibility and independence were referred to by seven workers. Inherent in the ability to work

independently, stated one worker, is the capability of accepting isolation from social and professional resources as well as a lack of supervision by a regional office. Coupled with a propensity for independence, two other respondents suggested that good common sense, in addition to an ability "to think on one's feet", were important attributes.

Other attributes mentioned by direct service respondents of the public agency included a variety of social work skills (counselling, analytical, systems) coupled with a knowledge of resources and limitations in a rural setting, that is, what is and what is not available. Finally, one respondent suggested that a worker with outside interests has the ability to recharge his/her energy and to know one's limits in the professional area.

#### Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

With respect to skills for rural social work practice, the nine private agency direct service workers suggested a variety of skills. Two respondents emphasized relationship-building skills, cited as particularly important with unwilling clients. Two respondents suggested the ability to work with a variety of people and organizations: teenagers, unmarried mothers, families, groups and communities, the most important skills being education, counselling, communication, group, community organization, advisory, programming and advocacy. A fourth rural worker cited skills in working with other caregivers,

ability to adapt to a cultural variety and an ability to work independently. Two workers emphasized an ability to work with formal, but most importantly, with informal resources, as well as the ability to research community needs and to counsel families, particularly those in crisis. Finally, one respondent suggested assessment, counselling and support-giving skills.

In terms of values for rural social work practice, private agency direct service workers again provided a variety of values. Two respondents indicated that rural practice requires basic social work values adapted to the setting, that is, to the standards of the community. For example, these workers suggested that children should not be removed from their natural home merely on the basis of overcrowding or drinking, problems which can be interpreted in light of community economic factors. Another respondent emphasized the importance of accepting people "where they are at", while a fourth emphasized a commitment to maintain children in their own families or at the very least, in their own community. Two other respondents stressed the value of acceptance and tolerance of cultural and religious differences, that is, being able to understand the child within his environment or in light of community norms. Another respondent described values as being extremely important in rural practice, expressing the view that every decision is a question of value, as different cultures and different community dynamics affect a worker's value stance.

Knowledge required for rural practice was identified by rural private agency respondents to include systems theory, community dynamics, extended family dynamics and a generalist approach. Generalist knowledge was cited by five workers, although three of these workers cited the importance of specialty ability as well. Two others interpreted generalist knowledge as knowledge of local resources and the informal network. Systems theory was identified by one worker, whereas, small community dynamics was emphasized by six respondents. The dynamics of small communities such as the power structure, the role of gossip and belief system were given special mention by two workers. The extended rural family in the cultural context was emphasized by two other respondents.

With respect to personal attributes, private agency direct service respondents commented on an awareness of cultural difference (six workers in total), an ability to work independently and to be flexible (three workers). One respondent suggested that each community has its own values, life and interaction system, and therefore, an ability to relate to and understand the community helps the worker establish credibility in the community.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

With respect to skills for rural social work practice, three managers cited the need to have a variety of basic social work skills to work with a variety of clientele.

Skill in relating to ethnic or cross-cultural groups was emphasized by three managers, whereas, a fourth emphasized treatment skills, teaching and group skills. A fifth manager emphasized relationship-building skills with communities and families.

Values were mentioned by one rural public agency manager; he cited a need for a strong value base and ideology.

Knowledge for rural practice, cited by three rural managers, included a generalist approach, an awareness of intervention options and program resources, and a community and systems approach.

Four public agency managers interpreted competencies to include such worker abilities and traits as an abundance of energy, an interest in people, a willingness to learn about rural people, life experience, a positive attitude to rural living, ability to be comfortable with self and to make independent decisions and interventions, enthusiasm, innovation, contentment with rural life and career, dedication, flexibility, maturity, objectivity, a sense of curiosity, and confidence.

#### Views of Private Agency Managers:

One private agency manager commented on skills for rural practice which included counselling, communication on both a community and individual level, teaching, problem-solving and long-term relationship skills with clients and



other professionals. Two managers emphasized a knowledge of the generalist approach and of rural communities as important in rural practice. One private agency manager discussed values for rural practice and emphasized a belief in humans and their capacity to grow as well as a respect and dignity for the individual in the community.

All three private agency managers also interpreted competencies for rural practice in terms of worker traits, such as the ability to balance one's life between work and outside activities, a sense of humour, coping ability, a rural interest, openness, honesty, directness in communication, creativity, innovativeness, a commitment to rural life, resourcefulness, independence, and an ability to "to work with" rather than "for".

#### Approach to Service Delivery in the Rural Environment

Workers were asked to describe the approach taken by their agency and/or by their individual efforts to the delivery of the child and family service program. They were further asked to define the particular roles and methods they employed in delivering the program. No attempt was made by the investigator to define the terms, roles and methods, but rather, workers were asked to use the terminology most relevant/meaningful to them. Workers were also asked to give their opinion of the most effective means of delivering child and family services to a rural community.

Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

The most common theme concerning approach to program delivery voiced by public direct service workers concerned the program's emphasis on casework (with individuals and families) concerns as opposed to what was termed the "management of larger problems", "community resource development", "education" and "prevention". This particular insight was emphasized by ten of the twelve public direct service workers. As well, the restraint policy of the present government was considered by five of these workers to be the major reason for this emphasis.

These individual workers expressed the view that casework tends to be the major approach and/or method utilized in the delivery of the program. One worker suggested that although the program had looked to other methods, the emphasis is on "patch-work", "crisis" intervention. Another respondent suggested that the local health and social service team had not been encouraged by the administration to take on "larger problems". Statutory responsibilities were considered to be the primary focus by another worker who indicated that little recognition was given to the community preventative approach. This particular respondent further equated statutory responsibilities with social control, as opposed to social change. One worker stated that prevention is cited as the overall goal, but that little is done in the area of preventative work because of a lack of support by the government for

resources such as treatment programs and employment training. The main priority in child and family services, cited two other respondents, is protection and remediation. Although they noted some preventative work such as parenting courses, they described the emphasis to be remedial, that is, casework, with little or no support from the present government or regional administration for a community development approach.

Coupled with the emphasis on remediation and casework, five workers linked this emphasis, at least in part, to the present government policy of restraint. Two workers noted that during this time of restraint, the expectations of the administrators were high, while at the same time, vacant staff positions were not being filled, creating low morale and a feeling of being overwhelmed among staff. Two other respondents stated that restraint was not a major impediment although it does hamper the delivery of intensive casework as a worker has too large a caseload to do a thorough job. The fifth respondent cited restraint as being responsible for the "patch-work", "bandage-type" intervention, which she classified as ineffective. This respondent suggested that prevention is being "wiped out" by restraint, and as a result, statutory work increases.

When questioned as to the most effective means of delivering service, five workers responded. The opinions presented included resource development, education and prevention as roles for rural practitioners. One respondent

stated that rural workers should be more involved in "community resource development work", rather than individual prevention. She suggested that the emphasis on the individual creates dependencies whereas an emphasis on developing resources to help families and communities carry out their functions is more effective. Two workers cited a community approach to include such activities as setting up work experiences for teenagers, setting up a home visitor program for the elderly and presentations to the local school on such topics as sexuality and teenage development. Another respondent expressed the view that the role of the rural social worker should be to make the community aware of its social problems and to encourage its involvement in their resolution. The approach, he stated, should be based on an attitude of trying to change the community, that is, not seeing problems as matters of individual adaptation but as a lack of strong community support. This particular respondent was particularly critical of the Department of Health and Community Services for its tendency to view the individual as the problem and not to give workers the mandate to intervene on a broader level. He stated that a macro approach can be undertaken in a rural area because of its conceptual manageability and thus problems should be approached on this level. The final respondent cited the team approach as an effective means of delivering service, as well as methods such as public relations, parent education regarding children's needs and co-operation with other bodies such as the RCMP or the local church ministers.

In addition to these viewpoints, three respondents also cited the importance of working with the total family system in a rural community.

In terms of methods utilized, two respondents also cited work with local schools, senior citizen groups, doctors and lawyers on a planning and consultative basis as major social work activities in rural areas. Another respondent noted that in rural areas, foster parents are a major resource and should be viewed as extensions of the Department into the community. Three respondents expressed the view that a lot of work does not get documented. Local people are often the major source of referral, noted one respondent, and thus as a result, confidentiality is a major issue.

#### Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

The most common theme concerning approach to service delivery expressed by private agency direct service workers concerned community resource development as the major approach adopted by the agency and rural workers to service delivery. Five out of a possible nine respondents were of this opinion. All five respondents cited the establishment of community resource centres and community committees as major methods in rural service delivery. Only one private agency direct service worker cited the major approach to delivery as casework of a crisis nature.

The establishment of resource centres, noted two respondents, is an effective means of making local people aware of the service and to allow the service to be delivered on a voluntary rather than authority basis, thus taking the stigma away from receiving service. These same two respondents also cited the community committee approach, that is, the use of a local committee to consider the question of the removal of a child from the community, as effective in helping the community to look at itself. In addition, the local community becomes the authority, as opposed to an individual worker, and the committee provides resources such as education of parents and homes for children. These workers cited the approach as one of attempting to maintain children in their own community as a major thrust.

Private agency direct service workers noted that the team approach, co-operation with other resources such as public health nurses, hospitals, schools, etc., is also effective. They also cited programming, such as the development of programs for parents and summer recreation, as a means of meeting the needs of clients.

Two other respondents cited the generalist and/or network approach involving the use of community resources as a major means of delivering service. These respondents indicated that they frequently tended to use informal resources rather than the formal, largely because of the stigma attached in their particular rural community to

government involvement. Emphasis by workers on positive involvement with the service, noted these respondents, encouraged the feeling that clients were involved in solving their own problems and thus, clients often "felt better" about receiving service.

The preventative approach, interpreted by private agency respondents as community involvement, was noted to require the employment of more workers. Respondents indicated that a lack of workers was reflected in higher apprehension and children in care statistics.

Two respondents commented on the opportunity for planned intervention in the rural setting. One of these respondents suggested that the nature of problems in the rural area allows for the ability to be prevention and family oriented, that is, to work with total families and to maintain families as a unit. The other respondent suggested that the work is less of a crisis nature, and the worker has the opportunity to become involved in all the significant systems. This same worker, however, suggested that there is a place for both the remedial and program approach in the rural setting as the people who take advantage of programs are not usually child welfare cases and that some people are best served on a one-to-one basis.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

Four public agency managers cited the major approach of the service as being remedial, casework and crisis in

nature. One of these managers, however, cited the need for a community development or preventative approach. These respondents noted the emphasis to be on crisis intervention in situations of family breakdown. The priority was described as being statutory child welfare services, followed by counselling to voluntary clients. One-to-one casework was described as the major thrust of the Child and Family Services Directorate. One manager suggested the policy of restraint also had the effect of curtailing services of a special needs nature such as children's psychiatric services.

Two other managers suggested that the approach of community development should be used to develop child welfare committees and as a means of identifying local resources. One manager stated that prevention was not part of the rural social worker's role.

With respect to effective methods in the delivery of service to rural communities, four managers cited the team approach. One manager, however, expressed the view that the team approach was being disintegrated during the time of restraint as the various disciplines (child welfare, public health, mental retardation, etc.) sought security and direction from their own individual program directorates. Another manager stated that the regional management group gave lip service to the team approach, but that little thought was given to its structure, and as a result, individual programs often worked at cross purposes with



other programs. Finally, the team approach, described by one manager as the "interdisciplinary perspective", was cited as a necessity to meeting all needs.

