THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISION AND CASEWORK RETENTION IN COUNTY-BASED CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS

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By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

The retention of front-line workers is an ongoing challenge for public child welfare organizations. The objective of this study is to better understand whether and to what degree supervision influences a worker's decision to look for another job. This study, part of a larger cross sectional workforce retention study, involves a survey of caseworkers and front line supervisors in thirteen (13) county-based social services organizations in a northeastern state. The approach used for this study is participatory research. Two supervisory factors were identified, knowledge and support. The logistic regression analysis comparing the effects of supervision on a respondent's decision to look for another job was significant for both factors: supervisor knowledge and supervisor support.

Action theory, emphasizing the relationship between two kinds of theory: espoused theory and theories-in-use, provide the framework for this study, which considers the congruence between what child welfare organizations espouse and what actual behavior demonstrates in the area of supervision. The results of this study provide empirical support for the effect of supervisor behavior on a worker's decision to look for another job.

List of Tables

List of Figures

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I decided to seek a Ph. D. in social work seventeen years after completing the MSW degree. The faculty at the University at Albany, School of Social Welfare inspired me to begin the process because inquiry is such an essential element of the work of this faculty. The dedication of the faculty to the science of social work, in search of effective practice to serve vulnerable communities, is an inspiration to me. Former Dean Lynn Videka and Associate Dean Anne (Ricky) Fortune supported my part-time schedule during the semesters when I was completing course work. Both women have been a source of continuing support during the writing of this dissertation, especially Lynn Videka who served on my committee.

Congresswoman Barbara Jordan was instrumental in my return to child welfare as a specialty area. I read her biography the spring before returning to school and her inquiry into social justice inspired me to pursue the history of social justice across disciplines in my first semester of study. This journey brought me back to child welfare, where I began my social work career.

Once I decided to explore child welfare, I was fortunate to find Dr. Ken Barter, Associate Professor and Chair in Child Protection at Memorial University's School of Social Work. Dr. Barter agreed to supervise my work in the doctoral program. Professor Barter is an inspiration. He is a mentor in the truest sense of the word, both a counselor and guide. He teaches through modeling and his gentle guidance has led me to consider new ideas for collaboration and

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Recruitment and retention of child welfare caseworkers are continuous challenges in New York State. In calendar year 2000, all counties in the State, except New York City, were surveyed to gather information on turnover among caseworkers, supervisors and managers in child welfare. Fifteen (15) out of 57 counties (26%) reported turnover in child welfare that exceeded twenty five percent (25%) for the year (Miraglia, 2001). Four of these counties had turnover exceeding forty percent (40%). Many of these counties also experience difficulty recruiting eligible individuals to fill positions, resulting in extended vacancy rates. Workforce research indicates a vicious cycle can occur in organizations when there are recruitment difficulties. The stress on current workers increases, resulting in resignations and making it hard to replace sufficient workers in a timely manner (Gibbs, 2001).

The New York State Social Work Education Consortium is a collaboration between graduate and undergraduate social work programs and public sector child welfare systems. The Consortium is designed to address workforce professionalization and stabilization. A workforce research team was established under the auspice of the Consortium, which included faculty and graduate students from the University at Albany School of Social Welfare, social workers

from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), county commissioners and their executive staff.

The child welfare system in New York State is regulated by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and administered through county-based Departments of Social Services. The top administrative position at the county and state level is the position of commissioner. In New York State, there are 57 county-based commissioners, one commissioner for the Administration for Children's Services in New York City, and one state level commissioner. Commissioners at the county, city, and state level are appointed. At the county level, the elected governing body of the county appoints the commissioner. In rural counties, the elected bodies are called Boards of Supervisors. In mid-sized counties, the County Executive makes the appointment usually with approval by the county legislature. In New York City, the Mayor appoints the commissioner. At the state level, the Governor appoints the commissioner with approval from the Senate, one house in the NY State Legislature.

The County commissioner profile is changing rapidly as current incumbents retire. At the time of this study, all commissioners participating in the study were Caucasian. Among the counties in the study, four of the original 13 commissioners were women. A total of five commissioners retired in fall 2002. Five of the commissioners in the study counties are now women. Commissioners must have a bachelor's degree and a number hold MSW degrees. Among the

commissioners participating in this study, one has a Masters degree in social work. The profile for commissioners in the study counties is consistent with the profile for commissioners across the state.

In April 2001, commissioners from counties with high turnover of caseworkers in child welfare met to discuss causes and potential solutions. Commissioners in the high turnover districts suggested that a workforce retention survey would assist them in understanding why workers stay. Thirteen (13) counties agreed to participate in the study. They joined with the New York State Social Work Education Consortium to co-design a survey instrument for distribution to current child welfare caseworkers and front line supervisors in the highest turnover counties.

A better understanding of the relationship between the supervision and the retention of child welfare workers may serve to address recruitment and retention challenges in public child welfare organizations. The study reported on here, explores the relationship between supervision and retention of caseworkers and front line supervisors in child welfare in thirteen (13) counties with high turnover. This study proposes to examine this relationship through determining caseworkers' satisfaction with supervision practice using a survey instrument that reflects dimensions of effective supervision and participants' response to the question, "Have you considered looking for another job in the past year?"

A second factor to be examined is the educational background of the casework supervisors. Several studies have examined the role of a social work

degree in preparing child welfare workers for effective practice. A survey of social work literature related to child welfare revealed no studies that considered the link between effective supervision in child welfare and educational preparation. This study will consider whether supervisors with a social work degree demonstrate supervisory practice that is aligned with effective practice.

The approach used for this study is participatory research. The research team worked collaboratively on all aspects of the design and implementation of the workforce retention study. The purpose of the survey is to understand the factors that influence worker retention. A secondary analysis of the supervision section of the survey is the focus of inquiry for this study.

The survey includes a 24-item section asking workers to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about their immediate supervision. The items are designed to represent effective supervisory practice as identified in the literature, previous research, and the expectations commissioners have for supervision (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Kraus, Koenig, Levey, & Grundbert, 1999; Lawson, 2000; Leichtman, 1996; Lipsky, 1980; Pecora, Whittaker, & Maluccio, 2000; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003). The supervisory role in child welfare practice is identified as significant in ensuring practice effectiveness, protection of children from harm, and accomplishing the goals set by the organization (Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000). Organizational literature identifies the supervisor as the primary socializing agent for new employees or those employees who are switching jobs

(Ibarra, 1999; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000; VanMaanen & Schein, 1979). Leichtman (1996) states:

> An employee's work psychology and identification with the organization is most directly influenced by his or her immediate supervisor, not the director of the entire agency or the program. ...(N)o role assumes more responsibility for the maintenance of the larger organizational personality and the working climate than that of the supervisor. (p. 91-92)

In a meeting with the commissioners discussing causes and solutions to workforce turnover, supervision was unanimously identified as one of the most critical elements for both recruitment and retention. As a member of the research team, I found this particular issue to be of great interest. Having been a child protective caseworker, I knew very well how important my supervisor was in supporting me as a new worker. As a policy analyst, I had long been concerned about the training, preparation and promotional process for supervisors within the public sector system. Finally, as a doctoral student, I was deeply interested in the issue of social justice and how the child welfare system could be transformed, at a fundamental level, to truly improve safety and reduce risk for vulnerable children and families in our communities. By virtue of their position as middle managers and primary socialization agents, supervisors had to be partners in any significant change initiative. This particular question was ideal given my long-range interests in research as a vehicle for organizational change.

The Child Welfare System in New York State

The child welfare system in New York State (NYS) is state regulated and county administered. There are fifty-seven (57) counties with direct service responsibilities for child welfare in addition to New York City, which has one child welfare system covering five (5) Burroughs. Child welfare services in the 57 counties are housed in the Services Division. New York City has one independent agency, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). The state regulatory agency for child welfare services is the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The mission statement for OCFS is to "serve New York's public by promoting the well-being and safety of our children, families and communities." All aspects of child welfare services fall under the purview of OCFS and are governed by this mission. This includes foster care, adoption and adoption assistance, child protective services, preventive services for children and families, services for pregnant adolescents, and childcare and referral services. While child protective services are responsible for investigating reports of alleged child abuse or neglect, the entire child welfare system is responsible for promoting the well-being and safety of children, families and communities.

Theoretical Framework

Argyris and Schön's (1991) *Theory in Practice, Increasing Professional Effectiveness* provides the theoretical framework for this study. Their theory of action emphasizes the relationship between two kinds of theory: espoused theory (what people and an organization claim to do) and theories in use (what they

actually do). It offers a framework for considering the congruence between what is espoused and what actual behavior demonstrates.

Action Theory was chosen because it highlights the interactions among individuals, groups and the organizational setting with a goal of influencing practice. This theoretical framework fits well with a participatory research approach as a key premise of the theory is verifying practice behaviors, which allow individuals and organizations to understand, in a specific and verifiable way, the relationship between what they say they do (espoused theory) and what they actually do (theories-in- use) in their day-to-day practice. In other words, Action Theory is an applied theory, which fully supports the research process. The methodology is an essential part of the theoretical framework.

This study gathers workers' perceptions of their supervision through a survey designed to understand supervisory behavior. The Supervision section of the survey contains 24 items designed to reflect espoused theory described in specific behaviors. A copy of the entire survey is attached as Appendix A (p. 126). The rating selected by the worker, using a 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree), tells us their perception of supervision behavior demonstrated by their supervisor. If the worker perceives congruence between preferred and actual supervisory practice, then the item rating will be closer to five. When a worker strongly agrees with a particular item in the survey, it indicates that supervisory behavior is perceived as reflecting preferred practice.

When there is congruence between intended and actual practice, Argyris and Schön (1991) suggest that a process called double-loop learning is in effect. Double loop learning reflects learning within an organization that is generative, open to feed back, cooperative, and trusting. Argyris and Schön (1991) call this Type II learning. When there is a disconnect between intended and actual practice, an opportunity is created to learn and improve. The social and behavioral norms of the organization in combination with the individual worker and their style of learning, construct what is learned and how the learning takes place. If the social and behavioral norms are "win-loose" or self protective, and overall discussion is discouraged, learning within the organization will be self-sealing and self-reinforcing, resulting in competition, withholding from others, and mistrust. This is called Type I learning and reflects a single-loop process. When an organization supports a Type II learning process, there is support for worker empowerment, collaboration and trust among team members. This study assumes that a Type II learning organization is more likely to engender worker loyalty thereby reducing voluntary turnover.

Public sector child welfare services are located within a large bureaucracy that is state-regulated and county administered. It is assumed that these child welfare systems operate as Type I learning organizations. Several authors have analyzed the organizational structure of public sector social services organizations, including child welfare services (Barter, 2000; Carniol, 1995; Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992; Lipsky, 1980; Pelton, 1989; Schorr, 1988). The

child welfare system is required to offer a wide array of services to increasing numbers of families while containing costs and following extensive, often contradictory regulations and policies from state and federal policy makers. The organizational response to these challenges has been attention to the cost containment elements of service provision, turning supervisors and managers into compliance officers. Fabricant and Burghardt (1992) describe the process concisely;

> Cost containment and increased productivity...can be traced to the development of proscribed forms of social service practice that are cheaper (uniform, factory-like, etc) and more amenable to management control. The introduction of...new federal guidelines... in child welfare agencies...consistently emphasize managerial, centralized state priorities (output/quantity) over client need (outcome/quality). (p. 88-89)

Child welfare workers belong to a class of public sector employees referred to as street level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). A defining characteristic of these workers is their ability to transform formal public policy by virtue of their practice. "Unlike lower level workers in most organizations, street level bureaucrats have considerable discretion in determining the nature, amount, and quality of benefits and sanctions provided by their agencies" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13). Lipsky (1980) asserts that worker's exert this discretion because of the following job characteristics: the work they do is too complicated to design a program format to cover every aspect, the work involves daily human

interactions, and clients believe that individual workers have a great deal of influence over the decisions to be made regarding the client situation. "The search for the correct balance between compassion and flexibility on the one hand, and impartiality and rigid rule-application on the other hand presents a dialectic of public service reform" (p. 15-16). The dominant culture of practice within these systems has emphasized cost containment through rule application, resulting in the closed self-sealing, self-reinforcing behaviors that typify a Type I learning organization.

Methodology

This is an exploratory, descriptive cross sectional study, which will consider whether congruence between espoused and actual supervisor behavior has an effect on a respondent's decision to consider looking for another job. It is a secondary analysis of data collected for a larger workforce retention study. The dichotomous dependent variable is whether the respondent states that they have considered looking for another job in the past year. Four independent variables are hypothesized (the supervisor's perceived accessibility, knowledge about the system and practice, leadership skills, and support), which reflect dimensions of supervision and are measured by specific items in the supervision section of the Workforce Retention Survey. Workers rated the behavior of their supervisor using a 5-point Likert Scale (1= Strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Congruence between intended (espoused theory) and actual (theories in use) supervisor behavior is reflected by a high rating from the worker. In other words,

the worker strongly agrees that the supervisor behaves in the manner described in the survey item. Validity and reliability analysis were carried out. Factor analysis was carried out to see if the data support the distinction between the four dimensions in the survey. The presence of an association between the independent and dependent variables in the study was examined using logistic regression. The dependent variable in the study was whether a respondent has looked for another job in the past year. Workers and front line supervisors in 13 county-based social services organizations completed a twenty four-item survey. Demographic information on participants is also included.

A participatory research framework is used for this study. The commissioners, as co-researchers, have been involved in all aspects of the design and implementation of the study. The supervision scale was designed using previous child welfare workforce instruments (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Lawson, 2000; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003) in consultation with the commissioners of the participating counties. All of the commissioners consulted with their executive staff as the instrument was being designed. Two professional social workers from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services are members of the research team, along with four faculty members and two graduate students from the University at Albany School of Social Welfare. The scale represents the espoused theory of the commissioners and their leadership staff regarding preferred supervisory behavior.

One of the compromises that resulted from working exclusively with the commissioners and their leadership staff was that workers were not directly consulted as the survey was being developed. Some of the counties sought input from workers, but this input was selective and did not include continuous involvement of workers in the development of the survey items. This compromise was made consciously, as the priority for this research was establishing a relationship with the commissioners, which would allow for the development of a long-standing partnership between the university and the county child welfare system.

The survey is designed so that each county receives a score reflecting the degree to which workers perceive supervisory practice as reflecting espoused practice. The mean score reflects the relative position of the organization on the learning organization continuum. The higher the mean score on the four independent variables the more likely the organization operates as a Type II learning organization (Figure 1).

Type I Learning organization
Little Congruence

Type II Learning Organization
High Degree of Congruence

Figure 1 Learning Organization Continuum

Hypothesis 1: If workers strongly agree that supervisor behavior reflects espoused practice then there is a high degree of congruence between espoused practice and theories- in-use, increasing the likelihood that a respondent will state that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year. The

null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between supervisory practice and respondent's acknowledgement that they have considered looking for another job in the past year.

If workers identify the educational background of their supervisor, this study explores the relationship between the educational background of the supervisor and respondents' perception of congruence between espoused and actual supervisor practice. A key assumption of research looking at the link between worker turnover and professionalization of the child welfare workforce is that social work education offers better preparation for practice in child welfare. This same assumption carries over into beliefs about preparation for supervision in child welfare.

