

APPLYING THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS CODE
OF ETHICS IN UNIQUELY-SITUATED NORTHERN GEOGRAPHICAL
LOCATIONS: ARE THERE FACTORS IN PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTS THAT
IMPACT ADHERENCE TO THE 2005 CODE?

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore social work practitioner familiarity with and interpretation of the 2005 Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (Code) to determine whether specific sections of the existing Code enable social work practitioners to deliver ethical service in uniquely-situated geographical locations in northern, Manitoba.

Study participants were asked to examine his/her knowledge of general social work practice experiences in the North within the context of the 2005 Code. The research questions were connected to specific statements from the 2005 Code in order to relate actual practitioner experiences with the requirements of the 2005 Code.

A qualitative research style with exploratory methodology was employed in this study. Purposive sampling was selected as the participants were chosen from a specific group: Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates from The Faculty of Social Work (FSWT) in Thompson. In-person interviews were conducted with six northern practicing, social workers.

The study findings were based on six study-participant views as to whether the existing 2005 Code enables practitioners to deliver ethical service, as they see it, in the North, in Manitoba. Based upon participant feedback, the findings indicated that the study participants believe that social workers in the North: are not familiar with the 2005 Code; have a lack of education, knowledge, discussion and accessibility in this Code, and find there is a lack of application of this Code in practice environments.

When given the opportunity to read and interpret the 2005 Code, five of six respondents reported that the intent of the Code is reflective of their practice, an apparent contradiction between how they described their understanding of the intent of the Code versus their practice realities. All reported that dual roles and potential conflicts of interest are very difficult to avoid when practicing social work in the North.

Participant recommendations include: that the Manitoba Association of Social Workers (MASW) now the Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers (MIRSW) list the ramifications of breaching the 2005 Code; identification by the MIRSW as to the criteria to suspend or revoke a social worker's membership; a review of the 2005 Code, as one participant stated that one policy could not apply to everyone; consideration to develop separate guidelines for social workers in isolated communities to allow for cultural differences that exist; change the wording of the 2005 Code; the MIRSW review the statement "...inherent worth and dignity..." in the Code, as it does not allow for some of the cultural differences that exist; review the economic and geographic issues that are somewhat unique in the North that make it challenging to adhere to sections of the 2005 Code.

Based upon participant feedback, the researcher recommends: that the MIRSW, consider embarking on an education and promotion campaign in order that each member can become familiar with the 2005 Code; broader education of Northern social workers as to the content of the 2005 Code; the MIRSW review the identified factors that social workers potentially face in all northern, rural, remote and isolated environments as those factors may impair his/her ability to adhere to the 2005 Code;

when formed, that the Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) review potential factors impacting social work practitioners in northern, rural, remote and isolated environments in relation to adherence to the 2005 Code.

Study limitations included: specific concentration on northern environments; minimal recruitment response; sensitivity of the study topic; considerable changes have occurred between the 1994 and 2005 versions of the Code, however the study focused specifically on the participants' understanding of the 2005 Code; participant comprehension of the interview questions; potential lack of agency/organization support to encourage participation in the study. The sample size constitutes a delimitation in this study.

Recommendations for future research include: consideration and flexibility on behalf of the Psychology/ Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) in studies to both protect participant rights through ensuring informed consent as well as the need to understand through research the realities of social work practice; the disclosure and provision of interview questions prior to the actual interviews; further research of ethical practice in the social work profession to ensure that all social workers practice under existing requirements set out in current MIRSWS By-Laws and, in the future, Provincial Legislation that is applicable to every social worker in Manitoba.

This study was limited to six participants, broader research to more fully investigate the practical realities of applying the 2005 Code in Northern environments could inform how the new legislation is implemented.

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CHAPTER1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

In the social work profession in Canada, it is the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (Code), hereinafter referred to as the Code, that sets out the parameters of ethical practice. The purpose of this thesis is to assess the extent to which the Code of Ethics can be applied in a northern, rural, remote practice setting. Given that the Code was amended in 2005, in order to achieve this purpose the research must also determine the extent to which northern practitioners are familiar with the Code and it also must look at how they understand the Code. There is a growing body of literature suggesting that the realities of the North may not be conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with the Code, therefore this research is narrowing a knowledge gap. Given the stated purpose, the research will explore practitioner experiences regarding: (1) familiarity of the Code; (2) interpretation of the intent and meaning of the Code based upon the Code content; (3) exploration of factors that may impede or enhance the Code.

1.2 Report Structure

The report structure is comprised of eleven chapters proceeding sequentially as: (1) Introduction; (2) History of CASW and Manitoba Association of Social Workers (MASW)/ Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers (MIRSW); (3) The Process of the 2005 Code Development; (4) The Development of the Research Questions; (5) Definition of Terms; (6) Methodology; (7) Findings; (8) Contributions to Social Work Knowledge; (9)

Establishment of the Manitoba College of Social Workers: Implications for Change; (10) Recommendations; (11) Conclusion and Personal Reflections.

1.3 Literature Reference and Explanation

The report does not include a separate literature review section as the literature has been incorporated throughout the chapters. There appears to be an extremely limited amount of Canadian literature pertaining to the study topic areas: social work in the North; ethics specific to Canada and northern locations; history of the CASW and the history of the MASW/MIRSW. Comparatively, a vast amount of American literature was located, in addition to a significant literature base written and produced by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the American social work association.

For the purpose of this report, the primary resources are Canadian, and the supplementary resources are international. Resources have been accessed from the following sources: journal articles from university databases including: social work abstracts, ebsco-host, psych-info; journal articles; Bison Library catalogue; primary source books with an anthology of authors; research text books; clinical practice text books; books specific to ethics; theoretical books; government archives; thesis dissertation; personal communications via e-mail and telephone; newspaper article; and charts from books. The research also conducted telephone interviews with the Director of CASW; the Director of MASW/MIRSW; and the author of the 2005 Code, Beverly Antle. As well, brief email interviews with the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW) and Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW).

Canadian authors that are cited have authored numerous resources spanning the

past two decades. The evident strength within the current reviewed Canadian literature base relates to the majority of those authors who support similar positions regarding service delivery in the North. This finding may serve to build the Canadian literature base. A significant amount of literature pertaining to the reality of practice in the North was accessed from Zapf, as cited in Turner, 1999; Delaney and Brownlee, 1995; Delaney, 1999; Wharf, 1999; Zapf, 1997; and Collier, 1993. Literature related to ethical issues was primarily drawn from: Jones, as cited in Turner, 1999; reflection on researcher's professional experience in the North; Cottone and Tarvydas; Delaney, 1999; Wharf, 1999; Zapf, 1997; and Delaney and Brownlee, 1995.

CHAPTER 2 - History of CASW and MASW/MIRSW

This chapter will present an overview of the historic structure, development and affiliation of the CASW and the MASW/MIRSW in relation to the social work profession and the 2005 Code.

2.1 Canadian Association of Social Workers

The CASW, founded in 1926, originated as a membership organization for social workers which in 1938 extended into active provincial branches of the CASW. According to Foley (1999), CASW adopted a federated structure reflective of the constitutional anthology of Canada. This resulted in CASW becoming a national association of provincial organizations. Therefore, members of the provincial associations became affiliated members of the CASW. The CASW mandate stipulates that the national association is responsible to provide leadership and respond to member organizations for the benefit of the profession as a whole (Foley, 1999).

For the purpose of this report, the title of registered social worker, certified social worker and licensed social worker will be defined to ensure a uniform understanding of these terms. A registered social worker refers to the issuance of a certificate of registration by a public or governing body (The Social Worker/Le Travailleur Social, v.58 (1), p.20). The regulatory association, the MIRSW, grants *Registered Social Worker* status in Manitoba by applying a stringent set of standards, skills and values to measure each applicant's entitlement (McCorquodale 1999, as cited in Turner, 1999). A certified social worker refers to the issuance of a certificate of certification by a public or private governing body (The Social Worker/Le Travailleur Social, v.58 (1), p.20). The Ontario

College of Certified Social Workers (OCCSW) grants the *Certified Social Worker* title upon verification that an individual has attained a specific level of education, knowledge and skills (Barker, 1999). The title of *Certified Social Worker* provides a stronger form of regulation than the title of *Registered Social Worker*. Certification ensures that a social worker has specific knowledge and skill; whereas, registration ascertains that a social worker has met the criteria or qualifications to carry out an occupational activity (The Social Worker/Le Travailleur Social, v.58 (1), p.20). However, the *Licensed Social Worker* title affords the maximum level of regulation in social work. A licensed social worker refers to the issuance of a license by a publicly-mandated governing body granting right to engage in the activities of a given occupation (The Social Worker/Le Travailleur Social, v.58 (1), p. 20). The *Licensed Social Worker* title is granted to an individual who has attained authorization from and is legally accredited by his/her jurisdictional provincial association (Barker, 1999).

2.2 Development of the MASW

The Provincial Secretary of the Province of Manitoba established Manitoba's provincial association, the Manitoba Association of Social Workers (MASW), as a body corporate on May 29, 1961 (MASW/MIRSW By-laws, 1999). MASW, at the time the research was compiled, one of three provincial associations whose professional social work members remain unlicensed, while the remaining seven provincial associations have passed legislation to license social workers. While Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec social workers continue to be unlicensed, Manitoba and British Columbia have passed legislation that has secured the title of *Registered Social Worker*.

2.3 Development of the MIRS

The Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers (MIRS), Manitoba's regulatory body, was formed through legislation in 1966 by the *Act to Incorporate the Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers* (MASW/MIRS By-laws, 1999); the closest affiliation to licensed social work status in Manitoba to-date. This Act provided for two separate bodies (Mackenzie 1999 as cited in, Turner, 1999): MIRS and MASW, which now function collectively with one board utilizing joint by-laws that are equally applicable except where noted otherwise. The Act permitted MIRS to protect the title *registered social worker* but did not allow for the control of practice, nor was registration compulsory (Mackenzie 1999 as cited in, Turner, 1999). *The Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers Act* is one of the oldest, non-amended, pieces of social work legislation that exists today. One may be inclined to query whether evolving practice has been reflected in evolving standards. Jones (1999) acknowledges the necessity to review and amend codes as a function that ethics committees, of both professional associations and colleges of practice, would carry out (as cited in, Turner, 1999). The monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or annual review of the Code and subsequent amendments may serve to ensure that evolving practice is reflective by evolving standards.

Historically, the CASW Code (1994), the MIRS Act (1966) and the MASW/MIRS Bylaws (1999) documents have not addressed practice issues in relation to the delivery of social work services in the North, in Manitoba and Canada. Zapf refers to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) conference that CASW hosted in

1984, where CASW, in discussing potential areas for involvement, did not mention "the rights of citizens in isolated areas or standards for northern practice" (1999, p. 345). He further refers to northern issues in the context of the national understanding within the profession, ". . . it appears that Canadian social work has barely begun to accept, incorporate, and learn from its unique northern environment" (1999, p. 353).

CHAPTER 3 - The Process of the 2005 Code Development

The Code, originally developed in 1938, was revised in 1940, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1970, 1979, 1983, 1994, and most recently in 2005. It serves as the leadership document for social work in Canada. While the Code was established and revised to be universally applicable throughout Canada, each provincial association and the sole territorial association independently determine whether the Code will be wholly endorsed, amended or substituted reflecting the collective diversity of provincial and territorial affiliations to the CASW Code of Ethics.

3.1 Development of the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics

Interview quotes reflect the circumstances at the time of the interview and responses were made within the context of that timeframe.

The CASW 1994 Code existed for eleven years until, during the process of researching this document, a new CASW Code was developed which was said to be wholly endorsed by the provincial and territorial associations serving as the CASW member organizations (E. Repetur Moreno, personal communication February 24, 2006). This section will delineate the process which was adhered to in the development of the 2005 Code of Ethics. The following is a comprehensive list of the nine provincial, and one territorial, associations which at the time of the research represented the CASW member organizations: British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW); Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW); Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW); Manitoba Association of Social Workers (MASW); Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW); New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (NBASW); Nova Scotia

Association of Social Workers (NSASW); Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers (NLASW); Prince Edward Island Association of Social Workers (PEIASW); Association of Social Workers of Northern Canada (ASWNC). The province of Québec, Ordre Professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec, is not a member of the CASW. CASW was requested to undertake the revision of the national Code as it has historically accepted this task and it is known to be convenient for one organization to complete the work rather than each provincial/territorial association (E. Repetur Moreno, personal communication, February 24, 2006). The initial process for evolving a new Code of Ethics commenced with the creation of an Advisory Committee of CASW which included the Alberta CASW Director and the CASW Executive Director (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28, 2006). Beverly Antle was hired to complete: the literature review, a comparative analysis of the previous Codes of Ethics, as well as a review of the Standards of Practice that were in operation in Canada (personal communication, February 28, 2006). The literature review focusing on ethics in social work was completed in September 2002 and published on the CASW website, members only section of the site; review of existing Codes including the 1994 CASW Code, Australian, British, United States and IFSW Codes; review of Standards of Practice documents including Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Saskatchewan were completed in December 2002 (B. Antle, *Social Work Ethics: exploring the new CASW Code of Ethics* CASW National Conference, June 2004). This process brought with it the need to understand all of the ethical directions in social work that were occurring on the national and international fronts (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28,

2006). Antle noted that Britain, Australia and the United States had all made significant changes to their Codes (personal communication, February 28, 2006). A primary reason to revise the Code was the need to comply with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), of which CASW and the provincial/territorial associations are members (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28, 2006). The 1994 Code was never adopted by British Columbia and Alberta, therefore the 1983 Code was in operation at the start of this most recent revision of the Code (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28, 2006). According to Antle, the 1994 Code did not reflect national diversity as each province/ territory led their members with varied social work principles and values; unity did not exist on the national front (personal communication, February 28, 2006). Prior to acceptance of the 2005 Code, provincial and territorial associations followed the 1983 and 1994 Codes. To remain in good-standing with IFSW, it was imperative for CASW to develop a national document representative of social work practice throughout Canada (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28, 2006). Moreover, Antle noted that the nationally accepted Code reflects consistency and continuity on the national front to enable CASW to comply with the expectations of the IFSW (personal communication, February 28, 2006). Antle advised that it was necessary to reconcile the Code of Ethics, the Standards of Practice and all other practice documents to be consistent with and not interfere with Standards of Practice documents that existed in jurisdictions throughout Canada and that would comply with the expectations of IFSW (personal communication, February 28, 2006). IFSW requires that each national professional organization reflect

common ethical standards of practice and a body of knowledge compatible with social work principles (IFSW, www.ifsw.org/home). To comply with IFSW membership requirements, CASW must reflect a national position on all issues.

3.2 CASW 2005 Code Development: Structure and Process

The process of revising the national Code occurred over approximately a period of two years. Antle provided a copy of the 2005 Code structure and process that was followed in developing the 2005 Code and presented at a conference in Saskatchewan in 2004 (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28, 2006). The 2005 Code structure and process was presented in the ensuing format:

Overview of Process Towards a New Code of Ethics [sic]

Development of a Draft Code of Ethics March 2003 [sic]

Each Province/Territory provided a copy and encouraged to obtain local review. All were encouraged to provide written

feedback[sic] In-person consultation held with Canadian

Presidents in Spring of 2003 [sic] Feedback incorporated into

revised Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical practice

which was again circulated for feedback. Teleconference

held on key issues where change being introduced. Each

CASW member organization invited to have a local expert

participate in discussion Fall 2003 [sic] Follow-up with

member organizations that had not provided any feedback

to date to encourage participation [sic] In-person

consultation held with Canadian Presidents in Spring of 2004 [sic] Further revisions incorporated and submitted to the CASW Board for approval. Ratified by all CASW member organizations in BC Spring 2005 [sic] (Antle, Social Work Ethics: exploring the new CASW Code of Ethics CASW National Conference, June 2004).

Antle advised that a draft of the 2005 Code was presented to the CASW Presidents/Board (personal communication, February 28, 2006). The 2005 Code draft was subsequently provided to each CASW member-organization to consult within their jurisdictions and provide feedback to Antle who, in turn, redrafted the Code and the Guidelines, presenting the following year when the CASW Presidents/Board reconvened (personal communication, February 28, 2006). According to Antle, additional consultations occurred with the member-organizations prior to ratification of the 2005 Code (personal communication, February 28, 2006).

3.3 CASW Member Organization Contributions

Antle indicated that all of the member-organizations provided feedback to the process of the development of the 2005 Code (personal communication, February 28, 2006).

In relation to this study, the Prairie Provinces, MASW; SASW; ACSW; were contacted and all provided feedback in relation to their organization's contribution to the 2005 Code. Interviews were conducted with MASW, SASW and ACSW Executive Directors based upon each organization's contribution to the development of the 2005 Code.

MASW engaged in an extensive telephone interview. SASW and ACSW responded to a brief email interview. Due to its geographic location, The Northern Social Work Association of Canada (NSWAC) was contacted to participate in an email interview; a response was not received.

SASW Executive Director, Richard Hazel, indicated that their provincial association did contribute to the development of the 2005 Code. Hazel noted that the SASW Practice Ethics Committee was the primary group involved in the review of the Code; in addition, the Professional Conduct Committee also had a role (personal communication, March 21, 2006). Additionally, SASW utilized their Advisory Board, which consisted of elected Council Members, Committee Chairs, Branch Representatives and the CASW Board Representative, as well as individual members who had particular interests and perspectives such as First Nations members who were asked to review and provide feedback on the Code drafts (R. Hazel, personal communication, March 21, 2006). "The process of approval by each of the member organizations of SASW was that we, along with the other member organizations approved the final version of the material. Our approval came as a motion to amend our By-laws during our 2005 Annual General Meeting" (R. Hazel, personal communication, March 21, 2006). Hazel believed that approximately 18 members participated in the development of the 2005 Code (R. Hazel, personal communication, March 21, 2006).

Miriam Browne, MASW/MIRSW Executive Director and Registrar, advised that the association was provided with a preliminary draft of the Code for the purpose of providing feedback and asking questions (personal communication, February 13, 2006).

According to Browne, it was specifically the MASW Board members who reviewed, revised and provided feedback to the development and acceptance of the 2005 Code (M. Browne, personal communication, February 13, 2006). Furthermore, Browne stated “. . . we passed the new Code at a Board meeting, it was in April 2004 that the amended Code was circulated to the Board and approved by the Board early in 2005” (M. Browne, personal communication, February 13, 2006).

Antle advised that the Guidelines for Ethical Practice 2005 were authored simultaneously through the same process as the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics (personal communication, February 28, 2006). Antle further advised that, in addition to adopting CASW Guidelines, most provincial/territorial associations maintain their own Standards of Practice and/or Guidelines of Practice which members are required to follow to maintain membership (personal communication, February 28, 2006).

3.4 CASW Member Organization Positions in Response to the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics

The following statements reflect varied positions regarding endorsement of the 2005 Code. Browne (MASW) indicated that the member organizations and CASW believe in similar values, therefore it was expected that the 2005 Code would be endorsed by the provincial/ territorial associations (personal communication, February 13, 2006). Repetur Moreno (CASW) indicated that, without regulatory functions, CASW has no authority to require that social workers adhere to a Code (personal communication, February 24, 2006). Adachi clarified that “. . . ACSW has not endorsed

the Code. The presidents of the provincial associations approved it in principle at their June 2005 Meeting” (R. Adachi, personal communication, March 15, 2006).

The process of interviewing and receiving information from the noted member organizations was valuable; however the author did not find that the responses were indicative of national unity in social work (B. Antle, personal communication, February 28, 2006). As noted in the previous paragraph, there are discrepancies as to the meaning or possibly the intent of CASW member organizations supporting the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics.

CHAPTER 4 – The Development of Research Questions

This chapter will illustrate how the research questions evolved through the exploration of the body of literature referenced in this study. A two part process of consulting the literature ensued. Initially, it was my general interest in the practice realities of the North that led to a review of the literature and, subsequently, a review and comparison of the wording changes between the current 2005 Code and the previous 1994 Code. These two bodies of literature were relevant to the types of questions that I expected to ask participants as part of the research.

4.1 Key Changes

Significant changes to the Code were unanimously viewed by all member organizations as necessary to ensure national acceptance from each jurisdiction. A significant difference between the 1994 and 2005 Code is that the 2005 Code does not identify a philosophical statement. Browne indicated the most fundamental change between the 1994 version of the Code and the 2005 version involved separating the Code document from the Standards of Practice and the Guidelines for Practice (personal communication, February 13, 2006). Antle identified the increased prominence of social justice as the most significant change in the 2005 Code as it recognizes ethnicity, culture and systems of belief that are known to be important to people (personal communication, February, 28, 2006). Another key change identified by Antle was the introduction of principles and values, whereas detailed information was incorporated into ethical guidelines which enabled the Code to be universal across Canada (personal communication, February 28, 2006). Antle noted the last key change to the 2005 Code

relates to the guidelines; the clarification of dual and multiple relationships, as well as, the delineation of relationships and boundaries with former clients (personal communication, February 28, 2006).