Three managers commented on the role of decentralization in rural service delivery. One manager expressed the view that there was no great value in decentralization from the point of view that control and supervision of workers is more difficult. This manager stated that centralization was easier to manage, although recognition should be given to the greater access to service for rural people available in a decentralized system. Another manager suggested that the team approach is more effective in a decentralized system, particularly if an office is located in an isolated area. With respect to decentralization, the third manager cited its importance to rural delivery, particularly when workers lived in the work area, although its effectiveness depended on the individual worker and individual community.

Finally, with respect to the approach to rural service delivery, two managers cited the importance of maintaining the family unit as a whole, or at least maintaining a child in his home community. Two managers suggested that there needs to be a balance between remedial and program approach, particularly as the program approach relates to the development of a system of resources to maintain the family unit. Two managers also commented on working with communities to stimulate the community to take

responsibility for its own members and their problems. One manager suggested that the authority role is de-emphasized through less use of the court and more emphasis on counselling and parental involvement.

Views of Private Agency Managers:

Private agency managers described the major approach to service delivery adopted by their agency as community resource development and the provision of resource workers. All three managers described the use of the local community in problem-solving and service delivery. One manager cited the method of implementing community resource centres as a major activity in the agency. Although the concept is not easily implemented in all communities, he stated, the goal is preventative, that is, to deliver service from the local area and to have workers receive people on a voluntary basis. The development of advisory committees, in addition to resource centres, was identified as a means of gaining the community's involvement in identifying needs and suitable programs. This manager also cited minimization of the court process and education of other professionals in the community as major attempts on the agency's part to maintain the goal of respect for the client in the community and to downgrade the stigmatizing process.

The second manager, in a discussion of community involvement, described the importance of quiet organization in the rural area to help citizens and communities meet

needs. This manager described the agency's goal in community organization to be that of assisting existing community institutions to fill the gaps in service rather than to operate the service in isolation of the community. He described traditional developments such as course offerings (for example, parenting program) and resource centres as essentially urban phenomena, and as such, requiring adaptation in rural communities to mix with the traditional mode of operation of rural families.

The third manager described the importance of locating services in the rural community in an effort to make service relevant to the local people. This manager recognized the need to keep people in rural areas to discourage the rural-urban migration that is often destructive and disenchanting for rural people. The use of native workers and native community committees on reserves was also cited by this manager as an effective means of helping local people to take responsibility for service delivery. Further, this manager also described the importance of community input into service delivery from the viewpoint that the professional is often threatening to traditional modes of service-giving developed by some rural communities. This manager stated that, unfortunately, a community committee often attracts interests of the middle class and does not necessarily represent the interests of the client group.

With respect to the most effective method of service delivery, one manager commented that it is important to offer service in whatever manner is fitting to the local area, that is, there should be no predefined model of service, other than that child welfare should be interpreted as families in need of service rather than as services for incapable parents, this idea inherently being a developmental philosophy. This manager commented that the need for apprehension of children should be interpreted as a failure on the agency's part to relate to the family in a constructive way. As such, he stated, the necessary skills, roles and knowledge should not be previously defined but available as the needs arise. Another manager cited an effective method as the generalist approach, that is, educational, rather than authoritarian, in tune with the concept of normalization.

#### Policy and Legislation and the Rural Environment

With respect to the areas of policy and legislation, respondents were asked to comment on the rural context and its relationship to the planning process, the Child and Family Service's program policy and the program's enabling legislation. As with previously cited areas of inquiry, the questions were open-ended and allowed for the respondents to make any comments they considered relevant. Respondents were not given definitions for the terms "policy" and "legislation", but were asked to comment using their own definitions of the terms.

Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

With respect to policy making for program delivery in the rural areas, four public agency direct service workers commented that planners and policy makers are unaware of the working conditions in the rural setting.

One manager pointed out that planners often have an urban background and are not informed of the working conditions found in the rural environment, such as the hours involved in travel, the weather conditions, the existence of telephone party lines, and the necessity of sound-running vehicles. Additional concerns cited by this worker where the rural setting is not considered is the whole area of foster care and the failure of the policy makers to take into account the extra costs involved in transportation, and the failure by policy makers to recognize regional differences. This worker commented that the foster home allowances are based on city conditions, as viewed by city planners. As well, he stated, the Eastman Region of the Department of Health and Community Services is considered to be the foster home resource region, although no consideration is given to the extra worker time or monies required of a resource-rich region. Two final points made by this respondent concerned the determination of caseload size being based on urban standards and the lack of recognition given to rural workers for extra involvement (in terms of time) to community resource development. Three other public agency direct service workers added that the administration

of the Child and Family Services program is unappreciative of pressures on the rural worker and continue to place administrative expectations on the rural worker.

With respect to the Child Welfare legislation, three workers commented that in the past it has been geared to the urban environment, although its implementation, outside of difficulties in locating clients to serve notices, establish appointments, etc., is no longer a major difficulty in rural areas. Three other direct service workers stated that the Indian Reserve situation is particularly difficult, as witnessed by the number of native children in care. More crucial, however, is the policy that allows the Child and Family Services program intervention on a life-and-death basis only. Workers stated that this policy is unreasonable and that it increases hazards for the reserve population. As well, two respondents advised that despite the policy, the local reserve community often expects extra service from the program.

An area commented upon by public agency direct service workers (five in total) concerned Family Court procedures in the rural setting. These respondents commented that court procedures are unclear in the rural area, often left to the whims of the judge and court party. The general concern had to do with the pompous and condescending attitudes displayed by the courts toward rural clientele. The formality of the court, in combination with

a lack of understanding of the rural environment were major factors cited.

Another comment made by two public agency direct service workers concerned the concept of team delivery. One worker commented that the team approach is presently de-emphasized and dismantled by the administrators who do not recognize that rural workers continue to work effectively in teams. The other worker commented that the policy of reporting to both a team leader and program co-ordinator created considerable difficulty and was particularly annoying to the rural worker, who was frequently located physically closer to the team leader.

Finally, one manager was particularly critical of the Child and Family Services Directorate. He described the Directorate as being responsible for making the decision to split Child Welfare from Family Services, which creates difficulties for the rural worker to intervene in a non-statutory manner when the family is involuntary. This is further aggravated by the community's expectation of results. He was also critical of those administrators without a social work background, who do not recognize that change is a slow process. Finally, the policy of some rural regions, requiring rural workers to be resident, in the opinion of this respondent, often forced the worker to quit.

Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

With respect to the policies and legislative requirements of the Child and Family Services program, four

private agency direct service workers commented that they did not see any difficulties with their implementation in the rural setting and, in fact, one worker added that the Child Welfare Act was loose and allowed for local interpretation. However, three private agency direct service workers also made the point that court procedures are unclear in the rural area. Two workers were of the opinion that it was necessary that court proceedings take place in rural communities to improve the court's understanding of the rural living situation. The transportation of families to and from court, the serving of notices on rural clients for court hearings and the lack of appreciation by the court of life in rural communities were cited by one worker as evidence of the failures of urban policy makers and courts to consider the rural context. One of these workers also commented that policy makers have failed to provide alternatives for temporary shelter care in the rural areas, thus requiring rural clients to be housed in urban facilities, which do not appreciate the demands on rural workers and rural clients.

One of the direct service workers from the private agency further commented that the authority/trust relationship expected in the Child and Family Services role was incongruent in its implementation, while two other workers saw no difficulty with being both a helper and a person of authority at the same time.



Views of Public Agency Managers:

With respect to the policies and legislative requirements of the Child and Family Services program, three public agency managers responded. One commented that he did not see any difficulties with either the Act or the policies, in that both provided a great deal of leverage, appropriate and fair except for the administrative detail required of rural workers. Another manager pointed to the required case recording system as being inconsistent with the nature of rural social work in that workers are required to be in the field most days and to combat great distances. The requirement that children in care receive thorough medical examinations, stated this manager, also required extra travel (to the urban centre) because of the lack of specialized medical services in rural areas. The third manager could not cite any problems with the Child Welfare Act, however, the policy of the Child and Family Services program on reserves, he stated, was a major issue as the native population has the greatest needs but receives the least service. A fourth manager also commented on the reserve situation, stating that the policy of life and death is "not hampering", but does require the catalyst role.

Four public agency managers commented on Family Court procedures in rural areas. The general opinion of these managers was that courts are fairly humane, although there are disadvantages with the inconsistency between

judges and their particular individual emphasis on formality/informality of the court process. One manager viewed the court as a problem, but not as a problem for social workers as much as for the courts in that certain judges favour certain agencies, vary in their understanding of the rural environment and cultural differences. As a result, this manager proposed the development of a provincial child welfare court system. Another manager cited difficulties in locating people or gaining response from non-verbal individuals during court proceedings.

Of significance are the comments made by four public agency managers on the high staff turnover rate in rural areas. One manager quoted a turnover rate of fifty percent (noting the period of government restraint) and related this rate to the pressures and demands placed on rural workers. Another manager, commenting on the high burnout potential in rural areas, advocated the implementation of informal days off to prevent this occurrence. A third manager recognized the need to give rural workers support for positive activities, while at the same time recognizing the pressures. This manager also noted that career opportunities are limited in rural areas, and as a result, experienced workers often end up in urban centres. He suggested that there needs to be a recognizable career line in the rural social service system as well as support in the form of sabbaticals to rural workers as means of reprieve. A fifth manager stated that he did not see the need to give extra

support to rural workers, adding that the job is not that difficult despite the travel, roads and personal adjustments involved.

Another comment made by a public service manager concerned the ability to make decisions independent of the larger organization in areas such as days off, strategies for intervention regarding life and death situations because of the distance from central decision-making bodies.

Views of Private Agency Managers:

Private agency managers, with respect to the areas of policy and legislation, commented on the demands of rural work, court proceedings in rural areas and caseloads.

One private agency manager noted that urban social work is easier and carries with it fewer demands. Another manager cited difficulties in keeping workers in rural areas and indicated that he deliberately attempted to do so by creating a rural unit within the agency as a point of identification and support for rural workers. As a result, this manager noted a considerable decrease in requests from workers to transfer to urban positions. Difficulties associated with defining appropriate rural caseload size due to travel were also noted.

Two managers commented on the effects of restraint, this being heavy caseloads and the need to develop an identifiable rural unit as a mutual support system. Further, with respect to the development of rural resource

centres, one manager commented that workers have been allowed to take a rural approach to this development. One manager commented on the flexibility of the agency with respect to the question of worker residence, recognizing that close social contact with clients is difficult for some workers.

Finally, with respect to court proceedings in the rural setting, one manager commented on problems associated with serving notice, the demands of the court and relative involvement in court cases as all being situations peculiar to the rural setting. This manager commented on the private agency's decision to have all court hearings heard in the urban centre as a policy decision made on the basis of expediency and the need to develop a close working relationship with Family Court judges. This decision, he noted, has serious implications for rural workers in that urban-oriented courts make decisions without knowledge of options in the rural areas for clients, and often reflect negative community attitudes (for example, disrespect for the family) in making these decisions.

## Implications of the Rural Environment for Social Work

### Education

#### I. Educational Background

Rural social workers were asked to respond to the issue of educational requirements for rural social work practice. From their perception, respondents were asked to describe the components of a social work education program for rural practice.

Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

By far the largest number of public agency direct service workers (seven in total) responded to the educational requirements for rural practice with the view that a rural field placement is a necessary component. One respondent stated that she would recommend a rural field placement although experience in a well-supervised setting and/or experience with rural living were also important requirements for rural practice. Another respondent suggested that a rural field practicum would expose a student to the factors of isolation and variety of people often of different backgrounds. Two workers also commented that the rural practicum would be useful in terms of gaining knowledge about rural life, determining one's willingness to become involved with a community and in determining one's interest in residing in a rural area, or as stated by another respondent, to experience the practical aspects of rural life.