Hypothesis 2: Supervisors with a social work degree will be more likely to demonstrate congruence between espoused and actual supervisory practices. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the educational background of the supervisor and the degree of congruence between espoused and actual supervisor practice.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the proposed study in terms of its purpose, theoretical framework and methodology. It is a descriptive cross-sectional study, using quantitative methods designed to understand the association between supervision and respondent retention. A secondary analysis of data collected for

a larger workforce retention study will be carried out. Characteristics of the respondents in this study will be described.

The results of the study are intended to build on a developing body of research, which can be used to assist child welfare organizations in their efforts to reduce worker turnover and improve supervision practice.

The next chapter will examine the literature in child welfare practice, which creates the context for workforce concerns, and present the theoretical framework for this study. More specifically, the literature related to the child welfare workforce will be examined as the basis for the present study. Action theory is described, key concepts are defined and a model for action theory is illustrated based on the work of Argyris and Schön (1991). Action theory is linked with supervision in child welfare both conceptually and through the recent literature and research on supervision.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Context of Child Welfare Practice

The child welfare service delivery system has operated in much the same way since the 1970's.

> Historically, the child welfare system has swung between two competing approaches: (1) protecting children by removing them from home where they are being abused or neglected, and (2) making every effort to keep children in these homes, even when the facts indicate they are seriously at risk. When it appears that one approach is not working, we switch to the other. We continue with that approach until we become convinced that it, too, is not working, whereupon we switch back, "(re)discovering" the previous approach, which we take up again. And so we swing back and forth, and though changes in the child welfare system occur, no forward progress is ever made, only a continual swinging from side to side. (Lindsey & Henley, 1997, p. 115)

Change initiatives have been comprised of tinkering around the edges, although recommendations for major reform have been put forward.

> It is a strange and tragic paradox that confidence in our collective ability to alter the destinies of vulnerable children has hit bottom just as scientific understanding of the processes of human development and the rich

evidence of success in helping such children have reached a new high. (Schorr, 1988, p. xvii)

There are two major assumptions that inform the majority of child welfare work. One is that parents of the children referred to the child welfare system are unable to manage their own affairs. This assumption is reflected in child-centered practice and the slow acceptance of family-centered practice and policy (Briar-Lawson & Wiesen, 2001).

The second is that poverty will not influence consequences for children. These assumptions are referenced in relation to practice in child welfare in Canada, England, and the United States (Barter, 1999, 2000; Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit, 1979; Hetherington, Cooper, Smith, & Wilford, 1997; Hutchinson, 1994; Lindsey & Henley, 1997; Pelton, 1989; Schorr, 1988; Swift, 1997) These assumptions influence the way practice is carried out, reflecting organizational practices, approaches to supervision and the expectations placed on workers providing child welfare services. These assumptions are often challenged and considered flawed.

Practice in child welfare is carried out residually; that is, waiting until a problem occurs, and then offering minimal services. The residual orientation reflects the Rationalist and Utilitarian thought that continues to dominate social institutions in North America. Assistance is offered when problems become unsolvable, and services are often minimal so people do not become dependent on help (Carniol, 1995; Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992; Lindsey & Henley, 1997;

Mullaly, 1993; Swift, 1997). The intention of child welfare services is important-promoting the well-being and safety of children. Services are carried out, in the name of child well-being, with a focus on parent blaming instead of exploring the underlying causes that lead families into child welfare services. The evidence of a strong association between poverty and families served in child welfare is compelling (Carniol, 1995; Gil, 1998; Hutchinson, 1994; Merrick, 1996; Pelton, 1989; Pelton, 1981; Wharf, 1993). Along with poverty, families grapple with multiple challenges such as isolation, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of knowledge about children's needs, and problem solving strategies that include use of physical force or verbal aggression that results in an increased risk of harm to children (Brissett-Chapman, 1995; Geen & Tumlin, 1999; Pelton, 1981).

Cultural norms have evolved identifying a parent as responsible for providing adequate care and supervision for their children (Goldstein, Freud et al. 1979). Those who allegedly do not provide adequate parenting will be investigated and appropriate action taken (Carniol, 1995; Donzelot, 1977; Platt, 1977). With the best of intentions, child welfare workers take positions that require them to be society's guardians. Although the point of intervention for a child protective services worker is different than for a foster care or prevention worker, the charge to promote the well-being and safety of children is explicit for all workers in the child welfare system. When services are offered, the same workers who are investigators may become the helper. In larger communities, the investigating worker may refer the family to another worker for intervention. In

all cases this "help" takes place after a family experiences a crisis (residually) so the implicit message is one of failure or deficiency on the part of the parent (Carniol, 1995; Geen & Tumlin, 1999; Lindsey & Henley, 1997; Swift, 1997; Wharf, 1993).

In New York State the child welfare system operates as discrete units within the Division of Services. The state mandates child protection, prevention, foster care and adoption services, resulting in locally administered services to address each of these areas. Child protective services are mandated to receive reports of suspected abuse or neglect and initiate an investigation and determination of facts for reports meeting the legal definitions of abuse and neglect. Every county in New York State must have the capacity to investigate reported incidents 24 hours a day seven days a week. Reports are received by the State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR), located in Albany, NY and disseminated to the appropriate county investigators. CPS workers have up to 90 days to complete an investigation and render a "determination" regarding the reported incident. In 1998, New York State screened 260,000 reports of suspected abuse or neglect and accepted 145,000 reports for further investigation. Unfounded cases totaled 95,700 (66%) meaning there was no evidence to support the report. There were 49,300 (34%) indicated cases, meaning there was evidence to support the report. Of the indicated cases, 19,720 (40%) were closed the same day as indicated. The number of cases opened for services was 29,580. This represents 60% of the indicated cases and

20% of the total cases accepted for further investigation (Schimke, 2000). Between September 1, 2001 and August 31, 2002, the State Central Register received 155,066 reports - 44,956 (29%) cases were indicated and 100,262 (65%) were unfounded. As of November 2002, 9848 (6%) are undetermined (State Central Register, personal communication, November 2002).

Foster care is administered by a network of agencies available in each community to care for children who are unable to remain in their own homes. Emergency, short and long-term out of home services are available. Individuals and institutions approved by their local social services agency provide services. Federal and state laws, policies, and regulations govern foster care services. OCFS is responsible for approving, inspecting, supervising and monitoring authorized individuals and agencies. Each county is mandated to administer these services at the local level.

Adoption services are charged with providing safe and permanent homes for children who can no longer remain with their biological family. Local and statewide adoption services recruit and certify individuals who volunteer to adopt. These workers carry out a required home study, which is designed to assess preparation for adoption. If an individual or family is approved as an adoptive home, workers endeavor to match children and adoptive parents and offer services to support the adoption process. Workers are responsible for making diligent efforts to find a permanent home for every child in New York State.

Prevention services are authorized to provide services to vulnerable families in an effort to prevent out of home placement. Local communities are mandated to offer prevention services, which are often delivered through partnerships between the county social services department and local community based social services agencies. Prevention services operate on the premise that strengthening family capacity to support the well-being and safety of their children is in the best interests of the child and family. Often the county worker operates as a case manager, with local agencies providing the direct services.

As previously noted, practice within this system has vacillated between child-saving and family preservation efforts. Each time the direction of services changes, new legislation, policies and procedures are put in place. Over the past twenty years cost containment has been added as a factor affecting services due to increasing public expenditures and decreasing state and federal revenues. As government priorities shifted and the public became concerned about the wisdom of "throwing money" at social problems like poverty and needy children, resources available for public social services were reduced. Simultaneously the pressure to "do something" to improve the well-being and safety of children increased every time media attention was brought to bear on an incident of child abuse or neglect (Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992; Lipsky, 1980; Malm, Bess, Leos-Urbel, Geen, & Markowitz, 2001; Nelson, 1984; Pecora et al., 2000; Pelton, 1989; Schorr, 1988).

These conflicting demands create a contradiction between the mission of child welfare services and the resources allocated to accomplish the mission. This contradiction results in a tension between those parts of the system designed to provide services and those charged with setting and enforcing policies. Workers in child welfare bear the brunt of these conflicting demands and contradictions. The result is that "Huge caseloads and inadequate resources combine with the uncertainties of method and the unpredictability of clients to defeat their aspirations as service workers" (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii).

We ask child welfare workers to be the guardians of our most vulnerable children and families, while offering little in the way of social and economic support. If the adage "we are known by the company we keep" is true, our beliefs about families served by child welfare are reflected in our attitude towards the workers and supervisors providing these services. How many child welfare workers speak freely, much less with pride in social situations of the work they do? It is not uncommon to hear people say to child welfare workers, "I don't understand how you can do that job!" The child welfare system as a whole is looked upon with disdain, as being ineffective, and responsible for "dealing with" families that no one else wants to serve. Families tarnished by the stigma of failing as parents. The child welfare workforce faces daily challenges in their efforts to carry out the social expectation to promote the well-being and safety of children and families. Given the context of the work, one might assume that the turnover rate would be higher than it is.

Workforce Concerns

Child welfare organizations across the United States are under siege (Barter, 1997; Carniol, 1995; Geen & Tumlin, 1999; Hooper-Briar & Lawson, 1996; Hughes, 1999; Lindsey & Henley, 1997; Merrick, 1996; Pelton, 1989, 1981; Schorr, 1988). Since child abuse reporting laws were passed in the early 70's the systems providing care to vulnerable children and families have struggled to provide effective services across the child welfare system. Most of the public attention has focused on delivery of services, vacillating between practice and policy that emphasizes either child rescue/parent blaming or family preservation. Some of the challenges include: changing definitions of abuse and neglect, lack of clarity about the role of child welfare services, high caseloads, court ordered mandates, worker turnover rates, lack of clarity about standards to evaluate risk and harm reduction to children served by the system, practice approaches that emphasize parent blaming and social control functions, hiring practices that recruit new workers without experience in human services, federal regulations that mandate specific outcomes for foster care and adoption that include financial sanctions if outcomes are not met (Barter, 1997, 2000; Geen & Tumlin, 1999; Gleeson, Smith, & Dubois, 1993; Lawson, Anderson-Butcher, Peterson, & Barkdull, 2003; Lindsey & Henley, 1997; Pecora et al., 2000; Pelton, 1989; Schorr, 1988; Waldfogel, January/February 2000).

Individuals working in child welfare are recruited to or select these positions for a variety of reasons. Most seek employment in this system because

of a desire to be "of service", to make a difference, to work with children (Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992; Landsman, 2001; Lipsky, 1980). Some are seeking the security of a unionized position, unaware of the demands of child welfare work (Lipsky, 1980). Most counties in New York State have no organized recruitment process, relying on the posting of a civil service position announcement to alert potential applicants to an upcoming casework exam. Applicants must have a baccalaureate degree in any discipline to take the exam. A few counties have established local rules requiring a candidate to major in human services or a related field or have post baccalaureate human services experience. Achieving a passing grade (75%) on the exam is required to be placed on a list of candidates for child welfare positions. Additional civil service regulations severely restrict the number of eligible candidates that counties can eliminate from consideration, even if an interview indicates that the individual is poorly suited to child welfare work. While the civil service system was designed to protect workers' rights and reduce nepotism and cronyism in public service employment, these same worker protection rules may thwart efforts to hire candidates who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform this difficult work.

Once employed, workers are often assigned a caseload on their first day. With mandatory training for new workers across child welfare units, new employees must juggle the demands of training while getting to know the families on their caseload, the community service system, and the internal operations of

the child welfare system. In high turnover counties, units of workers have been known to resign together, resulting in administrators serving clients until new workers can be hired. New workers joining this unit will inherit cases with no assistance from previous workers during the transition period. Vulnerable families are asked to absorb these changes while continuing to make progress in meeting treatment goals. For some families, a slow down in the timetable to meet identified treatment goals may result in permanent removal of children from the family. Workforce stability is being identified as an important factor in supporting successful family reunification (Lawson, Petersen, & Briar-Lawson, 2001).

Precious little attention has been paid to workforce issues. The limited attention given to this area has focused on policy or training initiatives, especially ones designed to train workers in the latest practice trend (Hooper-Briar & Lawson, 1994, 1996; Waldfogel, January/February 2000). Only recently have child welfare systems in the US incorporated new management strategies such as Total Quality Management, which are designed to assist agencies in "breaking away from traditional approaches to managing scarce resources" (Gunther & Hawkins, 1996, p. xvii). There is little question that the system is in crisis, resulting in worker morale problems and limited attention to meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families. As a consequence of worker morale problems, high caseloads, and low salaries, worker turnover in most child welfare units has become a perpetual problem in many communities across the country.

In the past decade, funding through federal Title IV-E is being used to support social work students interested in a career in child welfare. The goal of this funding is to attract trained professionals to the child welfare field with a goal of improving practice. Documenting the effectiveness of Title IV-E funding in reducing worker turnover is resulting in more workforce research. Recently, "outcome" studies are being carried out, which focus on recruiting and retaining professionally trained social workers in the child welfare workforce (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Fox, Miller, & Barbee, 2003; Jones, 2003; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003).

Interest in the re-professionalization of child welfare is an important reversal of a twenty-year de-professionalization effort. The effect of the de-professionalization of the 1970's is that the vast majority of American child welfare workers do not have a degree in social work. According to the American Public Human Services Association Report from the Child Welfare Workforce Survey (2001) "Thirty percent (30%) of the 43 states responding (13/43) have a social work license requirement for child protection workers, with only one-quarter (25%) requiring this of other direct service workers and supervisors" (p. 9). One national study indicated that only twenty eight percent (28%) of child welfare workers had a social work degree (Liberman, Hornby, & Russell, 1988). Current estimates for New York State are that twenty percent (20%) of the child welfare workers have social work degrees (Peter Miraglia, personal communication, September, 2000).

One assumption driving the exploration of workforce turnover is that worker retention is important for improving practice. If effective practice is a goal, an important component of worker retention is reducing turnover of those workers most suited for the work. This assumption is based on the belief that it takes between one and two years for a new child welfare worker to learn the job well enough to practice at an adequate level (Cyphers, 2001; Ellett, 2000; Kraus et al., 1999). Missing from current policy and job pre-requisites is attention to educational background as an element of improved practice.

Effective practice is essential for promoting the well-being and safety of children served in the child welfare system. A desire to support positive outcomes for children is the basis for the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-89), which shortened the timelines for out-of-home placements of children, reauthorized, and renamed the Family Preservation Act of 1993 to Safe and Stable Families. With the focus on outcomes shifting to effective practice, risk and harm reduction, ensuring child well-being, and moving children from temporary out of home care to adoption or other permanent home, worker retention and practice skill become essential components of the public sector agency's ability to meet the federal mandate.

If worker retention is one element of improving practice in child welfare, we must understand the factors that support this retention. There are few studies that consider worker retention, and those that do, focus almost exclusively on retention of workers with a social work degree (Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001;

Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Ellett, 2000; Fox et al., 2003; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987). Most research focuses on worker turnover (Barak et al., 2001; Camp, 1994; Cyphers, 2001; Drake & Yadama, 1996; Kraus et al., 1999; Landsman, 2001; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; Yadama, 1996). We have no way of knowing with any certainty that simply changing those factors that influence turnover will have the desired effect of increasing retention, much less improving practice.