4.2 CASW 1994 and 2005 Code: A Comparative Analysis

A general analysis of the 1994 and 2005 Codes will be completed by exploring specific sections of each document's statements, values and underlying principles as applied to social workers who practice in Canada.

Social work practitioners are required by their provincial association to adhere to either the CASW 1994 or 2005 Code. "Social workers are advised to contact the regulatory body in their province or territory to determine whether it has adopted this *Code of Ethics*." (CASW, 2005, p.2).

The 1994 Code is comprised of a series of ten statements which are listed after the definition section and latterly incorporated as the primary statement under each of the ten chapters. The 1994 Code differentiates the first seven statements as *Ethical Duties and Obligations*, and statements eight to ten as *Ethical Responsibilities*. This Code stipulates that a breach of the Ethical Duties and Obligations would result in grounds for disciplinary action, while a breach of Ethical Responsibilities may result in the commencement of an inquiry.

Comparatively, the 2005 Code is comprised of six core social work values and underlying principles. The *Purpose of the CASW Code of Ethics* section encourages the reader to view the values and principles stated within the 2005 Code as a professional conduct *guide* for social workers (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005). It

further advises that ethical behaviour is the responsibility of the individual social worker; that a Code of Ethics does not guarantee ethical behaviour (CASW, 2005, p.2). The 2005 Code does not stipulate disciplinary repercussions as noted in the 1994 Code.

Jones (1999), as cited in Turner (1999), defined ethical practice as: "The social worker is obligated to balance the need to uphold the law with the principles dictated in the code of ethics. . . . drafting of new codes, standards of practice, or regulatory documents must take current legal issues into account. . . . in all situations, written law takes precedence over a professional code of ethics" (p.312).

Specific sections of the 1994 Code will be compared to the 2005 Code to explore the potential intent, meaning and relevance as the general guiding social work document. In relation to the primary professional focus, the 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, states: "A social worker shall maintain the best interest of the client as the primary professional obligation" (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 1994, p.4). This statement is defined at the beginning of the first page in the 1994 Code Definitions section as:

(a) that the wishes, desires, motivations, and plans of the client are taken by the social worker as the primary consideration in any intervention plan developed by the social worker subject to change only when the client's plans are documented to be unrealistic, unreasonable or potentially harmful to self or others or otherwise determined inappropriate when

considered in relation to a mandated requirement, (b) that all actions and interventions of the social worker are taken subject to the reasonable belief that the client will benefit from the action, and (c) that the social worker will consider the client as an individual, a member of a family unit, a member of a community, a person with a distinct ancestry or culture and will consider those factors in any decision affecting the client (CASW, 1994, p.1).

In comparison, the 2005 Code no longer contains a statement identifying *the best interest of the client* as the primary professional obligation. However, the 2005 Code, Preamble, states:

The social work profession is dedicated to the welfare and self-realization of all people; the development and disciplined use of scientific and professional knowledge; the development of resources and skills to meet individual, group, national and international changing needs and aspirations; and the achievement of social justice for all (CASW, 2005, p.3).

With regard to professional responsibility, the 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation (3), states: "A social worker shall inform a client of the client's right to consult another professional at any time

during the provision of social work services" (CASW, 1994, p.4). The most comparable section in the 2005 Code to address this was found in Value 3: Service to Humanity, the second principle. It states: "Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice" (CASW, 2005, p.6). This statement may serve to acknowledge that social workers, by the positions that they hold, have power and authority when providing service to clients. The language used throughout the 1994 Code may possibly be read as definitive and directive, illustrated by repetitively and consistently stating: *a social worker shall*. "A social worker *shall* maintain the best interest of the client as the primary professional obligation" (CASW, 1994, p.3). This principle appears to stress that social workers *strive* to use power and authority in responsible ways. This section is one of a number of examples where the language has changed in this way.

In relation to professional boundaries, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation (5), of the 1994 Code states: "A social worker *shall not* become involved in a client's personal affairs that are not relevant to the service being provided" (CASW, 1994, p.4). This statement possibly serves to advise social workers to develop and maintain professional boundaries based upon the service being provided. Comparatively, the 2005 Code, Value 4: Integrity of Professional Practice, third principle, states: "Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients" (CASW, 2005, p.7). The 1994 Code appears to be directive stating that a social worker *shall not*

become involved. Both Codes refer to the necessity for boundary development. This is another example where the Code has been amended to use language that may not be directive. The word *shall* employed consistently throughout the 1994 Code may ultimately reinforce a directive tone.

Regarding written consent, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Confidential Information, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, (a), of the 1994 Code, states: “. . . the client authorizes in writing the release of specified information, ¹⁹” (CASW, 1994, p.5). Written authorization serves as verification that the individual did consent to release specific information. In comparison, the 2005 Code Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice, third principle, states: “Social workers only disclose confidential information with the informed consent of the client or permission of client’s legal representative” (CASW, 2005, p.8). The 2005 Code does not make specific reference to the requirement that client consent be provided in writing.

In relation to confidentiality, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, Disclosure, (19), of the 1994 Code states: “The social worker shall avoid unnecessary conversation regarding clients” (CASW, 1994, p.6). In comparison, Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice, of the 2005 Code states within the value statement: “Social workers only disclose confidential information to other parties (including family members) with the informed consent of clients, clients’ legally authorized representatives or when required by law or court order” (CASW, 2005, p.7). In this section the 2005 Code reflects significant change by defining additional specifics regarding consent than the 1994 statement. The 2005 Code no longer references

unnecessary conversations regarding a client that are not part of professional services being provided. Such circumstances may include engaging in or being present when general discussions occur regarding mutual community activities, clubs, organizations or institutions.

Regarding public education and teaching, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, (30), of the 1994 Code states: "The social worker may use non-identifying information for the purpose of teaching, public education or research" (CASW, 1994, p.6). In comparison, Value 6: Competence in Professional Practice, principle five, in the 2005 Code states: "Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies" (CASW, 2005, p.8). Another major change, the 2005 Code does not appear to make reference to teaching or public education. The 2005 Code appears to address the term *informed consent* to ensure the participant has a clear understanding of how the information will be used.

In relation to potential outside interests, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 6, Outside Interest, (1), of the 1994 Code states: "A social worker shall declare to the client any outside interests that would affect the social work relationship with the client" (CASW, 1994, p.7). Value 4: Integrity of Professional Practice, the fourth principle, in the 2005 Code states: "Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature of

the conflict is fully disclosed" (CASW, 2005, p.7). The 2005 Code appears to no longer contain specific reference to outside interests.

Concerning competence in professional practice, the 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 3, Competence in the Provision of Social Work Services, (2), states: "Where a social worker cannot reasonably acquire the necessary competence in the provision of a service to a client, the social worker shall decline to provide the service to the client, advising the client of the reason and ensuring that the client is referred to another professional person if the client agrees to the referral" (CASW, 1994, p.4). Comparatively, Value 6: Competence in Professional Practice, the third principle in the 2005 Code, states: "Social workers demonstrate due care for clients' interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence" (CASW, 2005, p.8). As with the 1994 Code, it appears this principle does not acknowledge that there are circumstances within organizations, agencies and communities where the individual is required to provide service regardless of whether or not he/she has competence in the area. This section also warrants consideration of geographical uniqueness by recognizing the potential challenges faced by social workers practicing in northern, rural, remote and isolated settings.

The 1994 Code, Ethical Responsibilities, Chapter 10, Ethical Responsibility for Social Change appears to have been replaced, in the 2005 Code, with Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice. These two sections of the 1994 Code and the 2005 Code appear to contain similar content.

An addition to the 2005 Code is Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice, the

fifth principle, which states: "Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship" (CASW, 2005, p.8).

Neither the 1994 Code nor the 2005 Code contain a clear definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest. Conflict of interest situations are a part of significant boundary issues which, if addressed professionally, can be appropriate.

Neither the 1994 Code, nor the 2005 Code, specifically state the exceptions to confidentiality. The 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, specifies: "(a) the client authorizes in writing the release of specified information,¹⁹ (b) the information is released under the authority of a statute or an order of a court of competent jurisdiction, or (c) otherwise authorized by this Code" (CASW, 1994, p.5). Comparatively, the 2005 Code, Value 6, Confidentiality in Professional Practice, fourth principle, states: "Social workers may break confidentiality and communicate client information without permission when required or permitted by relevant laws, court order or this Code" (CASW, 2005, p.8). The specification of circumstances that warrant the break of confidentiality has not been stated.

This section is in relation to directive wording. The 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, (20), states: "The social worker *may divulge* confidential information with the consent of the client, preferably expressed in writing, where this is essential to a plan of care or treatment" (CASW, 1994, p.6). In comparison, the 2005 Code, Value 5, Confidentiality in Professional Practice, uniquely

presents with directive wording, "Social workers *only disclose* confidential information with the informed consent of the client or permission of client's legal representative" (CASW, 2005, p.8). While this section appears to be stronger the 2005 Code does not refer to the "...avoidance of unnecessary conversation regarding clients" (CASW, 1994, p. 6) as found in the 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, 5.19 – 2005 Code, Value 5, Confidentiality in Professional Practice (within the value statement).

4.3 Summary Analysis

This research set out to discover how social workers understand the 2005 Code. The research questions evolved from reviewing the wording changes between the 1994 and the 2005 Codes. One significant observation includes wording changes between the two versions of the Code. The 1994 Code contains a comprehensive philosophical statement; the 2005 Code contains no similar statement.

Another significant change in wording involved the primary focus of service provision. The 1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, defined the client as the priority. The 2005 Code does not make reference to *the best interest of client*. However, in the preamble section it does refer to the self-realization of all people.

In relation to the 1994 Code, nine of the ten statements incorporated the phrase *the social worker shall*, phrasing that appears to be definitive and directive which may serve to decrease variances of interpretation. Whereas the 2005 Code appears to use non-directive phrases such as *social workers respect the client's right to; social workers*

demonstrate; social workers establish; social workers strive to; social workers advocate; leaving the 2005 Code open to broader interpretations. Such phrasing may convey to social workers an expectation as opposed to a requirement.

The 2005 Code conveyed directive wording in stating, "Social workers only disclose confidential information with the informed consent of the client or permission of client's legal representative (CASW, 2005, p.8).

The 1994 Code conveyed the requirement that client authorization be provided in writing. The 2005 Code refers to the need to attain the client's informed consent but there is no reference to requiring written consent in the 2005 Code.

One similarity is the 1994 and 2005 Codes' reference to the necessity for boundary development. Furthermore, neither the 1994 nor the 2005 Code appeared to comprehensively state what constitutes grounds for a conflict of interest to exist. Another similarity is that neither the 1994 Code, nor the 2005 Code, specifically state the exceptions to confidentiality but refer to the ability to break confidentiality when permitted by each Code's respective clause. The 2005 Code has added the section referring to *communicating limits to confidentiality to clients early in the relationship*, although again it does not appear to provide specifics.

An overview of the main wording-changes between the 1994 and 2005 Codes may facilitate a clear understanding of the change in semantics that has occurred between the two documents. The following sections were part of the content of the 1994 Code that were not incorporated into the 2005 Code. The 2005 Code does not:

- (1) stipulate disciplinary repercussions (1994 Code preamble);

- (2) make a statement identifying the best interest of the client as the primary professional obligation (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, 1.1);
- (3) specifically identify the limitations to confidentiality (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, 5.25);
- (4) make specific reference to potential conflict of interest with outside interests (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 6, Outside Interest – 2005 Code);
- (5) make reference to the requirement that client consent be provided in writing (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5 (a));
- (6) specify a client's right to consult another professional (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, 1.3);
- (7) make reference to presenting non-identifying information when teaching or providing public education (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations Chapter 5, Confidential Information, 5.30);

Less directive wording in the 2005 Code may leave certain sections open to broader interpretation than previously experienced with the 1994 Code:

- (1) shall (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, 1.3) *versus* strive (2005 Code, Value 3, Service to Humanity, Principle 2);

- (2) shall (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, 1.5) *versus* establish (2005 Code, Value 4, Integrity of Professional Practice, Principle 3).

Directive wording in the 2005 Code may provide direction and clarity to practitioners:

- (1) Social workers only disclose... (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 5, Confidential Information, 5.20 – 2005 Code, Value 5, Confidentiality in Professional Practice, Principle 3)

Similarities, as both the 1994 Code and the 2005 Code:

- (1) refer to the need for boundary development (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 1, Primary Professional Obligation, 1.5 - 2005 Code, Value 4, Integrity in Professional Practice, Principle 3);
- (2) do not define what constitutes a conflict of interest (1994 Code, Chapter 6, Competence in Professional Practice, Ethical Duties and Obligations 6.1 – 2005 Code, Value 4, Integrity in Professional Practice, Principle 4);
- (3) do not recognize pressure to provide service regardless of social worker competence in the practice area (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations Chapter 3, Competence in the Provision of Social Work Services, 3.2 – 2005 Code, Value 6, Competence in Professional Practice, Principle 3);
- (4) essentially contain the same content (1994 Code, Ethical Responsibilities, Chapter 10, Ethical Responsibilities for Social Change – 2005 Code, Value 2, Pursuit of Social Justice).

- (5) do recognize potential challenges in service delivery in relation to competent professional practice (1994 Code, Ethical Duties and Obligations, Chapter 3, Competence in the Provision of Social Work Services – 2005 Code, Value 6, Competence in Professional Practice, Principle 3).

Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice is a section of the 2005 Code that does not appear to be reflected in the 1994 Code.

Given that the 2005 Code content generally appears to have been modified to this less directive approach to the wording, it is important to explore the potential implications for practice. It is important to consider whether increased flexible language in the 2005 Code is more conducive to practice in the North. It will be important to learn from the study participants' feedback if there is a wide variance in how the 2005 Code is now interpreted.

The CASW website states that the CASW Guidelines for ethical practice serve as a companion document to the CASW Code of Ethics 2005. However, this statement was not found printed anywhere in the 2005 Code (www.casw-acts.ca). There is a footnote on page 2 of the 2005 Code that states, "To find the IFSW declarations or information about your relevant regulatory body, visit the CASW website: <http://www.casw-acts.ca>" (CASW 2005, p2). Moreover, the MASW/MIRSW Standards of practice 2004 exist as an accompanying document to the Code. "The Standards of Practice are intended to support and expand on the CASW Social Work Code of Ethics (1994) and the CASW Standards of Practice (1995). . . . the Standards are the reference for the evaluation of conduct of social workers by MASW/MIRSW when consultations or adjudications of

complaints regarding professional practice are required” (Standards of Practice, 2004, p.2). To clarify, social workers who practice in Manitoba must adhere to the 2005 Code. However, in reality, the Standards of practice support the 1994 Code and the CASW’s 1995 Standards of practice.

4.4 Practice Realities in the North

Practice realities in the North potentially impact the ability for social work practitioners to act in accordance with the Code. The literature cites possible challenges faced by social workers when practicing in northern, remote or isolated environments.

Collier (1993) refers to social work as an intrusive force from industrial society into remote areas, professing to help people with what is in their best interest. Moreover, Collier (1993) considers the relationship between social work and practice in the North to be a residual effect of colonization. The social work profession has historically reflected control and regulation, serving the interests of agency bureaucracies not the interests of individuals or communities (Collier, 1993).

Historical Canadian literature recognizing rural and northern issues surfaced in the 1980’s when Brian Wharf presented on the distinction between rural and remote social work practice (Zapf, 1999). Ken Collier authored, *Social Work with Rural Peoples: Theory & Practice* in 1984, which included a specific chapter called, Social Work in Rural Communities (Zapf, 1999). The chapter generally referred to the historical context of the dominant society’s practice of applying their beliefs, values and practices out-of-context and upon northern people. Zapf furthered this distinction in acknowledging,

"American rural social work theory was not sufficient to guide practice in northern Canada where social workers encountered intense conflicts between the role for which they had been trained and the demands of northern communities" (1999, p. 347).

These historical dates are relevant in relation to the revision of the CASW Code in 1994 which continues to fail to recognize the uniqueness of practice in the North. More than ten years have passed since Canadian authors initially recognized and provided rationales for CASW to address the distinctive practice issues in the North.

In the 1990's, awareness of the uniqueness of practice issues in the North increased as various Canadian authors explored and built on the theoretical foundations from the founding theorists (Zapf, 1999). In review of the literature, Canada's historical development and increased professional awareness regarding practice issues in the North has not influenced the CASW policymakers to acknowledge and endorse their recommendations reflected through specific amendments to the Code. These recommendations date back to 1984 when the International Symposium-International Federation of Social Workers (ISIFSW) was held in Canada.

A significant knowledge gap may exist within the general literature base and in relation to the CASW literature base. This potential gap supports a lack of understanding and recognition of the uniqueness of service delivery to and in northern, rural and remote practice settings. Practice in the North consists of limited resources, limited supports and isolation (Delaney, 1995). Some of the unique service challenges include: engaging in dual roles and varying degrees of conflict-of-interest in order to provide service to individuals, communities and/or organizations; sole itinerant workers

practicing in isolated, remote and/or high service areas; disproportion in relation to community population size and the frequency and severity of issues; limited access for support and supervision; allocation of social work positions in relation to the geographic service area and/or the service demands within each community; limited funds to provide adequate service to communities; and policies/procedures developed external to the region.

The MASW/MIRSW Standards of Practice 2004 document developed Standard 10, Rural and Northern Social Work Practice. This Standard endorses the notion that rural and northern social workers may face unique challenges, such as a lack of resources, peer-support, supervision and professional development. In addition, Standard 10 acknowledges geographic isolation and challenges with maintaining confidentiality, as key unique practice issues. This acknowledgement and recognition of practice differences between different environments within the province and the North is significant and possibly sets precedence to incorporate into a future CASW Code. It is a reality that northern social workers will continue to face ethical challenges that social workers who practice elsewhere in Manitoba may not. In *1984*, the uniqueness of service delivery in the North was recognized as a primary issue during the preparatory stages of the Eighth International Symposium of the International Federation of Social Workers (ISIFSW) in Canada. However, during the symposium's overview of social work practice in Canada, the North was not mentioned (Zapf, 1999). To date, it appears that the CASW has not publicly recognized the North as a unique sector of the national population of social work practitioners, requiring specific consideration in

relation to subsequent revisions to the Code.”. . . the CASW Code of Ethics must make a clear and ethical position for social workers working in northern areas, attesting to the rights of northern communities and northern peoples . . . ” (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 1982, as cited in Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, & Tranter, 1997, p. 5). The Code cannot reflect the uniqueness of service delivery to northern populations until the CASW policy-makers wholly recognize and endorse the same (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 1982, as cited in Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, & Tranter, 1997). It is now twenty-six years since the 1984 ISIFSW Symposium took place, there is no reference to the North in the 2005 Code; as a result the CASW may be seen as disregarding the uniqueness of service delivery in the North.

The body of the 1994 and 2005 Codes do not refer specifically to the realities of the North; reference is made in the standards but there is no mention in the core content of the Code that acknowledges the North.

The 2005 Code presents as less directive with increased flexibility which leads to consideration of practice implications in the North.

4.4.1 Dual Roles and Conflict of Interest

Northern and isolated communities make up a specific sector of social work professionals practicing in Manitoba. The reality of social work practice in the North often involves the existence of dual roles. According to Delaney and Brownlee, the environmental uniqueness of the North, in and of itself, produces challenges for social workers in areas such as dual-relationships (1995). It is extremely common, and often

unavoidable, that social workers in the North have a connection with clients outside of their counselling relationship. One of the difficulties in northern communities is the reality of dual roles which are most evident in social, business and professional relationships (Reamer, 2001). Potential dual-relationships can be addressed when counselling commences as practitioners have the opportunity to acknowledge, disclose or advise their client that they may have involvement in the same community events, organizations, clubs and activities. In northern communities a social worker may have no alternative than to: purchase goods from a client; work with a client as a parent on a school committee; have a client's child in your home if your own child develops a friendship with your client's child. Therefore, an essential part of the initial session includes establishing clear boundaries to ensure that a client will understand that a social worker: will not approach them in public to discuss service issues; will not acknowledge them as a client outside of the counselling meetings; who has outside interests in common with a client will establish clear boundaries stipulating there will be no discussion of counselling issues outside of counselling sessions. Delaney and Brownlee (1995) indicate that social work service provision in isolated and remote northern communities can cause ethical dilemmas not addressed in the Code. The role of social work practice in the North necessitates working with multiple levels of client systems; the entire community becomes part of the client system (Delaney and Brownlee, 1995).