Other components, cited by three respondents, of a social work education for rural practice included community organization and group-work training. It was noted by one respondent that community work is often an expectation of a rural practitioner, as is group work because workers often find themselves to be the only social worker in a rural area. Another respondent stated that the rural practitioner must be able to intervene on a broad, community basis.

Another component, suggested by one respondent, was a generalist university education including both practical experience and theoretical knowledge.

Two direct service workers were particularly critical of present social work programs for failing to adequately prepare students for rural practice. One of these respondents noted that the present social work education program does not make students aware of cultural differences, as well as the demands of the rural job.

Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

With respect to education for rural social work practice, six private agency direct service workers commented on education of a universal, generalist nature. Specific components of the generalist education referred to by respondents included small community dynamics, native culture, rural field experience, program development role, knowledge of human behaviour and developmental psychology, research ability, particularly in areas of community needs assessment, cultural awareness, community organization, an understanding of the concept of power, and the political and social structures of the rural environment, as well as intensive counselling skills. A rural field placement was described by six respondents as being important to exposing students to the personal nature and realities of rural social work. One respondent added that the emphasis in social work education should be concerned with anything pertaining to

rural life. Another respondent stated that students with rural and/or northern field experiences were viewed as superior to totally urban-trained workers in that the rural experience is broader, the students who choose a rural experience are different and add a personal flavour to their work and are usually able to work independently and have a sense of "what works". One respondent suggested that formal training is not as important as a commitment to helping people and an ability to be adaptable to a variety of cultural groups.

Three respondents were critical of present social work programs. One respondent suggested that a generalist education is acceptable as an overview, but there is also need for more intensive counselling skills to be developed in rural practitioners. The other workers expressed the view that schools of social work could emphasize the child welfare role to establish its credibility in the mind of the profession.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

When questioned as to the educational requirements of a rural social work practitioner, two public agency managers commented on a generalist education, one described a specialist education, whereas, a third manager described a generalist education with specialization in a particular field. Specific components of an education program referred to by managers included an emphasis on small community

dynamics, cross-cultural studies, stages of human development, cultural patterns and variations, humanitarianism issues and the community approach. Two managers commented on the need for social work education to deal with practising in rural areas, stressing skills and knowledge such as independent decision-making, use of authority, human behaviour, child development, rural characteristics and rural problems. One manager commented that he did not see the need for skill development in family therapy.

Public agency managers (three) commented on a rural field placement as being an important part of the education for a potential rural practitioner. One manager suggested that a rural field experience, particularly a block placement, in a small, family-like placement is preferable, and that the placement should be tied to a specific agency, similar to an apprenticeship program, before the individual is hired by that agency. The second manager recommended the expanded use of rural areas as field placements, with instructors who are aware of the rural environment. The third manager described a rural field experience as helpful.

Three managers commented on the present social work education program. One manager commented that he expected to see a worker trained prior to taking on a job and described this as the total role of the school and not of the agency. A second manager described most social work educators as lacking a knowledge of the rural environment.



A third comment concerned the inclusion of native peoples into professional social work education and the lack of emphasis in the present program on what he termed as treatment and skill development. This third manager, with specific reference to rural practice, suggested that schools of social work can offer little more than rural sociology and a study of native cultures.

Views of Private Agency Managers:

In terms of social work education for rural practice, two private agency managers indicated that they preferred to hire workers with rural field placement experience. These managers also suggested that the emphasis of education should be on developing a value stance (i.e., respect and dignity for the individual), skills in helping people to understand each other's differences and skill in relationship-building for the purpose of engaging clients voluntarily. Another manager suggested that a specific course on rural social work has possibilities for its development into a specialty area, as well as in terms of establishing credibility for rural social work practitioners. It is important to get away from the notion that urban social work is superior. This manager expressed the opinion that a rural social work course should focus on rural life, skill development to deal with local power structures and attitudes in rural communities concerning public assistance, humanitarian issues and the community approach. The third

private agency manager, commenting on education for rural practice, expressed the view that workers who have grown up in rural areas tend to have a sense of community, a knowledge of informal resources and understanding of the issue of confidentiality, and are therefore in a better position to adapt their education to the rural setting.

## II. Continuing Education Opportunities and Needs in the Rural Setting

The line of inquiry concerning continuing education focused on the opportunities in the rural environment for the professional social worker to continue to learn and grow, and the needs of workers while practising in the rural setting. Workers were asked to comment on the resources and opportunities for continuing professional education in the rural setting as well as to identify their educational needs while employed as a professional in a rural setting.

### Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

Six public agency direct service workers, when asked to comment on the professional continuing education opportunities available in the rural setting, stated that there was a general lack of formal opportunities. One respondent commented that as a result of a lack of opportunities she sought out "extra training" on her own initiative by becoming involved with a group of family therapists and working on a Master's degree on a part-time basis. She also stated that the agency provides few

opportunities, and it is a matter of individual initiative to locate courses, etc. Further, this respondent suggested that if opportunities were made known and available to rural workers, many would take advantage of these opportunities. A second respondent commented that she was not able to locate education resources in her own community, that commuting to a large centre was a major hardship, and therefore, was planning to leave her job and move to Winnipeg in the near future.

Another respondent, with respect to continuing professional education, noted that urban workers are in regular contact with their colleagues, whereas a rural worker's contact with colleagues often means leaving one's work community to meet with professionals in larger centres. Learning opportunities in the field and from colleagues, noted one respondent, were available but there was little opportunity for formal learning. Two other respondents noted that the general lack of continuing education opportunities in the rural area were particularly aggravated by present-day government restraint.

With respect to their continuing education needs, the largest number of public agency direct service workers (five in total) indicated skill development in the area of counselling, particularly with families, as their greatest need. One respondent stated that the Child Welfare Review of 1975 identified a need for professional workers to develop counselling and continuing care skills. Two other

respondents indicated that although they had a need for development of family counselling skills, traditional family therapy is not what is needed, but rather, skills to work with the unmotivated client. Three respondents expressed the opinion that these courses should be instructed by a rural social worker in the rural setting.

In addition to the development of counselling skills, three public agency direct service workers commented that there is a need for training in the area of child welfare, law and social work, with particular emphasis on philosophy, definition of neglect, etc. One of the three respondents also suggested that an orientation to child welfare policies and procedures was also indicated. These respondents suggested that the school of social work could take a lead in child welfare education and court-related procedures.

Other continuing education needs identified by a minority of public agency workers included values clarification, case management, administration, community development (particularly how to mobilize economically and socially backward communities).

#### Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

When questioned as to the opportunities for continuing professional education, two private agency direct service workers commented that there has been a lack of opportunity, whereas, two other workers indicated that

they have been able to take advantage of workshops and courses held in one of the rural centres. Those two respondents who commented on the lack of opportunities described their learning as having come through experience, particularly in the areas of small community dynamics and native culture. A fifth private agency respondent stated that he had received the greatest input from co-workers.

With respect to their continuing education needs, the largest number (seven) indicated skill development, that is, family counselling, psychological counselling, social assessment, family therapy, crisis intervention, parent training and communication, as the greatest area of need. With respect to family counselling skills, two workers stated that the greatest difficulty encountered is in engaging families in solving their own problems, particularly hard-to-reach families. Respondents suggested that the development of a variety of counselling techniques would be helpful.

A second area of continuing education need identified by private agency direct service workers (four) is values clarification. Two respondents stated that a course on values clarification, particularly in the area of families and family separation would assist them. Personal values and lifestyles, societal and legal values were areas of concern for clarification cited by two other workers.

A third area of continuing education need cited by private agency workers (four) was a course on child

development. Other areas of need cited by a minority of workers are native cultural awareness, small community dynamics and a course specific to rural child welfare.

Views of Public Agency Managers:

Public agency managers, with respect to continuing education opportunities in the rural setting, held similar opinions. Three managers commented that formal staff training and development were generally neglected in rural areas. One manager commented that most educational opportunities are available in Winnipeg, although the great variety of cultures and classes in the rural area provided for a great learning opportunity. A second manager indicated that restraint had curtailed most opportunities and that a rural worker required self-motivation to take advantage of continuing education and extension courses (usually offered in Winnipeg) as the worker was required to take time off from work at his/her own cost. This manager stated that he expected people to be trained when they take on a job and that additional training should be individually motivated and determined. The third manager suggested that the lack of continuing education opportunities is more frustrating to field workers than managers and most field workers have to rely on support from co-workers as a means of ongoing learning.

Two managers also referred to the view that rural workers are often unaware of educational opportunities, most

of which are held outside the working area. A fourth manager described ongoing learning as a responsibility of both the employee and the agency and that it can be done relatively inexpensively in the working area.

With respect to continuing education needs of rural social work professionals, public agency managers (three) cited skill development. Skill development was discussed by these managers in terms of a variety of modalities of intervention, from crisis to treatment of families and their particular application to rural families. Other needs identified included sessions on rural social work, rural lifestyles, cultural awareness, stages of human development and community development in rural areas. One manager cited a need to become aware of resources used elsewhere in the province, by means of discussion and a sharing of experiences with co-workers in other areas of the province. Finally, skill development in terms of case planning and the development of a broad philosophical perspective among workers was cited by one manager.

#### Views of Private Agency Managers:

One private agency manager commented that opportunities for continuing professional education are not available in rural areas because workers are isolated. This manager indicated that he could not define the continuing education needs of all the rural workers in the agency, however, he suggested cultural studies, rural

community development, application of family therapy to rural families and personal self-awareness as some of the needs of rural workers.

### Other Issues

With respect to the line of inquiry concerning other issues, respondents were asked to make any other comments or express any opinions about their rural practice not touched upon during the interview. Respondents were asked to make comments either of a general or specific nature.

### Views of Public Agency Direct Service Workers:

Seven public agency direct service workers chose to make additional comments on rural social work practice.

One respondent indicated that he prefers rural practice, in comparison to urban practice, the main advantages being the investment and commitment of oneself professionally and personally to a community, the opportunity to be aware of the community dynamics and therefore to intervene, and the opportunity to practice using a variety of techniques and resources. A second respondent was critical of professional schools of social work for not reinforcing an identification with the social work profession, thereby causing workers, both rural and urban, to be criticized for not being able to identify and to be proud of their skills and abilities. This respondent was also critical of the government for not recognizing rural



direct service by giving greater pay and status to management positions.

A third respondent was critical of management for not giving feedback on one's work, for failing to recognize that social work often becomes the dumping ground for other services such as mental health and mental retardation, and for failing to make available opportunities to compare experiences with workers in other districts and regions. A fourth respondent was also critical of the child and family services program for failing to emphasize community development, and holding high expectations for service while not providing additional staff, creating a situation of low morale and a feeling of being overwhelmed on the part of rural workers. This respondent also expressed the view that rural workers are in need of more reinforcement and encouragement from the administration, the rationale being the rural worker is independent and needs to know he is valued and that the administration is supporting him. He was concerned that supervisors do not have rural experience and therefore do not appreciate the pressures. A fifth respondent also emphasized the need for a community approach. The sixth respondent indicated that he chose to practice social work in the rural setting because there are fewer pressures and it is less crisis oriented.

Views of Private Agency Direct Service Workers:

Two private agency direct service workers chose to respond to the topic of other issues. One of these

respondents described her rural experience as being broad, marked by a personal flavour and practical in nature. In comparison to urban practice, she described rural practice as being pure in that people are less tainted by the social service systems of the urban centre. She also described rural social work as a question of lifestyle and as involving the opportunity to mobilize resources and to do honest casework, both requiring flexibility and offering a challenge. This respondent also emphasized the importance of building in support mechanisms for rural workers.