Both retention and turnover research in child welfare examines a wide array of dimensions related to the workforce. Efforts to understand workforce turnover in child welfare have focused primarily on workers with social work degrees, on the effects of burnout across the workforce, or on the compatibility of the work with personal values (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Drake & Yadama, 1996; Fox et al., 2003; Jones, 2003; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; Yadama, 1996).

One recent study explores factors that contribute to job satisfaction among child welfare employees and commitment to the agency and field of practice (Landsman, 2001). Dissertation research by Ellett (2000) looked at the relationship between human caring, self-efficacy beliefs, and professional organizational culture related to employee retention in child welfare. This research was carried out in two states with a large sample (n=941) of child welfare employees representing all levels of direct, supervisory and administrative practice. Across both states, all three variables were shown to be

related to intent to remain employed in child welfare. In addition, findings through supplemental analysis demonstrated two visible trends; that respondents with Master's degrees (general) and those with either a BSW or MSW degree reported higher levels of human caring and self-efficacy than those with other BA degrees.

One theme that appears repeatedly as a factor influencing both turnover and retention is supervision. The nature of supervision (skill, availability, relationship to practice efficacy) and the key role that the supervisor plays as the bridge between line workers and administration make this role critical in the turnover/retention discussion (Cyphers, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Fox et al., 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Kraus et al., 1999; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994). The skill level of entry-level workers demands that supervisors "teach the ropes". Most states have training programs for child welfare workers and the training assumes a level of supervision to reinforce the skills taught in the training (Cyphers, 2001; Gibbs, 2001; Kraus et al., 1999).

Eligibility for an entry-level casework position in New York State is a baccalaureate degree in any discipline and a passing grade on a multiple-choice exam. The result of such a low level requirement is that new workers are unprepared for the job, requiring extensive training and supervision. These new employees often quit within a year of being hired because there is a poor fit between personal career goals and current practice in child welfare. For some rural districts, geography and union supported residency requirements make it

difficult to recruit more than a handful of people to take the required civil service exam, forcing districts to hire anyone who passes the exam, without regard to interest or ability. Because of the minimal qualifications for an entry level position, the question that confronts policy makers, child welfare administrators and social work educators in New York State is what background, training, continuing education and organizational practice will improve retention among child welfare workers. One component of this larger question relates to the impact that supervision has on worker retention.

Supervisors are the bridge between the administration and direct practitioners. Front line supervisors are often called "middle managers", reflecting their critical bridging role. This position requires skill in teaching and socializing supervisees, guiding practice, and skill in administrative functions such as paperwork, task completion and socialization to the organizational culture (Fox et al., 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Gleeson et al., 1993; Kraus et al., 1999; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994). Professional social workers have developed many of these skills through their education program

One of the challenges confronting New York's public sector agencies is that filling supervisory positions is a union requirement. Supervisory positions are promotional and exam based so that only current employees can sit for the exam and must receive a high grade to be eligible for a position. Current employees who are eligible to take the promotional exam may be workers who thrive in a highly bureaucratic rule-bound system. The commissioners involved in the

design of this study all identified as problematic the recruitment and selection process for supervisors. The commissioners identified individuals in these positions as "often representing a limited vision towards effective practice and a high degree of attention to the bureaucratic requirements of the job" (Meeting with high turnover district commissioners, April 2001). The promotional exam does not reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities that are required in these positions. It takes several years to change the exam and promotional process for these positions.

Given the critical nature of the supervisory role, this study is intended to explore the congruence between espoused supervisory practice and worker perception of supervisor behavior and expressed intent to remain in child welfare practice. A second purpose of the study is to look at the educational background of supervisors to see if there is a link between perception of effective supervision and the educational background of the supervisor.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the workforce retention issues in child welfare requires the ability to analyze systemic, organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors, all of which have been demonstrated to have an impact on the workforce (Cyphers, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Drake & Yadama, 1996; Ellett, 2000; Fox et al., 2003; Gleeson et al., 1993; Guterman & Jayaratne, 1994; Jones, 2003; Kraus et al., 1999; Landsman, 2001; Lawson, 2000; Lipsky, 1980; Malm et al., 2001; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003;

Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; Yadama, 1996). In a meta-analysis of antecedents to retention and turnover in child welfare, social work and other human service employees Barak, Nissly, and Levin (2001) identified theory from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and economics as informing the studies they reviewed. No single theory has been sufficient to describe the complex interactions that comprise the factors resulting in workforce turnover in child welfare.

> The few authors who offer conceptual models to explain portions of the process of turnover or turnover intention among mental health and human service workers focus on social psychological models to suggest that turnover behavior is a multistage process that includes behavioral, attitudinal and decisional components. (p. 628)

Action Theory

In considering the theoretical base for this dissertation study, literature in social work, organization and management, and social psychology was explored. The work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1991) was intriguing. It described efforts to understand, in an organized and verifiable way, the interaction among the individual, groups, and the organizational setting. The primary purpose of developing this understanding is to influence practice within the organization and with consumers of service from the organization. The approach detailed by Argyris and Schön (1991) in *Theory in practice, Increasing Professional Effectiveness,* fits well with the child welfare organizations under study.

The role of the individual in creating and maintaining organizations has been debated for many years. A number of sociologists and organizational behaviorists have theorized that the beliefs and actions of individuals in everyday life is the basis for reality as we know it, which is reflected in the dominant structure of society and organizations (Argyris, 1996; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Grathoff, 1978; VanMaanen & Schein, 1979). The work of Argyris and Schön (1991) offers an explanation as to how practice is carried out by individuals within an organization. Action theory suggests ways to predict and influence future practice within an organization. It is a theory of action designed to influence and improve practice. Action Theory is defined by Argyris and Schön (1991) as "a deliberate human behavior which is for the agent a theory of control, but which, when attributed to the agent, also serves to explain or predict behavior" (p. 6). Action theory offers a framework for understanding the complex interactions that influence individual behavior and the factors that result in behavioral change.

The framework considers theories-of-action in organizations that offer services, which are delivered through professional practice. Practice is defined as "a sequence of actions undertaken by a person to serve others, who are considered clients" (Argyris and Schön, 1991, p. 6). Practice behavior leads towards intended consequences. In social work we call this purposeful behavior. Action theory develops the idea of espoused theory (what we say we do) and theories-in-use (what we do) and approaches to learning from current practice to refine and improve future practice.

In a perfect world, one's individual day-to-day behavior, which is the manifestation of our theories-in-use, will be consistent with what we espouse. Internal consistency influences both espoused theories and theories-in-use. Internal consistency is the yardstick that each individual uses to measure and decide how to behave in a given situation. If there is a gap between what we espouse and how we actually behave then we may have two measures that govern our practice. The actual measures are called governing variables.

Governing variables influence our theories-in-use. They set the requirements, which guide our behavior. Equilibrium or balance in our governing variables is an indicator to us that our theories-in-use are sufficient. Action theory suggests that in our "perfect world" one's espoused theories and theories-in-use will be superposable, reflected in our day-to-day behavior. This type of congruence reflects an alignment between what one believes and how one acts, creating a balance in the governing variables that guide our behavior. The alignment between behavior and theories-in-use will be monitored through feed back from clients and colleagues.

The conceptual model for Action Theory as defined by Argyris and Schön (1991) is illustrated in Figure 2. A basic assumption of action theory is that organizations are comprised of individuals, and therefore individual espoused theories and theories-in-use must be the focus for research within organizations.

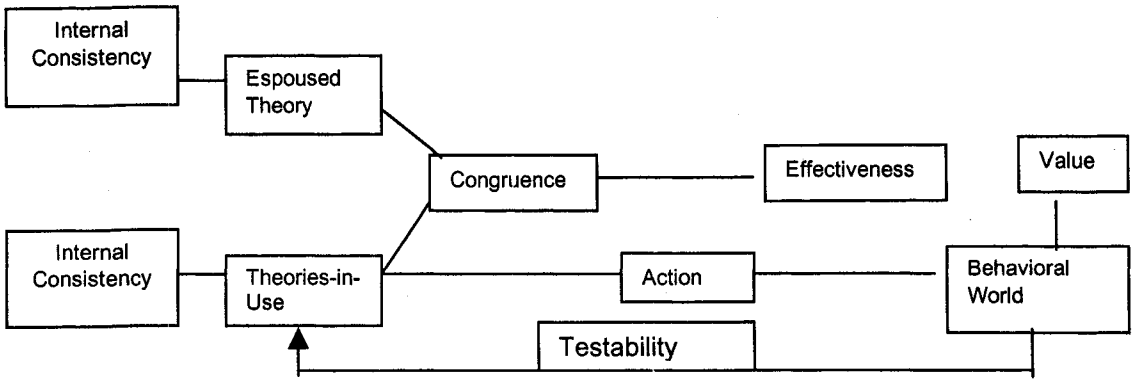

Figure 2 Conceptual Model for Action Theory (Argyris & Schön, 1991)

Where do our theories-in-use come from? Professional and organizational socialization, including their interactions, weigh heavily in the construction of our theories-in-use (Ibarra, 1999; Landsman, 2001; VanMaanen & Schein, 1979). We develop and continuously refine our theories-in-use based on "assumptions held about, others, the situation and the connections among action, consequences and situations" (Argyris & Schön, 1971, p. 7). Theories-in-use are tacit structures, meaning we do not think about them or the assumptions that inform the theories very frequently. The equilibrium of our everyday world is maintained when our theories-in-use are in balance with the governing variables in our environment. Governing variables control or direct our theories-in-use. Examples of a governing variable are the amount of energy a person has to expend on a particular day or the degree of comfort that a person has working in

a crisis environment such as child protective services. In social work theory the concept of a "governing variable" is similar to a personality characteristic or personal preference. Argyris and Schön identify these elements as variables meaning they assume different characteristics and governing because they strongly influence or control equilibrium in our day-to-day world. Governing variables represent underlying assumptions most often unconscious, which inform implicit theories-of-action. In order to maintain the balance between theories-in-use and governing variables, action theory suggests that individuals try to keep theories-in-use reflecting current reality.

Dilemmas arise when the disconnection between theories-in-use and governing variables becomes too great. Going back to the example of personal energy, an individual may be perceived as "behaving differently" on a low energy day. More "dilemmas" may occur on a low energy day. Dilemmas consist of incongruity, inconsistency, limited effectiveness in practice, challenges to values, and an inability to test the relationship between what is espoused and practiced. The phrase "today is a bad day" expresses this imbalance. For most of us, "bad days" are infrequent and we quickly regain equilibrium without changing our theories-in-use or governing variables. In the example of a worker in CPS who is not comfortable working in a crisis environment, an imbalance between governing variables and theories-in-use may occur daily. This worker may find that their approach to practice is unsuccessful in this environment. Figure 3

illustrates the concept of balance between theories-in-use and governing variables.

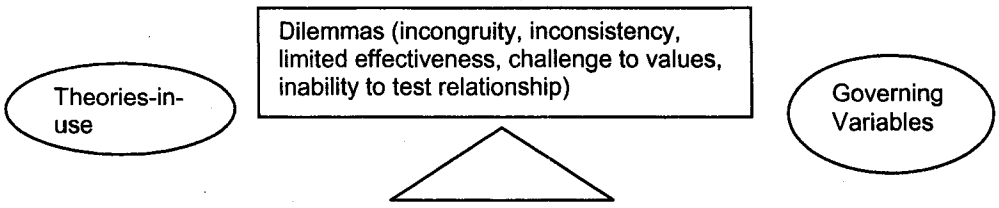

Figure 3 Balance between theories in use and governing variables, which can become unbalanced when dilemmas are encountered

The Action theory model suggests that if there is continuous testing (or feedback on) of the congruence between theories-in-use and behavior related to espoused theories then governing variables and theories-in-use will remain in balance. Dilemmas will be addressed as they are discovered and our practice with clients can be focused on effective outcomes. This continuous testing and re-adjustment represents a style of learning that is open and transparent. Argyris and Schön (1991) refer to this type of learning as double-loop learning. Double-loop learning suggests continuous interaction with the governing variables bringing underlying assumptions to the fore, allowing the assumptions to be explicit and considered in the light of espoused theory. This process is analogous to the concept "conscious use-of-self" taught in social work practice. Argyris and Schön (1991) call this double-loop learning Type II learning.

Type II learning includes approaches to practice where individuals reflect on the behaviors that represent theories-in- use, analyzing the alignment between actual practice behavior and what we say we do. When incongruity or inconsistency are identified, action is taken to re-align practice. This is done through a transparent process of testing, evaluation and feed back.

At the opposite end of the learning continuum is single-loop learning. Single-loop learning represents a process of maintaining constancy by changing our behaviors to maintain our governing variables. Over time this may result in limited congruence between espoused theory and theories-in-use. For example, if a child welfare worker prefers to work in a predictable environment because an important governing variable is that practice is most effective when it can be planned out in advance, an assignment in child protective services, which responds to family crisis will require a re-ordering of both a governing variable (planning) and theories-in-use. A worker in this situation employing single-loop learning will try to use the same repertoire of practice approaches in child protective services that they used in other settings, even if they receive feed back that it is not effective. The result will be a miss match between the worker and the practice setting, resulting in the worker leaving the unit or continuously receiving negative feed back while becoming more entrenched in ineffective practice. Type I learning occurs in organizations that have self-sealing, self-reinforcing learning systems resulting in practice that emphasizes competition, withholding help from others, conformity, covert antagonism, and mistrust. Dilemmas may be a regular

occurrence resulting from behavior that reflects perceived incongruity and inconsistency. These systems of practice result in little commitment to group decisions, limited risk taking and members find there is a lack of freedom to explore and define goals.

Action Theory and Supervision in Child Welfare

The theoretical model for action theory in professional practice offers a possible explanation for the way supervision influences worker retention in child welfare agencies in thirteen (13) county social services organizations. The districts in this study were selected because worker turnover was at least twenty five percent (25%) in calendar year 2000. Turnover represents a dilemma for these systems. As turnover rates increase, workload for remaining workers increases, disaffection among all employees increases, practice effectiveness is impacted, and the governing variables that supported the organization are no longer in balance with the mission and goals of the organization. If these social services systems are engaged in Type I learning then practice is likely to emphasize competitiveness, withholding help from others, conformity, covert antagonism and mistrust. Supervision may be rule focused, completing paperwork and closing cases as quickly as possible. Feedback from workers is not welcomed in this environment. In fact, workers may be criticized for putting too much time into offering services if they are not completing paperwork in a timely fashion. Cooperation, helping others, individuality and trust, elements of a Type II learning organization, will be de-emphasized.

Research literature on turnover in child welfare identified supervision skill on a number of dimensions as a component of turnover (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Gleeson et al., 1993; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003). Dimensions include: creating a climate where workers feel supported, facilitating workers' sense of being effective at what they do, being willing to listen to work related problems, the extent to which supervisors can be relied upon "when things get tough at work", aiding supervisees in getting their job done, being accessible, being knowledgeable about the system and casework practices, possessing management and leadership skills and being supportive. When supervision practice includes these dimensions, according to the literature, turnover appears to decrease.