4.4.2 Managing Challenges

The delivery of social work services in the North entails managing various challenges

which are unique to the range of geographic locations within the North, isolated and remote environments. Zapf refers to northern Canada as “a vast and sparsely populated hinterland region with world views and underlying values that differ from an urban south that exercises economic and political domination” (1999, p. 353). Northern communities are often in positions to continue the provision of services with existing policies regardless of their value. This challenge entails providing services that recognize and respect individual views and values that may not fit the dominant society, where policies are most often developed (Zapf, 1999). The literature reflects that affected individual practitioners, agencies, organizations, and communities have been known to address these challenges. The delivery of ethical social work service in the North, rural and remote environments requires that the rules, regulations and standards reflect the reality of the environment.

Another significant challenge exists for those professionals practicing in the North as sole service-providers within a community. In such situations commonly the social worker manages every issue, regardless of his or her competence in the topic area, as frequently there are no other professionals available to provide the service.

The provision of education also reflects a challenge in northern, isolated and remote communities where people tend to recognize to whom you may be referring by some inadvertent reference to a situation or circumstance which may seem irrelevant. In particular, relevant factors include: the community population; the community’s geographical location in relation to surrounding communities; the connectedness and relations between people within the community and neighbouring communities.

Protection of a client's anonymity must be the primary consideration above and beyond other considerations related to training and education. Brownlee & Delaney (1997) discuss the common practice of bringing in trainers from the South rather than utilizing experienced professionals in the North. Importing professionals for education purposes tends to decrease the likelihood of sharing identifying information where, otherwise, the presentation of local information may be identifiable. However, a growing impact relates to the additional challenge of not utilizing experienced, skilled northern practitioners in educating others in the North.

The general willingness of participants to participate at any stage of the study reflects a significant challenge in relation to completing research. The various stages include: consent to participate prior to the interview; participation in the initial interview, and participation in subsequent interviews. Another aspect of this challenge is the degree of participation at various stages of the process. This concern may be connected to the topic, the perception of the questions, and/or the perception of any judgment imposed when asked or responding to a question.

The final challenge concerns whether the sample provides accurate responses. Again, the study topic may increase vulnerability if a participant perceives that another professional, this researcher, is judging him or her. A significant secondary aspect of this challenge is trust: in the researcher; in the study; and in the entire process. Vulnerability increases considerably in this area due to the size of the community and the common skepticism, the perception that nothing is ever truly confidential.

4.5 General Statement of Problem Area under Study

Understanding the origins of the Code and analysing its applicability in Northern Manitoba will facilitate the exploration of whether the 2005 Code enables practitioners to deliver ethical service in the North. This study explores practitioner familiarity with and interpretation of the 2005 Code in relation to whether the Code does in fact establish a set of standards that can be universally applied throughout Canada regardless of geographical location. In addition, this study explores whether these standards are applicable in the North; whether they can be universally applicable regardless of geographic location. The opportunity, if necessary, to amend professional standards to reflect the reality of northern service delivery establishes a valued dimension for the social work profession in recognizing potential knowledge gaps that are specific to service delivery in the North.

Furthermore, this study may serve to promote policy development processes, as an essential tool within social work practice, to ensure that intended objectives and goals, such as the Code, are applicable to all practitioners.

4.6 Research Questions

1. To what extent are social workers in the North familiar with the existence and content of the 2005 Code?
2. What do the value statements contained in the 2005 Code mean for practicing social workers in the North?
3. To what extent do individuals practicing social work in the North perceive that they are able to act in accordance with the CASW Code of Ethics?

4. Do the perceptions of practitioners working in the North differ according to gender, years of post-graduate practice, or the type of social work service they provide?
5. What factors, concerning the non-work environment in which social workers practice, affect their ability to deliver services that are in accordance with the Code?
6. What are the issues in a practitioner's work environment that affect their ability to act in accordance with the Code?
7. Are there specific factors identified by social workers in the North which may enable them to act in accordance with the Code?
8. Do social workers recognize issues that may impede their ability to practice in accordance with the Code?
9. Are there amendments to the existing Code, reflecting the reality of northern geographical locations, which would favourably affect a practitioner's ability to act in accordance with the Code?

CHAPTER 5 - Definitions of Terms

The term *non-work environment* will include the context of geographical, physical, economic, political and spiritual environments specific to Northern practice.

Factors in the participants' *work environment* pertain to the actual work conditions such as: the power structures practice in the North which may include Chief & Council; organization/agency administrators; boards; the resources which may include community-based, regional and networking. Further considerations include the degree of accessibility, adequacy, quality, open/closed community systems, community norms, and practitioner community relations.

The term *northern geographical locations* refers to the North in Manitoba as defined in the listing of the parameters north of the 54th parallel and inclusive of the twenty-seven communities previously identified. Geographically, Northern Manitoba is isolated from the rest of the province. Thompson, the sole northern city, is situated 777 kilometers north of Winnipeg, the closest city. Thompson, considered as *The Hub of the North*, is the main centre to twenty-six other communities. Many of these small northern communities are completely isolated and can only be accessed by air. Some of those twenty-six communities only have road access via ferry and, in winter, must wait until freeze-up to drive across a winter road. At these times of the year resources can be scarce due to accessibility. Factors affecting a social worker's service provision include: weather conditions, availability of chartered flights, road access and other transportation issues. Those individuals who live a portion of the year on the trap-line may be completely inaccessible due to location and transportation issues.

CHAPTER 6 - Methodology

A qualitative research style with exploratory methodology was selected as most applicable to this particular study. Mauch and Birch (1998), indicate that qualitative research encompasses a group of exploratory methods that share common characteristics which constitutes a general style of research rather than a methodology. Exploratory methodology permits the researcher to gather information as this is a new area where little documentation exists.

6.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to explore practitioner familiarity with and interpretation of the 2005 Code to determine whether specific sections of the existing CASW Code of Ethics enables social work practitioners to deliver ethical service in uniquely-situated northern geographical locations in Northern Manitoba.

The research design is a crucial phase to develop as it illustrates the step-by-step sequence of actions, the plan, to complete the study (Mauch & Birch, 1998). This process is essential to obtain objective, reliable and valid data. All aspects of the research design including: research preparation (literature review, ethics approval, consents, and logistics i.e. location, costs, and materials); employment of qualitative methodology; purposive sampling; data collection; data analysis; reporting; delimitations and limitations of the study will be reviewed in this chapter.

The qualitative style was utilized as the primary methodology to explore the identified problem. An Interview Question Guide (Appendix K), created for the in-person interview process, was comprised of the following sections: research topic and

study purpose; basic participant demographics; a set of questions relating to awareness and familiarity of the 2005 Code; review of the four specific sections of the 2005 Code and Principles under study; questions and probes specific to each section of the 2005 Code under study; general questions regarding the 2005 Code and the document's applicability, familiarity and accessibility to the participants as social workers. The Interview Question Guide was developed specifically to: initially provide participants the opportunity to review the specific 2005 Code statement; secondly, provide his/her interpretation of the meaning; third, participants' were asked to talk about factors that either prevented or were conducive to practising in a manner consistent with the 2005 Code. Following contact and verification of a potential participant's expressed interest to participate in the study, a copy of the Research Participant Consent Cover Letter (Appendix F) and the Potential Participant Study Information (Appendix G) were sent out via mail for his/her review and further consideration of study participation. The researcher then re-contacted each potential participant to ascertain whether he/she had decided upon participation in the study. Prior to the interview, each participant was sent, via mail, a copy of the: Participant Letter (Appendix H); CASW 2005 Code, sections of the Code, to be reviewed during the interview, were tabbed; Research Participant Consent Form (Appendix J). The Interview Question Guide (Appendix K) was not provided to study participants. Based upon participant feedback and in consultation with the thesis committee (two members) the researcher modified the Participant Letter (Appendix I).

Consistent with qualitative research when responses were not directly related to the question participants were encouraged to continue to talk as part of the process of gathering rich data. One exception occurred when the researcher mistakenly redirected a participant; the participant expressed that the relevancy was related to impact upon him/her as a practitioner.

As previously referenced, the interview questions pertained to specific sections of the 2005 Code such as, exploration of dual relationships and experiences of social workers practicing in the North. The basic demographics collected served to ensure that all study participants met the criteria and supplemented the main qualitative analysis. Participant demographics have not been disclosed due to the increased risk of recognition of study participants.

6.1.1 The Sample

Purposive sampling requires that the researcher select participants who are considered to be typical examples of the issue under study (Alston & Bowles, 1998). This method was selected to facilitate the discovery of each participant's experience, in practicing as a social worker in the North, in accordance with the Code.

Purposive sampling was utilized as the participants were chosen from a specific group; BSW graduates from The Faculty of Social Work (FSWT) in Thompson. Participant recruitment commenced with this researcher initially attaining approval from the PSREB, then submitting a letter of request, *Formal Letter of Request of Faculty of Social Work at Thompson* (Appendix E), to the Director of the FSWT requesting that all BSW graduates from the FSWT be sent a request to consider his/her participation in the

study. The letter of request included study information, *Potential Participant Study Information* (Appendix G), which included a contact number for the researcher. The FSWT had no knowledge of the identity of the actual study participants as the FSWT, after sending out letters to all potential participants, had no further contact or involvement with the study.

As a result of limited potential participant response, in consultation with the thesis committee and in attaining an Amendment Approval from the PSREB, provided on October 13, 2009 (Appendix B), additional recruitment efforts were made. A newspaper advertisement (Appendix D) was placed in the Nickel Belt News on October 23, 2009, a paper which circulates to all twenty-six northern communities listed in this study. This same advertisement, in poster format, was sent to the following agencies/organizations: Addictions Foundation of Manitoba; Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba; MKO (Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc); School District of Mystery Lake (SDML); Family Services and Housing; Community and Youth Correctional Services.

Selection of the participants through purposive sampling was based on two demographic characteristics. The first criterion required that participants graduated from FSWT and possessed a BSW degree. This criterion was essential to ensure the sample was comprised of participants who were educated within the same environment and were exposed to the same basic academic requirements resulting in the attainment of the Bachelor of Social Work degree.

The second criterion necessitated that participants had practiced in the North for a minimum of three years. Essential to the reliability of this study was the commonality of each participant's experience. The requirement of practising for three years in the North provided a basis for building commonalities in that participants are exposed to the Northern work environment, its policies, procedures, standards and regulations as social work practitioners, which served to constitute building northern practice experience.

Eight social workers expressed interest in the study; of those, six became study participants. One of the potential participants scheduled an interview but did not attend nor did he/she respond to a follow-up phone call from the researcher. The second potential participant expressed interest by leaving a voicemail requesting further contact; upon contact the individual did not return the researcher's phone calls.

6.1.2 Data Collection

According to Alston and Bowles (1998), qualitative research is inductive, flowing from specific observations to general ideas and theories. In keeping with the qualitative approach, it was imperative that this study be phrased in a way that simultaneously explored social work practitioner experience in the North and acknowledged the reality of practice in the North. While qualitative methods of data collection necessitate considerable time commitments to gather relatively small samples, the methodology, potentially, results in drawing richer data from participants.

Alston and Bowles (1998), describe semi-structured interviews as ideal instruments for exploratory research as the process provides a significant degree of flexibility

enabling the interviewer to explore additional information when raised by the respondent. Throughout the process of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked questions to gather information about participant experiences. The interview guide was specifically connected to the problem statement, as well to the research questions, and was administered by asking each participant the same questions in the same manner, to the degree that was possible.

In-person interviews were scheduled in consultation with each participant according to the person's availability. All interviews took place at Onsite Insight, this researcher's professional office, located at the North Centre Mall, 3 Station Road, Thompson, Manitoba, R8N 0N3. All participants were in agreement with the interview location which is central in Thompson and known to all participants. Access to the location was available at all times which served to increase the likelihood of accommodating each participant's schedule.

As a key component of qualitative research, participants were free to discuss issues other than what was intended to explore in the interview guide; they were encouraged to do so as part of the process of gathering rich data. As previously noted-above in *8.1 Research Design*, one exception occurred. Participants were aware of the option to partake in a second interview. The first interview was utilized to introduce the study and administer the interview guide. At the start of each first interview, every participant reviewed and, all being in agreement, signed the written *Research Participant Consent Form (Appendix J)* prior to questions being asked from the interview guide. The second interview was offered to share the interview transcription

as well as the researcher's interpretation of the findings and themes; also called *respondent validation*.

All participants engaged in one interview, the duration ranged from one to two hours. While it was agreed that an interview would not continue past two hours all interviews continued until saturation of the data was attained.

The documentation of emerging themes at the end of each interview served to provide an ongoing account of participant experiences in a concise format. Subsequent to the completion of an interview, the researcher drew preliminary themes out of the transcriptions which were beneficial to recognizing similar themes with future participants.

Furthermore, the utilization of a study-journal (field notes) was beneficial to the participant-specific notation of: non-verbal responses and communication contributors; potential participant comforts, discomforts and barriers; researcher memos and observations.

Feedback and interview recommendations provided from the first two participants resulted in a modification made to the potential participant study information provided prior to the interview. Subsequent to participant feedback additional information introducing the concept of *workplace environmental factors* was provided to future participants for review prior to his/her interview. However, the actual impact was limited as it appeared that participants may not have reviewed the material in depth prior to the interview as the concept continued to be discerned as unfamiliar.

6.1.2-1 Ethical Considerations

The *Research Participant Consent Form* [RPCF (Appendix J)] identified potential risks, perceived or real, involved in relation to the participant's agreement to engage in the study. Identified risks included: emotional stress as a result of participating in the study as questions or discussions may have been perceived as harmful to individual participants; FSWT, Director and support staff are aware of potential participants due to their initial contact. However, actual participant names were not confirmed nor verified by the researcher; interviews were conducted in-person. It should be noted for all contact by phone, to verify participation or schedule an interview, the researcher specifically used a secure line. There was a level of risk to participants if he/she chose to speak from a cordless phone or a cell phone as these calls can be picked up through the use of scanners; participants were asked to refrain from disclosing any specific examples as to whether or not he/she adhered to the Code and were informed that if he/she was a member of the Manitoba Association of Social workers and disclosed a breach of the Code the researcher was obligated to report to the Director of the Manitoba Association of Social Workers.

As noted previously in *8.1.2 Data Collection*, informed consent was ensured as the RPCF was read and reviewed together with each participant at the start of the interview. The rights of the participant were clearly stipulated and reiterated throughout the document. The option and right for a participant to withdraw his/her consent to participate, at any stage of the study, was reviewed.

6.1.2-2 Confidentiality and Participant Risks

Exceptions to confidentiality stipulated in the *Research Participant Consent Form* [*RPCF* (Appendix J)], were reviewed, read and accepted by all participants as illustrated by the signing the document. The *RPCF* specified the researcher's obligation by law to comply with a subpoena and report the following to the appropriate authorities: suspected child abuse, child abuse and/or neglect; any intent to harm self (suicide) or harm others (homicide). Additionally, the *RPCF* stipulated that, should a participant MASW member disclose a breach of the Code during the interview, then the researcher was obligated to report the occurrence to the director of MASW.

To ensure confidentiality, each participant's identifying information including his/her: name, home address, phone number and email address will remain solely known to the researcher. All participants and all reference to participant information will be referred to numerically which is inclusive of written material and all information stored on the computer and computer storage devices (discs, flash drives, and external hard-drives). Each participant is referred to as 'P' with a number reflecting the order in which they contacted the researcher, for example the first potential participant is referred to as 'P1'. Materials and devices required to carry out the interviews included: a tape recorder; a computer; a separate, toll-free, telephone line with voice mail capabilities; a fax machine; a calculator; a photocopier; a postage meter; a paper shredder; writing materials. Each interview was audio-taped on a separate audio-tape cassette. The audio-tape was transcribed and saved, password protected, in a computer file and as a backup on the researcher's external harddrive at the end of each interview. In addition,

participant interview-data were kept separate to communication cues collected via the writing of notes and memos. All participant data was stored in a separate locked filing cabinet at this researcher's home and was shredded and destroyed once the final thesis document has been submitted, defended and accepted.

Participation in the interview questions and discussions could lead to emotional stress in relation to self-judgment, fear of sharing thoughts, feelings and opinions. Initial recruitment contact made by the FSWT, depending upon his/her relationship with the FSWT, may have resulted in a reaction of ensuing thoughts and feelings. Participant cordless or cell phone usage increased the possibility for conversations to be listened to by others through the use of scanners. Contacting the researcher at a number other than those listed in the study information could have resulted in a participant's name being heard on an answering machine, seen on a caller identification display or the call received by someone else.

6.1.2-3 Potential Barriers

Potential barriers reflect the limitations of the study design. All participants were courageous to participate in this study as the identified risks to participants, in responding to unknown questions, were present.

One possible barrier for every potential participant was the receipt and review of the Potential Participant Study Information [PPSI (Appendix G)] document, which listed any and all known potential risks pertaining to participation in the study. Potential participants were asked to accept the risk unaware of the interview questions.

The fact that a local researcher conducted the study reflected a potential barrier. A

professional imbalance was present simply by one social work practitioner interviewing other social work practitioners. This perceived barrier surfaced in interviews when varying degrees of discomfort were conveyed in relation to unfamiliarity with the Code, discussion and the concepts surfaced.

The limited sample size of six participants was a barrier as the researcher was not able to generalize the findings beyond those six participants who took part in the study.

6.2 Data Analysis

Qualitative research processes generate a significant amount of data transcription and text data in the analysis phase of the study. The specific steps that were followed in analysing the data for this particular study will be delineated.

6.2.1 Treatment of the Data

The interview data were recorded, transcribed, coded and categorized according to the principles of qualitative methodology. Transcribed data from the interviews was thereafter referred to as the transcripts. Study-journal, memos and data have been kept separate to differentiate between the actual data and the study-journal (field notes). Open coding or first-level coding (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996 in Montcalm and Royse, 2002) was employed to delineate the data, analyze the data and categorize the data to develop themes. All participant data was tabbed with the respective participant's numerical designation. Additionally, identification of the data was achieved through colour-coding the transcripts. Silverman (2001) employs grounded theory to enhance the development, saturation and analytic framework of themes.

6.2.2 Thematic Analysis

This process evolved from deciphering individual components of the data into second-level coding (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996 in Montcalm and Royse, 2002) where the focus is the correlation amongst the categories. The transcripts were repeatedly read to surface the meaning units within the transcript. Once the meaning was derived and noted, repetitive patterns, and in-turn thematic codes developed from the data. Saturation of the coding process occurred after subsequent reviews of the transcripts did not uncover new thematic codes or themes.

Mauch and Birch (1998) note that hypotheses, theories and research questions function as a guide to sort through the masses of collected data. The research questions provide a structure which may enhance the emergence of homogeneous data. This process created the foundation from which to begin the formal interpretation of the data; the findings.

6.2.3 Summary

Qualitative research was selected as the methodology through a series of semi-structured, in-person interviews. A main feature of qualitative research is the significant volume of rich participant data produced from the text and transcript data. Qualitative methodology was also employed as the researcher anticipated the study sample size would be limited, and it was, generating six study participants.

Data was collected through the audio-taping and recording of communication contributors derived from one in-person interview with each participant. Each audio-tape was transcribed after the participant interview. The field-notes (observations and

memos) were kept separate from the transcripts. Ethical considerations, confidentiality and risks were identified in the *RPCF* (Appendix J) in relation to the participant's agreement to engage in the study. Potential barriers reflect the limitations of the study design.

Analysis of the data involved: deciphering of the data, first-coding, development of categories, second-coding, development of thematic codes; the foundation to advance to interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER 7 – Findings

The surfaced themes derived from participant responses will provide the basis of the findings; therefore the findings will be written up to correspond with the research questions. The reporting mechanism is this thesis report. In addition, the overall study findings will be shared and discussed with the study participants, as they all chose.

7.1 Demographics

The main qualitative analysis has been supplemented with the basic presentation of demographic data related to age, gender of participants, date of completion of social work degree and date of commencement of practicing as a social worker in a social work position. However, due to the limited sample size, the concern of potentially identifying a participant is significant; therefore demographic data has been generalized to protect confidentiality.

All participants met the study criterion of graduating and possessing a BSW degree from the FSWT, and currently practicing for the past three years within one of the specified twenty-six northern communities. All participants were of the same gender. Three of six participants practice as non-direct service providers; the remaining three participants provide direct services to individuals. In relation to the practice environment, three participants described being isolated as practitioners and in the workplace.