The second private agency respondent also described rural practice as being different from urban practice in terms of the problems encountered and the pressures. She described rural social work as involving a broad range of problems, allowing the opportunity for a worker to develop and grow, and in particular, to use the outreach role.

#### Views of Public Agency Managers:

Two public agency managers made comments when asked to identify other issues. One manager indicated that "it is good" to talk about rural practice as the concepts are usually not discussed. The second manager emphasized the view that there is no real difference between rural and urban social work practice.

#### Views of Private Agency Managers:

One private manager commented on the area of other issues. He suggested that not a lot is known about rural

social work. He expressed the view that services have generally been scattered among sparse populations, and that there is a technology and philosophy to rural practice which can produce results.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Commentary on Findings with Reference to Literature Review

Specific conclusions, hypotheses and recommendations about rural social work practice arising from commentary on each area of inquiry and literary review appear later in this chapter. This discussion, however, contains a drawing together of the findings' descriptive data with each other and with the theoretical material outlined in the literature review and conceptual framework. Characteristics and problems of the rural setting, practice implications of the rural setting, approach to rural service delivery, policy, legislation and the rural environment and implications of the rural environment for social work education as identified in the literature and by each of the four sets of respondents (public agency direct service workers, private agency direct service workers, public agency managers and private agency managers) provide information about what variables tend to be predominant and cluster, and what factors/issues are considered urgent by people practising in the rural environment.

## I. The Rural Context: Characteristics and Problems

The literature concerning the rural context generally takes the position that people in rural areas are more like people in non-rural areas than they are different from them. However, the literature also points out that there are economic, social, political and other institutions and conditions that have shaped the lives of people in rural areas, producing different responses and adaptive behaviours in different rural areas, thus making rural life different from the contemporary metropolis. Despite the great variations among rural people and rural communities in style, custom, economic situation, population density, geographic location and topography, the literature poses some dynamics that can be considered universals. The following are most commonly identified: the existence of rural ethnic groups, of which one may predominate in a particular rural community and retain cultural identity; the role of religion in rural communities as an important consideration for one's status in a rural community, and as being inextricably woven into the whole fabric of community life; the smaller scale of living encompassing primary group orientation, the informal power structure and system of illusion which produces local community pride; and finally, the rural social welfare structure, differing markedly from the textbook model of the ideal social welfare system, including only fundamental services, and lack of choice between services, auspices for services or conditions under

which services may be obtained, because services are offered on an itinerant basis and often by a public agency. Other characteristics of the rural social welfare structure include a high degree of vertical system integration and control, vulnerability to the trickle-down theory of social welfare, which has the effect of the social service being called upon to remedy massive failure of a primarily economic nature, and to be much more salient and therefore visible in the small community. Another significant feature of the rural social welfare structure is the existence of the natural service system. The writers concerned with the rural social welfare structure also note that the rural social services are frequently regarded as serving the goal of social control and thus both social services and their clientele are stigmatized, although the agricultural extension model extends the rural social work role to social and economic development.

With respect to rural social problems, the literary viewpoint is that rural communities have problems which are common to all communities elsewhere, however, many of the problems of rural areas have resulted because of the unique social, economic and political systems which have been dysfunctional and inadequate for many rural persons. Common problems identified include the decline in the rural population, particularly the out-migration of young adults, unemployment and underemployment, law enforcement for minority group members, the isolation and plight of the rural

aged, fewer services and recreational opportunities, lack of public means of transportation, particularly for members of the lower class, and rural poverty, particularly for minority groups. In essence, the rural area presents numerous problems of considerable magnitude.

From the practitioner point of view, it is noteworthy that field workers in both the public and private agencies tend to agree on the major rural characteristics and problems. Typical characteristics identified by field workers included comments concerning the perception of (and therefore willingness to accept) the social service program in the rural community as being akin to social and financial control and legal enforcement, the lack of formalized resources and existence of the natural helping system in the rural area, a conservative ideology held by rural residents, and a sense of tradition and family, including religion and ethnicity among rural residents. Private agency field workers added characteristics such as a lack of confidentiality and the untainted, pure life of the natural setting, whereas, public agency respondents commented on identification by rural residents with the rural worker. With respect to social problems, again, there was consensus between private and public agency field workers on the view that rural problems are similar to urban problems, although public respondents added that problems were related to the rural context. The public agency cited the problems to include physical isolation, transportation and the plight of the elderly.

Supervisory/managerial personnel of both the public and private agencies contributed little to insights provided by the field personnel. Where views were expressed, management perceptions were consistent with those of field personnel.

Research data concerning characteristics and problems of the rural environment favourably compare to the insights shared in the literary review, although the literature included characteristics of the rural social welfare structure not emphasized by the investigator during the inquiry with practitioner respondents. An overall impression is that management personnel were unable to contribute significant perceptions of the rural environment, citing a minority of those offered by field workers.

## II. The Rural Context: Implications for Practice

A survey of the literature regarding the implications of the rural context for social work practice reveals a whole plethora of theories and formulations about the ways and means of practising social work in the rural environment. Although the literature is not short of suggestions, it seems for the most part that these are still to be evaluated.

For the practitioner, the literature comments that the smallness of the rural social welfare structure implies a need to be self-motivated, self-directed and capable of autonomous work, to be able to accept close scrutiny of



one's activity, social and work-related, by the local community, and to accept roles that are not normally seen as social work roles. The establishment of credibility in the community as a potentially helpful person is regarded as extremely important. Other factors such as distance and weather are cited in the literature as additional concerns with which the rural worker must contend. The smallness of rural life requires a redefinition of confidentiality and overrides preconceptions about professional role. Finally, the literary viewpoint suggests that the diversity of rural communities requires worker flexibility and ability to quickly adapt to the changing environment.

The literature cites the generalist as the role thought to be most commonly played by social workers in rural communities. Within this role, sub-roles of clinician, organizer, program developer, technical expert, educator and ombudsman are conceptualized as most frequently used by rural practitioners. The program development role, conceptualized to include a community development approach, is the most frequently described role in the literature.

The research data focuses practitioners' comments on implications of the rural context for social work practice in terms of worker residency, worker experience and worker competencies. With regard to the question of residence, both field and management personnel of the two agencies held mixed opinions, the majority identifying major problems and/or pressures for the resident rural worker as well as

advantages. The major problem issues described were a lack of confidentiality of the worker's personal life, demands on the worker's free time, continual identification within the community as a social worker, strained social relationships and potential loss of objectivity and professionalism in face of criticism and lack of professional stimulation. The advantages cited were familiarity and identification with the community, stability in the provision of service and a sound knowledge base for social interaction and effective intervention.

From the perspective of worker experience, again, there was general consensus among all respondents (private and public agency, field and management personnel) as to the factors creating both advantages and disadvantages to rural practice. Respondents most commonly cited the factors of distance, weather, lack of supervision, community pressures, the informal attitude of the rural community and lack of formal resources as creating a situation of isolation, requiring independent decision-making, knowledge of the work community, good public relations and a re-interpretation of the confidentiality issue. Respondents' remarks bear resemblance to the literary viewpoint.

Competencies for rural practice reflected by rural social worker respondents included skills, values and knowledge and personal traits/attitudes. With respect to skills, all four groups of respondents agreed on the need for a variety of assessment and intervention skills, with

particular emphasis on relationship-building skills. Values were given greatest consideration by field workers, but again, there was considerable congruence between the views of managers and field workers, both emphasizing a sensitivity to cultural differences, that is, the acceptance of a variety of people of various cultural, traditional and ethnic backgrounds and with different lifestyles. The value stance of a rural worker is considered to be important in view of the high visibility of a worker's actions and interventions in the rural environment.

Consistent with the literary viewpoint, there was general consensus among all respondents as to the appropriateness of the generalist approach to rural practice, with particular attention paid by respondents to knowledge of the community and thus the ability to use informal, existing resources in practice, and to develop positive peer/interdisciplinary approaches and roles such as outreach (in view of the fact that a worker was often the only resource person in a particular community), advocate, resource broker, information giver and educator. In addition, emphasis was given to knowledge of small community dynamics, rural social structures, both the formal and the informal, and various cultures, their beliefs and traditions.

With respect to competencies for rural practice, the findings illustrate a consensus of opinion between field and management respondents of both the public and the private

agency. In recognition of the autonomy in rural practice, the sense of independence and need for flexibility, as well as commitment to rural life, were considered essential by all respondents. Again, these themes were consistent with the literary perspective.

### III. The Rural Context: Approach to Delivery

The literature review identifies implications of the rural setting for social service delivery and approach. Services are often required to expand their activities to include functions that they might not carry in urban centres. The local informal power structure is recognized as a potential ally in the delivery of services in rural areas. In addition, the literary comment specifies a community-oriented approach as a suitable model for effective rural practice. A multi-disciplinary team model for implementation of the community approach is also indicated. Finally, a more practical concern, transportation, is cited by writers concerned with rural social work, as a critical factor in the delivery of social services in the rural environment.

The data generated by rural social work respondents illustrate a dissension in opinion and practice. In the subject area of approach to service delivery, the view of private agency practitioners, at both the field and management level, differed rather significantly from public employee practitioners, as well as with the literary review.

Public field workers, for the most part, emphasized the value of a family and community focus as well as a prevention and developmental philosophy, but described their typical practice to be of a remedial and casework nature. The present Manitoba Government's restraint policy was viewed as being partially responsible for this occurrence, however, some public workers also described management as having a casework and/or individual focus. Private agency practitioners, on the other hand, described their approach in terms of a generalist, preventative, family and community focus. The development of rural resource centres, educational programs and community (child welfare) committees, were cited as examples of this thrust. Some workers indicated, however, that some of their practice continued to be crisis and remedial in nature.

As with the field workers, management personnel, on the issue of program delivery, differed considerably in opinion. The public agency managers described the approach being used as remedial, although some identified a need for a community and family development approach, but indicated that this approach was not being implemented in practice due to lack of staff and general managerial support. Private agency managers described service delivery in terms of prevention and voluntary service giving from local resource centres, which emphasized education rather than authority.

#### IV. The Rural Context: Policy and Legislation

With respect to program and administrative policy and program legislation, issues raised by respondents were varied in nature, although consensus of opinion was expressed on some issues.

For the most part, public agency field workers were critical of policy makers and planners for a lack of awareness of the rural working conditions. Both public and private agency field and management personnel considered the present child welfare legislation to be appropriate, although the specific policy of the program regarding services to native Indians on reserves was raised and considered to be a problem by a majority of public agency respondents.\* Family Court procedures were also raised by all four groups of respondents, and for the most part, considered to be problematic because of the court's subjectivity to whims, judicial prejudices and lack of knowledge of the rural context. Team work with members of other professions received support from a small number of public agency respondents. Noteworthy is the concern expressed by both private and public agency managers with professional staff turnover in the rural setting, although

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\*Private agency respondents did not consider services to native Indians on reserves as a problem because the Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba provides services to the reserves in their catchment area. C.A.S. of Eastern Manitoba contracts with the Federal Government to provide services to the Indian reserves in the area.

private agency managers stated that the turnover rate had decreased since a delivery system specific to the rural setting had been implemented. It is interesting that both public and private agency managers were concerned with staff turnover while the average length of experience of the sample of workers under investigation is thirteen years. Perhaps the staff turnover problem is more imagined than real.