Knowledge of the elements that comprise effective supervision is available to child welfare systems. The items in the Supervision section of the Workforce Retention Survey are designed to describe behaviors which reflect "best practice". For example "my supervisor provides the help I need to complete my required tasks" provides feedback to a supervisor on their workers' perception of supervision practice. All of the items in the supervision section of the survey identify supervisor behavior, which the commissioners believe is most effective. If supervisors are practicing according to these espoused theories, what is the impact, if any, on worker retention? An assumed consequence of not attending to the supervisory process would be increased turnover among workers who encounter dilemmas in their practice related to effectiveness, incongruity

between what is espoused and what is done, inconsistency in practice, value conflicts and an unwillingness to engage in constructive analysis to resolve these dilemmas.

The action theory framework can be applied to the process of supervision. In child welfare, supervision is identified as having "a substantial impact on worker performance if certain supervisory functions are carried out well" (Pecora et al., 2000, p. 451). These "functions" represent the espoused practice identified by the commissioners. Supervision requires interaction with the worker. In the context of action theory, the practice of both worker and supervisor would be informed by theories-of-action that may or may not be explicit and available for discussion. Governing variables for each party may be different. For example, one supervisor may assume that supervisees should take the initiative in seeking assistance on cases. The supervisee may operate on the belief that a supervisor is "the boss" and waits to be asked if there are any cases that need to be discussed. If both parties continued to operate on these assumptions without discussing different learning and teaching styles, the supervisor may come to see the worker's behavior as "resistant" to supervision and not interested in feedback. The worker may view the supervisor's behavior as cold and uncaring, leaving the worker on her own to figure out what to do. In a Type I learning organization these assumptions would prevail, as the single loop learning process would support maintaining these unspoken beliefs. This mode of learning short circuits the feedback process whereby we can analyze the congruence between actual

behavior and espoused practice. The consequence of this Type I learning process can be poor communication, inconsistent feedback, a focus on paperwork and rules rather than developing skills. The resulting tensions can lead to dissatisfaction with the work, insecurity, reduced trust, and ineffective practice. Eventually the worker or supervisor may find the balance between their theories-in-use and governing variables disrupted. Type I learning does not allow for corrective feedback or the opportunity to re-align espoused practice and practice behaviors used in the everyday world.

When the dominant mode of learning reflects a Type II learning process, where feedback is encouraged and congruence between what is espoused and what is practiced is valued, behavioral consequences such as: freedom to explore and define goals in one's work and support for this practice, opportunity to explore new paths to goals and support for this work, opportunity to set realistic but challenging goals, cooperation in the work setting, helping others, and trust result (Argyris and Schön,1991). The worker and supervisor are able to reflect on the tension between them and consider ways to modify their behavior to create a new balance.

The process of supervision is noted in a number of studies as having a direct impact on worker satisfaction (Barak et al., 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Fox et al., 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Jones, 2003; Liberman et al., 1988; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003). For those respondents remaining in child welfare, the study by Dickenson and Perry (2003) notes

significant differences in levels of support received from supervisors. "Supervisors were rated as more competent in doing their job when they showed concern for subordinate's welfare, approval for a job well done, helped workers complete difficult tasks, were 'warm and friendly' when the respondent is having a problem" (p. 16). Rycraft (1994) noted, "Caseworkers have definite ideas regarding the qualities and attributes they desire in a supervisor. These include being accessible, knowledgeable of the system and of casework practice, possessing management and leadership skills, and above all else being supportive" (p. 78). Pecora, Whittaker, Maluccio, and Barth (2000) noted that important components of effective supervision included: "promoting consistent application of a family-centered service philosophy, empowering workers, balancing the degree of directiveness, encouraging both professional and personal growth of workers, being available for consultation and support, acknowledging effective job performance, helping staff set priorities" (p. 451-452).

The position of supervisor is a bridge between executive management and line workers thereby reflecting and enforcing the larger organizational culture. Supervisors are key socializing agents, passing on the dominant culture of the organization to new employees (Ibarra, 1999; Kraus et al., 1999; VanMaanen & Schein, 1979). Krause, Koenig, Levey and Grundbert (1999) identified:

> (T)he personal attributes and aptitudes that are important in child welfare practice such as: commitment to the child welfare mission; respect for

> clients and the ability to listen and communicate well with them; patience and tolerance; perseverance; self-motivation; ability to motivate participants and enforce compliance; organizational ability, and a tough outer shell needed to survive in these jobs. (p. 21)

Front line supervisors must support, teach, encourage and reinforce these attributes and aptitudes among their workers, while simultaneously managing required administrative tasks. Leichtman (1996) summarizes the supervisory role this way:

> As such, he or she is the liaison, buffer, and interpreter between a broad division of labor - that is the administration structurally above, and the line staff below. These two groups represent subsystems with divergent agendas. While both are directed toward an overriding common service goal (the welfare of the client), disagreements, conflicts, and even an undercurrent of antipathy should be anticipated. (p. 82)

Type II learning as described by action theory is designed to support a supervision process that can accommodate the demands required for effective supervision. Action theory offers a model for understanding the elements of supervisory practice supporting worker retention. The proposed study will explore whether there is evidence for the relevance of action theory as a tool for understanding the supervisory process and its impact on worker retention in child welfare.

The Current Study

The current study looks at four dimensions of supervisor behavior, which may influence worker retention in child welfare organizations: accessibility, knowledge about the system and practice, leadership skills, and support. Accessibility is defined as being available and attentive to the worker. Survey items that explore this dimension include "My supervisor is available to me when I ask for help" and "My supervisor regularly evaluates my performance". Knowledge about the system and practice is defined as both knowing "the rules of the organization" and techniques for approaching clients as well as an ability to communicate this knowledge to supervisees (teaching workers "the ropes"). Items that explore this dimension include: "My supervisor provides the help I need to complete my required tasks" and "My supervisor is knowledgeable about effective ways to work with children and families". Leadership skill is being measured with a global item that states, "My supervisor demonstrates leadership". Support includes personal as well as job related support. Items include; "My supervisor genuinely cares about me" and "My supervisor gives me help when I need it".

Specifically the study considers whether supervisory behavior is congruent with the type of supervisory practice espoused by the commissioners as reflecting "best practice". The elements comprising espoused theory of supervision are assumed. Although this study does not explicitly measure the dimensions of the espoused theory of supervision, the items were developed

from the literature on child welfare practice and supervision (Fox et al., 2003; Landsman, 2001; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000), previous research (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994) and extensive input from the commissioners and leadership staff from the social services districts in the study. Worker retention is assumed to improve when supervisory practice is effective.

What impact does education preparation have on supervisory practice? One assumption is that supervisors with a social work degree will exhibit more congruence between espoused theories and theories-in-use. This assumption is based on the premise that social work education is intended to prepare practitioners for effective practice. The survey items were designed to reflect preferred supervisory practice. Therefore, the study also considers whether workers with supervisors who have a social work degree evaluate their supervisors as exhibiting behaviors that reflect espoused theories in their supervisory practice, and what effect this has on an individual worker's decision to stay or leave. Figure 4 illustrates the model for research being carried out.

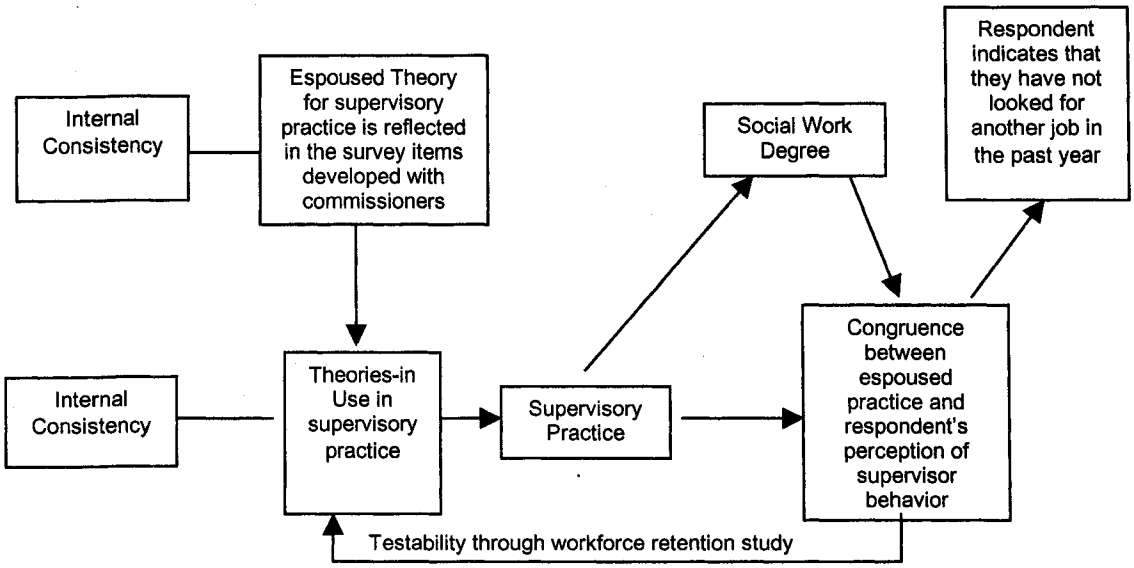

Figure 4 Conceptual Model for Study

Hypothesis 1: The greater the congruence between espoused supervisor practice and supervisor behavior the greater the likelihood that a respondent will say that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between supervisory practice and a respondent indicating that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year.

Hypothesis 2: Supervisors with a social work degree will be more likely to demonstrate congruence between espoused and actual supervisory practices. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the educational

background of the supervisor and the degree of congruence between espoused and actual supervisor practice.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the literature in child welfare that documents the context for practice in this area. Consideration is given to the service system as it is currently constructed in New York State. The relationship between current practice and worker retention was discussed. The theoretical framework reflecting the nature of the relationship between supervision and worker retention was also described and illustrated. Chapter Three will describe the methodology for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The current study of the congruence between espoused supervisory practice and supervisor behavior and the relationship to respondents' statements that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year is a secondary analysis of a larger cross-sectional workforce retention study being carried out in a northeastern state in the United States. This study considers whether supervision is related to respondents stating that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year and whether supervisors with a social work degree are viewed by workers as demonstrating preferred practice more frequently than supervisors without a social work degree.

A twenty-four-item section of the larger survey is dedicated to supervision. Reliability and validity tests were carried out. The twenty-four survey items were designed to explore four dimensions of supervision, which were identified in previous studies as important factors in worker retention (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003). The dimensions are; accessibility, knowledge about the system and practice, leadership skills, and support. Factor analysis was carried out to see if the data supports a distinction in the four areas. The data was analyzed using logistic regression to see if there is a relationship between the dimensions of supervision and a respondent answering that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year.

All respondents participating in the survey were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements about their immediate supervisor. The survey uses a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A copy of the entire survey is included in Appendix A (p. 126). Descriptive data includes age, salary, race, gender, educational background, supervisory status, how long respondents have been supervised by their current supervisor, and the educational background of the supervisor. Items were developed using questions from three previous surveys on child welfare worker turnover (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Lawson, 2000; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003), and input from the commissioners participating in the study. The commissioners consulted with their deputy commissioners and directors of service as the instrument was being developed. The items reflect the espoused supervisory practice of the agencies participating in this study.

Survey respondents also completed a yes-no question on whether they have considered looking for another job in the past year. When a respondent considers looking for another job, the behavior is believed to reflect a positive attitude about leaving. That is, the respondent is considering leaving their position. Research in child welfare, organizational studies and the theory of planned behavior support the link between intention to leave and leaving behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Barak et al., 2001; Gardner, 1986; Rycraft, 1994). This study builds on previous research by linking supervisor behavior with the consideration of not looking for another job. That is, the greater the congruence

between supervisor's espoused practice and actual practice behavior the greater the likelihood that the respondent will express an intention to remain in child welfare by stating that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year.

Concepts and Variables

The concepts and variables that form the basis for the workforce retention study, including the supervision section, were identified through a survey of the literature and from a series of meetings held with local district commissioners, OCFS staff, consultants from the Cornell School of Labor and Industrial Relations and consortium faculty. The commissioners participated in a brainstorming session in April 2001 where they identified the possible causes of worker turnover. At this same meeting, a summary of recent social work literature representing the current state of knowledge regarding worker turnover in child welfare was presented. Causes of turnover identified by the commissioners were consistent with the factors identified in the literature; salary and resources, organizational issues, work related concerns, and supervision (Barak et al., 2001; Cyphers, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Drake & Yadama, 1996; Ellett, 2000; Fox et al., 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Graef & Hill, 2000; Jones, 2003; Landsman, 2001; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; Yadama, 1996). Meeting participants unanimously identified supervision as the most important factor in worker retention. At this meeting, the commissioners requested that a study be carried out in their districts to help them

gain a better understanding of the factors that influence worker retention. The Social Work Education Consortium, a collaboration between social work programs and public sector agencies designed to address workforce professionalization and stabilization, agreed to oversee this research.

The workforce retention study team collected instruments used in social work research on child welfare workforce retention. Instruments from California, Texas and Rochester (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003) were reviewed. An extensive review of the literature was carried out. The factors that appear to influence a worker's decision to stay or leave are: salary and benefits, organizational issues, autonomy in one's work, supervision, workforce socialization, fit between individual needs and work, and burnout and emotional exhaustion. Supervision appeared in a number of studies of worker turnover (Barak et al., 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Ellett, 2000; Fox et al., 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Jones, 2003; Landsman, 2001; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003).

Supervision is a practice carried out in the agency with employees. The role of the supervisor is varied and spans all segments of the organizational structure. The supervisor is the key socializing agent for individual workers, introducing them to the organization and to practice. Supervisors "teach the ropes", and span the boundary between management and individual workers. According to Leichtman (1996):

Effective supervision is organized around four objectives of equal value:

- To subordinate all agendas to those of the client/client family and the agency as a whole;
- To contain the biases and distortions that both parties bring to the supervision forum;
- To facilitate meeting the client's needs so that service can be appropriately terminated in the future; and
- To facilitate the professional development of both the supervisee and the supervisor. (p. 81)

The practice of supervision is then carried out day by day within the context of the organization, through particular job responsibilities and through interaction with individual supervisees. Practice in each arena requires skill sets, which can be developed from training and education reflecting effective practices in these arenas. These "effective practices" are espoused theory. Espoused theory is what a supervisor or worker says they do when asked to describe their practice. According to Argyris and Schön (1991):

> When someone is asked how he or she would behave under certain circumstances, the answer usually given is one's espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which one gives allegiance, and which upon request, is communicated to others. (p. 6-7)

It is what one learns in training or a supervision class as the "best way to approach practice". Espoused theory is reflected in the adage "Do what I say, not what I do".

Because the supervisor has a pivotal role within the agency, how they carry out supervisory practice can have an impact on the practice and retention of individuals in their unit. Is there congruence between what the agency states is preferred supervisory practice and actual supervisor behavior? If there is congruence, does effective supervision influence an individual's decision to consider looking for another job? Congruence is a key concept in this study.