7.2 Modified Case Studies

Six case studies describe the results of this qualitative research study where individual semi-structured in-person interviews were completed within a seven month

time frame; from July 2009 to February 2010. The interviews were conducted by this researcher and employed purposive sampling based on the eligibility criteria. Each participant was interviewed once. To ensure accurate data collection, each interview was audio-taped, transcribed, coded and categorized according to the principles of qualitative methodology. Field notes (memos and data) were kept separate to differentiate between actual data and researcher observations. The purpose of the Case Studies is to present the issues, as identified through the in-person interviews. The case studies will follow the same structure as the interview guide to accurately review the responses to the various questions and sections of the Code.

Participant #1 (herein referred to as P1) self-identified being employed as a social work practitioner for more than five years and defined the nature of his/her work as a mentoring role rather than a direct social work role. The work environment was described as supported within and by various disciplines.

Generally, the Code, prior to receiving and after scanning, was identified as a guide to practice. P1 stated: "I think it's just to guide our practice. I never really studied the Code to be honest with you. . . . when I printed it off I never had one so it's been very helpful".

Prior to receipt of the study information, P1 was not aware that the 2005 Code existed and noted that his or her workplace did not provide reference or promote the Code. P1 indicated: "I was familiar that there was a Code of Ethics but . . . even going through school it was never really pushed on you, you were never really taught it. It was just said you should know it. . . . I'm not very familiar with the Code".

The 1994 Code was noted as referenced during the Faculty of Social Work undergraduate program.

Value 3 - Service to Humanity—Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P1 interpreted this principle as: “using your/my position as a social worker advocating for your client and using your knowledge and experience and connection to improve”.

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code’s intent included: limited resources (geographical); jurisdictional issues (political), “. . . there is definitely a geographic limitation because we do service outlying communities and there are always jurisdictional things that are going to limit what we can do”.

The factor conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code’s intent was identified as limitations which enable more professional creativity to tailor services to fit client needs (work). P1 stated: “. . . because you live in the North you are limited to the different resources that the South aren’t but you can be very creative . . . in my work we allow creativity to support the client . . . there’s a lot of things you would never ever see in the South because they have those resources and we can kind of tailor the services to fit the clients needs”.

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P1 interpreted this principle to mean: “. . . as a social worker I would establish boundaries or I would be able to identify what my limitations were and . . . what I can do to ensure that my clients needs are being met”.

In relation to workplace environmental factors believed to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code’s intent, P1 indicated: “. . . because you work one-on-one with individuals you develop very, very close relationships . . . it meets the needs of both...always in the best interest of the client . . . those relationships are definitely clear boundaries . . . geographically I would say its a real issue” (work/geographical).

In response to whether there are any factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code’s intent P1 stated: “. . . being able to connect to meet client needs supports a good relationship”.

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P1 interpreted this principle to mean: “. . . should a professional be faced with a conflict of interest that it’s important to bring it to the surface ahead of time”.

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent, P1 indicated that:

smaller communities . . . are more of a challenge . . . it is definitely a struggle because confidentiality is a huge factor . . . its more geographical because . . . you're limited to your resources . . . that does pose problems because everyone knows everything . . . political would fall under that too . . . because we're smaller you're going to run into conflict of interest for sure . . . (geographical and political).

Factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent, P1 indicated: ". . . self-awareness being aware . . . being insightful of the potential that it could be a problem and identifying it".

Value 5 - Confidentiality in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P1 interpreted this principle to mean: ". . . you respect that you communicate that confidentiality will be respected unless certain things happen. Unless you're faced with obligations that you have then you need to report . . .".

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: impacts of sharing limitations of confidentiality, ". . . we always get a consent signed...however it could make it more

difficult for us to get the information we need to help the client. . . . outside of the agency . . . we would have to get consents but if the client didn't want us to then that would pose some difficulty in getting the right care . . . " (work). Furthermore, P1 stated, I think confidentiality is very important but there are situations where it is in the best interest of the client even if they don't recognize it . . . if we could break that confidentiality". Feedback regarding the size of a community was shared by P1: "Because you're in smaller communities, even a small city, people know a lot of things that are not necessarily their business . . . " (geographical).

The factor conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent, P1 described as: "I think it's just developing the relationship so that would be the helpful thing about this Code about the confidentiality" (work).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P1 interpreted this principle to mean: ". . . it's just making sure that I'm feeling competent that I'm not going to hurt someone by pretending to know something that I don't".

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent were identified by P1 as: "I think it would be lack of resources . . . I think in the North you're limited more specifically with counselling, that's a definite hollow here . . . it would also fall under spiritual . . . "(spiritual) .

As a result of researcher error, P1 was not asked to respond to factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent.

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P1 interpreted this principle to mean: "As a social worker my understanding is that you need to work with the best interest of the client by minimizing, by ensuring that they understand what they are engaging in . . . that you honour the confidentiality . . . that their names are not going to be publicized . . .".

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: a lack of encouragement to participate in research (work), "We are engaging in research but our limitations with that is staff facilitate that to support that"; isolation, "geographical because you live far away . . . we're quite isolated" (geographical).

P1 requested to leave the question factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Codes intent.

Generally, P1 indicated that the Code reflects his/her reality of practice: "I don't know if it's so much my practice or how I practice . . . I think it's just my own personal beliefs . . .".

P1 stated, "Change the wording . . ." when asked if the Code were rewritten what suggestions would he/she offer.

The Code was acknowledged as accessible, "Through the internet, they have it on the internet".

In response to social worker familiarity with the Code, P1 stated: ". . . I just remember being told you should know this and that was it. It was identified you should know it but it should be a class, the students should go over it so everyone is aware of it and what the content is and maybe write papers on each one or something".

At the end of the initial interview P1 agreed to a second interview to review the transcript and consider any additional responses. P1 expressed a preference to prepare prior to the interview due to being a visual learner; this feedback was acknowledged as helpful and beneficial to consider prior to the researcher engaging in additional interviews. Furthermore, P1 conveyed that the material provided for the purpose of completing the interview was helpful and influential in deciding to incorporate utilization of the Code into his/her practice environment.

In responding to P1's concerns regarding his/her participation in the interview, the researcher reassured P1 that his/her participation in the interview and interpretation of the Code was based on his/her awareness, understanding and general experiences and has benefited the study solely by participating in the study. The response to the questions, whatever that response may be, is the intent of the study. The researcher reassured P1 that there is no judgment or evaluation of right or wrong responses.

The interview duration was two hours.

Field Note Observations - During the interview, the researcher was concerned with the impact of the nature and depth of the questions to which P1 was asked to

respond. At the beginning of the review of the sections of the Code, P1 identified a limitation in his/her learning style where, as a visual learner, preparing in advance would have been preferred. The factors related to the environment probes possibly created some confusion and frustration as simply a different way of considering the issues and responses to the questions. P1 identified fatigue as an underlying issue. The researcher was concerned that, through observed non-verbal cues and communication cues, P1 may have felt confused and overwhelmed by the questions as well as the length of the interview.

P1 scheduled a second interview however did not attend the interview.

Participant #2 (herein referred to as P2) scheduled an interview time; however did not attend nor call to reschedule. P2 did not respond to requests to contact the researcher. P2 was not interviewed.

Participant #3 (herein referred to as P3) advised being employed as in his/her current role for the past year in a direct social work position which was identified as the primary function of his/her service provision.

The Code, prior to receiving and after reading the document, was described as a set of guidelines and values by which social workers respectfully operate. P3 stated: "the purpose I think is to provide guidelines and values for social workers to operate under to be respectful to co-workers, respectful to clients, respectful to agencies".

P3 confirmed his/her knowledge of the 2005 Code prior to receipt of the study information, and noted that his/her workplace has a copy of the Code which has been referenced in response to a particular situation.

When asked whether the Code is referenced in his/her workplace, P3 indicated: “. . . it’s hard to merge the social work Code of Ethics into a workplace . . . they don’t follow the same Code. . . . it’s not highly regarded either; you know it’s not seen as something that’s important”.

The 1994 Code was noted by P3 as explored and referenced extensively during the Faculty of Social Work undergraduate program. P3 in response to exposure to the Code indicated: “. . . we were well indoctrinated . . . in several courses actually”.

Value 3 - Service to Humanity—Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P3 interpreted of this principle as: “I think the intent of this particular section is that we as social workers are put in a position of authority and in your practice you have to be cognizant of not abusing that authority or that power . . .”.

Workplace environmental factors thought to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code’s intent, P3 described as: service provision challenges, non-degreed supervisors and service provision in home communities. Service provision challenges: “political for sure . . . social workers . . . trying to advocate for the clients . . . to get particular services . . .”(political). Non-degreed supervisors: “. . . having supervisors that aren’t social workers supervising in a supervisory role not understanding all of the things that we can do with regards to the different levels of support . . .” (work). Service provision in home communities “. . . geographical too . . .

you end up working with clients from all over the North . . . the smaller the community the harder it is to try and provide any kind of services supports . . . often clients go back to their home communities and it's very difficult to help them in their own community" (geographical).

Factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent were identified by P3 as, degreed supervisors and decreased funding. Degreed supervisors: ". . . it is very helpful because they have a broader understanding of social work and tend to operate from the same Code. . . . much more support, much more understanding of the different levels of things that you're doing or trying to do with that particular population that you're working with . . ." (work). Decreased funding: ". . . things you used to be able to provide for clients you can no longer do that so that's a factor right now . . . it's only economic . . . the scope of your service is a lot smaller and easier to manage" (economic),.

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P3 interpreted this principle to mean: "I think the intent is to establish professional boundaries".

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: community location, population size, limited resources to provide services and potential conflicts of interest (geographical). P3 indicated:

Geographical because the smaller the community the harder it is to establish those boundaries . . . the smaller the place the more hats you wear as a social worker . . . you do the work because it needs to be done but you know damn well that you crossed the boundaries that you shouldn't have; you know there was no other worker to do it, you were stuck you do it. So that prevents sometimes that professional boundary from being staying established but I think the fact that when you are more aware of those things you are more likely to follow the professional boundaries and there are going to be rare blips but the smaller community the more blips to be able to adhere to the Code.

Being in an environment with other professionals who hold the same social work background who believe in and value the Code was identified by P3 as the factor conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent. P3 stated, . . . having co-workers with the same social work background who believe and value the Code, have similar values about treating the professional boundaries and certainly having supervisors too who do that. . . . if you work in an environment where this is where the line is then I think you're more supported to stay within the . . . professional guidelines . . . you end up working with clients from all over

the North . . . the smaller the community the harder it is to try and provide any kind of services supports . . . often clients go back to their home communities and it's very difficult to help them in their own community (geographical).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P3 stated: "this intent as well is to establish professional boundaries".

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent were identified by P3 as: unrealistic expectations; awareness and leadership. Unrealistic expectations, P3 stated; "if you are in a workplace where the boundaries are fuzzy . . . where there is almost an expectation that you carry on two or three different roles then . . . that's not helpful". Awareness and leadership, P3 indicated: ". . . depending upon the leadership in the agency that you're working in as to how they operate and do business . . ." (work).

Factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent; P3 indicated as: "it's finding people who follow or practice from the social work background and the social work Code of Ethics 'cause if you're working with multidisciplinary everybody has a different idea about what . . . it meansI think too it depends on the particular agency that you're working for. It's the intent behind their service you

know that's pulled in of course political. . . . it relates back to the boundaries too . . . " (work).

Value 5 - Confidentiality in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P3 indicated; "I think the intent of this section is to reassure the client that their information and their issues are not going to be publicized all over the place . . . it's part of relationship building in what you do as a social worker".

Workplace environmental factors P3 described as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: challenges maintaining confidentiality, ". . . geographical would certainly come back in because, again, the smaller the community the harder it is to maintain confidentiality in the workplace . . . " (geographical); lack of privacy, ". . . even the way the office workplace is set-up, there isn't privacy . . . " (work).

The factor conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent was described by P3 as: "having a written . . . confidentiality policy which outlines the consequences . . . that's again another helpful boundary . . . " (work).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P3 indicated: "I think the intent of this section is that you shouldn't be doing things

that you're not trained to do. You should be practicing within the scope of what you know".

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent were identified by P3 as: lack of funding and lack of training opportunities. Lack of funding, P3 indicated: "This is where economic comes in because often within the agency . . . there is no money for professional development . . ." (economic). Lack of training opportunities, P3 indicated: "Way up north here we often don't have the support system, if we want to train in another area there isn't the facility . . . there isn't a support network to encourage us . . . and be able to . . . further our practice" (economic/geographical).

Training and networking opportunities were identified by P3 as the factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent. P3 indicated: "When you do get to have a workshop or further training it's like a piece of gold in your hands because it gets you associating with others in like fields as well and the networking piece of it is very valuable too" (work).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P3 indicated: "The intent is to lessen the risk of harm to participants or clients of that research . . . there needs to be protection for the clients".

Workplace environmental factors believed to prevent social workers from adhering

to this section of the Code's intent were described by P3 as: lack of interest in research, challenges in conducting research, lack of funding and intent research. Lack of interest in research, P3 indicated: "We're not encouraged to do research at all . . ." (work). Challenges in conducting research, P3 stated: ". . . sometimes it's really hard . . . to do any kind of research if people are spread all over the place especially in the North . . ." (geographical). Lack of funding, P3 indicated: ". . . the economic factor, our social work agencies are just scraping by and in deficit by the end of the year" (economic). Intentional research, P3 stated: ". . . usually if there is research done with political backing there's a particular intent for that research . . . they want certain outcomes . . ." (political).

P3 indicated that he/she was unaware of factors conducive to practicing in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent: ". . . I haven't seen anything that's been helpful for research".

In response to general questions, P3 indicated that the Code does reflect the reality of his/her practice as the same values are embraced: "It reflects the reality of my practice because I encompass those values". The researcher clarified with P3 that he/she adheres personally to the Code but professionally there are geographical barriers; P3 verified and responded as, "yes".

P3, in response to the question, *if the Code were to be rewritten*, indicated that:

. . . if you are operating a social work agency that does social work kind of service then agencies need to have a common Code of Ethics . . . if you are doing a particular kind

of work agencies need to subscribe to a social work Code of Ethics. . . . agencies need to step up to the plate and have more guidelines in place for their employees . . . there needs to be something in place to say if this has occurred then there's consequencesIt's not okay to do this.

The Code was acknowledged by P3 as accessible through the: “. . . internet, I've got a copy at home somewhere”.

In response to social worker familiarity with the Code, P3 stated: “. . . I'm not so sure . . . usually only if there's some kind of situation up”.

At the end of the initial interview, during discussion of a potential second interview, P3 advised that a second interview was not necessary.

The interview duration was one hour.

Field Note Observations – While P3 conveyed confidence throughout the interview, *the factors related to the environment probes* were possibly a foreign way of evaluating the Code. Responses were provided in every instance however responses were typically succinct and closed. P3 may have, during the interview, lost interest in the subject matter. The thunderstorm which took place throughout the interview appeared to have an impact on the participant as P3 made a number of references to the storm.

Participant #4 (herein referred to as P4) advised being employed as a social work practitioner in his/her current role for more than five years in direct services.

The Code, prior to receiving and after reading the document, was identified as a

document which guides our practice. P4 stated: "The purpose of the Code gives us guidelines on what we as social workers need to do in practice . . . its what guides our practice, kind of the do's and don'ts . . . not specific dos and don'ts but keeps us accountable".

The Code was acknowledged as a known and familiar document prior to receipt of the study information. However the 2005 version of the Codes existence was not known: ". . . that was a surprise to me when you sent it and it was the 2005 Code . . . the Code I saw was the one that I graduated with . . . I guess it's 1994".

The practical application of the 1994 Code was noted as explored and referenced during practice courses in the Faculty of Social Work undergraduate program: ". . . more in the practical classes that we had".

As to whether the Code has been referenced in the workplace, P4 indicated that it had: "by the water fountain, more tongue and cheek kind of discussions . . . who practices and who respects the Code and who respects the Code of social workers . . .".

P4 expressed his/her belief that social workers have minimal knowledge of the Code: "I wonder how many other social workers read this . . . I think there's other people out there who don't even know this exists".

Value 3 - Service to Humanity—Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P4 interpreted this principle to mean: "I use my position to get the help for my clients that they might not possibly have".

Workplace environmental factors thought by P4 to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: social worker role: "My role as a social worker financially is a barrier" (economics); geographical location, "definitely where we live compared to Winnipeg multiple resources" (geographical); limited resources, "I think sometimes, just my organization, sometimes I might have limitations on what I can do" (political).

Factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent were not provided as P4 indicated: ". . . I am going to have to come back to this because I had preconceived ideas of what we were going to do so I am not quite ready for this". The researcher informed P4 there is an opportunity to do a second interview and review the transcription. P4 agreed.

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P4 described the intent of this principle as: "boundaries don't get blurred that . . . you're not going to be doing things for clients that would be unethical or you wouldn't be opening yourself up to burnout about confidentiality".

The workplace environmental factor seen by P4 as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent was blurred boundaries. P4 stated:

. . . as social workers the boundaries are blurred all the time, we're a small community, we all have children who play hockey together, we all curl in the same place, we all go out to establishments you can't go out . . . without running into your client . . . people know where social workers live . . . I know of social workers hanging out in the same social circles as their clients (geographical).

The factor P4 identified as conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent was having checks and balances in the workplace to ensure confidentiality. P4 indicated: "there are things that people can do to ensure that this doesn't happen or that it does happen that they establish but I think it's a matter of a personal thingWhere I work there are checks and balances that we're ensuring confidentiality" (work).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P4 interpreted this principle to mean: ". . . this would be where I would disclose that I know somebody that I shouldn't be working with and that we disclose that I have a relationship with them or worked with them in the past and the intent would be so that it's in the open that people aren't providing services to a family member or friends . . .".

The workplace environmental factor believed by P4 to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent was stated as:

. . . being in a small community, it's hard. Sometimes you have to really think about what that relationship really is and you also to have to figure is there somebody else who . . . can work better with this family, I know there are people that had to back off working with certain cases because it was their relativeWhether people always disclose, I'm not sure (work).

One factor P4 noted as conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent was: "In a larger work population it is easier to pass a case along, in a smaller office it is harder to do that and not always possible to do that. Sometimes agencies request workers to take on an unknown role to ensure there is not a conflict" (work).

Value 5 - Confidentiality in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P4 interpreted this principle to mean: "basically that clients are aware of what social workers can and can not do The confidentiality part that if someone said they would commit suicide or abuse that they can't keep it that they would need to disclose to whoever".

P4 stated that there were no factors in the workplace environment that could prevent social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent: "I can't see why not, I can't see this being an issue".

P4 agreed with the paraphrasing by the researcher of a general understanding that social workers who identify limitations results in practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Code's intent, "ya for the most part".

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P4 interpreted this principle as: "ensuring they are not practicing with clients, that their abilities or level of expertise is not there, or their comfort level".

Factors in the workplace environment that P4 indicated prevents social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent were described as: a lack of professional expertise and a lack of specialization.

Lack of professional expertise in communities: ". . . I think that some of the needs that people have we don't have the expertise here in the community and so people will take on that role to be honest . . ." (geographical). Lack of specialization: "I actually think the school of social work had barriers . . . it was more of the theory and . . . when I walked out of there I didn't know what kind of social worker am I going to be . . . I think that's a barrier to get our education . . ." (political).

The identification of program limitations and organizational boundaries was described by P4 as being experienced in the workplace environment and conducive to

practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Code's intent: ". . . there are agencies out there that . . . will practice only certain expertise right and are open in saying that's not our area we can't deal with that . . ." (work).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P4 interpreted this principle as: "people who are engaging in these research projects...know why they are doing the project to protect the clients . . . from confidentiality and protecting them that they're not using the information for something different . . .".

P4 indicated that there were no workplace environmental factors believed to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent: ". . . I don't see any barriers . . .".

P4 did not identify any factors as being conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Code's intent.

In general, P4 reported that the Code does reflect the reality of his/her practice but clarified not necessarily reflective of the organization but of his/her practice. P4 responded: "My reality? Yes. Do I think about it every day? No. My practice? I think, ya".

In response to the question, *if the Code were to be rewritten*, P4 indicated: "I'm not sure, I think I'd have to come back to that one. I mean I don't know if sometimes

these are too vague . . . let me come back to that one". The researcher reiterated the opportunity to return to the question during a second interview; P4 agreed.

When asked how the Code could be referenced, P4 responded: "I would probably go to www Canadian social workers or Google it on Canadian social workers . . .".