#### V. The Rural Context: Implications for Professional Education

The literature regarding the implications of the rural context for professional social work education addresses itself to appropriate content and methodology of social work education to meet rural needs. The identified curriculum components for rural social work education include an emphasis on group and community behaviour, community organization methodology, the learning of practice from the generalist perspective, solutions to rural problems and their implementation, and field placement in a rural agency or setting. As well, social systems theory, social dynamics of communities and the study of power and the nature of formal and informal organization are considered necessary curriculum components. The identified skill areas are also multiple, the most crucial being the ability to conduct broad-gauge systemic analysis. The notion of total environment assessment (that, demographic, ecological, cultural, historical, systems, relationships and

functions) is founded on the holistic education philosophy which includes a systems approach, a situational perspective and planned change. The educational methodology thought to be most appropriate by commentators on rural social work education is the collegial model, wherein both the instructor and student are actively engaged in intervention and evaluation, based upon principles of field instructor as role model, accountability to client-consumer, autonomy of practice, opportunity for collaboration, observation and analysis.

Rural social work education, as discussed in the literature review, also considers the part-time student and untrained practitioner presently working in rural areas, as well as the potential native practitioner. The special problems in developing educational programs for these groups are also given consideration.

The consensus of opinion of writers on rural social work education is the need for social work education to become more assertive in recruiting, and preparing professional manpower for practice in rural settings, for schools of social work to play a more active role in enhancing life in the rural community and in calling the attention of the social work profession to the needs of the rural community.

Research findings, from the practitioner viewpoint, are organized into components of social work education for rural practice, the opportunities for professional growth in



the rural setting, and the education needs of the rural practitioner. Both public and private agency personnel, field and management, generally agreed that opportunities for professional development were not available in rural areas, except for the opportunities provided by co-workers and the informal learning provided by the variety of conditions in the rural environment. They indicated that any opportunities that existed were in the urban centres, for the most part, and that restraint measures in both the public and private agency had curtailed most opportunities to take advantage of courses or workshops. The reported professional development that was taking place appeared to be generally the result of individual efforts. It was also noted that opportunities such as extension and/or continuing education courses and part-time professional studies were generally not made known to rural workers.

With respect to components for social work education, there was general agreement among all four groups of respondents that a rural field placement is an essential ingredient. A universal, generalist education was also cited with emphasis on community dynamics, community organization, cross-cultural studies, and studies of the rural environment, values clarification and skill development.

Continuing education needs identified by field workers, as well as their supervisors, emphasized skill development in counselling and family treatment approaches

and community development. Courses on rural child welfare, small community dynamics and native cultural studies were also identified.

Consistent with the views elicited by the literary review, practitioners' responses in terms of education components were generally consistent and offered considerable congruence. The literary review added a comment on the educational methodology and special educational problems of untrained or native practitioners. The literary comment concerning an assertive role for social work education received support from respondents who criticized professional social work education programs for failing to prepare students for rural practice, for not including native students in education programs, and for under-emphasizing the development of skills and an understanding of rural social systems.

#### Tentative Hypotheses, Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

Summary and comparison of the literary and research findings concerning the rural context, its characteristics and problems, the implications for practice, approach to delivery, policy and legislation, and social work education lead to the formulation of critical comments on the variables, issues and factors identified. A number of research conclusions emerging from consideration of the descriptive data combined with the literary opinions are presented in terms of summary remarks and where appropriate,

hypotheses concerning rural social work practice and implications for further research.

Again, it must be emphasized that these observations and conclusions are in no sense based on a random sample of rural social work practitioners, but rather, on an exploratory study of practitioners employed by the child and family services program of both a private (Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba) and public (Department of Health and Community Services) agency providing service in the Interlake and Eastman regions of the Province of Manitoba. Its usefulness, therefore, it must be restated, comes from the presentation of insights rather than presentation of the typical.

#### I. The Rural Context: Characteristics and Problems

From the literary and research observations concerning the characteristics and problems of the rural environment, certain issues are evident.

Rural workers are obviously aware of the characteristics of the rural population they are serving and, in particular, are concerned with the community's perception of the child and family services as a "welfare" program. In light of this common perception and awareness of the lack of confidentiality in the rural setting, respondents' remarks suggest that a sensitivity to clients' reluctance to engage themselves with the service ought to be stressed. As well, it appears important to recognize that the child and family services program may be used as a last resort by rural residents, forcing a crisis intervention capability among

rural practitioners as well as a recognition that service will be delivered, at least initially, to involuntary clients. As well, an understanding of the major, front-line role of local professionals such as the minister or doctor in rural service delivery appears important.

With respect to the existence of the natural helping system in rural communities, there appears to be a common belief that it exists; however, respondents did not elaborate on the identity of the natural helpers. Nonetheless, this insight leads to the observation that who you know in the rural community is as important as what you know, as the natural helping system has the potential of being a significant resource to a rural practitioner.

The identified conservative ideology of rural communities gives rise to a concern for certain segments of the rural population who are not tolerated, or in fact, are ostracized by the rural community. This appears to be one disadvantage under which practitioners must operate in rural communities; for this group of people, intervention may be extremely difficult as the family history precedes them and treatment by the community is based on this stereotype. This conservative ideology may also result in objection by certain members of the population to such "progressive" developments as day care programs, parent education program, etc. As well, this same ideology, with its emphasis on family, ethnicity and religion, may reinforce the traditional role of the community in social control as well as the traditional roles of men and women.

Personal involvement by the rural worker with the community, coupled with the lack of worker anonymity in the rural community, reinforces other insights presented during the inquiry, particularly the commitment to rural life and social work as a total experience (personal and professional) for the practitioner. If the community selects the social work professional as a person who can be trusted, the community will then allow the professional to function effectively. This revelation suggests that the quality of client-worker relationships is important, advising that a balance between being professional but in a personal way needs to exist.

It is perhaps not surprising to hear rural workers comment that rural problems are similar in nature to urban social problems, in view of the common human condition, although recognition is at the same time given to the role of rural context upon these problems. It is obvious that factors such as ethnicity, close-knit relationships, scarce resources and physical isolation aggravate the rural social problems and ought to be clearly understood as an integral part of a problem and its solution. In this same vein, the description of rural life as personalized and community oriented ought to be clearly understood by a rural practitioner.

Although research findings do not decisively conclude that rural characteristics and problems are different from urban characteristics and problems, there is

evidence that the characteristics and problems for each rural community ought to be understood and recognized by rural practitioners as they attempt to deliver services in rural communities. As well, the identified characteristics would argue for programs carefully designed to meet rural needs and delivered in a style compatible with the local environment; failure to acknowledge that the rural context has unique characteristics can lead to the inappropriate application of urban delivery approaches and models in rural settings.

## II. The Rural Context: Implications for Practice

From the literary and research data concerning the implications of the rural context for social work practice, certain observations can be made.

With respect to the issue of rural worker residence, the mixed opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages suggest a need for a thorough research of the subject. The visibility of the rural professional appears to be a highly important variable in the delivery of service, while at the same time, worker burn-out and staff turnover are recognized as critical factors of rural practice. Without further study of the subject, it appears important that a prospective rural employee be made well aware of the advantages and disadvantages to residency in the working community, while at the same time, it is advocated that agencies leave the decision to the individual as this research points to variation among workers in their ability to cope with rural

residency. The findings also suggest the importance of a sound knowledge and understanding of rural communities, both theoretically and practically as a pre-condition to seeking employment in the rural setting.

Research and literary data concerning rural worker experience prompt a number of observations. There are advantages and disadvantages to rural practice, the most significant being scarce resources, the lack of supervision, diversity among communities, community pressures and an informal attitude among rural clients and residents, complicated by factors such as distance and weather. These factors necessitate an ability to be flexible as well as an independent decision-making capability. Also, the personality of a rural social worker, this data suggests, must include the capacity to move quickly into relationships (personal and professional) with all sorts of people in all sorts of roles.

As well, the pressures identified by rural practitioners suggest the need for sabbaticals from rural work, as well as considerable monetary and professional recognition of the rural social worker. Most importantly, from an administrative point of view, is the serious need to build in a professional support system for the rural workers. These findings also suggest, on a more practical level, the provision of adequate vehicles and office space in the rural work community.

Further, the findings support the generalist model for rural social work practice. It can thus be tentatively concluded that rural professionals, for the most part, function as generalists, as there is neither sufficient population nor wealth to support social work specializations.

With respect to competencies for rural practice, the observation that a variety of skills and techniques are needed gives rise to the following generalization: a high degree of social work skill is required for the practice of social work in the rural environment. Findings regarding competencies for rural practice further reinforce the importance of a commitment to rural life and rural social development as a factor to be considered when attracting social work professionals to rural communities, that is, a high degree of social work skill is not the only requirement for professional rural practice.

In light of the value and knowledge base for rural practice expressed in the research data, it can be concluded that a sound value base is critical to rural practice because of the close scrutiny of the worker's activities. As well, formal (for example, rural systems) and informal knowledge (for example, the strengths and weaknesses of the informal power structure of a local community) contribute to a rural worker's effectiveness and ability to gain access to resources for people. Finally, the identified competencies which include flexibility and an independent practice capability are important factors to be considered when hiring social workers for rural practice.



### III. The Rural Context: Approach to Delivery

The insights and issues raised by rural social work practitioners with respect to approach and delivery reflect a contrast between the traditional view of child and family services based on the medical model and the more modern environmental perspective. Briefly, the medical model supports a casework emphasis, whereas the environmental model supports a community approach. Research and literary findings concerning approach to service delivery suggest the need for an evaluation of the various approaches presently adopted in the rural setting as to applicability and suitability to the rural context. Further, the contrast between the private and public agency, as defined in their approach (definition of purposes and goals) presented in this investigation, appears to require further study being that there may well be the necessity of a variety of approaches that are suitable and applicable to the rural context. A study of consumer perception of rural service delivery and a needs assessment of identified rural communities may provide valuable information as to appropriate approaches to rural social service delivery. Through the use of community inventories, a more complete appreciation of the quality of service provision for rural persons would hopefully result. This seems important at this time due to economic restraints and public policies resulting in what appear as cutbacks or non-growth in the area of human services as well as in light of decreasing/ changing rural populations.

#### IV. The Rural Context: Policy and Legislation

Issues with respect to policy and legislation in the rural context lead to a number of observations and recommendations for further research. First, a failure to recognize the distinctiveness of rural working conditions on the part of the policy makers and planners suggests a need for these persons to be made fully aware of the characteristics and factors of the rural setting. The necessary information must somehow be brought to the attention of policy makers and planners in order that services reach the people who need them and that social workers are given the administrative supports to carry out their activities effectively. The initiation of a social education/awareness approach involving the study of community problems, as well as strengths and problems of rural people is advocated. Such an approach would focus on the opportunities and potential for service provision, not necessarily formal, present in rural communities.

Other issues raised by rural respondents suggest that the rural child welfare role requires clear delineation with respect to services for Treaty Indians, as well as a need to educate the Family Court as to the rural environment and its conditions.

Finally, the benefits of a multi-disciplinary team approach to child and family services program delivery merit consideration in rural practice. It is hypothesized that some aspects of professional isolation in the rural setting

can be reduced by fostering greater interdisciplinary co-operation among rural human service personnel by acknowledging and building on overlapping functions and moderating an emphasis on professional separateness. Team work, in at least some aspects of service delivery, it would appear from this analysis, increases the opportunities for feedback and learning among members and, to some degree, compensates for the absence of supervision found in most rural areas.

V. The Rural Context: Implications for Professional Education

Literary and research findings concerning implications of the rural setting for professional education clearly argue for a rural emphasis in social work education. Social work, historically, has been described as an urban phenomenon that emerged in tandem with industrialization and urbanization; it seems that to genuinely be of assistance to rural communities, the social work profession must become more assertive in recruiting, preparing and providing ongoing training of professional manpower in rural settings.