Congruence is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the fact or condition of according or agreeing; accordance, correspondence, harmony" (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). Congruence is derived from the Latin *congruentia* meaning agreement, harmony, and congruity. Argyris and Schön (1991) define congruence as:

> One's espoused theory matches one's theory-in-use---that is, that one's behavior fits the espoused theory of action. A second (and much used) meaning of congruence is allowing inner feelings to be expressed in actions: when one feels happy, one acts happy. (p. 23)

What this study seeks to explore is whether preferred supervisory practice (espoused) is what workers actually experience in their day-to-day interactions with their supervisor. If there is a high degree of congruence between preferred and actual supervisory practice, do workers who have this perception consider looking for another job less frequently than workers who do not perceive their supervisor as demonstrating congruent practice? Given the critical role that the supervisor plays, this study will build on previous research, by offering an

analysis of the degree to which congruent supervisory practice is related to the consideration of looking for another job.

Item Design

A number of considerations guided the design of the items used for this study. A participatory action research framework guided the development of the research process (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). There are 11 schools of participatory action research encompassing a "range of approaches and practices each grounded in different traditions, different philosophical and psychological assumptions, each pursuing different political commitments. The common elements in this family of approaches are the research is participative, grounded in experience, and action oriented" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. xxvi). For the workforce retention study, a democratic process was used including a consensus building process among all partners around the questions to be considered, the design, development and implementation of the study. The commissioners for the local social services districts, state OCFS staff, faculty, and graduate students comprise the research team. The exclusion of workers and supervisors on the team was acknowledged and discussed. Although it presents as a limitation of this study, the partnership with commissioners as executive management was seen as an essential step for relationship building, with the inclusion of staff within these organizations in future research. Some of the commissioners did seek input from their workers during

the instrument development process. All members of the research team worked on the multiple drafts of the survey as it was being developed.

Efforts were made to improve the content validity of the items in the survey as it was being developed. Content validity is defined as the degree to which the items of the instrument represent the attributes to be measured (Fortune & Reid, 1999; Weinbach & Jr., 1998). Items were drawn from previous workforce research in child welfare (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003), the commissioners and their leadership team, and literature on the elements of effective supervision (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Kraus et al., 1999; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003). Commissioners and their leadership team reviewed four drafts of the instrument and provided feedback on each draft. The final items in the supervision section of the instrument represent a consensus of all the commissioners on items that best describe preferred supervisory practice in child welfare. A pilot test was carried out, which further refined the items on the instrument. Following the pilot test revisions, the commissioners reviewed the complete instrument once more and gave final approval.

There was one issue that appears in the literature, which the commissioners were reluctant to have emphasized in the survey. The issue is burnout. The reluctance to have more than one question about this issue had to do with the question of what burnout means. A majority of the commissioners believe this term is overused and vague. The commissioners felt that the

emphasis on burnout would not provide useful information in terms of retention. One item was included in the survey; "My supervisor helps me prevent and address burnout".

The pilot test of the entire Workforce Retention Study instrument and protocol was carried out in a county of similar size and geographic location to the majority of the participating counties. A group of workers and supervisors completed the survey and then met with study team members to discuss the questions. Following standard research protocol, questions were revised based on feed back from the pilot study. The workforce study team was particularly interested in knowing which questions confused the workers or supervisors, which questions were not relevant, and whether there were any additional questions that should be added.

The independent variables reflect supervision practice in four dimensions: accessibility, support, knowledge about the system and practice, and leadership skills. All of the survey items are designed to understand supervisory behavior around these four dimensions. The dimensions were identified in the child welfare and workforce literature (Cyphers, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Fox et al., 2003; Gardner, 1986; Gibbs, 2001; Landsman, 2001; Lawson et al., 2001; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003) and were described in both the literature review and the chapter on theory.

If there is a high degree of congruence between the espoused and actual supervisory practice for an independent variable, the mean score will approach

five. This indicates that workers in that district perceive their supervisors as exhibiting a high degree of congruence between their espoused and actual practice. If the mean score is low (with 1 being the lowest score) this indicates that workers perceive a lack of congruence between supervisor behavior and espoused practice. The dependent variable is worker retention as expressed by a respondent stating that they have not considering looking for another job in the past year. Logistic regression will be used to determine if a change in the supervisory item rating predicts a similar change in the odds that a respondent answered "no" to the question of whether they had considered looking for another job in the past year.

Sampling Procedures

Local districts that reported a turnover rate of twenty five percent (25%) or more during calendar year 2000 were invited to participate in this study. Sixteen (16) districts met this criterion. Thirteen (13) of the districts elected to participate in this study. Two (2) districts never responded to any invitations to discuss workforce turnover. One (1) district elected to withdraw from the study once the instrument was designed because of a concern that the current workload was so heavy the workers did not have time to complete a survey. All child welfare workers and front line supervisors in participating counties were invited to complete the survey. A meeting of workers and supervisors was held in each county where a member of the study team described the study, distributed a

participant information letter, described participant protections, and distributed surveys. Appendix B (p. 141) contains the participant information letter.

Participants willing to complete a survey were given two (2) hours to do so. The survey required between 20 and 40 minutes to complete. Participation in the study was voluntary, which was described in the participant information letter (Appendix B, p. 141) and consent form signed by participants (Appendix A, p. 126). Workers returned the survey in a sealed envelope to the workforce study team representative that day. Workers also had the option of completing the survey later and returning it by mail. If a worker did not want to participate after learning about the study, they could place the survey instrument in the envelope and return the sealed envelope to the study team representative. Only the study team knew if the survey was not filled out. The entire population of child welfare workers and front line supervisors from participating counties were invited to complete the survey. This eliminated sampling bias, which may result from selecting a sample of the population. Making envelopes available to mail surveys in was intended to reduce sampling bias due to the date and time of the survey distribution. All workers had the opportunity to complete a survey if they wished to. The study team tried to make it convenient for all of the workers and front line supervisors to participate.

Data Collection

Sources

All child welfare workers and front line supervisors in thirteen (13) counties participating in the Workforce Retention Study were invited to complete a survey. The local districts participating in the study represent a selected sample of districts in a northeastern state. They all reported child welfare workforce turnover rates of twenty five percent (25%) or more during calendar year 2000.

This northeastern state divides local districts into three categories, small, medium and large, based on size. There are fifty-seven (57) counties in the state, excluding the largest city. Large counties make up 12% of the districts (7/57), medium counties account for 60% (34/57) of the districts and small counties account for 28% (16/57) of the districts. In this study, 14% (1/7) of the large districts, 26% (9/34) of the medium and 19% (3/16) of the small districts participated in the study. Statewide there are 3,732 workers, excluding the largest city. The local districts participating in the study have a total workforce of 696 representing 19% of the statewide workforce outside of the largest city.

Methods

Data were collected in the form of a survey. A member of the workforce retention study team held a meeting in each county. All child welfare caseworkers and front line supervisors were invited to this meeting. All of the counties except one have a workforce totaling less than 100 potential participants so one or two meetings accommodated all of those who were willing to learn

about the study and consider participating. In the larger county (300 potential participants), eight separate meetings were held to inform workers about the study and invite them to participate. This plan was recommended by the Director of Human Resources as having the greatest likelihood of accommodating participation by the majority of workers and supervisors. Extra surveys were available with stamps and return address labels to accommodate any worker who was ill, in court, or attending to a case emergency prohibiting participation on a given day. The Commissioner and Director of Services informed workers about the study, the date and location of the meeting.

Participants received a cover letter describing the survey at the meeting (Appendix B, p. 141). The workforce retention study representatives had a script for describing the study (Appendix C, p. 143). This process follows research protocol for ensuring consistency in communication with participants across sites. Workers were invited to ask any questions they might have about the study.

Surveys were distributed along with a return envelope. Participation in the study was voluntary and there was no remuneration. Participants had the option of completing the survey at their desk, or in reserved rooms. The primary goal was to ensure privacy and confidentiality for participants. Surveys were placed in the envelope by participants and returned to the box. The Workforce Retention Study representative remained at the site for at least 2 hours to give participants time to complete the survey. The representative was responsible for returning completed surveys to the workforce study team. Participants had the option to

mail in the survey. Workforce retention study members handled all completed surveys to ensure confidentiality.

All participants created a personal code, which was used when the data were entered. This code is anonymous, and known only to the individual respondent. This procedure ensures that data cannot be linked to individual respondents.

Data are stored in a password protected computer, on the computer hard drive. Only study team members with approval from the Institutional Review Board can access the data. All study team participants completed a mandatory human subjects training and received a certificate of completion. This training is renewed annually in an effort to ensure protection for human subjects participating in research efforts through the University at Albany.

Methods for Analysis

Data was analyzed for basic descriptive information such as age of supervisor and worker; gender of supervisor and worker, agency size, salary, length of time the worker has been with their current supervisor, and length of time in child welfare practice. A validity and reliability analysis of the four supervisory dimensions was conducted. Factor analysis was carried out on the survey items to see if the data supported the distinction between the four dimensions. Logistic regression was used to analyze the effect of the supervisory dimensions on respondent's consideration of looking for another job.

Logistic regression is a procedure for analysis related to multiple regression. It is used with studies that have a dichotomous dependent variable (Fortune & Reid, 1999; Morrow-Howell & Proctor, 1992; Weinbach & Jr., 1998). In the proposed study, the dependent variable is respondent consideration of looking for another job in the past year. The various descriptions of supervisor behavior, which make up the 24 survey items, comprise the independent variables. The survey items are designed to measure four dimensions of supervision believed to reflect effective supervisory practice in child welfare. Logistic regression will allow an analysis of the "relative effects of a number of independent variables on one (dichotomous) dependent variable. It can provide an estimate of the strength of the effect of any given variable, while controlling for the influence of remaining variables" (Fortune & Reid, 1999, p. 324). With logistic regression, the estimate of the strength of an effect is represented as a probability that the independent variable affects the dependent variable (George & Mallery, 2001; Morrow-Howell & Proctor, 1992).

Human Subjects Protection

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University at Albany and the University at Binghamton approved the Workforce Retention Study Protocol in October 2001 (Appendix D, p. 145). The current study was a secondary analysis of a portion of data from the larger Workforce Retention Study. The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland determined that this study did not require an ethics

review since it is a secondary data analysis (Appendix D, p. 145). The University at Albany Institutional Review Board approved the secondary analysis of the data in August 2002 (Appendix D, p. 145). Criteria for the protection of human subjects have been attended to in the design of the current study. All participants in the original Workforce Retention Study received a letter describing the purpose of the study, procedures in place to protect confidentiality, the names of research team members, and contact information for the research team and the Institutional Review Board at the University at Albany (Appendix B, p. 141). Participants returning surveys signed an informed consent form (Appendix A, p. 126) and created a personal code to protect the identity of the participant. All data currently stored for the Workforce Retention Study uses only the personal code as an identifier and cannot be linked to any individual participating in the study, without special authorization related to the original study.

The current study accessed a portion of the data from the Workforce Retention Study. This information is anonymous. All data for the Workforce Retention Study is stored according to a confidential code developed by the participant. The following data from the larger Workforce Retention Study was used for analysis in the present study:

- The 24 item supervision section of the study
- Descriptive information regarding the gender of the worker and supervisor, caseload size, salary, agency size, length of time the worker has been employed in child welfare and in the particular unit, length of time the worker has been supervised by the immediate supervisor, supervisors education background.

- Participant response to a question regarding whether the respondent has considered looking for another job in the past year.

Responses to the above survey items were analyzed for all participants from each of the thirteen (13) counties. No county or individual worker can be identified from the data being used for the present study. Full assurance of the protection of all human subjects participating in the Workforce Retention Study and the study of supervisory practice and workforce retention is a core value of the author.

Summary

The Methods chapter provides a description of the design of the study, a definition of the key concept and description of the variables that define the study, the process used to design the survey instrument, sampling procedures, data collection sources, methods and pilot test, and the proposed methods for analysis of the data. Protection for human subjects is also considered. Chapter Four describes the results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings from a select, secondary analysis of data from the Workforce Retention Study are reported. The chapter includes: descriptive results presenting demographic information on survey respondents; an analysis of the reliability of the survey items related to supervision; a principal component analysis of the supervision items in the survey; bivariate analysis to determine what additional variables will be included in the multivariate model; and a logistic regression analysis to estimate the probability of respondent's indicating that they have not looked for another job in the past year. Using the conceptual model described in Figure 4 in Chapter 2 (p. 46), this chapter concludes with the findings of the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between respondents assessment of supervisor support and knowledge and respondents likelihood of considering a new job. Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study and the implications of the findings for social work research, practice and education.

Demographic Information on Survey Respondents

All child welfare caseworkers and front line supervisors in 13 counties were invited to complete a workforce retention survey. A total of 409 respondents completed surveys out of a potential respondent pool of 696 for a 58% response rate. Five respondents were eliminated from the present analysis, as they did not complete any item in the supervisor section of the survey. The total number of

respondents for this report is 404, a response rate of 58%. The sample size is large enough for logistic regression analysis (Garson, 2002; Wright, 1995). Three hundred fourteen (314) of the respondents (78%) identified themselves as workers, 84 as supervisors (21%), and 6 (1%) did not answer this question.

Age

Figure 5 presents the percent distribution of worker's and supervisor's ages in decades. Data are missing for 9 workers and 3 supervisors. The mean age for workers is 38; the mean age for supervisors is 44. Although the mean ages are close, 59% of the workers are less than 40 years of age compared to 33% of the supervisors and 32% of the supervisors are over 50 compared to 18% of workers.

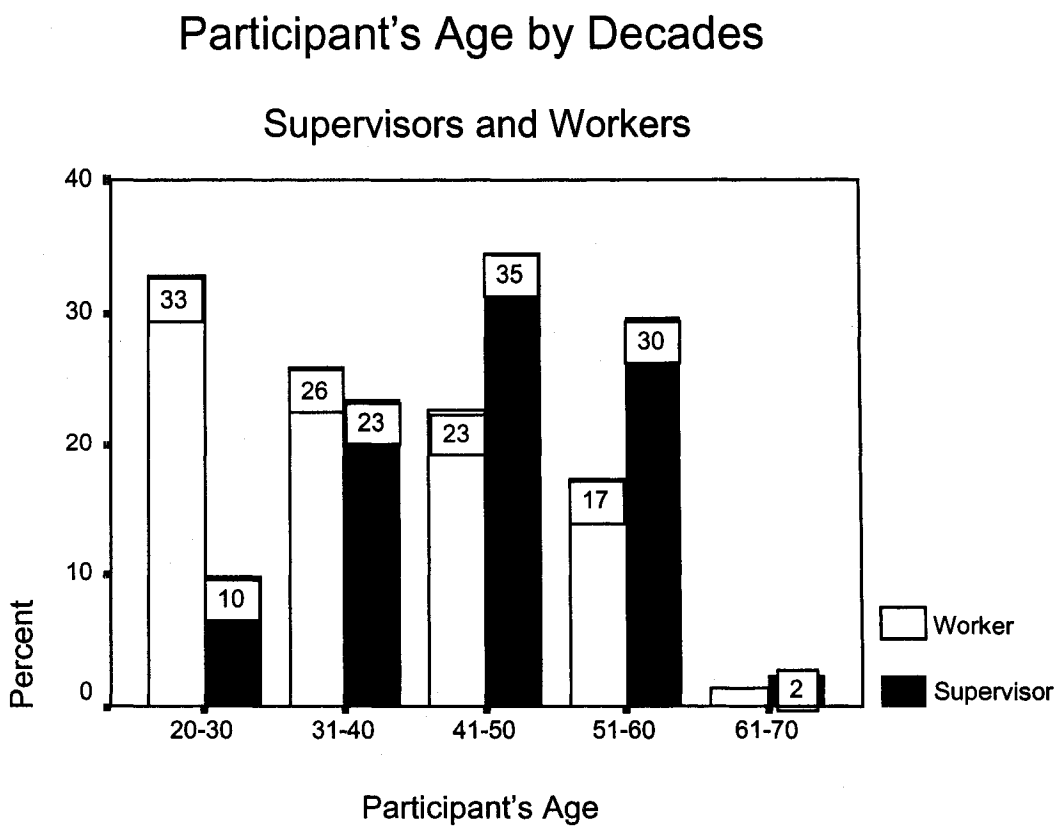

Figure 5 Participants Age by Decades for Supervisors and Workers

Gender

Eighty point nine percent (80.9%) of the respondents are women, 256 of the caseworkers (81.5%) and 66 of the supervisors (78.6%). Data are missing for 1 supervisor (1.2%) and 2 workers (.6%).