In response to social worker familiarity with the Code, P4 indicated that social workers are not very familiar with the Code or with the Codes details. P4 stated: "familiar with it, like the details; probably not. I think things that stand out would be the confidentiality, treating your clients with respect . . . those kind of main things but specifics I don't think so".

P4 had no questions to ask this researcher. The offer of a copy of the Study Outcome was agreed to by P4. Again, P4 expressed his/her recommendation to provide future participants with information specific to the workplace environmental factors prior to his/her interview to enable participants to prepare for the nature of the questions asked throughout the interview. The researcher advised P4 that this feedback would be seriously considered.

The interview duration was two hours.

Field Note Observations – During the initial phase of the interview, P4 stated that the questions were not easy. P4 expressed that he/she had preconceived ideas of how the interview would be and once asked the questions felt unprepared for the nature of the questions. While responding to a question, P4 referred in-depth to the impact of workers who are not degreed social workers referring to them as such, the researcher listened then redirected P4 back to the interview questions. In response, P4 articulated

his/her disappointment at being discouraged to explore the issue in greater depth as P4 conveyed that it has had such a significant impact upon him/her as a social worker.

The researcher observed both the verbal feedback as well as non-verbal body language cues which supported P4's expression of disappointment. This situation in the interview had a direct impact and was latterly realized to be an error on the researcher's behalf.

The participant referred to his/her lack of preparedness a number of times throughout the interview expressing concern for the researcher in relation to his/her perception, as a participant, of providing limited responses. As a result, P4 recommended that future participants have the opportunity to consider the workplace environmental factors prior to their participation in the interview. The researcher discussed the reasons for not providing additional information and reassured the participant that his/her feedback would be considered.

The second interview was scheduled; it was not attended.

Participant #5 (herein referred to as P5) expressed interest in the study and requested further contact however did not respond to subsequent phone calls. P5 was not interviewed.

Participant #6 (herein referred to as P6) employed as a social worker practitioner in his/her current position for the past few years. Work responsibilities were described as engaging in direct and non-direct social work service provision requiring interaction and networking both internal and external to the organization.

Familiarity with the Code in general was noted. However the existence of the 2005 Code was not known.

The 1994 Code was identified as reviewed, explored and examined during the Faculty of Social Work undergraduate degree.

Value 3 - Service to Humanity—Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P6 interpreted this principle to mean: "I believe . . . the client is at the center of what they're doing and that social justice . . . is what we are working for the quality and equal access . . .".

Workplace environmental factors P6 believed to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: the child welfare system, geographic barriers and the justice system. The child welfare system, P6 indicated: "politically, specifically the child welfare system is a very political system so often you have to play that game along with playing this game, there's a balancing act with that . . ." (political). Geographic barriers, P6 indicated: ". . . there's geographic barriers with being able to meet their needs adequately . . ." (geographic). The justice system, P6 indicated: ". . . the justice system has a focused mandate and their belief around what they need to be doing . . ." (political).

P6 described working from common philosophies and policies which supports practising consistent with this section of the Code's intent. P6 indicated that: ". . . being a client-centered agency and . . . a like-minded . . . group . . . all have a

certain set of ethics that guide how we make decisions, how we practice and how we treat . . . "(work).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P6 interpreted this section as: ". . . it remains the social worker's responsibility to establish the boundary and reinforce that boundary to establish basically a therapeutic relationship with the client".

In response to factors that could prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent, P6 explained: "I don't believe there's things that prevent people but do add barriers to this. . . . the small town nature to working, you know it's guaranteed that you have other experiences with clients other than client professional experiences . . . "(geographical). Due to inexperience and limited skills newer social workers were described by P6 as challenged in establishing appropriate boundaries: "I have seen this be a barrier for newer social workers . . . and I've seen families be compromised not out of malice but just inexperience . . . " (work).

The agency's existing policies and parameters were identified as factors conducive to supporting this section of the Code. P6 indicated, "We have policies around this, parameters around outside contact . . . guidelines . . . which I think certainly helps . . . especially people with less experience figure out how to navigate with some of those things" (work).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P6 interpreted this section of the Code as: “. . . we want you to be honest and . . . straight forward . . . we don’t want to be in situations where we could appear to be biased or not acknowledging that we might be in conflict”.

Factors that may prevent social workers from practicing consistent with the intent of this section of the Code included: multiple roles, community size and nepotism.

“. . . geographical things like often we wear different hats . . . you can sometimes be perceived to be in conflict of interest”(geographical). Community size: “. . . I’ve heard people talk about this being a problem . . . in smaller communities . . . everyone knows everybody’s business and how are you impartial and even if you are perceived not to be . . . all those things happen in a smaller community”(geographical). Nepotism: “. . . because you’re so-and-so’s cousin . . .”(political).

P6 indicated that his/her workplace environment’s existing conflict of interest policy (work) facilitates practicing consistent with this section of the Codes intent: “. . . we have a conflict of interest policy . . . in the workplace”.

Value 5 - Confidentiality in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P6 interpreted this principle to mean: “. . . clients know what we can and cannot teach ourselves and they know the extent of confidentiality and what it means for our relationship with them”.

P6 indicated that there were no factors that prevent social workers from being consistent with this section of the Code’s intent.

Workplace conflict of interest policies (work) were identified as being conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Codes intent. P6 indicated: “. . . we have policies around this, it’s in our orientation. We train people about this the minute they walk through the door, its part of the employee package around what confidentiality is, what their responsibility is . . . ”. This researcher provided many examples in attempt to encourage P6 to explore his/her knowledge of social worker experiences through a broader lens, outside of his/her workplace experience.

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client’s interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P6 interpreted this principle as: “. . . we practice within our knowledge base and our skill level in what we’re equipped to do”.

P6 identified the lack of supervisory support, unqualified people in social work

positions and high turnover rates as factors in the workplace environment that may prevent social workers from being consistent with this section of the Code's intent.

Lack of supervisory support: "I think sometimes we don't have adequate supervision maybe we're doing a job that our supervisor isn't equipped to do . . . you don't get support . . . or you don't have an adequate resource to increase your competence . . .".

Unqualified people in social work positions: ". . . in small communities we kind of fall into positions . . . you haven't really demonstrated the skills necessarily but . . . you're a valued employee . . . some of that happens I think more than it would in a larger setting" (work). High turnover rates: "I think there's a lot of turnover in positions for whatever reasons . . . I think that would affect peoples competence . . . there's always a learning curve . . . I definitely think mistakes are made . . . that compromise clients interests or their safety . . ." (geographical).

Factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent were identified as access to training and networking within the organization (work). P6 indicated: ". . . having access to training and things like that to increase knowledge . . . having access either within your network . . . so you can draw on other's skills . . . access those resources to either increase your own knowledge or to provide a resource that you need for the situation".

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P6 interpreted the intent of this principle to mean: "that aimed at researchers, researchers are connecting themselves ethically and abiding by the Code of Ethics in all aspects".

P6 indicated there were no factors that would prevent social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent.

No factors were identified by P6 as being conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Code's intent.

In response to general questions, P6 indicated that the Code does reflect the reality of his/her practice; "Yes I do . . . I can't think of specifics that particularly stand out".

Regarding potential suggestions should the Code be rewritten, P6 indicated that he/she would not offer anything: "I don't know if I would offer anything to be honest with you; I don't think I'd offer anything".

If additional information about the Code was required P6 indicated: "I think I could find information . . . I would assume it wouldn't be that hard to find information about it".

P6, in response to general social worker familiarity with the Code noted that social workers are not so familiar: "I would say some would be quite familiar, some would probably have limited familiarity . . . I wouldn't say that it's the main thing that guides people on a day-to-day basis". When asked by the researcher if he/she, over the years of practice, has been involved in having discussions of the Code, P6 replied: "I would not say very much".

In response, P6 indicated he/she had no questions to ask of the researcher.

In relation to the opportunity for a second interview P6 responded that it was not necessary but was willing to have fifteen minute phone call instead of an in-person meeting.

The interview lasted for one hour and ten minutes.

Field Note Observations – At times throughout the interview P6 conveyed, through non-verbal communication cues, potential impatience with the questions. Body language and non-verbal communication cues such as sighing were prevalent throughout the interview which may have reflected possible frustration or confusion. The repetitive nature of the interview questions may have had a potential impact on this participant's sustained interest. Employed communication skills such as paraphrasing and clarifying may have also negatively impacted the participant as, at those times, the responses presented as possibly brisk and closed. In addition, there was some possible participant discomfort as P6 at one point stated feeling like the interview was a test. The concept of workplace environmental factors may have been unclear as throughout the interview the participant rarely considered those aspects unless specifically asked. Responses were quite repetitive and drawn primarily from knowledge within his/her workplace. Towards the end of the interview it seemed as though P6 may have potentially lost interest in completing the interview.

The follow-up phone call did not occur as the researcher mistakenly recalled that P6 did not wish to have additional contact (researcher error).

Participant #7 (herein referred to as P7) indicated he/she has been a degreed social worker for a number of years and employed, providing non-direct social work, in

his/her current position for the past year. Isolation was noted as experienced within the community however not within the organization due to the networking opportunities.

P7 indicated that the Code, prior to receiving and reading, was known: "to establish a benchmark for integrity in the field". Prior to attending the interview P7 indicated that he/she reviewed the Code.

P7 defined the Code's purpose: ". . . it's the expectations, it's the guidelines of holding a degree and ensuring that degree is held with some specific regard, respect and regard . . . it just allows some credibility for our profession, a profession which sometimes gets beaten up a lot politically, socially and mistakes are made . . ."

P7 indicated that the 2005 Code was an unknown document as was the existence of the CASW; the existence of the MASW was known:

I didn't know there was a CASW but I knew there was a Manitoba Association of Social Workers . . . I'm a very ethical person and I was pleased to see when I read it that that is who I am . . . it was just of course that it's who we are, what we should be and there was parts of it where . . . I kind of thought . . . maybe there but not here, that might work in Toronto but might not work here.

In response to reference to the Code in his/her workplace P7 indicated: ". . . a Code is lofty; is my dream but it's not my reality". Reference was made to the accessibility to

a Code of Professional Practice in the workplace: “we have a Code of professional practice which is kind of based on this”.

P7 replied: “I think so” when asked if the Code was referenced during the Faculty of Social Work undergraduate program.

Value 3 - Service to Humanity—Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P7 indicated:

the policy itself is based on the promotion of social justice; it serves the needs of the client . . . that type of policy doesn't exist in any system . . . you can't create a policy that's broad enough for a province you know in government systems and covers every scenario so then you use your power and authority as best as you can.

Workplace environmental factors believed to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: a lack of direct access to clients, attempting to apply a universal policy and social justice not served. A lack of direct access to clients: “. . . it gets to be a problem in terms of not having direct access to clients in their home community and in decision making and that's geographical” (geographical). Attempting to apply one policy. “How ridiculous . . . that is impossible because of circumstances. There's literally a hundred circumstances that come at you

every day and you have to take the same policy and apply it to everyone in every situation so and that's directly political"(political). Social justice not served: "power and authority invested serve the needs of clients in promotion of social justice again what social justice "(economic).

P7 expressed that policies, rules and regulations of an organization are factors which define professional boundaries and are conducive to practicing consistently regarding this section of the Code's intent. P7 indicated: . . . having a clear sense of the rules, what are the rules, what can you do, what can't you do, what is your power, what is your authority having those clearly defined, your limitations, knowing what you can do and what you can't do is a huge benefit" (work).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P7 indicated: "I think the intent is to establish professional boundaries".

In response to factors in the workplace environment that prevents social workers from practicing in adherence with this section of the Code, P7 indicated: "I have not seen anything in the environment that would lead someone to act in a non-professional manner in terms of boundaries".

Factors conducive to practicing consistent to this section of the Code's intent were noted by P7 as: "the policy and the rules, and the regulations, and the things that people sign, and the oaths of confidentiality, and the rules and regulations of an organization define professional boundaries" (work).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P7 interpreted this principle as:

. . . its quite easy to avoid conflict of interest to make sure that if there is somebody that you are working that you have a vested interested in or that has a vested interest in you in whatever form that is not being treated in any other manner than anybody else and that if there's a conflict of interest it should probably be declared or brought out into the open.

Conflicts of interest were described as expected and existing in the North and perceived to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent.

P7 responded:

Oh absolutely in the North . . . people are related, people know everybody, conflict of interest is everywhere, it's almost impossible to avoid conflict of interest in a community this size and this is a bigger community never mind in the smaller ones which is hopeless. . . . it's unavoidable, I've seen it in hiring practice, I've seen it in

structures, I've seen it politically, all of the factors (work/ geographical/ political/ economic/ spiritual).

P7 indicated that there is nothing that is conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Code's intent as conflicts of interest in the North and small communities are unavoidable. P7 stated:

Absolutely not, there's nothing healthy, it's unavoidable. If you have an organization and you have a 100 employees those 100 employees are going to know almost everyone in the 26 communities or be related in any kind of social work field. It doesn't matter if you're management or grassroots worker or whatever its going to impact you in some way because you're going to have a case where there's somebody you're related to or somebody you know or somebody who interviewed for a job at some point or somebody whose nephew is on your board of directors or somebody who . . . I have never seen anything like this community for that, never, it almost takes my breath away, I have to think about absolutely everything I do examine it very carefullyIt's a nightmare declaring it just doesn't make it go away and I think the value in having something like this, a Code like this is to make people really aware of their reactions . . . self-awareness will save the day

here. . . . if you are in a community and you have 9 people and 8 of them declare a conflict of interest you're screwed (work/ geographical/ political/ economic/ spiritual)".

Value 5 - Confidentiality in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P7 interpreted this principle as: "to make sure that people know that not everything is held within the confines of the room in cases of self-harm, harm to others and . . . child abuse".

Factors, which P7 indicated prevents social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: work demands, sharing limitations of confidentiality, low literacy levels and legal obligation to report. Work demands, P7 indicated: "kind of a thing that people get into the flow of things and you just don't remember or its just glossed over, something you have to do, another form to fill out without really attaching significance to that and then when it happens of course then that's severe consequences because they said you never told me that . . ." (work). Sharing of limitations of confidentiality, P7 indicated: ". . . its just best to go with honest straight up if this happened this is what I have to do, but there can be . . . a sense of judgment on the part of the client or something and a fear especially when it comes to their children" (geographical). Low literacy levels, P7 stated:

It's our northern culture as a whole to try and bring the bar up a little bit so people can read and write well, so people can actually read and write policy which was written in fairly plain language, where people are terrified, I see such high rates of low literacy, such low literacy across the board and . . . it's . . . very hard for people to read the policy and it might be in there, and it might be in the Code, and it might be everywhere else but it's hard to understand and you're not going to come out and say it to the person who's hiring you. Ya I did review the policy but actually it's beyond me because the words are too big . . . it's geographical maybe it's the North. I've never seen it in the South . . . I think it's here, it is geographical (geographical).

Legal obligation to report, P7 indicated: "legal things that they don't know that they're supposed to . . . that there is a general misunderstanding of the specific things that must be reported . . ." (political).

Specific, careful hiring practices and selection were identified as aspects conducive to practicing in accordance with this section of the Code's intent. P7 indicated:

I've seen it in the community where there are very specific hiring practices and people are chosen very, very carefully and not out of desperation to fill a chair and that works

better. It leads to much easier hiring and you can demand the scope and the qualifications and the competencies . . . ”
(work/ economic).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client’s interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P7 interpreted this section of the Code’s intent as meaning; “protect human beings from being helped from people who really don’t know what they are doing and can actually screw them up worse than they were in the first place . . . ”.

Workplace environmental factors seen as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code’s intent included: a limited labour pool and a lack of competent service provision. A limited labour pool, P7 indicated: “. . . resulting in the hiring of unqualified people, organizations not having the resources to hire efficient, qualified people and to attract them to the community and so services are provided by people who don’t know what they are doing. . . . that’s geographical as well not having the labour pool” (economic/ geographical). Lack of competent service provision, P7 indicated: “Certainly it’s geographic because sometimes you have to provide service in areas that you are not very competent” (geographical).

In relation to factors conducive to practising consistently with this section of the Code’s intent, P7 indicated: “. . . Human Resource Management in terms of training in

the provision side of the development of skills to . . . deal with that and again it comes down to the structure of the workplace" (work/economic).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P7 interpreted this principle as: "to protect individuals and communities from unethical workers".

In relation to factors preventing adherence to this section of the Code, P7 indicated: "No, I think that's a very personal thing how one does research and don't think it's the responsibility to be attributed to anything but the human being doing the research".

Factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code were identified by P7 as: ". . . good mentors in workplaces, I have seen some good mentoring, good management "(work/political).

In response to general questions, P7 indicated that the reality of his/her practice does reflect, or attempts to reflect, the reality of the Code.

If the Code were rewritten, P7 indicated: "I think its a very broad Code—I don't think that it can be with my experience with policy that there can be anything written out that applies to everybody everywhere so I think its a good a shot as any at creating a standard to which to aspire. . . . I think it's a Code that we work towards".

The Code was known to be accessed through the internet: "I would probably Google it and it would probably lead me to something close to that".

In relation to social worker familiarity of the Code, P7 indicated:

Not familiar . . . I've never worked specifically in an environment where it was a prerequisite to be a member of CASW or MASW . . . I think what happens is that people create per organization Codes that are based on that somewhat but specific to organizational goals. I think social workers are more familiar with organizational goals and their organizational Codes . . .

In response, P7 indicated that he/she had no questions for the researcher.

P7 indicated that he/she would like to review what was said in the interview and agreed to schedule a second interview.

The interview duration was two hours.

Field Note Observations – This participant, from his/her comments, may have been very cognizant of the nature of the responses, as reference was often made to the possible babbling, fatigue and a macabre sense of humour. Multiple reminders were made to P7 to refrain from sharing specifics, rather attempt to provide general responses. The questions appeared to be thoroughly considered in relation to the identified environmental factors and clarification was sought prior to providing responses. P7 appeared to contradict his/her early comment: “. . . a Code is lofty, is my dream but it's not my reality” by stating that the 2005 Code reflects the reality of what he/she tries to do in practice.

P7 requested a second interview, however did not respond to two phone calls to schedule another interview.

Participant #8 (herein referred to as P8) indicated being employed as a social work practitioner in the same role for more than ten years. The work environment was described as moderately isolated.

Prior to reviewing the Code, P8 described the 2005 Code as, "a standard of practice that would protect the people we interact with".

Upon receipt of the 2005 Code, P8 indicated: "I briefly scanned itI think perhaps there was a little more detail than I actually would have remembered".

In response to familiarity with the 2005 Code and its content, P8 indicated: "I certainly had seen it and reviewed it when it came in replaced the Code we had prior to that".

P8 indicated that the 1994 Code was discussed during the Faculty of Social Work undergraduate program, "I think prior to the update we were brought up to standard on the former Code".

P8 noted that the 2005 Code is referenced in the workplace: "occasionally, it's specific to situations which arise and questions around what ethically we are obligated to report". P8 verified that copies of the 2005 Code and posters are visible and available in his/her workplace.

Value 3 - Service to Humanity—Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P8 indicated: "this talks about our responsibility to advocate for fairness for clients . . . to help clients become aware of their rights and connect them with agencies or systems that will help them have their needs met".

Workplace environmental factors believed to prevent social workers from following this section of the Code's intent included: social worker roles and access to clients in home communities. Social worker roles, P8 indicated: "I think that certainly in the workplace that very often the ability to advocate or just be able to assist clients the way that they need to be and certain work environments are limited by the roles that the workers are allowed to take on" (work). Access to clients in home communities: "Very often it's very disjointed services and . . . there's a lot of broken services where networking isn't really very helpful it doesn't exist to help people get all the help that they need" (geographical).

Flexibility to meet client needs was shared as a factor that was viewed as conducive to practicing consistently with this section of the Code's intent. P8 indicated: ". . . in some . . . work environments . . . the limitations of what we can and can not do restricts our being able to meet clients needs, but even here to some degree there's just not the accessibility to services that clients need and no way to make the connection" (work).

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P8 interpreted this principle to mean: "that there are appropriate boundaries between a worker and the client and that the relationship is based on clients' needs as opposed to the workers needs".

One workplace environmental factor believed to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent was described by P8 as, limited respect for values and religious beliefs impacting incidents of breaches of confidentiality due to limited ability to protect privacy. P8 indicated:

. . . we obviously have a very high population of aboriginal people in our community and I think there is often not a lot of respect for values, religious beliefs, differences that are recognized in some of the work places . . . I think that very often the boundaries around people and respect for people and their issues are not very well respected and that there's often breaches of confidentiality that should not be occurring and it may occur in larger communities but I certainly think that in the North, where everyone kind of knows everyone and the work environments are smaller . . . its probably more noticeable (work/geographical/ spiritual).