The research findings support a generalist education, including an emphasis on the rural condition and skill development applicable to the rural setting. Such an approach to social work education might better prepare human service workers to provide services in a rural context. As well, it is argued that a rural field/practicum placement

has the benefit of exposing students to the rural community social condition, and preparing students for independent, minimally supervised professional practice. Development of social work education in terms of increasing teaching effectiveness specific to alternate modes of providing human service education in a rural context is advocated.

The findings also support the development of social work education programs for the potential native practitioner, designed according to native interests and human service needs. It is argued that such an effort would be extremely valuable in the planning and provision of services in both rural and urban communities given the reality of the increasing native population in Manitoba.

It is significant that rural workers are cognizant of the lack of opportunities in the rural setting for ongoing professional education. This factor, coupled with the identified training needs, suggests the development of continuing education models, designed in a format compatible with the time, geographical and financial constraints of the rural worker.

Finally, it is important to stress that if social work education is to become a force in training manpower for practice in rural areas, attention must be given to training appropriate to the demands of rural practice. To provide effective training for rural practitioners, it is advanced, requires a unified effort on the part of all levels of social work education and practice. The rural practice

community must be directly involved in course planning, curriculum design and curriculum content, calling for the educational institutions to open their doors to the rural practice community, not only to give information, but also to receive information about rural needs and conditions. The preparation of a social work literature and curriculum, focused on Canadian rural needs and conditions, is advocated as a necessary counter-balance to existing written material dealing with human services in urban settings. Alternatives seem necessary in order to modify the present social work curriculum so that it will more accurately reflect the context of the rural environment.

Finally, it is further stressed that schools of social work and rural social worker employers must address the concerns and needs of rural practitioners.

### Summary and Recommendations

#### Suggestions for Further Research:

This study by no means has included the many facets of social work practice in the rural setting. In conclusion, a number of the more significant topics in the subject area are suggested for further research.

This study of rural social work practice has not attempted to take a consumer point of view of rural social work practice. The focus of this research, being explorative and formulative, did not address the issue of rural practice effectiveness. One method of data collection for assessment of rural practice in qualitative terms might

be a survey of rural clients' attitudes and opinions of rural service. In fact, current evaluative technology might be fruitfully employed in the rural setting.

A major area of inquiry in this study concerns social work education for rural practice, the emphasis being on advocating a rural perspective to education. A major task of further research might be to develop a social work education program appropriate to the needs of rural practitioners, of both an undergraduate or continuing education nature. It is stressed that rural curriculum development is a major challenge of the future.

A further suggestion for research concerns a scientific inquiry into the current characteristics of the rural people and communities. The major goal in such a research undertaking might be to confirm or refute long-held assumptions and myths about rural life and to assess changing conditions (trends). It is suggested that this inquiry could include a confirmation and/or elaboration of the informal helping network as well as an ascertainment of the perceived needs of the rural public. Little is known about the qualitative aspects of contemporary life in rural communities and a more definite picture of expectations and needs requires delineation.

Consistent with a study of rural people, a study of rural practitioners is also recommended. Such an inquiry might focus on issues such as rural worker residence, as well as age and cultural factors and their relationship to

rural practice. There continues to be a number of myths about the rural social work practitioner, one of which concerns the perception of the rural practitioner as having and requiring fewer qualifications. It is suggested that a scientific inquiry of the rural practitioner may serve to enhance the practice of rural social work in the profession as a whole.

Finally, there appears to be a strong argument, arising in the literature and from participants in this study, for a community-oriented approach to social work in rural areas. The concept needs to be elaborated more clearly; as well, it seems to have components which would be sufficiently relevant to rural practice as to make them worthy of consideration. Included in such a study might be the implications for the worker in terms of his/her capacity to cope with a dual role, and for the client and community in being presented with a possibly confusing view of the social worker's role. This also raises the question about who (the agency or the community) should employ the social worker.

It is recommended that these research suggestions be undertaken with the same commitment to understanding the practice of social work in the rural setting that has inspired this study.

## Conclusion

The issues, concerns and insights raised by rural social work practitioners in the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the Province of Manitoba, the supporting evidence in the literature and the growing interest in rural social work in the profession emphasize the significance and vital contribution of rural social work and provide support for the adoption of a rural specialty within the profession. It is suggested that this is an important development if rural social work is to be given the recognition, identification and credibility it deserves.

This study has been inspired by the intent to improve the quality of human services in the rural community, to awaken an interest in the profession to the challenging and rewarding opportunities for social workers in the rural setting, and to provide Canadian, specifically Manitoban, content to the growing literature on rural social work through an exposition of the rural context and its implications for the practice of social work and the delivery of social services.



## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT (A Study of Social Work Practitioners in the Interlake and Eastman Regions of the Province of Manitoba)

##### I. General Identifying Information

1. Name of social worker:
2. Approximate age:
3. Educational background - Degree(s)/Diploma(s) held:
4. Experience (i.e., social work positions held)  
Type:  
Length of Service:
5. How long have you worked in this rural community?
6. Previous rural experience:
7. Previous urban experience:

##### II. Characteristics of the Rural Setting

1. Describe the rural environment in which you work in terms of its physical, geographical and psychosocial characteristics. What are the people and their communities like? How would you describe life in the rural area?
2. What are the usual social situations, problems or conditions you encounter in your daily practice (of a caseload or community nature)? If you have worked in this rural area for some time, are there any noticeable changing trends?

### III. Practice Implications of the Rural Setting

1. Do you live in the community in which you work? If so, has this any implication(s) for your practice? If not, what are the implications for you (the worker) living outside your work community(ies)? What are the implications for the community?

Does worker residence affect the delivery of the child and family services program?

2. What is your experience with working in a rural area? What are some of the positives and/or negatives of rural practice? What are some of the pressures?
3. What are useful values for a social worker practising in the rural setting?
4. Given the problems and needs of rural residents, what information/knowledge do you require to carry out your job in the rural area?
5. What social work skills do you find yourself using most often? What are the skills you need to practise social work in the rural setting?
6. What do you need to cope in this environment? Can you identify any required personal traits and/or attitudes specific to rural practice? If so, what are they?

### IV. Approach to Rural Service Delivery

1. What major approach/method do you (as a worker) use in the delivery of the child and family services program? What is the approach taken by your agency to program delivery? Why is this (these) approach(es) taken? In your opinion, what is the most effective means of program delivery in this rural area?
2. What is the most typical problem that confronts you in your job (e.g., caseload, community organization, etc.)? How do you deal with it? Where do you go for assistance or solutions. What resources do you use?
3. What other people/groups of a human service nature are working in this geographical area? What is your relationship with them?

4. What would you like to see happening in the rural area in terms of delivery of the child and family services program?

V. Policy and Legislation and the Rural Setting

1. Does the child and family services program meet the needs of the rural community? Does it meet the needs of you as the service representative?
2. Does planning and policy-making in the child and family services program take into account the rural setting? Are you ever consulted about the effects of the program in the rural area?
3. Is the child welfare legislation helpful in meeting the needs of rural residents?

VI. Social Work Education and the Rural Setting

1. What opportunities are there in this environment for you as a professional to continue to learn and grow? What are you able to do about your needs (if any) as a professional?
2. What are your continuing education needs and/or goals? How and where are they met? What do you need or want?
3. A graduate social worker is hired for a position in the child and family services program in the rural community. What do you believe the graduate should possess in terms of educational background and experience? Please identify the components of social work education for rural practice.
4. What advice would you give to a student entering social work with a view to rural practice?

VII. Other Issues/Concerns

1. Have you any comments/opinions to make about rural social work practice in general? Is there anything you have to say about rural practice that was not touched upon previously in the interview?

## APPENDIX B

## OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT  
(A Study of Social Work Practitioners in the Interlake  
and Eastman Regions of the Province of Manitoba)

Introduction to Study

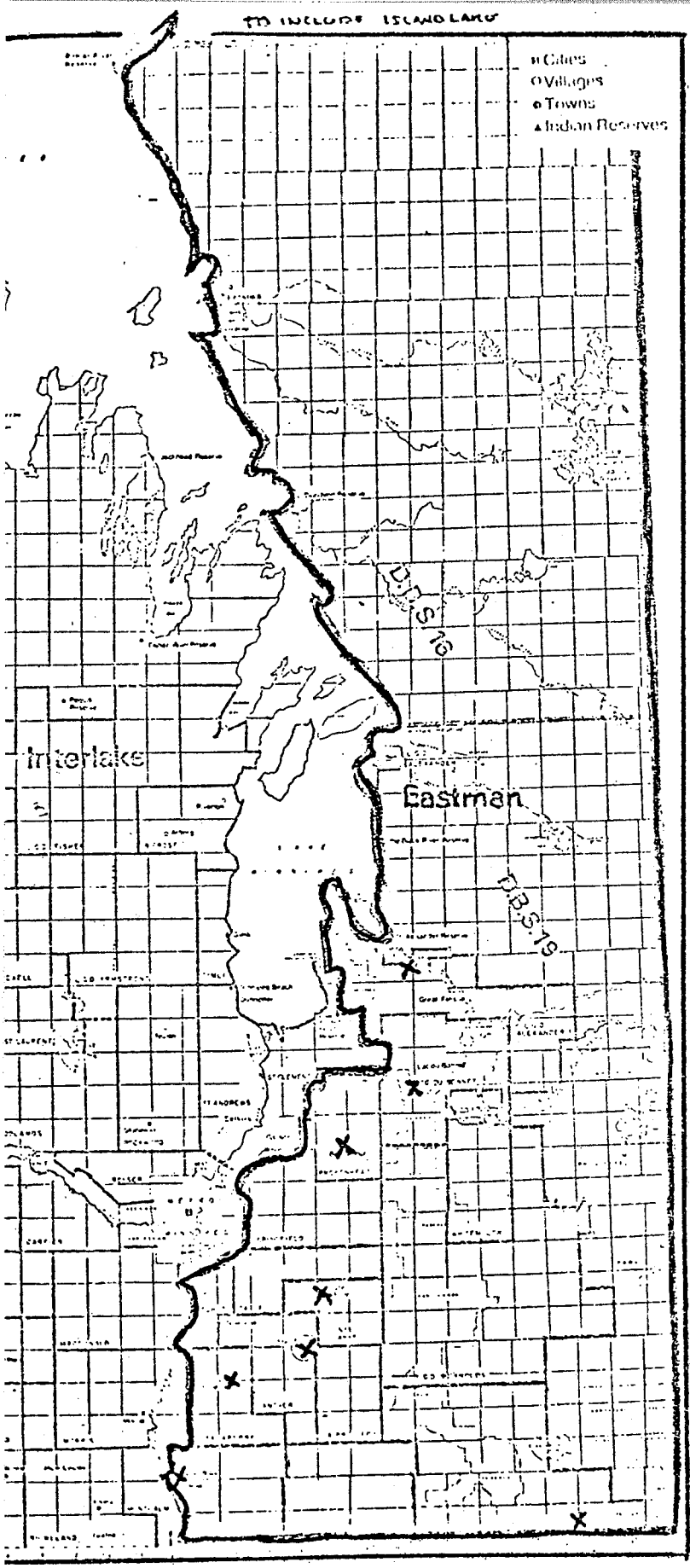
The practice of social work in the rural environment has been attracting interest from practitioners and educators alike in recent years. Much of the literature on the subject has originated outside of Canada. As well, the literature itself speaks of diversity in opinion about what social workers do or should be doing in this setting.

The Province of Manitoba has a large number of social workers practising in the rural areas and therefore a study of these practitioners would appear to be warranted. This study will attempt to undertake an exploratory analysis of social workers in the rural environment, the main questions being: what do social workers do in the rural setting and what are the identifiable issues pertaining to social work in this field of practice? A number of social workers in the Eastman and Interlake Regions of the Province are being surveyed in an effort to tap their insights about rural practice. The results of this study will hopefully be of assistance to both practitioners and employers, as well as the School of Social Work.