Racial and Ethnic Identification

The respondents are almost exclusively white with 80 supervisors (95.2%) and 274 workers (87.3%) identifying as white. Data are missing for 1 supervisor (1.2%) and 10 workers (3.2%). The remaining 3 supervisors (3.6%) identified as

other or two or more races. The remaining 30 workers (9.4%) were distributed among 7 other racial or ethnic groups. The largest group among the seven is workers who identified as Black at 3.5% (11). The racial and ethnic makeup of the workforce reflects the mostly rural white communities that comprise the counties in the study.

Salary Information

Annual salary for workers and supervisors is depicted in Figure 6. Data are missing for 3 workers. The distribution of salaries for both supervisors and workers are bi-modal due to the different salary structures among the counties. Larger counties have higher beginning salaries. Among workers in this study 66% (205) have salaries less than $35,000 compared with 46% (39) of supervisors who have salaries greater than $35,001.

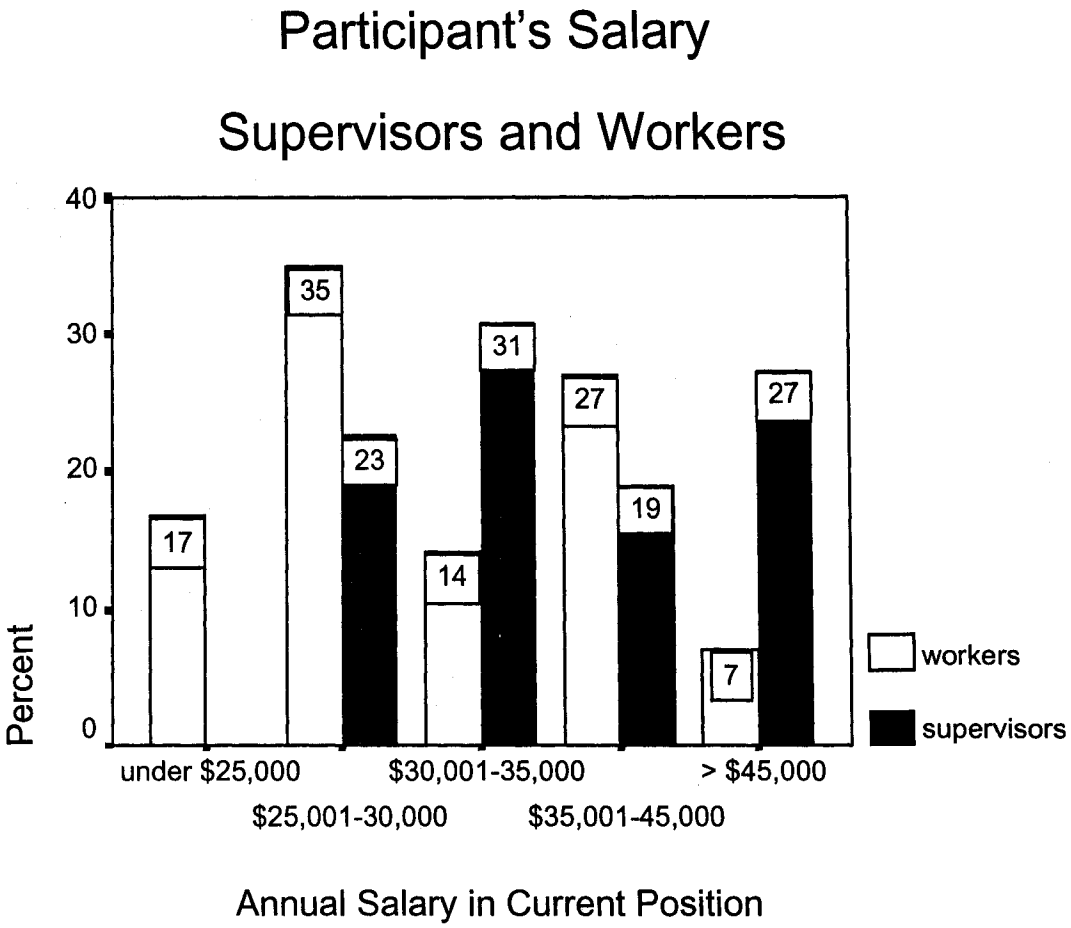

Figure 6 Annual Salary in Current Position

Household income is illustrated in Table 1. A higher proportion of the supervisors live in households with incomes greater than $50,000 (73% compared to 44% of workers).

Table 1

Household Income for Workers and Supervisors

Salary Categories	Workers		Supervisors	
	N	%	N	%
$15,000-$25,000	16	5.1%	1	1.7%
$25,001-$35,000	58	18.5%	6	7.1%
$35,001-$50,000	82	26.0%	12	14.3%
$50,001-$70,000	76	24.2%	27	32.1%
More than $70,000	63	20.0%	35	41.7%
Missing	19	6.1%	3	3.6%

Unit Position

Two measures of unit assignments were made illustrated by Table 2. One indicates how many total years an individual worker or supervisor has spent in a unit. The total year count includes repeat time in a particular unit. Current assignment tells where respondents were working at the time of the survey.

Table 2

Average Time in Work Unit and Current Assignment Supervisors and Worker

	Supervisors			Workers		
Work Unit	Avg. Time in Work Unit Years	Current Assignment N	%	Avg. Time in Work Unit Years	Current Assignment N	%
CPS	9.0	27	32.1	3.5	124	39.5
Court	1.9	0		1.7	9	2.9
Prevention	4.8	4	16.7	3.5	78	24.8
Adoption	7.9	6	7.1	4.7	23	7.3
Foster Care	5.6	23	27.4	3.6	91	29.0
Family Pres.	5.1	0		2.7	7	2.2
Other	4.0	3	3.6	3.6	7	2.2

Between both worker and supervisor respondents, the majority are currently assigned to either Child Protective Services or Foster Care (supervisors 32% and 27.4% respectively, 39.5% and 29% respectively). Because both workers and supervisors can have multiple assignments the totals for current position may exceed 100%.

Years in Child Welfare, Current Agency, and Current Position

Figures 7 and 8 illustrate both mean and median length of time that respondents have been in the field of child welfare, in their agency and their position.

Among workers 31% have been in child welfare 2 years or less, 38% have been in the agency 2 years or less, and 52.5% have been in their position 2 years or less.

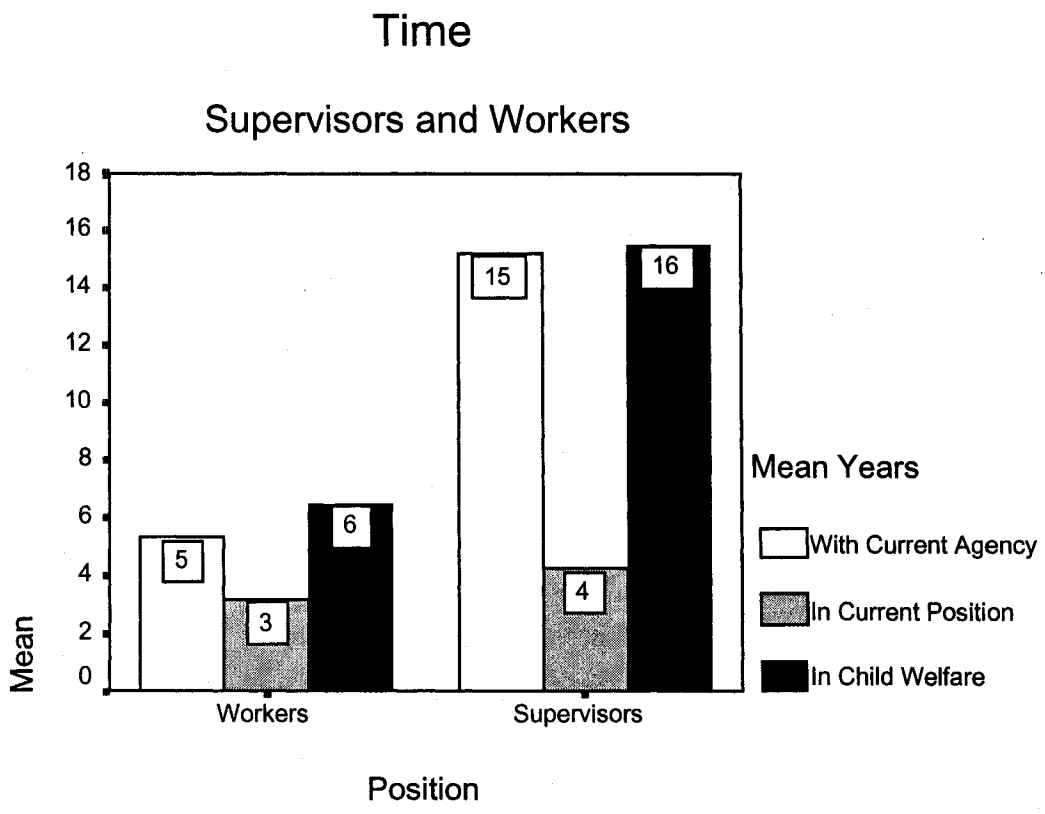

Figure 7 Mean Years with Current Agency, In Current Position and In Child Welfare For Supervisors and Workers

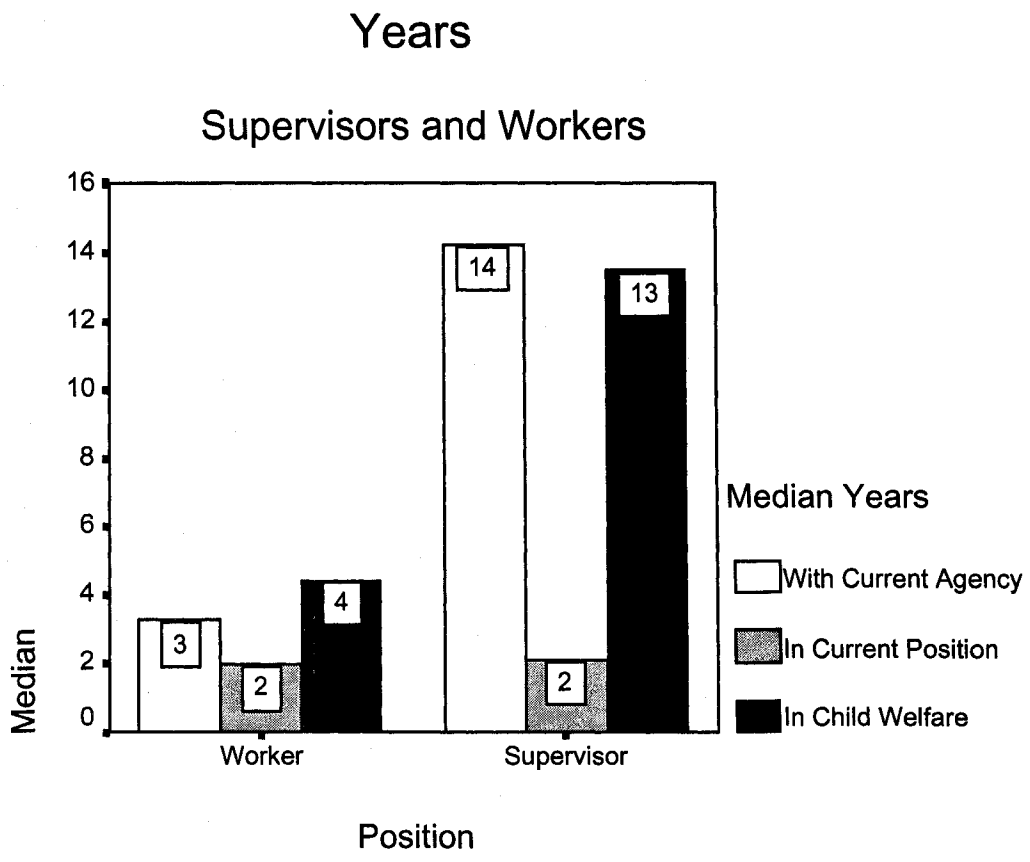

Figure 8 Median Years with Current Agency, in Current Position, and in Child Welfare for Supervisors and Workers

Length of Time with Current Supervisor

When respondents were asked how long their current supervisor had supervised them 70% (284) indicated 6 months or more, 25% (99) indicated between 1 and 6 months and 5% (19) indicated one month or less.

Caseload Size

Caseload size was measured on three dimensions: number of children on your caseload; foster care families on your caseload; and biological parents on

your caseload. The data, particularly on number of children on your caseload have an unexpectedly large range with a minimum of 0 and maximum of 1,700. Because the mean is affected by a skewed distribution the median is provided as a means of central tendency. Subsequently we learned that counties have different categories for counting caseload so these data may present an inaccurate measure of caseload size. In addition, supervisors appear to have interpreted this question differently with some reporting 0 since they do not have direct case responsibility and others reporting in the hundreds up to 1,700 children on their caseload, presumably reflecting the caseload size for all of the workers they supervise. These data cannot be assumed to accurately reflect caseload size as originally defined for the survey. They paint a picture of worker and supervisor perceptions of their current caseloads, which are surprisingly high. The average number of children for supervisors is 164.5 (median 50; SD 298.94), for workers 42.6 (median 30, SD 41.63). The average number of foster families on the caseload for supervisors is 12.4 (median 1.5, SD 24.5), for workers the average is 6.0 (median 3, SD 9). The average number of biological parents on a caseload for supervisors is 111.6 (median 20.5, SD 253), for workers the average is 25.6 (median 20, SD 22.76).

Tasks

Respondents were asked what percentage of their week was spent on particular tasks. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate respondent's description of time on tasks for workers and supervisors. Paperwork is perceived by workers to

consume the largest portion of work time in any given week. Workers report that 45% of their time is dedicated to paperwork and 32% to direct practice.