Another factor was defined as social workers lack of awareness of the economic reality of the North and its people: "I think that many of the workers have middle class values and middle class backgrounds and aren't aware of the economic realities of many of the individuals that they serve (economic)".

Appropriate boundaries were identified as factors conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the Code's intent. P8 indicated:

the work that we do or I do enables us to establish appropriate boundaries and I think that one of the things that occurs in our workplace is there is a lot of talk about boundaries and appropriate relationships and ensuring that our focus is on the needs of our client as opposed to meeting our own needs.

Value 4 - Integrity in Professional Practice—Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P8 interpreted this section of the Code to mean: "as social workers we have the responsibility to be open about any potential conflict or prejudice we have in dealing or working with an individual".

Pressure to provide services regardless of an existing conflict was described as the factor which prevents social workers from following this section of the Code's intent. P8 indicated:

. . . there have been incidences in this community where . . . transparency is not identified and individuals work with people without declaring that conflict of interest or . . . there may be some form of . . . prejudice other than identified. Basically, in many cases, I think . . . there isn't anyone else . . . they don't have the luxury of being able to say I can't work with this person because they're the only worker in town or . . . there's just no one else who can take the case (work/geographical/ political).

The ability to identify when a conflict of interest exists was noted by P8 as a helpful factor in adhering to this section of the Code's intent: ". . . certainly the ability to identify where conflict may exist, to have the ability to, when you're not comfortable with or don't feel that you can have impartiality, be able to say I'm not able to take this case for me its a conflict" (political/ geographical).

Value 5 - Confidentiality in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P8 stated:

the intent is so that we don't begin to engage with people without them being clearly aware of our obligation as social workers around the need to report . . . homicidal or suicidal intent, court subpoenas or if someone is abusing a child. That should occur . . . at the beginning, before you have someone even begin to talk to you about what's going on, they need to know that we are as social workers obligated to report those situations or any other situations may arise should be communicated to our clients . . .

P8 did not identify workplace environmental factors known to prevent social workers from following this section of the Code's intent: "no matter where you're working . . . it needs to be part of your practice".

Practicing in adherence with this section of the Code's intent was described by p8 as: "I think one of the things is having . . . a formalized . . . service agreement that people can read and understand, and sign, and know, and use it every time" (work).

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P8 interpreted this section of the Code to mean: "protect clients from bad practice that can harm them".

Factors that are believed to prevent social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent included: social worker competence and nepotism. Social worker competence: "I think the geographical limitations certainly see people dabbling where they shouldn't be dabbling based on the fact that there may not be anywhere to refer on or competent people in the community"(geographical). Nepotism: "Politically I think that very often communities are pressured to employ individuals who may be related to the in-powers as opposed to professionals who are with educational backgrounds that would prevent individuals without proper education being involved" (political/geographic).

P8 identified self-awareness as the factor conducive to practicing in adherence with this section of the Code's intent. "In certain workplaces I think there is the ability to recognize that you are not prepared or qualified to deal with certain issues and having the ability to refer on or . . . refuse to become involved in a situation that you're not prepared to handle competently".

Value 6 - Competence in Professional Practice—Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

P8 interpreted the meaning of this section as: ". . . to have a standard or to be continually evaluating success or limitations which need to be worked on".

Factors preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the Code's intent were described as economic in relation to continued education: "economically if you're

from the North and you come up with the funds to continue your education, your exposure to new theories that would be an issue" (economic).

Factors in the workplace environment that are conducive to practicing in support of this section of the Code's intent were described as the ability to monitor client satisfaction. P8 indicated: ". . . there has been an attempt to monitor client satisfaction although . . . people sometimes fear responding even though it's supposedly confidential. I think people actually fear being able to be identified".

In response to general questions, P8 indicated that certain realities in the North make it challenging to adhere to sections of the Code:

I believe the Code sets a clear guideline for how our practice should be offered, and I believe that we certainly need to adhere to the principles within it but I do believe some of the work environments make it more difficult to follow the Code particularly in looking at areas of meeting people's needs. I think there are certainly realities particularly in the North that make it challenging to be able to adhere to some of the standards in the Code. I think that certain areas of social work are very specialized and certainly in the North having the specialist is not a reality. I think economic and geographically we have a lot of issues that are somewhat unique in the North.

When asked if the Code were rewritten, P8 indicated: "I think that it would be important to look at the need for guidelines for workers in isolated communities. Also it talks about the inherent worth and dignity for people but it doesn't allow for some of the cultural differences that exist in our areas that we practice". P8 indicated that he/she would like to spend more time on the Code to answer this question. The researcher discussed the opportunity for a second interview.

If there was a need to know more of the Code, P8 indicated: "I would contact Miriam Browne I guess at the Association or the Canadian Association".

When asked how familiar social workers are with the Code, P8 stated:

I think that very often when social workers get out and into the world and providing services that we actually spend very little time looking at the Code or continuing to watch for changes. I think most of us come out knowing certain values and just kind of go from that but really looking at the Code . . . I don't think generally that its the Bible that maybe it should be for us to work on, work from.

The researcher clarified asking if he/she was saying that social workers are not that familiar with the Code. P8 indicated: "I don't believe so. I have not had a lot of discussions with other social workers about their querying things in the Code . . . I think it's what we turn to when we have questions . . .".

In response, P8 indicated that he/she had no questions for the researcher.

When offered the opportunity to participate in a second interview P8 responded that

he/she would like the opportunity to return to one question, *If the Code were rewritten*.

The interview duration was one hour.

Field Note Observations – Throughout the interview this participant appeared to be uncomfortable with the process and the questions, advising after the interview of his/her extreme fatigue which was said to impair concentration throughout the interview. Upon clarification of his/her responses the secondary responses seemed to be closed and the researcher was concerned that P8 may have felt judged by the researcher.

P8 did not wish to partake in a second interview but expressed interest to return to the question, *if the Code were rewritten*. Latterly, P8 decided it was not necessary to provide additional information.

7.2.1 Summary of Opinion Questions

Four general opinion questions were asked of the participants' to gain insight into the practical application of the Code in relation to his/her service provision.

Five of six participants indicated that the Code does reflect the reality of his/her practice, when asked, *Does the Code reflect the reality of your practice?* Of those five, one participant responded that, ". . . the Code, it's just my whole belief system", another indicated, ". . . because I encompass those values". It is important to identify an apparent contradiction between how participants described their understanding of the intent of the Code versus disclosure of practice realities. A contradiction occurs when participants express an awareness that social workers are not supposed to have dual relationships but do, as it is unavoidable. One of six participants did not agree that

the Code reflected the reality of his/her practice and expressed that, "certain realities in the North make it challenging to adhere to sections of the Code, economic and geographic issues are somewhat unique in the North".

In response to being asked, *if the Code were being rewritten what suggestions would you offer*; the first participant stated that he/she would change the wording. Another three participants thought they would need to think about the question further; two of these participants had no additional comments to share in relation to this question. One participant stated he/she would not offer any changes. Another participant indicated that 2005 Code, as a document, is ". . . a broad Code . . . don't believe one policy can apply to everyone". This participant also contradicted the previous statement expressing that the Code reflects a ". . . good shot at creating a standard to which to aspire, it's a Code that we work towards". The final participant feedback conveyed the importance to consider the need for guidelines for workers in isolated communities. This participant indicated that ". . . the reference to inherent worth and dignity in the Code does not allow for some of the cultural differences that exist".

When asked, *if you wanted to know more about the Code how would you access it*, four of six participants identified the internet as his/her resource. Two of six participants stated the CASW would be a source, while another considered the MASW, and another the FSWT. One participant expressed uncertainty but thought it would not be too difficult to locate information on the Code.

The proceeding question resulted in a cohesive response; *How familiar do you think*

social workers are with the Code? A prevailing theme that emerged was that participants believed that most social workers would not be familiar with the 2005 Code. Comments included:

Everyone should be aware of the Code, the content, write papers on it, more emphasis on the Code. . . . it's something we turn to when we have questions. . . . I wouldn't say that it's the main thing that guides people on a day-to-day basis. ...confidentiality and respect in relation to the Code may be familiar but not specifics of the Code. . . . the Code is discussed only in relation to a situation and needs to be reviewed, revamped. What do people understand? Is it valuable? Do people even read it? It's good to look at it and see, does this even work for people any more?

Two of six participants expressed the belief that social workers are more familiar with organizational Codes of Conduct, ". . . social workers are more familiar with organizational goals and their organizational Codes. . . . it's hard to merge the Social Work Code of Ethics into a workplace; they don't follow that same Code".

Every participant was asked to consider participation in a second interview to: review the interview transcription; reflect upon responses to validate, clarify, amend or delete content. Three of six participants agreed to a second interview, of which two scheduled, yet did not attend, and, all three did not respond to phone calls to schedule/reschedule the second interview. Three of six participants indicated that a

second interview was not necessary. However one did request contact to provide additional information in one specific area; upon contact he/she decided not to proceed. The researcher misunderstood one participant request to contact for follow-up via phone, for a brief fifteen-minute conversation; the researcher did not make contact (researcher error).

Participant responses to the above-noted four general questions were not necessarily consistent with information shared throughout the interviews. As documented, five of six participants endorsed the 2005 Code as reflective of his/her practice yet verified minimal knowledge of and a lack of familiarity with this Code. Three of six participants recommended significant modifications to the Code, while the three remaining participants expressed requiring additional time to consider possible suggestions to the Code.

7.3 Response to Research Questions

As participants stated, the 2005 Code was not known or familiar to them. The 2005 Code was said not to be a document they think about day-to-day in their workplace. However, this study illustrates that given the 2005 Code and the opportunity to talk about it, they are able to cite practice issues. A significant portion of the findings served to support each respective participant's interpretation and feedback.

The participants expressed their general belief that most social workers would lack familiarity with the 2005 Code. Of the participants, two of six were aware that the 2005 Code existed; four participants were not aware that the 1994 Code had been replaced. The content of the 2005 Code was unknown to participants prior to his/her participation

in this study. Participant responses to the research questions are explored in the proceeding segment.

What do the value statements contained in the 2005 Code mean for practicing social workers in the North?

All of the participants, on each respective interview date, were employed as social workers in the North. The interpreted intent of the specific value statements and accompanying principles explored in this study, and contained in the 2005 Code, were defined in relation to each participant's views as noted in the following section.

Value 3: Service to Humanity, Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

Three of six participants interpreted this section to mean that the social work position is to advocate for the client. Another two conveyed that social workers have to be aware of their power and what they do with it. The promotion of social justice was considered to be the intent by another participant.

Value 4: Integrity in Professional Practice, Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

The intent was deciphered to unanimously reflect the need to establish boundaries/professional boundaries with clients.

Value 4, Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be

compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

The responsibility to declare a conflict was noted by five of six participants. The remaining participant interpreted the need to establish professional boundaries.

Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice, Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

Three of six participants interpreted this section to mean that limitations to confidentiality will be identified. Another participant articulated the meaning as awareness of what one can and cannot do. A fifth participant defined this section as reassuring a client that his/her information will not be shared as a part of relationship building. The final participant deciphered the section as informed consent, the extent and meaning of confidentiality with clients.

Value 6: Competence in Professional Practice, Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

The intent was understood by two of six participants to reflect acknowledging practice limitations. Another two participants defined practicing within the scope of knowledge. The final two participants interpreted this section to mean that it is essential to protect individuals from bad practice that can do harm.

Value 6 Competence in Professional Practice, Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimise risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

This section was defined by two of six participants to mean that clients understand what they are engaging in and their information will remain confidential. Another participant considered the meaning to lessen the risk of harm to clients of that research. A fourth participant defined that researchers are connecting themselves ethically and abiding by the Code. Another participant indicated this section referred to protecting individuals and communities from unethical workers. The final participant defined this section as a standard with which to continually evaluate success or limitations.

To what extent do individuals practicing social work in the North perceive that they are able to act in accordance with the CASW Code of Ethics?

Participants relayed information surfacing as themes which now identify the barriers to social workers practicing in accordance with the 2005 Code.

A significant theme was reflected as the lack of familiarity with the 2005 Code.

Two of six participants indicated he/she had previously been aware of the 2005 Code and had accessed it. The 2005 Code was generally reinforced by participants as a guide for practice however the remaining four participants reported being unaware that the 1994 Code had been replaced with the 2005 version. The 2005 Code had been

accessed by two participants as a document to refer to in response to a situation having occurred.

The participant-reported reality of dual roles and unavoidable conflicts of interest developed as a theme and was substantiated in response to Value 4: Integrity in Professional Practice, Principle 3.

Five of six participants indicated that geographical workplace environmental factors prevented social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the 2005 Code's intent.

Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005, p.7).

Five of six participants cited the development of boundaries, policies, rules, regulations and parameters in the work environment as conducive to practicing consistent with this section of the 2005 Code's intent.

Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005, p.7). *Geographical:* (five of six participants cited limited resources, dual roles and pressure to provide services regardless of conflicts). *Work:* (three of six participants expressed awareness to declare and limited resources). *Political:* (five of six participants referenced limited resources, pressure to

provide services) factors were stated as preventing social workers from adhering to this section of the 2005 Code's intent.

The lack of education, knowledge, discussion, accessibility and application of the 2005 Code surfaced as a theme.

The participants reflected varied experiences in relation to exposure to and education regarding the 2005 Code during the undergraduate program at the FSWT. Responses prior to Part B (4): *Did you talk about the Code as part of your social work degree course work?* Three of six respondents advised they were taught the 1983/1994 Code, while the remaining three advised that the 1994 Code was referred to during their undergraduate degree at the FSWT. Four of six participants expressed the non-existence of 2005 Code information in the workplace when asked if they had access to the 2005 Code or a 2005 Code poster in the workplace.

The lack of relevancy of the 2005 Code in social work practice emerged as another theme.

As noted-above, four of six participant workplaces do not promote the 2005 Code in their agency/organization. This researcher found that there was inconsistency amongst participants as the 2005 Code was endorsed as a document. However, the reported practicality of applying the 2005 Code in practice was not substantiated.

Do the perceptions of practitioners working in the North differ according to gender, years of post-graduate practice, or the type of social work service they provide?

Variance of responses amongst participants was negligible. As illustrated throughout the Findings section, Modified Case Studies 7.2, regardless of the

demographics or direct and non-direct practitioner service provision, participants cited very similar experiences, concerns and challenges.

What factors, concerning the non-work environment in which social workers practice, affect their ability to deliver services that are in accordance with the Code?

The non-work environment refers to the factors related to the environment that surfaced during the review of each 2005 Code Value and Principle explored with participants throughout the interviews. Participant findings reflected the proceeding non-work factors. *Mission statements:* P7 indicated, “. . . clear mission statements . . . that’s what you have to know, that is your end to get to that mission statement, whatever you do has to lead to that one way or another”. *Access to service provision:* P1 indicated, “we do service outlying communities and there are always jurisdictional things that are going to that limit what we can do”. *Employing qualified social workers:* P7 indicated, “. . . organizations not having the resources to hire efficient, qualified people and to attract them to the community and so services are provided by people who don’t know what they are doing . . .”. *Professional boundaries:* P4 indicated, “Being in a small community it’s hard sometimes you have to really think about what that relationship really is . . . I know there are people that had to back off working with certain cases because it was their relativeWhether people always disclose, I’m not sure”. P7 indicated, “. . . informed consent is unknown”. *Confidentiality:* P1 indicated, “In our smaller communities. . . that is more of a challenge it is definitely a struggle because confidentiality is a huge factor in these outlying areas”. *Unrealistic service demands:* P3 indicated, “you do the work because it needs to be done but you know

damn well that you crossed the boundaries that . . . there was no other worker to do it . . . the smaller community the more blips to be able to adhere to the Code”.

What are the issues in practitioners’ work environments that affect his/her ability to act in accordance with the Code?

The work environment refers to the factors related to the actual work conditions. Participant findings reflected work factors such as, *power structures* within communities must practice collaboration to ensure service provision to consumers is accessible, appropriate and professional. P3 stated: “. . . if the expectation is that you’re to fly out in a little airplane...to a very tiny community and you get there . . . and they don’t want you there but you’ve been sent there you know, where is that collaboration”? *Political power structures* in communities impacts both clients and workers. P8 indicated: “I think in many of the communities, particularly the smaller communities, the political pressure coming from the leadership makes it difficult as well for workers”. *Community norms*: P8 indicated, “I think that many of the workers have middle class values and middle class backgrounds and aren’t aware of the economic realities of many of the people that they serve”. *Community resources*: P1 indicated, “. . . because the small communities you’re limited to your resources and that definitely does pose problems”. *Nepotism* exists in communities where unqualified or inexperienced individuals may be given positions according to who they know. P8 indicated, “I think that very often communities are pressured to employ individuals who may be related to the in-powers as opposed to professionals who are with educational backgrounds that would prevent individuals without proper education being involved”.

Are there specific factors identified by social workers in the North which may enable them to act in accordance with the Code?

The findings of the six study participants surfaced factors that, in their opinion, enables adherence to the 2005 Code. These factors were previously illustrated in section 7.2 Modified Case Studies. Common factors, where three or more participants reported corresponding factors, will be cited. Five of six participants reported that appropriate boundary development enabled adherence in accordance with the 2005 Code which included the development of parameters, policies, rules, regulations, philosophies and service agreements. Four of six participants reported that the ensuing factors enabled adherence in accordance with the 2005 Code: meeting client needs; self awareness. Additional factors reported by study participants that enable adherence to the 2005 Code include: social workers who endorse the Code; developing rapport; confidentiality boundaries; degreed supervisors; reduced funding (lessens service provision demands); training and networking opportunities; taking on unfamiliar roles (to decrease conflict of interest); identification of confidentiality limitations; conflict of interest policy; specific hiring practices; good mentors; identification of program limitations; ability to monitor client satisfaction.

Do social workers recognize issues that may impede their ability to practice in accordance with the Code?

The findings of the six study participants surfaced multiple factors that, in their opinion, impairs adherence to the 2005 Code. These factors were previously illustrated in section 7.2 Modified Case Studies. Common factors, where three or more

participants reported corresponding factors, will be cited. All six participants reported that the proceeding factors impede practice in accordance with the 2005 Code: conflicts of interest (professional and personal); limited resources (positions and funding); service provision challenges in home communities (community leadership challenges, community power structures, accessibility, resources, service provision environment, community supports). Five of six participants reported that the following factors impede practice in accordance with the 2005 Code: boundary challenges (dual/multiple roles); challenges maintaining confidentiality (professionalism, service environment, privacy, community population, accessibility to community, service provider community-based versus itinerant) ; unrealistic expectations of service provision (beyond area of competence, lack of specialization); social worker role challenges (degreed, qualified, experienced, competent, specialization expectations); nepotism (power structures, positions provided to unqualified family members and/or friends, impacts the quality of service provision, impacts clients directly). Four of six participants reported that the following factors impede practice in accordance with the 2005 Code: geographical location (accessibility, existing services/supports, and jurisdictional challenges); challenges providing direct service to clients in their home communities (community norms, existing/non-existing community structures/programs/services, and multi-service collaboration). Additional factors reported by study participants that impede practice in accordance with the 2005 Code include: challenges with supervisor role (non-degreed, unqualified, lack of access, lack of support, lack of knowledge); challenges with the

justice system and child welfare system (social justice is not served, political games); limited training and research opportunities.

7.4 Limitations and Delimitation of Study Design

A limitation refers to a factor that may affect the study; the researcher does not control the limitations (Mauch & Birch, 1998). These limitations reflect problems with the implementation of the study design.

One overall limitation relates to the specific concentration on northern environments, while similar challenges may exist in southern rural and isolated environments or urban environments they were not explored in this study. There was no consideration as to whether the same conditions explored in this study could possibly occur in the South as this study specifically focused on the North. The findings are possibly indicative of factors associated with a rural, remote or isolated environment. However the study did not look beyond northern, rural, isolated conditions.

Another limitation of the study implementation includes minimal recruitment response which was possibly diminished due to the potential lack of participant knowledge of the Code.

Applying Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics in Uniquely-Situated Northern Geographical Locations: are there Factors in Practice Environments that Impact Adherence to the 2005 Code? *This topic reflects a study limitation due to the sensitivity of the subject and may have intimidated or deterred potential participants from engaging in the study.*

A significant limitation pertains to the recognition that considerable changes have occurred between the 1994 and 2005 versions of the Code. However the study focused specifically on the participants' understanding of the 2005 Code.

Participant comprehension of the interview questions reflects a considerable limitation. Every participant at some point during his/her interview conveyed being challenged to understand and relate to the questions, as well as their responses, within the context of the workplace environment.