The format of the survey will consist of an in-depth interview with interested social workers, using the following areas as a guideline for the discussion.

It is not the intention of the study to evaluate the effectiveness of individual practitioners or programs (and therefore, there are no right or wrong answers), but rather to comment on the experiences, opinions, functions and skills of rural practitioners.

- I. Job Description
  - formal description
  - actual practice
  - constraint factors
  - range of activities
- II. Characteristics of the Rural Setting
  - the context (physical, social) of the work environment
  - major conditions, changing trends in rural environment
- III. Practice Implications of Rural Setting
  - place of residence and effects on worker and on community
  - view of program held by community, effects of program on community
  - pressures of rural practice, necessary skills
  - important/useful values in rural setting
  - knowledge requirements re: rural practice
- IV. Approach to Delivery
  - typical problems encountered, resources called upon to solve these problems, methods and/or skills used in the process
  - new trends (if any) in delivery
  - other ideas about more effective method to meet program goals in rural context
- V. Program Policy/Planning and the Rural Setting
  - does the program's policy and/or legislation relate to rural needs?
  - does planning process take "rural" into consideration? should it?
  - extent of involvement by rural worker in program planning
- VI. Education/Training
  - opportunities for learning in rural environment
  - what are educational/training prerequisites for work in rural environment
- VII. Other Issues/Concerns
  - open to general or specific comments



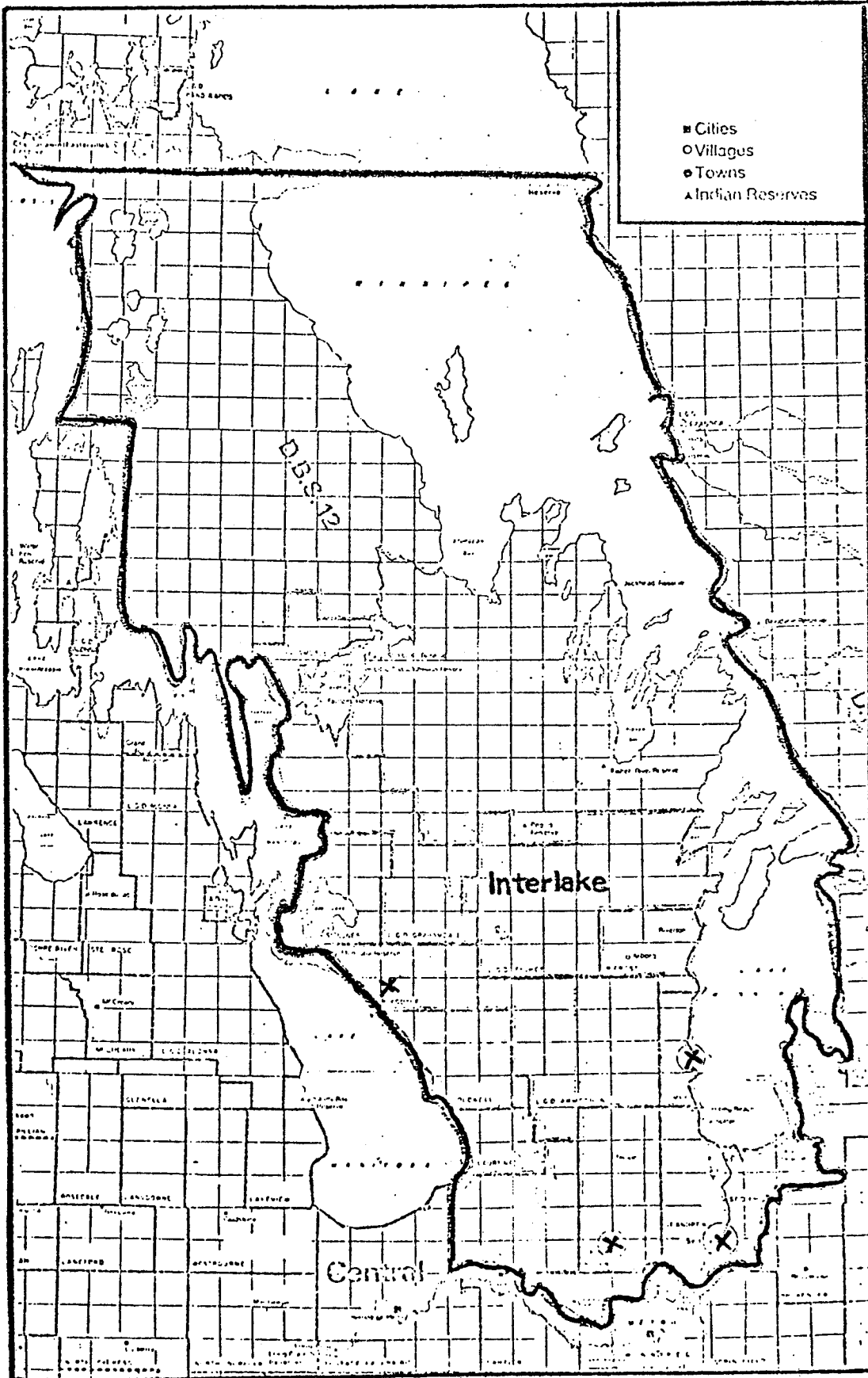
- Regional Office:  
Beausejour
- District Offices:  
Steinbach  
Pine Falls  
Ste. Anne  
St. Pierre  
Sprague
- District Health Centre:  
Lac du Bonnet
- C.A.S. Eastern:  
Main of  
St. Boniface
- Resource Centres:
- Urban  
Norwood  
Windsor Park
- Rural  
Steinbach  
Lac du Bonnet  
Scantebury  
St. Pierre  
Roseau River  
Reserve  
Beausejour

APPENDIX C

Map of the EASTMAN REGION, Department of Health and Social Development

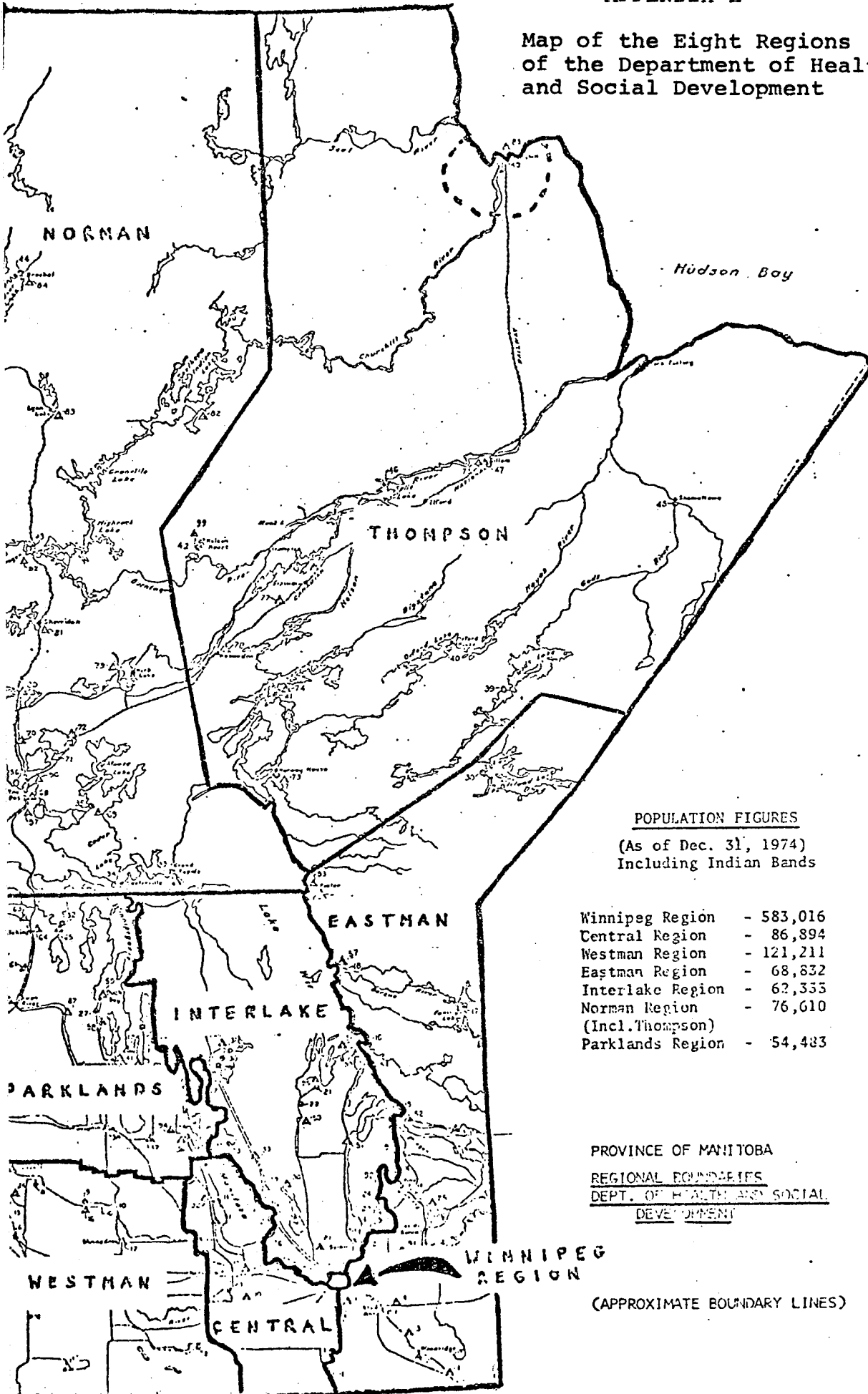
1 Office: Selkirk  
t Offices: Ashern, Gimli, Stonewall

Map of the INTERLAKE REGION, Department of Health and Social Development



APPENDIX E

Map of the Eight Regions of the Department of Health and Social Development



POPULATION FIGURES

(As of Dec. 31, 1974)  
Including Indian Bands

Winnipeg Region	-	583,016
Central Region	-	86,894
Westman Region	-	121,211
Eastman Region	-	68,832
Interlake Region	-	62,355
Norman Region	-	76,610
(Incl. Thompson)		
Parklands Region	-	54,483

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

REGIONAL BOUNDARIES  
DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT

(APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY LINES)



## APPENDIX F

## PROFILE OF EASTMAN REGION\*

The Eastman Region used in this study is the boundaries designated by the Department of Health and Community Services (formerly Department of Health and Social Development). The region covers that part of the province which is east of the Red River and Lake Winnipeg, west of the Ontario border, south of the 53rd parallel and north of the United States border, excluding the Rural Municipality of St. Clements, the Unicity of Winnipeg, and that part of the Rural Municipality of Morris which is east of the Red River and including that part of the Municipality which is west of the Red River (see Appendix C).

In 1971, the total population for the Eastman Region was 64,995 or 6.3% of the total population of the province.

Among the total population (in 1961), there is no ethnic majority; the breakdown is as follows: French, 21.5%; German, 15.8%; Netherlands, 14.8%; Ukrainian, 14.5%; British Isles, 12.4%; the remainder (21%) is made up of native Indian and various other nationalities.

Of the population in Eastman Region age 15 and over, 51.9% were in the labour force in 1961. Agriculture is the major employment classification with 41.5% of the labour force engaged in this activity. Service (11.4%), trade (9.9%) and manufacturing (9.6%) rank second, third and fourth respectively, together employing 30.9% of the labour force. Collectively, these four types of industry employ 72.4% of the labour force.