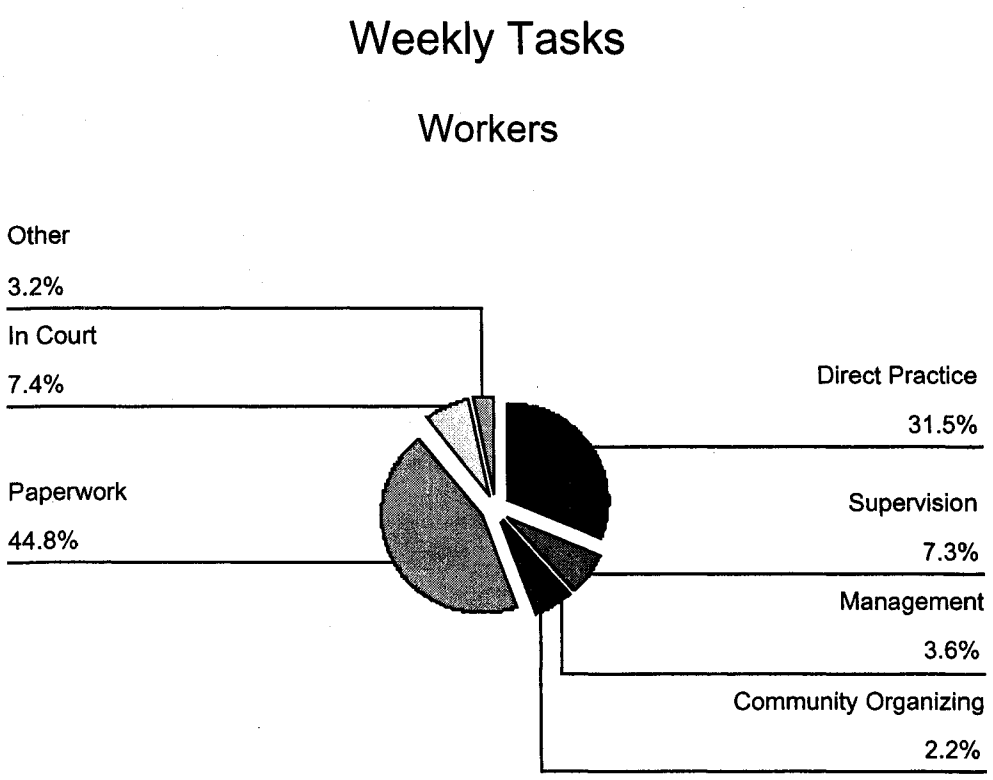

Figure 9 Weekly Tasks for Workers

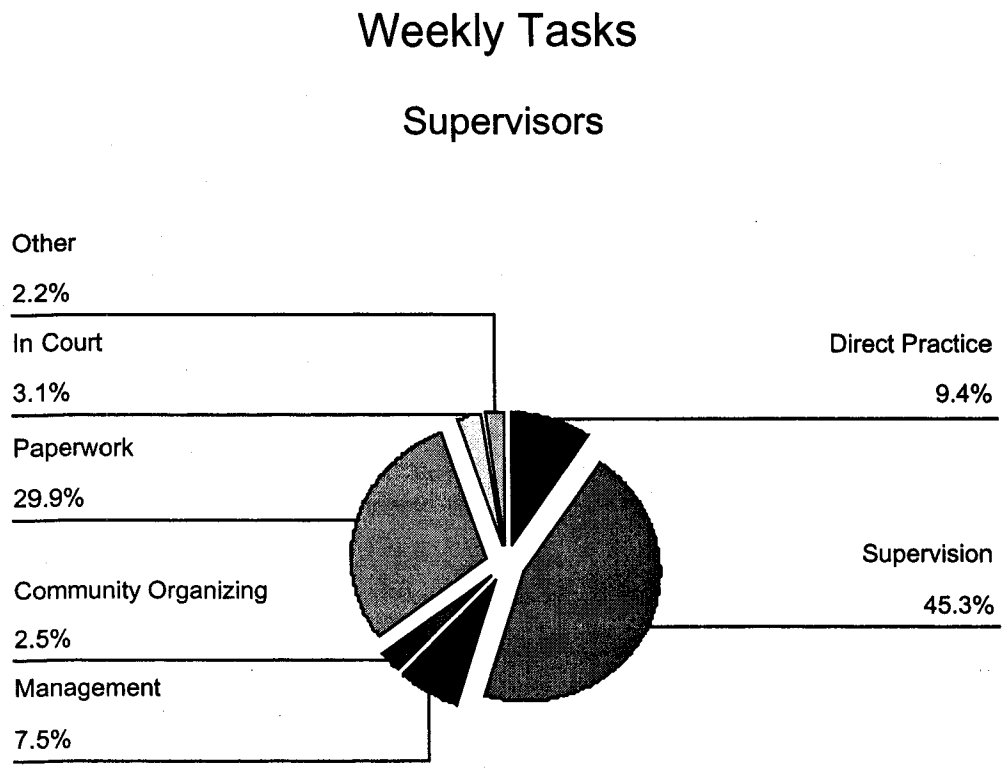

Figure 10 Weekly Tasks for Supervisors

Educational Background

When asked about educational background, 88% (356) identified themselves as having a baccalaureate level degree, 12% (48) did not answer this question. Responses represent 284 (90%) workers and 72 (86%) supervisors. A baccalaureate degree is a prerequisite for the caseworker position in NY State so it is assumed that all 404 respondents have this degree. The following baccalaureate majors were specified in order of frequency; social sciences (69), psychology and related fields (67), education (37), criminal justice (28), human services (24), social work (22), business (22), english/communications (20),

health (16), political science (11), child and family services (7), biology (1), other (32).

There are 57 (14%) respondents who identified themselves as having completed a master's degree, 43 (14%) workers and 14 (17%) supervisors. The following graduate degree majors were specified in order of frequency; social work (21), education (11), liberal arts/humanities (8), health (4), psychology/counseling (4), criminal justice (3) and other (6). Thirty (7%) respondents identified themselves as having completed graduate credits towards a master's degree, 21 (7%) workers and 9 (11%) supervisors. Respondents identified their major as social work (13), unspecified (12) and counseling (5).

A total of 8 (2%) have a second graduate degree or credit towards a post-graduate degree specified as; education (1), other (1), credit towards MSW (2) and credit towards unspecified degree (4).

Degree of Supervisor

Data gathered on the degree of the supervisor came from less than half of the respondents, 147 (36.4%) supervisors were identified as having a BA degree and 48 (11.9%) as having a master's degree. Only 34% (138) indicated the discipline for their supervisor's degree. The disciplines of social work (26.8%), education (14.5%) and health related (9.4%) were mentioned most frequently. Other disciplines identified included: business, computer science criminal justice, English, human services, psychology, public administration and sociology.

Reliability and Validity

Content validity was an important consideration in the development of the instrument. The steps taken to improve content validity during the development of the instrument are described in Chapter 3.

Efforts were made to reduce the effect of measurement bias in the construction and application of the instrument. During construction, commissioners and their leadership staff reviewed and revised items to reduce investigator bias or "blind spots". Extra attention was given to methods of data collection to improve the response rate and reduce measurement bias. The steps taken in data collection are described in Chapter 3.

The survey instrument appears to discriminate among respondents in a meaningful way. Results achieved from the measures are in line with results from previous child welfare workforce studies.

Alpha reliability was evaluated for the survey items related to supervision. The reliability coefficients for the 24 supervisory items produced a standardized item alpha of .97 (item $\underline{M}$= 3.6, variance= .08). Coefficients above .75 are considered reliable.

Principal Component Analysis

In designing this study, the survey items for the supervisor section were designed to reflect supervision practice in four dimensions: accessibility, support, knowledge about the system and practice, and leadership skills. The dimensions were identified in the child welfare and workforce literature (Dickinson & Perry,

2003; Fox et al., 2003; Gibbs, 2001; Landsman, 2001; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003) described in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. In order to determine if the survey items do reflect different dimensions, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was completed on the 24 supervisory items in the survey. The PCA identified two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 accounting for 63% of the variance in the items. Orthogonal and oblique rotations were carried out to determine if two dimensions continued to be reflected by the supervisor items. The orthogonal rotation using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization converged in 3 iterations and provided the most clearly defined components for the two factors.

The first factor is being labeled Supervisor Knowledge, the second factor Supervisor Support. One item loaded on both factors, "My supervisor supports me in balancing the demands of my job with my personal life". The items for each factor along with the item weight are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Factor Scores for Supervisor Items

Supervisor Characteristics	Knowledge	Support
Cares		.658
Gives Help	.679	
Approval		.688
Helps Complete Tasks	.672	
Helps with Required Paperwork	.706	
Helps balance Job Life	.470	.461
Helps with difficult cases		.654
Helps me learn and improve	.729	
Consistent		.617
Considers Opinions		.835
Helps me set goals		.682
Offers creative solutions		.674
Explains decisions		.684
Listens to alternative perspectives		.821
Flexible rules		.804
Effective work	.594	
Reinforces training	.534	
Supportive of training		.515
Available	.563	

Evaluates performance	.689
Helps me learn the ropes	.744
Helps me prevent burnout	.627
Leadership	.719
Competent	.676

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
Rotation Method: Verimax with Kaiser Normalization (Rotation converged in three iterations)

In order to further test the strength of the two identified factors, a reliability analysis was carried out for the 14 items linked to supervisor knowledge and the 11 items linked to supervisor support. The standardized item alpha for supervisor knowledge is .95 (item M = 3.5, variance .10). All of the items comprising this factor contributed to the strength of the construct. The standardized item alpha for supervisor support is .94 (item M = 3.6, variance .05). All of the items comprising this factor contributed to the strength of the construct.

The results of the principal component analysis support the existence of two dimensions in the scale used to assess supervisor practice. It is unclear whether the other two dimensions theorized, leadership and accessibility, are subsumed by the two main factors or were not reflected well by the questions contained in this survey. This will be considered further in the discussion section.

The combined PCA and reliability analysis offer support for identifying two primary constructs underlying the supervisory questions. The constructs contain all of the supervisory items. One item loads on both constructs. The two

constructs, supervisor knowledge, and supervisor support will be used as the key constructs in the logistic regression.

Tests of Significance

The first research hypothesis predicts a relationship between respondents' assessment of supervisor behavior and their consideration of looking for a new job. While respondents' assessment of supervisor behavior is the primary focus of the analysis, there are contextual factors that may influence respondents as they make career decisions. Caseload size, salary, age, gender, education, undergraduate and graduate major, and time in units, the agency, child welfare, and their current job were all considered as potentially significant influences on a respondent's decision to consider looking for another job. Job status as either a supervisor or a worker was also considered as a potentially significant factor. The Independent Samples t-test was used to test significance for interval level variables. This test was chosen as the most appropriate because there are two independent samples in this study, those who have looked for another job in the past year and those who have not. The Chi-square Test of Association was used to test significance for nominal level variables. Results of these analyses are reported next.

Independent Samples T-test

Interval level variables were evaluated using the Independent Samples T-test with the dependent variable "Have you considered looking for another job in the past year". Results for number of children, foster families and biological

families on the caseload were not significant as were the results for time spent in various work units (CPS, Foster Care, Adoption, Prevention, Court, Other). The results for percentage of time spent on various tasks (direct practice, supervision, paperwork, etc.) were also not significant.

Significant results were obtained for three of the time variables (time in child welfare, the agency, current position), for age and for the supervisory factors. The F values were very large for all of the time variables except for age raising questions as to the influence of sample variance on the results.

The results of the t-test for age and time in the job are included in Table 4.

Table 4

Independent Samples T-test for Age and Time in the Job

Variable	Mean Diff.	F	df	t	Sig.
Age	5.63	1.494	384	4.601	.000
Years with Agency	3.97	21.90	389	4.832	.000
Years in Current Position	1.25	21.364	385	2.654	.008
Years in Child Welfare	3.32	8.196	377	3.689	.000

Dependent Variable: Respondents who have and have not considered looking for another job
Equal Variances Assumed

The results of the t-test for supervisor knowledge and support are included in Table 5.

Table 5

Independent Samples T-test for Supervisor Knowledge and Support

Variable	Mean Diff.	F	df	t	Sig.
Knowledge	3.32	2.286	359	2.344	.020
Support	3.11	2.620	378	3.172	.002

Dependent Variable: Respondents who have and have not considered looking for another job
Equal Variances Assumed

T-tests were also performed on the same variables using "Are you a supervisor" as the dependent variable. The time variables were all significant. Supervisor knowledge and supervisor support were not significant. The mean difference between supervisors and workers is 1.72 for supervisor knowledge and .52 for supervisor support. Table 6 illustrates the results for the time variables when status as a supervisor is the dependent variable.

Table 6

Independent Samples T-test for Age and Time in the Agency between Workers and Supervisors

Variable	Mean Diff.	F	df	t	Sig.
Age	-6.17	4.54	384	-.458	.000
Years with Agency	-9.96	24.84	389	-12.62	.000
Years in Current Position	-1.02	11.28	385	-1.97	.05
Years in Child Welfare	-9.04	14.45	377	-10.1	.000

Dependent Variable: Are you a supervisor
Equal variances assumed

Mean age for workers and supervisors are both significant for those respondents who have considered looking for another job. The average age of workers who considered looking for another job in the past year is 36.7 years of age. The average age for workers who have not considered looking for another job is 41.8 years of age. For supervisors who have not considered looking for another job, their average age is 47.5 years of age, for those who have considered looking for another job, the average age is 42.1 years.

Since age and the time variables may be measuring the same effect, a correlation analysis was done. Prior to carrying out the correlation analysis, it was assumed that years in current position is not inter-correlated with age, since the median time for both workers and supervisors in their current position is 2 years. The question that arose is to what degree are these predictor variables inter-correlated. The correlation analysis for age and the time variables are presented below in Table 7. The correlation analysis is significant for each of the variables. Results for years in child welfare and years in current agency are high indicating that they may be confounded with each other. Age and time in position will be used as independent control variables in the logistic regression to reduce the possibility of multicollinearity.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix for Age, Years with Current Agency, Child Welfare, and Current Position

	1	2	3	4
Age	1.0	.564	.570	.367
Years with current agency	.564	1.0	.838	.508
Years in child welfare	.570	.838	1.0	.414
Years in current position	.367	.508	.414	1.0

All Correlations are significant at the .01 level for a two-tailed test

Chi-Square Test of Association

Nominal level variables were evaluated using the chi-square test of association with the dependent variable "Have you considered looking for a new job in the past year" independently and in combination with position as a supervisor or worker. Results for county, gender, race, BA degree, MA degree, current position in Child Protective Services, Court Unit, Adoption, Foster Care, Prevention, Family Preservation, and Other were not significant.

Salary was significant (x^2= 21.76, *df*=4, *p*=. 000) with 189 of those with salaries $\leq$ $35,000 (47.8%) stating that they had considered looking for another job in the past year in comparison with 63 of those who said they had not considered looking for another job in the past year (16%).

When status as a supervisor was included in the analysis with the dependent variable "Have you considered looking for another job in the past

year", salary was significant for both workers (x^2= 10.73, *df=4*, *p*=. 030) and supervisors (x^2= 9.12, *df*= 3, *p*= .028). Among both workers and supervisors who said they had considered looking for another job in the past year 17 (20.7%) supervisors and 128 (41.7%) workers earn $\leq$ $30,000. Among those with salaries greater than $35,000, almost the same percentage of workers and supervisors (25% or 77 and 23.2% or 19 respectively) said they had considered looking for another job in the past year.