Another limitation existed with the potential lack of agency/organization support to encourage participation in the study. However, if supervisors do not have a social work degree and are not familiar with the Code they may be least likely to support participation in the study.

Delimitation is a factor that could affect the study; the researcher controls this factor. *The sample size constitutes a delimitation in this study,* as the sample is purposive where only a percentage from the entire potential sample population will be selected. In addition, the following characteristics were selected in establishing the purposive sample: (1) that participants were graduates of the Faculty of Social Work at Thompson (FSWT); and (2) that participants have three years' post-graduate employment as a social work practitioner in one of the twenty-six northern communities listed in the study.

7.5 Summary

Participant findings conveyed a general understanding that current awareness and knowledge of the 2005 Code and its contents is minimal. This understanding, at times

throughout the interviews, was reflected as more of a concern. The recognition of the importance to familiarize oneself with the 2005 Code by reviewing and utilizing the 2005 Code as a practice tool was identified as a factor to enhance consistency with the 2005 Code. However, participants conveyed a sense of professional apathy in relation to the 2005 Code, because the 2005 Code generally has not been available as a reference in the workplace, nor have social workers been required, as a condition of employment, to be a member of the MASW, now amalgamated into the MIRSWS. The term *apathy* refers to a shared responsibility for MIRSWS, individual social workers and agencies/ organizations to educate and support the general knowledge and practical application of the 2005 Code of Ethics.

Participants acknowledged their lack of familiarity with the 2005 Code. However, when they were given an opportunity to review the Code and asked for their understanding of specific sections of the Code they reported some degree of consistency as to the meaning. So while there was a range of interpretation it was not reflected as broad. Secondly, the research explored the uniqueness of participants' knowledge of practice environments that may impede adherence to the 2005 Code. Third, factors in the practice environment that may be conducive to adhering with the 2005 Code were explored with participants.

Based upon participant feedback, separate to the actual interview, this researcher believes there is a possibility that study participants may continue to familiarize themselves with the 2005 Code.

CHAPTER 8 - Contributions to Social Work Knowledge

To this researcher's knowledge, research pertaining to the applicability of the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics has not been explored previous to this study. This research is important due to the implementation by the provincial organization and the declared national endorsement of the 2005 Code which has drawn criticism from various practitioners, authors and scholars. Commencing research to report findings of practitioner familiarity with and interpretation of the 2005 Code potentially constitutes an important contribution to the existing knowledge base for social work practitioners. The study findings may potentially be utilized by practitioners to enhance his/her comprehension of the realities of the work environment and in turn reflect these realities first and foremost with themselves, supervisors, agencies and organizations.

With the completion of this thesis the researcher has contributed to the literature base regarding practice in the North. Participant experiences may support the theory that the 2005 Code may be more flexible but not necessarily reflective of the reality of service delivery in northern Manitoba. Social workers may develop an interest to collaborate with the MIRS to progressively work towards reflecting the reality of social work practice in the North, in Manitoba. Findings from this study may serve to address a wider audience such as: policy-makers, administrators, advocates, educators, students and/or politicians.

Moreover, findings may provide a sound basis for future research. Mauch and Birch (1998), refer to three forms of follow-up: (1) replication of the study which would serve to further substantiate findings; (2) expansion of the study which would take the

findings to greater depths or in diverse directions; (3) instrument refinement which, related to this study, would entail further refinement of the interview guide.

Of interest is one study that referred to the applicability of the 1994 CASW Code, *Hospital Social Workers Experiences with Ethics and Ethical Decision-Making* (Ashcroft, 2005). This study also had a limited sample size; there were ten participants. As part of the study findings the researcher referenced participant feedback in relation to the consideration to utilize the 1994 Code as a reference/support document when facing ethical decisions. The findings were specific to only five study participants involved in the study as additional questions were supplemented part way through the study. Ashcroft (2005), noted that the 1994 Code was not referenced as an access tool by any of the five participants. "Not one social worker interviewed identified the code of ethics as a tool that had been utilized when they themselves were involved in an ethical dilemma or a difficult clinical situation" (Ashcroft, 2005, p.104). This excerpt from the Ashcroft study serves to strengthen the findings in this study.

CHAPTER 9 - Establishment of the Manitoba College of Social Workers

(MCSW): Implications for Change

Bill 9 – *The Social Work Profession Act* (SWPA) was granted Royal Assent in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on October 8, 2009. As a result, the MASW/MIRSW known as one entity, has been realized to be two separate legal entities. On June 9, 2010, at the MASW Annual General Meeting, a resolution was passed to dissolve the MASW and merge all of its past operations under one single structure, the MIRSW (MASW/MIRSW communication, www.maswmirsw.ca). “The MIRSW will continue as the designated corporate body that will continue as the Manitoba College of Social Workers” (MASW/MIRSW communication, www.maswmirsw.ca).

Presentation of the pending emergence of the Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) is of particular interest to this study as some study participants identified feeling professionally impacted by the social work profession’s inability to regulate and protect the title of Social Worker; a primary function of the MCSW.

One participant referred to the responsibility of agencies to establish guidelines:

. . . many people call themselves social workers and they haven’t gone through the same training we have to officially be called social workers. What Code do they follow? . . . as part of their registration to the Province for work and things we’ve been talking about for twenty-five years now. Agencies need to step up to the plate and have more guidelines in place because there is safety for employees,

safety for the clients and guidelines will help us with that through consequences . . . if it happens there needs to be something in place to say if this has occurred then there's consequences . . . it's not okay to do this.

Another participant expressed significant impact by non-social workers who are in social work positions:

there are people who say they're social workers, that one day they woke up they were a carpenter and today they're a social worker . . . they're not true social workers they're doing a social work job. . . . people who are not social workers that does affect me on a daily basis . . . it's my experience, it's my frustrations, it affects me on who I'm working with in the community . . .

A third participant specifically referenced geographical location as a primary factor in social work services being provided by non-social workers:

. . . a lot of the time I work with people that aren't social workers but are in social work positions which I think a lot of time is a geographical thing . . . sometimes it's the healthiest person in the community or the one that wants to be helpful . . . I think that happens more than it would in other places because there's people to choose from . . .

Another participant spoke to expectations of non-social workers holding social work

positions: "I don't always work with BSWs but you work with people who do the same work as BSWs who don't have the background and the education and learning involved in that so sometimes we assume that people know that and they don't".

A fourth participant addressed the issue of the lack of resources in hiring people for social work positions:

organizations not having the resources to hire efficient, qualified people and to attract them to the community and so services are provided by people who don't know what they are doing and who may do it for many years. . . . on a bad day people are providing service and they don't have a clue and when it comes specifically to social work it can be very damaging to individual communities.

The final participant to provide feedback in relation to non-social workers in social work positions expressed:

. . . geographics [sic] are one of the biggest restraints we have in having people with proper qualifications or having access to people with proper qualifications. . . . we have seen in the North a large number of people without the training to be in positions that they're in and I think that affects even though they're not bound by the Code certainly they're doing social work positions.

Based on my research with six participants, I found that there is ambiguity in relation to the pending MCSW and the 2005 Code. On one hand there is more flexibility in the 2005 Code than the 1994 Code; on the other, challenges exist. A primary challenge is conflict of interest situations.

In relation to conflict of interest situations, one participant expressed that: "you do the work because it needs to be done but you know damn well that you crossed the boundaries that you shouldn't have . . . you know there was no other worker to do it, you were stuck, you do it".

A second participant stated: "we are in conflict of interest all of the time because in small communities . . . confidentiality is a huge factor . . .".

Another participant stated: "in a larger work population it is easier to pass a case along, in a smaller office it is harder to do that and not always possible to do that".

A fourth participant indicated:

very often in smaller communities everyone knows everybody and those boundaries become a little more awkward . . . some people may be servicing relatives which never occurs in a larger community but if you're the only game in town it becomes very difficult to keep those boundaries . . . Basically, in many cases, I think because there isn't anyone else or you know they don't have the luxury of being able to say I can't work with this person

because they're the only worker in town or, you know what, there's just no one else who can take the case.

A fifth participant expressed:

. . . I'm not a social worker 24 hours a day and there's other things that I'm involved in that's contrary to being a social worker . . . I feel like you can sometimes be perceived to be in conflict of interest. . . . in smaller communities not wanting to practice in their home communities because of . . . those struggles with everyone knowing everyone's business and . . . even if you are perceived not to be you're so-and-so's cousin and all of those things happen in a smaller community.

The final participant stated: "People are related, people know everybody, conflict of interest is everywhere, it's almost impossible to avoid conflict of interest in a community this size . . . never mind in the smaller ones which is hopeless. It's a nightmare declaring, it just doesn't make it go away".

What will the impact be for professional social workers when the MCSW mandates the writing of an exam asking questions of the Code and its practical application in service provision?

An update to information presented earlier in Chapter 3.1, Development of the CASW Code of Ethics. At the time the literature review was completed the following provincial associations did not have legislation: the Manitoba Association of Social

Workers (MASW); British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW); Ordre Professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec. To-date, the BCASW and Ordre Professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec now have legislation. MIRSWS (MASW/MIRSWS merged into MIRSWS) continues as a regulatory organization. As noted earlier in this chapter the SWPA was passed and MIRSWS is currently in the process of developing the emerging MCSW. Therefore, eight of nine provincial associations have legislation regulating social work practice. The Association of Social Workers of Northern Canada (ASWNC), a CASW member, remains without legislation. Ordre Professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec has legislation is not a CASW member organization.

The ensuing chapter describes recommendations derived from participant and researcher feedback identifying implications for the future of social work practice in the North.

CHAPTER 10 – Recommendations

The recommendations are correlated to the emergence of the MCSW as this study's feedback surfaces data, specific to the six participant views, reflecting general social worker lack of knowledge of the 2005 CASW Code, whereas the MCSW *mandates* adherence to the Code; a considerable gap to narrow.

Are there amendments to the existing Code, reflecting the reality of northern geographical locations, which would favourably affect a practitioner's ability to act in accordance with the Code? This final research question is addressed through participant and researcher recommendations which are identified in the subsequent section. The recommendations are realistic according to the northern environment. They also reflect potential future 2005 Code amendments which, as a result, may enhance a social worker's ability to adhere to the 2005 Code.

10.1 Participant Recommendations

The proceeding statements were derived from participant feedback documented in the Findings section, Modified Case Studies 7.2 of this study and is forwarded as participant recommendations.

- (1) The MASW [now the MIRSWS] list the ramifications of breaching the 2005 Code.
- (2) The need for social workers to know under what circumstances would a social worker's membership be suspended or revoked.
- (3) A review of the 2005 Code, as one participant stated that one policy could not apply to everyone.
- (4) The consideration to develop separate guidelines for social workers in isolated

communities to allow for cultural differences that exist.

- (5) Change the wording of the 2005 Code.
- (6) MIRSWS review the statement *inherent worth and dignity* in the Code as it does not allow for some of the cultural differences that exist.
- (7) Review the economic and geographic issues that are somewhat unique in the North that make it challenging to adhere to sections of the 2005 Code.

10.2 Researcher Recommendations

While this study cannot generalize beyond the opinions of the six participants, the findings illustrate that participants believed that most social workers are not familiar with the 2005 Code. Corroborating this finding is the Ashcroft study (2005) where five participants exemplified a lack of familiarity with the 1994 Code as none of those participants conferred with the 1994 Code when faced with ethical dilemmas.

The findings in this study demonstrate the need for broader education of Northern social workers as to the content of the 2005 Code. Based on this study's findings, this researcher recommends that the MIRSWS consider embarking on an education and promotion campaign for each member to become familiar with the 2005 Code, the intent, the meaning and a general understanding that it is each social worker's professional responsibility to adhere to the 2005 Code.

The emergence of the Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW), through legislation, will require that all practicing social workers adhere to the 2005 Code of Ethics. All six participants reported factors in northern, rural, remote and isolated environments that affect his/her ability to adhere to the 2005 Code. When social

workers are required to register to use the title of Social Worker the MCSW will be in a position to recognize the environmental factors present for professionals practicing in northern, rural, remote and isolated environments. The research identifies a potential dilemma for the MCSW, where social workers are required to adhere to the 2005 Code, yet it may not be feasible in northern, rural, remote and isolated practice areas due to specific factors that have been identified throughout this study.

Based on this study's findings, this researcher recommends that the MIRSWS review factors that social workers potentially face in all northern, rural, remote and isolated environments as those factors may impair his/her ability to adhere to the 2005 Code.

10.3 Future Research

It was difficult to recruit participants for this research study. There was a low response to recruitment efforts. One factor may have been the requirement to strictly adhere to the parameters set out by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB). While it is essential not to compromise the rights of a participant there may possibly be some means to increase flexibility. Therefore, this researcher encourages consideration and flexibility on behalf of the PSREB in studies, where the need to protect participant rights through ensuring informed consent is paramount. However, in this situation, it is essential to understand through research the realities of social work practice. A prevailing theme that emerged from the findings was that participants believed that most social workers would not be familiar with the 2005 Code. If social workers are not familiar with the 2005 Code, if this Code is not promoted in the workplace and if this Code is not being employed in practice, then concern of the

quality of service provision develops. Clearly, as the findings support, the perceived lack of familiarity with the 2005 Code is of concern raising issues about the quality of service being provided. The quality of service provision cannot prematurely be viewed to hold individual social workers accountable but rather regarded as a systemic issue to be considered and addressed. A future focus for research could be: What are the actual practice implications of not being familiar with the 2005 Code?

Future researchers interested in expanding or replicating this research may choose to consider the disclosure and provision of the interview questions prior to the actual interviews. Possible outcomes to this recommendation may result in the participation of more or less participants.

Further research of ethical practice in the social work profession is necessary to ensure that all social workers practice under existing requirements set out in current MIRSW By-Laws and, in the future, Provincial Legislation that is applicable to every social worker in Manitoba. Regardless of geographic location, whether practicing in urban, rural, isolated, remote or northern environments social workers can collaboratively work together to ensure that equitable standardized Values and Principles exist in the social work Code of Ethics.

10.4 Summary

Recommendations, provided by the participants and this researcher, relate to the role and responsibility of the MIRSW and the pending MCSW to review and determine whether existing policies embody the reality of social work practice throughout all geographic locations in the Province of Manitoba.

In addition to this study, a prior study by Ashcroft (2005) also identified a lack of social worker familiarity with the Code. The Ashcroft study (2005) referenced the 1994 Code which supports similar findings to this current study.

Consideration by the PSREB regarding the potential dilemma of study outcomes relevance in the field versus research restrictions that may reflect barriers resulting in reduced study-sample size. The provision of interview questions prior to conducting the interview may better prepare future participants. The continuation of future research in relation to the 2005 Code and subsequent Codes will serve to enhance and substantiate the pending MCSW mandate of social worker knowledge of and adherence to this Code.

Chapter 11 – Conclusion and Personal Reflections

The goal of this thesis, assessing the extent to which practitioners can act in accordance with and follow the 2005 Code in northern, rural, remote practice settings was achieved. Familiarity of the 2005 Code, interpretation of the intent and meaning of specific sections of the 2005 Code and exploration of factors that impede or enhance the Code were explored. Six participants engaged in an in-depth interview process resulting in the culmination of rich data which will contribute to a limited literature base regarding northern, rural, remote and isolated practice environments.

An apparent contradiction of participant feedback occurs between the 2005 Code content questions and the first general question, *Does the Code reflect the reality of your practice?* Five of six study participants indicated *the 2005 Code intent reflects the reality of his/her practice*. The contradiction exists between how participants described their understanding of the intent of the Code versus the disclosure of practice realities. A contradiction occurs when, for example, participants express an awareness that social workers are not supposed to have dual relationships but do because it is unavoidable. As referenced in 7.3 [Response to Research Questions], study participants identified factors that impede adherence to the 2005 Code, including: conflicts of interest (professional and personal); limited resources (positions and funding); service provision challenges in home communities (community leadership challenges, community power structures, accessibility, resources, service provision environment, community supports); boundary challenges (dual/multiple roles); challenges maintaining confidentiality (professionalism, service environment, privacy, community population,

accessibility to community, service provider community-based versus itinerant); unrealistic expectations of service provision (beyond area of competence, lack of specialization); social worker role challenges (degreed, qualified, experienced, competent, specialization expectations); nepotism (power structures, positions provided to unqualified family members and/or friends, impacts the quality of service provision, impacts clients directly); geographical location (accessibility, existing services/supports, and jurisdictional challenges); challenges providing direct service to clients in their home communities (community norms, existing/non-existing community structures/programs/services, and multi-service collaboration); challenges with supervisor role (non-degreed, unqualified, lack of access, lack of support, lack of knowledge); challenges with the justice system and child welfare system (social justice is not served, political games); limited training and research opportunities.

Factors which participants conveyed [in Chapter 7.3] may enable adherence with the Code included: appropriate boundary development; meeting client needs; self-awareness; social workers endorsing the Code; developing rapport; confidentiality boundaries; degreed supervisors; reduced funding; training and networking opportunities; assuming unfamiliar roles; identification of confidentiality limitations; conflict of interest policy; specific hiring practices; good mentors; identification of program limitations; ability to monitor client satisfaction.

Personal Reflections

I have practiced as a social worker in the North for the past twenty years providing individual, couple, group, organization and community service delivery. I find value in

both the 1994 Code and the 2005 Code. Upon review of the 2005 Code, I quickly referenced the 1994 Code to understand what had changed; what statements continued to be endorsed, modified or removed, and what statements were new. The Code reviews contained in this study were interesting and led to the development of the thesis study to understand directly from social work practitioners in the North their interpretations of specific sections of the Code. I interpreted the 1994 Code as directive, conveying that social workers are required to adhere to the Code, as a source of reference, support and to guide practice. I believe that a directive Code is essential in environments where support, supervision, experience and skills may be limited. I believe it remains a luxury to receive supervision, direction and support in social work in the North, rural, remote and isolated environments. I also thought that the clarity and direction contained in the 1994 Code established clear, well-defined boundaries and expectations possibly resulting in common understandings and reduced variances in understanding and therefore practice.

In my opinion, the 2005 Code is much more flexible than the 1994 Code, yet vague and open to broader interpretations. Some may wonder if it is not better to make a Code more applicable to multiple environments. I believe that the perceived flexibility, vagueness and increased variable interpretation contained in the 2005 Code is unfortunately to the detriment of individual practitioners in the North, rural, remote and isolated environments. That losing the directive stance in the 2005 Code may result in practitioners experiencing increased uncertainty, a lack of direction and a decreased sense of what an appropriate response may be in the various situations that such

practicing social workers experience. If this is not in the Code, I am concerned as to how such practitioners will receive professional support, guidance and direction. Northern, rural, remote or isolated environments are generally used to doing without or making do with limited resources. I am concerned that social work professionals have been affected for some time and/or will realize the impact in the near future when knowledge of and adherence to the 2005 Code is required with the development of the MCSW.

I believe that it is time to evaluate and review the expectations of professional social work service provision in the Province of Manitoba. It is time to review the 2005 Code to ensure that the values and principles contained in that Code provide clear, realistic expectations to which social work practitioners can adhere. Social work service provision equity is a reasonable goal in a supportive system where the professional body, first and foremost, provides definitive, realistic expectations that are applicable provincially. Different environments warrant varied responses; however, it is not acceptable for the professional social worker to have to breach the 2005 Code of Ethics in order to follow the expectation of one's organization in delivering social work service. It is necessary for every community in Manitoba to have *adequate resources to ensure that professional social workers are not placed in situations where service delivery and breaching of the Code are synonymous*. The six study participants unanimously expressed their belief that social workers in northern, rural, isolated communities are in conflict of interest situations. This situation is not acceptable. Change is essential. Provincially, *funding to develop a realistic resource base must be secured* to ensure that

professional, experienced, skilled, knowledgeable and culturally-appropriate social workers are hired into positions to provide quality social work services to all consumers in Manitoba.