In terms of religious affiliation (1961 figures), Roman Catholic is the major grouping with 37%, followed by Mennonite (20.8%), Ukrainian (10.6%) and Ukrainian Catholic (9%).

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\*Source: Manitoba Department of Health and Social Development, Division of Research, Planning and Program Development, Aging in Manitoba - Needs and Resources, 1971, Vol. III, Eastman Region.

The Eastman Region is comprised of a large number of settlements. Broken down by population, the variety of settlements is as follows:

Population (50-99)-	21	
Population (100-299) -	28	
Population (300-499) -	13	
Population (500-999) -	8	
Population (1000-4499) -	3	
Population (4500+) -	1	(Beausejour is regarded as an urban centre)

## APPENDIX G

## PROFILE OF INTERLAKE REGION\*

The Interlake Region used in this study is the boundaries designated by the Department of Health and Community Services. The Interlake Region includes that central portion of the province which is bounded on the west by the east shores of Lake Winnipegosis, Lake Waterhen and Lake Manitoba, on the south by the southern boundaries of the Rural Municipalities of Woodlands and Rosser, on the east by the east shore of Lake Winnipeg, the Red River and the Unicity of Winnipeg, but including the Rural Municipality of St. Clements, and on the north by the 53rd parallel, but excluding Easterville and the L.G.D. of Grand Rapids (see Appendix D).

The Interlake Region is a large, mostly rural region. It contains one major urban centre (Selkirk) and eight smaller urban centres, all located in the southern half of the region which is the most populated portion of the region. The northern half of the region is sparsely populated in widely separated settlements. The total population in the region in 1971 was 61,766 or 6.1% of the population of the province.

Among the total population, there is no ethnic majority. Ethnic background of the 1961 population is as follows: British Isles, 32.8%; Ukrainian, 17.6%; Scandinavian, 12.0%; and, German, 8.3%, the remaining 30% being of mixed ancestry, including native Indian (numbering 5,630 in 1975).

Of the population in the Interlake Region age 15 and over, 51.5% were in the labour force in 1961. Agriculture is the major employment classification (40.5%) followed by service (14%), trade (10.1%) and manufacturing (9.1%). Together, these four occupations employ 73.7% of the labour force.

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\*Source: Manitoba Department of Health and Social Development, Division of Research, Planning and Program Development, Aging in Manitoba - Needs and Resources, 1971, Vol. IV, Interlake Region.

In terms of religious affiliation, there is no majority; the major religious groupings (in 1961) are as follows: Roman Catholic, 20.2%; Anglican, 19.6%; United Church, 17.7%; Lutheran, 15.6%; Ukrainian Catholic, 10.5%.

The Interlake Region is comprised of a large number of settlements:

Population (50-99)	14
Population (100-299)	23
Population (300-499)	7
Population (500-999)	5
Population (1000-4499)	3
Population (4500+)	1

## APPENDIX H

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY  
OF EASTERN MANITOBA\*1. NAME

Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba.

2. AUSPICES

The Board was previously composed of approximately 50 members who were elected at large and were not necessarily representative of their area. In 1972, with the establishment of a number of decentralized resource centres and their citizen advisory committees, the structure of the Board was altered. The Board is now composed of 12 members including one member from each Regional Advisory Committee and four to five members at large. Board members tend to be community leaders who are relatively representative of their area. There are four committees of the Board. These include Program Development and Evaluation, Personnel, Finance and the Executive Committee.

The main office for the agency is in St. Boniface with decentralized resource centres in the urban areas of Norwood and Windsor Park, and rural centres in Scantebury, St. Pierre, Steinbach, Beausejour, Lac du Bonnet and on the Roseau River Reserve.

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\*Source: J. C. Ryant, et al. A Report to the Minister of the Department of Health and Social Development, A Review of Child Welfare Policies, Programs and Services in Manitoba. Winnipeg, July 1975.

### 3. CATCHMENT AREA

#### a) Boundaries

C.A.S. Eastern provides child welfare service to all organized municipalities within Eastman Region in southeastern Manitoba (see Appendix C), including such communities as Steinbach, Beausejour and Lac du Bonnet, and that area of Winnipeg including St. Boniface and Windsor Park.<sup>1</sup>

#### b) Population

The rural area of C.A.S. of Eastern's catchment area overlaps with part of that served by the Eastman Regional Office. The Roseau River and Brokenhead Indian Reserves fall within C.A.S. of Eastern's boundaries which include a reserve population of 1,115 status Indians. C.A.S. of Eastern provides a full range of child welfare services to these reserves by virtue of the special contractual arrangement.

#### c) Unique Characteristics of Catchment Area

The catchment area provides service to a large Francophone population in St. Boniface, and a significant Mennonite population in the Steinbach area. Around Steinbach, there is a relatively large number of retarded children.

### 4. SERVICES

#### a) Programs Offered

- i) Pre-protection services. Pre-placement services involve the use of resource workers who are actively involved in outreach efforts such as volunteer programs, family life education, short-term crisis counselling, information and referral services, and creating and supporting a community advisory group to become involved in community-related efforts. Short-term counselling may also be offered by the resource worker as a pre-placement service.

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<sup>1</sup>Eastman Region provides child welfare services to all local government districts and unorganized territories within their regional boundaries.

- ii) Protection. Protection services are offered primarily by back-up workers working out of the central office, although decentralized community resource workers do initial investigations and emergency placements when necessary.
- iii) Extended care.
- iv) Services to unmarried.
- v) Adoption.
- vi) Full child welfare services and services related to the resource centre concept are offered to the reserves in the C.A.S. catchment area. A child care centre is operated on the Roseau River Reserve which offers primarily a temporary resource for children in their own community.

## 5. RESOURCES

### Nature of Staff Deployment

The most unique feature of this agency is its development of a series of resource centres staffed by resource workers either on a full or part-time basis. These staff work closely with a community advisory committee (known as a Regional Advisory Committee) and develop programs and services which are primarily non-statutory in emphasis. Such activities range from facilitating resource development and client advocacy to short-term crisis counselling and emergency protection intervention. Major responsibility for statutory services is carried by "the back-up worker" who follows up protection referrals which require service over an extended period of time. Back-up services are provided on an itinerant basis from the main office and when the statutory focus of such service has terminated, the cases would be closed or transferred back to the resource worker for follow-up.

Services are provided by three units--an Adoption and Northern Unit, a Rural Unit, and an Urban Unit.

## APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF THE EASTMAN REGION (CHILD AND FAMILY  
SERVICES PROGRAM), DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES\*

1. NAME

Eastman Region.

2. AUSPICES

The Regional Office is located at Beausejour and district offices exist at Pine Falls, Steinbach, St. Pierre, Sprague and Ste. Anne. In addition, public health offices with itinerant social work coverage exist at Whitemouth and St. Adolphe.

3. CATCHMENT AREAa) Boundaries

Eastman provides services to the southeastern segment of the province including the reserve areas at Island Lake, which is actually situated north of latitude 53° (see Appendix C). Within this diverse geographical area, the Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba provides child welfare services only to the incorporated towns and municipalities, and Eastman provides child welfare services in addition to other programs in all local government districts and unorganized territories.

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\*Source: J. C. Ryant, et al. A Report to the Minister of the Department of Health and Social Development, A Review of Child Welfare Policies, Programs and Services in Manitoba. Winnipeg, July 1975.



b) Population

The population of the region is approximately 68,800, of which 8,341 are status Indians living on reserves. Fort Alexander and the reserves at Island Lake have the largest concentrations of native people.

Steinbach and Beausejour are the largest communities in the essentially agriculturally-based southern part of this region. Generally, the population is widely dispersed throughout this region with the heaviest concentration in the southern area.

c) Unique Characteristics of the Catchment Area

This region has a significantly large status Indian population and only two of the twelve reserves receive full child welfare services from C.A.S. of Eastern. There are two areas of the region with a comparatively high ratio of special problems. In the Sprague area, there is a significantly large child population with psychological speech defects, and around Steinbach, there is a relatively high number of retarded children.

4. SERVICES

a) Programs Offered

- i) Pre-protection services. The primary emphasis in pre-protection services in this region is on voluntary family counselling, although the public health educator has been involved in extending family life education programs. Family counselling services are not consistently offered throughout the region and appear to depend on worker time and credibility in the community.
- ii) Protection services.
- iii) Extended care. This region has developed the Piney-Stuartburn area as a major centre for foster homes due to the positive attitudes towards foster care in this area, which appears enhanced by a close-knit community structure with large extended families.
- iv) Services to unmarried.

- v) Adoption. Adoption services are provided throughout the child welfare catchment area in the region, however, there has been special emphasis on the placement of native children on the four reserves near Island Lake. This area was selected as a potential resource for children because of strengths present in these communities and the strong sense of traditional family patterns which provide an excellent resource for children. Close working relationships have been developed with the Band Councils in the area, and gradually some of the reluctance of placing agencies has been overcome.
- vi) In Sprague a special child care worker has been hired to work primarily within the school system with children in care. This worker has also become involved in some recreational outreach programs.

## 5. RESOURCES

### Nature of Staff Deployment

Staff are decentralized to several locations in the region and caseloads therefore tend to be generalized where the full range of child and family services are offered. Where C.A.S. of Eastern provides child welfare services, Eastman social work staff specialize primarily in family counselling. Some specialization in worker roles has occurred in the adoption and foster home programs, particularly in the Island Lake and Sprague areas.

Staff are divided into two major health and social service teams within the region with team leaders responsible for service delivery within their geographical areas. Staff do consult with the senior program people in their respective disciplines and the region has recently acquired a program service co-ordinator. Sub-teams within each core team have become the major working units with core team meetings occurring every four to six weeks. An evaluation completed in March 1974 indicated that positive steps had been taken to initiate the team approach in the region, there was evidence of strong staff commitment to the concept, and that service to individual cases was enhanced through this mode of service delivery.

## APPENDIX J

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERLAKE REGION (CHILD AND  
FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM), DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES\*

1. NAME

Interlake Region.

2. AUSPICES

The regional office is located at Selkirk and there are three other district offices at Gimli, Stonewall and Ashern.

3. CATCHMENT AREAa) Boundaries

Interlake Region serves the area north of Winnipeg to Latitude 53° in the central part of the province. Its western boundary roughly follows the eastern shores of Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba and the eastern boundary of the region follows the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg. The total area of the region covers approximately 10,000 square miles (see Appendix D).

b) Population

Interlake has a population of approximately 62,000 of which 5,630 are status Indians living on eight reserves in the region. Selkirk has a population of 10,000 and it is the largest centre in the southern

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\*Source: J. C. Ryant, et al. A Report to the Minister of the Department of Health and Social Development, A Review of Child Welfare Policies, Programs and Services in Manitoba. Winnipeg, July 1975.

part of the region which is relatively affluent in the economic sense. The population in the central and northern portions of the region is widely dispersed and considered to be economically depressed. The Peguis Reserve has the major concentration of status Indian population in the area.

c) Unique Characteristics of the Catchment Area

As above.

4. SERVICES

a) Programs Offered

- i) Pre-protection services. Voluntary family counselling is extended as the major form of pre-protection service in this region.
- ii) Protection.
- iii) Extended care.
- iv) Services to unmarried.
- v) Adoption.

5. RESOURCES

Nature of Staff Deployment

Staff carry caseloads including a combination of all child and family service programs and these services are provided as part of a team which include public health staff and probation officers. There are four teams in the region, one in each office, and each team has a co-ordinator. In addition, there are program specialists for each regional program located at the Selkirk Regional Office and these specialists function as a regional management group. They have no line authority and attend team meetings only on the invitation of the team co-ordinator. There are four child and family service staff at Stonewall, three at Gimli, two at Ashern and eight at Selkirk.

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