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Appendix A

**PSYCHOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH
SERVICES
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

CTC Building
208 - 194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Fax (204) 269-7173
www.umanitoba.ca/research

08 April 2009

TO: Louise Wilson Marques (Advisor J. Rodgers)
Principal Investigator

FROM: Bruce Tefft, Chair
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: Protocol #P2009:017
"Social Work Code of Ethics: Does the Existing Code Enable
Practitioners to Deliver Ethical Service in Uniquely Situated Northern
Geographical Locations"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol, as revised, has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval has been issued based on your agreement with the change(s) to your original protocol required by the PSREB. It is the researcher's responsibility to comply with any copyright requirements. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Eveline Saurette in the Office of Research Services (fax 261-0325, phone 480-1409), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Appendix B

**PSYCHOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
AMMENDMENT APPROVAL**

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OFFICE OF RESEARCH
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CTC Building
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Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Fax (204) 269-7173
www.umanitoba.ca/research

AMENDMENT APPROVAL

13 October 2009

TO: Louise Wilson Marques
Principal Investigator

FROM: Bruce Tefft, Chair
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: Protocol #P2009:017
**"Applying Social Work Code of Ethics in Uniquely-Situated
Northern Geographical Locations: Are there Factors in Practice
Environments that Impact Adherence to the Code"**

This will acknowledge your e-mail dated October 10, 2009 requesting amendment to the above-noted protocol.

Approval is given for this amendment. Any further changes to the protocol must be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation.

Appendix C

**SOCIOLOGY/PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
AMMENDMENT APPROVAL- Revised**

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OF MANITOBA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH
SERVICES
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

AMENDMENT APPROVAL

13 October 2009

TO: Louise Wilson Marques
Principal Investigator

FROM: Bruce Tefft, Chair
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: Protocol #P2009:017
"Applying Social Work Code of Ethics in Uniquely-Situated Northern Geographical Locations: Are there Factors in Practiced Environments that Impact Adherence to the Code"

This will acknowledge your e-mail dated October 10, 2009 requesting change in title from "Social Work Code of Ethics: Does the Existing code Enable Practitioners to Deliver Ethical Service in Uniquely Situated Northern Geographical Locations" to the above-noted title.

Approval is given for this amendment. Any further changes to the protocol must be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation.

Appendix D

Newspaper/ Poster Recruitment Advertisement**Research Study Title:**

Applying Social Work Code of Ethics in Uniquely-Situated Northern Geographical Locations: Are there Factors in Practice Environments that Impact Adherence to the Code

Researcher:

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
M.S.W. Student-University of Manitoba
Phone: 1-877-444-4143

Research Supervisor:

Jay Rodgers, M.S.W.
Adjunct Professor-University of Manitoba
Phone: 1-204-xxx-xxxx

This Research Study is recruiting participants who meet the following criteria: **(1) participants who have graduated from Faculty of Social Work at Thompson and possess a BSW degree; (2) participants who have practised in the North for a minimum of three years. The North consists of all individuals residing in locations that are north of the 54th parallel including: Thompson, Wabowden, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Split Lake, York Landing, Ilford, Gillam, Shamattawa, Norway House, Cross Lake, Oxford House, Gods Lake Narrows, Gods Lake, Gods River, St. Theresa Point, Wassagomach, Island Lake, Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake, Nelson House, Leaf Rapids, South Indian Lake, Lynn Lake, Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake.**

Purpose of the Research

In the social work profession, delivery of ethical service requires that all practitioners act in accordance with and follow the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. The research will explore practitioner experiences regarding: (1) familiarity of the Code; (2) interpretation of the intent and meaning of the Code based upon the Code content; (3) exploration of factors that may impede or enhance the Code. The purpose of this research study is to assess the extent to which the Code of Ethics can be applied in a northern, rural, remote practice setting.

Appendix D

As part of this study you are being asked to participate in research through a maximum of two in-person or telephone interviews, each will last no longer than two hours.

Participation in this study is completely confidential—your name will not be identified.

Should you choose to participate in this research project, a participant consent letter containing additional study details will be provided to you for your consideration. If you require additional information or choose to participate in the study you may contact this researcher, **Louise Wilson Marques at 1-877-444-4143** to advise of your interest and/or provide your contact information.

Appendix E

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
M.S.W. Student-University of Manitoba
xxx xxxxxxxxx Drive, Thompson, Manitoba R8N xxx
Phone: 1-877-444-4143



Formal Letter of Request of Faculty of Social Work at Thompson

Researcher:

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
M.S.W. Student-University of Manitoba
Phone: 1-877-444-4143

Research Supervisor:

Jay Rodgers, M.S.W.
Adjunct Professor-University of Manitoba
Phone: 204-xxx-xxxx

April 29, 2009

Colin Bonnycastle, Associate Professor/Director
Faculty of Social Work at Thompson
North Centre Mall, 3 Station Road
Thompson, Manitoba
R8N 0N3

Dear Colin,

Further to our conversation in July 2008. I am formally requesting your assistance in gathering potential participants to engage in my thesis study titled: *Social Work Code of Ethics: Does The Existing Code Enable Practitioners To Deliver Ethical Service in Uniquely-Situated Northern Geographical Locations.*

Appendix E

In relation to the sample, the first criterion requires that participants have graduated from the Faculty of Social Work at Thompson and possess a BSW degree. The second criterion necessitates that participants have practiced in the North for a minimum of three years and are currently employed in a social work position in the North. For the purpose of this study, the North consists of all individuals residing in locations that are north of the 54th parallel including: Thompson, Wabowden, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Split Lake, York Landing, Ilford, Gillam, Shamattawa, Norway House, Cross Lake, Oxford House, Gods Lake Narrows, Gods Lake, Gods River, St. Theresa Point, Wassagomach, Island Lake, Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake, Nelson House, Leaf Rapids, South Indian Lake, Lynn Lake, Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake, hereinafter referred to as communities.

I will provide you with a package of information for each potential participant which will include a research participant consent form outlining all aspects of the study. Specific sections of the 2005 Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (Code) will latterly be provided to those who consent to participate in the study.

Due to study timelines I am requesting that potential participants advise me of his or her interest or non-interest to participate within one week after receiving the package. The secure phone line and confidential voicemail to be utilized for the study is contained in the attached package. As noted a copy of the Code will be provided well in advance of the first interview. A second interview will take place to verify the summary of the initial interview.

Your willingness to assist with the initial contact of potential participants is greatly appreciated. Please advise should you require clarification, have questions or concerns upon reviewing this information.

Sincerely,

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
M.S.W. Student – Study Researcher

Appendix F

Research Participant Consent Cover Letter

January 20, 2009

Dear Graduate,

I am contacting you to inquire if you would be interested to participate in a thesis study, conducted by graduate student Louise Wilson Marques, which will be based out of Thompson. The attached information provides all of the pertinent details related to the study. I would ask that you read the information carefully and contact me at 677-1450 or 1-866-237-5509 to advise of your interest. If you are not interested thank you for your consideration. Should you wish to consider participating in this study I will forward your name and contact information to Louise then she will contact you directly to further discuss your possible involvement. Please advise if it will be suitable for Louise to leave a message (name and number only) on an answering machine or with anyone who may answer the phone number that you provide.

Thank you for your consideration,

Colin Bonnycastle, Director
Faculty of Social Work at Thompson

Appendix G

Potential Participant Study InformationResearch Study Title:

Applying Social Work Code of Ethics in Uniquely-Situated, Northern Geographical Locations: Are there Factors in Practice Environments that Impact Adherence to the Code

Researcher:

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
M.S.W. Student-University of Manitoba
Phone: 1-877-444-4143

Research Supervisor:

Jay Rodgers, M.S.W.
Adjunct Professor-University of Manitoba
Phone: 204-xxx-xxxx

Dear Potential Participant,

This study is research for a Master's Thesis being conducted under the supervision of Jay Rodgers. My name is Louise Wilson Marques and I am a graduate student pursuing my Master of Social Work degree with the University of Manitoba. I am also a graduate of the Faculty of Social Work at Thompson (FSWT) class of 1990. You have received this information as you are a graduate of the FSWT. Due to privacy legislation it was not possible for the FSWT to provide your contact information, therefore Colin Bonnycastle, the director of the FSWT has contacted you on my behalf; he will not provide your name or contact information directly to me. Should you require additional information or choose to participate in the study you may contact this researcher, Louise Wilson Marques at 1-877-444-4143 to advise of your interest and/or your contact information. As the researcher I will contact you as soon as possible to discuss the study as well as respond to any concerns that you may have.

Appendix G

The purpose of this study is to explore your experience, as a social worker in the North, in relation to service delivery in accordance with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (Code). The goal is to understand from your experience as a social work practitioner, (1) your familiarity with and perception of specific sections of the 2005 Code, and (2) your awareness of factors in practice environments impacting adherence to the Code. Gathering of the data will facilitate the evaluation of whether sections of the Code reflect the reality of service delivery in the North, in Manitoba. The questions asked will require that you consider based on your experience as a social worker, whether certain factors enable or hinder consistency with the Code. The responses are to be general, neither specific nor actual examples.

I, as a graduate social work student, will be conducting this study. Adjunct Professor Jay Rodgers (Faculty of Social Work) will provide the primary academic assistance; Professor Denis Bracken (Faculty of Social Work) and Professor Arthur Schafer (Faculty of Philosophy) will be involved as part of the graduate thesis committee to provide their knowledge and expertise.

As part of this study you are being asked to participate in research through a maximum of two in-person or telephone interviews, each will last no longer than two hours. If you are uncomfortable with any of the interview questions it is your right to choose not to answer them. To ensure confidentiality your name will not be used. Information you share with the researcher will be given a numerical code and will be referred to as such to the committee members.

Remuneration will be provided should costs for transportation (within Thompson) and childcare be incurred to attend an interview. Costs associated for childcare will be reimbursed for the actual interview time at a rate of \$10.00 per hour. Receipts will be required and can be provided to the researcher at the end of the second interview. The researcher will immediately provide cash reimbursement upon submission of the receipt. In addition a receipt will be provided to the participant by the researcher to enable accurate financial accounting of the study. Participant costs will be managed by

Appendix G

the researcher and will be accounted for utilizing numerical coding as previously described.

Should you choose to participate in this research project a participant consent letter containing additional study details will be provided to you for your consideration. Participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no negative consequences should you decide not to participate in this study or if you choose to withdraw your participation at any time. If you perceive that participation in this study creates harm to you in any way you may withdraw your consent and your participation.

Thank you for your consideration to participate.

Sincerely,

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
MSW Student- Study Researcher

Appendix H

Sample Participant Letter



Louise Wilson Marques
 North Centre Mall, 3 Station Road, Thompson, Manitoba R8N 0N3

Researcher:

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
 M.S.W. Student-University of Manitoba
 Phone: 1-877-444-414

Research Supervisor:

Jay Rodgers, M.S.W.
 Adjunct Professor-University of Manitoba
 Phone: 204-xxx-xxxx

-----, 2009

 -----, Manitoba

Dear -----,

Further to our conversation please find enclosed the Participant Consent Form and the Canadian Association of Social Workers 2005 Code of Ethics for your review. I have identified the sections of the Code that will be reviewed during the interview.

Your signature is required in order to confirm your consent to participate in the study and you are, therefore, requested to bring the consent-form with you to the interview. We can then review it together prior to your signing.

I am verifying that our scheduled interview will take place on ----- at ----- at the office of Onsite Insight, North Centre Mall, 3 Station Road. Should there be a need to reschedule or you choose to decline the interview please contact me at 1-877-444-4143 to advise.

Sincerely,

Louise Wilson Marques

Appendix I
Sample Participant Letter-revised



Louise Wilson Marques
North Centre Mall, 3 Station Road, Thompson, Manitoba R8N 0N3

-----, 2010

-----, Manitoba

--- ---

Dear -----,

Please find enclosed a copy of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics 2005. The following sections of the Code will be referred to during the interview: Value 3-Principle 2; Value 4- Principle 3, Principle 4; Value 5- Principle 5; Value 6- Principle 3, Principle 5. You will be asked to consider your responses in relation to factors related to the work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual environment.

I am confirming our scheduled interview for -----at ----- at Onsite Insight in the North Centre Mall, 3 Station Road.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
MSW Student—Study Researcher

Appendix J

Research Participant Consent FormResearch Study Title:

Applying Social Work Code of Ethics in Uniquely-Situated Northern Geographical Locations: Are there Factors in Practice Environments that Impact Adherence to the Code

Researcher:

Louise Wilson Marques, B.S.W., R.S.W.
M.S.W. Student-University of Manitoba
Phone: 1-877-444-4143

Research Supervisor:

Jay Rodgers, M.S.W.
Adjunct Professor-University of Manitoba
Phone: 204-xxx-xxxx

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This study is research for a Master's Thesis being conducted by Louise Wilson Marques, graduate student with the University of Manitoba under the supervision of Jay Rodgers, Adjunct Professor at the University of Manitoba (Faculty of Social Work - home phone 1-204-xxx-xxxx). Jay Rodgers will provide the primary academic assistance,

Appendix J

Professor Denis Bracken (Faculty of Social Work - 1-800-432-1960 ext. 9264), and Professor Arthur Schafer (Faculty of Philosophy - phone 1-800-432-1960 ext. 9107) will be involved as part of the graduate thesis committee to provide their knowledge and expertise. These individuals will be bound by confidentiality. Participant names will not be disclosed or verified.

The purpose of this study is to explore your experience, as a social worker in the North, in relation to service delivery in accordance with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (Code). The goal is to understand from your experience as a social work practitioner, (1) your familiarity with and perception of specific sections of the 2005 Code, and (2) your awareness of factors in practice environments impacting adherence to the Code. Gathering of the data will facilitate the evaluation of whether sections of the Code reflects the reality of service delivery in the North, in Manitoba. The questions asked will require that you consider, based on your experience as a social worker, whether certain factors enable or hinder consistency with the Code. The responses are to be general, neither specific nor actual examples.

As part of this study you are being asked to participate in research through two interviews, each will last no longer than two hours. The first interview will facilitate an introduction to the study and administration of the interview guide. The second interview will take place to complete the interview questions, clarify issues or the depth of your feedback, and/or share the researcher's interpretation of the findings and themes. If you are uncomfortable with any of the interview questions it is your right to choose not to answer them.

Appendix J

There is the potential risk of harm to participants engaging in this study. First, there is risk that emotional stress may occur by participating in the study as questions or discussions may be perceived as harmful to individual participants. Second, Colin Bonnycastle and support staff will be aware of potential participants due to their initial contact however, actual participant names will not be confirmed or verified by the researcher. Third, Interviews will either occur in-person or via telephone. While the researcher will only use a secure line a level of risk will occur if participants choose to speak from a cordless phone or a cell phone as these calls can be picked up through the use of scanners. Last, you will not be asked to disclose any specific examples of whether or not you adhere to the Code. However, if you are a member of the Manitoba Association of Social workers and disclose that you have breached the Code I am obligated to report to Miriam Brown, Executive Director of the Manitoba Association of Social Workers.

Limitations to Confidentiality will occur if you contact the researcher at an alternate telephone number which is not confidential and not identified in this consent. Contacting the researcher at any phone number other than the phone numbers provided in the study information package and consent may result in others viewing your name and/or number on a call display or hearing a voicemail message, therefore it is essential to only use the contact numbers provided by the researcher. Your involvement in this study will not be identified to any person. Additional limitations include exceptions to confidentiality which are required to be reported by law: (1) suspected child abuse, child abuse and neglect, (2) any intent to harm yourself

Appendix J

(suicide) or harm others (homicide), and (3) court ordered disclosures (subpoena).

With your permission, the interview(s) will be audio-taped for the purpose of transcribing a complete account of the interview responses and will be reviewed solely by the researcher. The audio-tape and all materials will be kept in a private locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. After the final thesis report submission the audio-tape, as well all other transcribed data, will be destroyed (approximately June 2010). In addition, for the purpose of research methods and accurate understandings, the researcher may make brief notes during the interview to reflect non-verbal responses or communication contributors. To ensure confidentiality your name will not be used. Information you share with the researcher will be given a numerical code and will be referred to as such to the committee members. As a participant you may have a copy of the transcribed interview if you wish. The study outcome will be offered to you and will also be available through the University of Manitoba Dafoe Library.

In the final thesis report actual interview quotes may be used to reflect the Northern experience. If utilized, quotes will be completely non-identifying and may be altered to protect your identity. While your name will not be used in any way a reader may believe he or she can identify a participant of the study; participant identity will not be disclosed or verified to anyone.

Remuneration will be provided should costs for transportation (within Thompson) and childcare be incurred to attend an interview. Costs associated for childcare will be reimbursed for the actual interview time at a rate of \$10.00 per hour. Receipts will be required and can be provided to the researcher at the end of the second interview. The

Appendix J

researcher will immediately provide cash reimbursement upon submission of the receipt. In addition a receipt will be provided to the participant by the researcher to enable accurate financial accounting of the study. Participant costs will be managed by the researcher and will be accounted for utilizing numerical coding as previously described.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. Participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no negative consequences should you decide not to participate in this study or if you choose to withdraw your participation at any time. Therefore, if you perceive that participation in this study creates harm to you in any way you may withdraw your consent and your participation.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/ Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, toll-free at 1-800-432-1960 extension 7122 or email margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Appendix J

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

A study summary will be available June 2010 (approximate).
Please forward me a study summary by:

E-mail _____

Facsimile _____

Surface mail _____

Appendix K

Your willingness to participate in this research interview will significantly contribute to the study outcome. Your feedback is valuable and greatly appreciated.

Research Topic

APPLYING SOCIAL WORK CODE OF ETHICS IN UNIQUELY-SITUATED NORTHERN GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS: ARE THERE FACTORS IN PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTS THAT IMPACT ADHERENCE TO THE CODE

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (Code) has in fact established a set of standards which are applicable to all practitioners and can be universally applied throughout Canada, regardless of geographical location.

Interview Guide

Part A

1. Please identify your gender.
2. What year did you graduate with your BSW degree?
3. How many consecutive years have you been employed, as a social worker, in your current social work position?
4. What type of social work position do you currently hold?
5. Can you describe the environment where you currently practice?
Probes: isolated, population base, proximity to other communities...

Part B

1. Prior to reviewing the Code for this study, what did you think the purpose of the CASW Code of Ethics (Code) was?
2. A copy of the Code was provided to you prior to this interview. Have you had a chance to read the Code?

Appendix K

3. Based on your reading of the Code overall what do you think the purpose is?
4. Prior to receiving the Code had you been familiar with the 2005 Code and it's contents?

Probes: Did you talk about the Code as part of your social work degree course work?
 Has the Code been referenced or discussed in the workplace?
 Have you had access to the Code or a Code poster in your workplace?

It is important to clarify that the reference for all responses be based on your social work practice experience not specific incidents that you have been involved in.

A copy of the 2005 CASW Code has been provided to allow your review of the entire Code. This section of the interview refers to four specific sections of the Code 3.2; 4.3, 4.4; 5.5; 6.3, 6.5 which will be read together in full, and explored in relation to your actual practice experiences.

Value 3: Service to Humanity

Principle 2: Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

1. Based on your social work practice experience what do you believe is the intent of this section of the Code?
2. Based on your experience, are there any factors in the workplace environment that you believe prevents social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

Appendix K

3. Are there things that you have experienced in the workplace environment that you believe are conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Codes intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

Value 4: Integrity of Professional Practice

Principle 3: Social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of clients (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

Principle 4: Social workers value openness and transparency in professional practice and avoid relationships where their integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that should a conflict of interest be unavoidable, the nature or the conflict is fully disclosed (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

1. Based on your social work practice experience what do you believe is the intent of this section of the Code?
2. Based on your experience, are there any factors in the workplace environment that you believe prevents social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

3. Are there things that you have experienced in the workplace environment that you believe are conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Codes intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

Appendix K

Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice

Principle 5: Social workers demonstrate transparency with respect to limits to confidentiality that apply to their professional practice by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in their relationship (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

1. Based on your social work practice experience what do you believe is the intent of this section of the Code?
2. Based on your experience, are there any factors in the workplace environment that you believe prevents social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

3. Are there things that you have experienced in the workplace environment that you believe are conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Codes intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

Value 6: Competence in Professional Practice

Principle 3: Social workers demonstrate due care for client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

Principle 5: Social workers who engage in research minimize risks to participants, ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality and accurately report the results of their studies (CASW Code of Ethics, 2005).

1. Based on your social work practice experience what do you believe is the intent of this section of the Code?

Appendix K

2. Based on your experience, are there any factors in the workplace environment that you believe prevents social workers from being able to practice in a way that is consistent with this section of the Code's intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

3. Are there things that you have experienced in the workplace environment that you believe are conducive to practicing in a manner consistent with this section of the Codes intent?

Probes: Factors related to environment: work, political, geographical, economic or spiritual.

Based on our discussion do you think the Code reflects the reality of your practice?

If the Code were being rewritten what suggestions would you offer?

Following all of this discussion on the Code, if you wanted to know more about the Code, do you know how you would access it?

Generally, based on your experience in your practice environment, how familiar do you think social workers are with the Code?

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask?

Thank you for participating in this research project through engaging in this interview. Would you like to receive a copy of the study outcome? Please advise should you wish to make any comments regarding the interview process.