Based on this bivariate analysis, salary will be included as control variables in the logistic regression analysis.

A second hypothesis was formulated that states that supervisors with a social work degree will be more likely to demonstrate congruence between espoused and actual supervisory practice. There were several problems with data collection that precluded testing this hypothesis. The most significant factor was the small number of respondents who completed these questions. As stated previously less than half (48.3%) of the respondents indicated their supervisor's degree and only 34.2% indicated the discipline of the degree. While social work was the degree identified most frequently for supervisors, there were only 37 supervisors so identified.

The result of a chi-square analysis for discipline of supervisor degree with considering looking for another job was not significant. An independent samples t-test was carried out on the scores for supervisor knowledge and support for those respondents who indicated that their supervisor had a social work degree.

When mean scores for knowledge and support were tested with the dependent variable of looking or not looking for a job in the past year, the results were not significant.

Based on the low response rate and the lack of significance in preliminary analysis, supervisor degree will not be included in the logistic regression analysis.

Logistic Regression Analysis

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and the bivariate tests of significance were essential preliminary analysis to prepare for the logistic regression analysis. The PCA identified two primary factors in the supervisory survey. The factors have been labeled Supervisor Knowledge (Factor 1) and Supervisor Support (Factor 2). Based on the bivariate tests of significance, several other variables had significant findings for respondents who said they had considered looking for another job in the past year and those who said they had not considered looking for another job. Variables with significant findings include: age, salary, time in the agency, time in child welfare, and time in current position. When status as a supervisor was layered in the results were significant for age, salary, and the three time variables (in agency, in position and in child welfare).

In looking carefully at the results of the correlation analysis, years in the agency and years in child welfare are highly correlated indicating the possibility that they may confounded with each other. Age appears to be a proxy for two of

the time variables (in agency and in child welfare). This is not the case for time in current position. Therefore age and time in current position will be used as two of the control variables.

In order to test the possibility of intercorrelation between the independent supervision variables, a correlation analysis was carried out on supervisor knowledge and supervisor support. A high degree of intercorrelation can lead to multicollinearity. This term is being used in the descriptive sense

> to indicate the degree to which the predictors are intercorrelated. Most investigators would probably agree that correlations of $r > .80$ between predictors should be considered very problematic. Correlations of this magnitude might suggest that the two variables largely measure the same construct and that only one, or a combination of the two be used. (Licht, 1995, p. 45-46)

Table 8 includes the results of the correlation analysis on supervisor knowledge and supervisor support. The results indicate that there is a highly likelihood that the two variables are confounded with each other.

Table 8

Correlations for Supervisor Knowledge and Support

Supervisor	Knowledge	Support
Knowledge	1	.878**
Support	.878**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

With such a high degree of correlation, the usual approach would be to combine the two variables into a single variable. The composition of the sample for this study and theoretical considerations based on previous research and the theory being tested direct this analysis to maintain two separate variables describing supervisory practice. The age configuration of the sample may result in unique interactions around supervisory practice, which are being examined here. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The Block method was used for the logistic regression based on the theoretical model being tested. A number of models were tested, with the independent variables entered first and last in a multiple block analysis to consider the shared variance between the control and independent variables. Both supervisor knowledge and supervisor support were analyzed independently controlling for age, salary, and years in current position. Salary was recoded as a dummy variable with salary >$45,000 as the reference category.

The model and block tests were significant for both (Supervisor knowledge x^2=33.63, *df*=7, *p*= .000, Supervisor support x^2=41.61, *df*=7, *p*= .000). The model chi-square is a goodness of fit test showing the significance of the overall model. When $p \leq .05$ the null hypothesis that the independent variables make no difference in predicting the dependent variable is rejected. The block analysis measures the improvement in fit that the explanatory model makes compared to the null model and tests the effect of entering the categorical variables. It was significant for each step (Garson, 2002).

The model estimates fit the data at an acceptable level as verified by the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test, which is above the .05 level of significance illustrated in Table 9. This test is an assessment of the overall logistic model. When it is not significant, the model fails to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between observed and predicted values of the dependent variable (Garson, 2002).

Table 9

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test of Significance Logistic Regression

Supervisor	Chi Square	df	Significance
Knowledge	12.128	8	.146
Support	9.657	8	.290

The Classification Table of observed-predicted correct responses was 71.9% for supervisor knowledge and 72.2% for supervisor support. The

classification tables in both analyses do not support the assumption of homoscedasticity as the percentage of correct observed and predicted responses is different for both rows (Percent Correct for supervisor knowledge 11.2%, 93.% and for supervisor support 12.2%, 93.2%).

The results of the Logistic Regression of supervisor knowledge are shown in Table 10 and for supervisor support are in Table 11. When controlling for age, salary degree and year in current position both supervisory knowledge and supervisor support are significant. The odds of a worker saying that they have considered looking for another job in the past year:

- Decrease by 3% for each increase in rating on supervisor knowledge and
- Decrease by 4% for each increase in rating on supervisor support, when controlling for age, salary and time in position.

Table 10

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Supervisor Knowledge

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Supervisor Knowledge	-.029	.012	5.717	1	.017	.972
Age	-.039	.013	8.500	1	.004	.962
Salary 1*	1.052	.568	3.437	1	.064	2.864
Salary 2*	.750	.446	2.830	1	.093	2.118
Salary 3*	-.202	.464	.190	1	.663	.817
Salary 4*	.492	.462	1.132	1	.287	1.635
Time in Position	-.009	.032	.086	1	.769	.991
Constant	3.652	.942	15.026	1	.000	38.553

* Salary 1 < $25,000, Salary 2 $25,001-30,000, Salary 3 $30,001-35,000, Salary 4 $35,001-45,000

Table 11

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Supervisor Support

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Supervisor Support	-.043	.016	7.575	1	.006	.958
Age	-.040	.013	9.586	1	.002	.961
Salary 1*	1.161	.555	4.381	1	.036	3.192
Salary 2*	.775	.447	3.281	1	.070	2.171
Salary 3*	-.150	.447	.112	1	.738	.861
Salary 4*	.530	.440	1.447	1	.229	1.698
Time in Position	-.010	.031	.108	1	.742	.990
Constant	3.937	.967	16.567	1	.000	51.270

*Salary 1 < $25,000, Salary 2 $25,001-30,000, Salary 3 $30,001-35,000, Salary 4 $35,001-45,000

The results of the logistic regression indicate that the odds of respondents considering looking for another job are significantly influenced by both supervisor knowledge and support even when controlling for age, salary, and time in current position.

Results Pertinent to each Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

If workers strongly agree that supervisor behavior reflects espoused practice then there is a high degree of congruence between espoused practice

and theories- in-use, increasing the likelihood that a respondent will state that they have not considered looking for another job in the past year. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between supervisory practice and respondents acknowledgement that they have considered looking for another job in the past year.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that the odds of a respondent saying they have considered looking for another job decrease when they perceive their supervisor's knowledge and support positively.

Hypothesis 2

Supervisors with a social work degree will be more likely to demonstrate congruence between espoused and actual supervisory practices. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the educational background of the supervisor and the degree of congruence between espoused and actual supervisor practice.

This hypothesis remains untested due to insufficient data.

The next chapter discusses the interpretation of these findings, considers the findings from this study in the light of existing child welfare workforce research studies, identifies implications of the study for current theory, discusses limitations of the study, offers recommendations for further research, and identifies implications of the study for social work education as a partner in efforts to professionalize the child welfare workforce in New York State.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Overview of Significant Findings

This study was motivated by a desire to understand the effect of supervisory behavior on the retention of child welfare workers. Turnover in child welfare has been identified with a wide array of organizational, financial, supervisory and structural problems. In an effort to understand more specifically the role that individual factors play in the decision to forgo looking for another job, this study considered whether congruence between what supervisors say they do and what they really do, influences a worker's decision to look for another job. Increased supervisor ratings were shown to have an effect on the odds that a respondent will say they have not looked for another job in the past year. Positive ratings for supervisors were indicative of congruence between what a supervisor says they do and what they actually do in the opinion of their supervisees. Positive perceptions of supervisor knowledge and support decreased the odds that a respondent said they had looked for another job in the past year when variables such as age, salary and time in current position were controlled.

A second consideration of this study was whether supervisors with a social work degree exhibited more congruence in supervisory behavior when evaluated by their supervisees. This hypothesis was not tested due to a lack of data from respondents on the question of supervisor degree.

This chapter will: consider the findings from this study in the light of existing research studies, identify implications of the study for current theory, identify and discuss limitations of the study, offer recommendations for further research, and identify implications of the study for social work education.

Consideration of the Findings in Light of Existing Research

Attention to the child welfare workforce within the social work profession has a 60-year history in the United States. According to Zlotnick (2003) "Since the 1935 inception of federally supported child welfare services, the Children's Bureau encouraged states to use child welfare services funds to provide educational leave for workers to get a social work degree" (p. 3). Leadership within the Children's Bureau, many of whom had social work degrees, facilitated the partnership between child welfare and professional social work. Over the past 70 years, the connection between the social work profession and child welfare has waxed and waned. Numerous factors have been identified in the literature as influencing the connection including: poor working environments, (Ellett, 2000; Geen & Tumlin, 1999; Swift, 1997) declassification of positions, (Barter, 1992; Lieberman et al., 1988) high caseloads, (Cyphers, 2001, Gibbs, 2001) supervision, (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Leichtman, 1996; Rycraft, 1994) the lure of private practice, (Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987) low salaries, (Malm et al., 2001) organization and political structures, (Barter,1997, 2000; Carniol, 1995; Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992; Lindsey & Henley, 1997, Wharf, 1993) union restrictions, (Lipsky, 1980) the challenges of poverty, (Hutchinson, 1994; Pelton, 1989;

Schorr, 1988) and limited practice technologies (Briar-Lawson & Wiesen, 2001; Pecora et al., 2000).

Recent attention to the growing challenge of retaining child welfare workers and increased federal funding for educational initiatives in social work specifically directed towards child welfare workers have renewed the relationship. According to Zlotnick and Cornelius (2000) more than 40 states now have active partnerships between schools of social work and state child welfare agencies supporting graduate and undergraduate preparation in social work for child welfare workers. This funding has resulted in a new round of research exploring the factors that influence turnover in an effort to identify factors that can improve retention.

The results of this study reinforce the importance of supervision as a key component in child welfare workforce retention. Commissioners and their leadership staff identified specific supervisor behaviors, which demonstrated best practice in supervision. These behaviors formed the basis for the survey items used to gather information for this study. The identified behaviors offer a guide for administrators and supervisors in the training and evaluation of supervisory practice. The theoretical model for this study illustrates the link between effective organizational practice, supervisor practice and worker retention. The results of this study build on and extend the research identifying supervision as an important component in worker retention.

The results of the factor analysis supported the existence of two supervisory factors, knowledge and support. In the original conceptualization of this study, four factors were identified, knowledge, support, leadership and accessibility. While previous research has identified these four areas (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Leichtman, 1996; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994) the current study did not support this level of discrimination in supervisory tasks. From a workers point of view, supervisor behavior may be more uni- or bi-dimensional. In looking at the results from this study, the concept of leadership appears difficult to discriminate. Accessibility appears to be a component of support and not distinguished as a separate factor. The dimensions of supervision critical to workers is an area for further study. In this study, both support and knowledge were significant in reducing the odds that a respondent would say they have considered looking for another job when controlling for age, salary and time in position.

An area uncovered by this study, which is supported by some of the earlier studies in child welfare, is the effect of age on retention decisions. The bivariate analysis and the regression analysis in this study indicate an association between respondent age and decision to look for another job. Recent research has focused on MSW graduates as the population for study. These studies found no difference or a small difference in mean age between those looking and not looking for another job (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Fox et al., 2003; Jones, 2003; Rycraft, 1994; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003). The current

study invited all workers in high turnover districts to complete the survey. This sample may include a higher percentage of younger workers than other samples because these are high turnover districts.

Ellett's (2000) study, which also included all workers, supervisors and administrators and was a two state study, identified 58.2% of the respondents as older than 40. In this study, 59% of the workers are less than 40 and the median time in their current position is 2 years. The time/age variable may be a very important component of retention. This finding suggests that employee selection and socialization processes may be critical to keeping workers long enough to begin to feel competent and committed to the organization.

This study used a participatory research method to involve the leadership of each social service office in the design of the survey instrument and implementation of the study. A hoped for result of this method is a high degree of participant investment in the results and use of the results to design organizational change strategies. One example of the link between the participatory method and action strategies is found in the way the supervision questions were designed. The commissioners were actively involved in the development of survey questions. For the supervision items, the commissioners stated that the survey items reflected best practice. A way to strengthen the survey even more, and extend participation in the research process to the agency as whole, would be to involve the workers in a review of the survey items. Commissioners were given reports on the results of the data analysis for their

county and can use the mean scores on the supervision questions to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in supervisor practice in their agencies.

The theory used to guide this study, Action Theory, is designed to integrate research and feed back mechanisms into the everyday operations of an organization. The process of continuous feedback is critical for testing the congruence between espoused and actual practice. This study goes beyond the production of new knowledge to including the use of research results to improve the organization.

In summary, the results confirm previous findings that supervision is important in worker retention. The research method and theoretical framework include strategies for bringing the results of research into action strategies co-designed for systems improvement.

Implications of the Study for Current Theory

Although there has been an increase in workforce research in child welfare over the past ten years, there is little in the way of theory development guiding this research. In a meta analysis of workforce research in the human services, Barak, Nissly and Levin (2001) identified the lack of a theoretical framework as a major deficiency in this area of research. In a review of the literature completed for this study, Landsman (2001) and Ellett (2000) are the only authors identified as including a theoretical framework as part of their child welfare workforce research. Landsman (2001) "applies theoretical concepts

derived from occupational sociology to develop and estimate a causal model of organizational and occupational commitment among public child welfare employees" (p. 387). Ellett (2000) links "theory rich psychological constructs (i.e. human caring and self-efficacy), and important organizational factors (i.e. professional culture), and retention in child welfare settings. This study was designed to provide insights into these relationships and to contribute to our understanding of employee retention in child welfare work settings" (p.23).

The current study focuses on a particular component of workforce retention, supervisor behavior and develops a theoretical framework which identifies the connection between supervisor behavior, worker consideration of looking for another job and an organizational environment that supports congruence between what leaders identify as effective practice and what employees actually do in their day to day work. This theory is located within a research method designed to engage organizational leaders as co-researchers with a goal of utilizing the results of the research as a basis for identifying change strategies.

The results of this study reinforce the importance of supervisory practice, particularly supervisor support and knowledge, in worker retention as identified previously (Cyphers, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Ellett, 2000; Pecora et al., 2000; Rycraft, 1994). The interaction between organizational structures and support for supervision and worker retention are key components of the model for this study. Supervisors who demonstrate congruence between what they say

they do and what they do are likely to be working in organizations that support a Type II learning process. The structures in a Type II learning organization are similar to the work culture that reflects professional norms and values identified by Ellett (2000). These norms and values would include "administrative support, professional sharing and support among colleagues, and organizational vision/professionalism/commitment" (p.134). According to Argyris and Schön (1991) a Type II learning organization reflects practice that is generative, open to feedback, cooperative, and trusting.

This study builds on a theoretical base that is sparse and in need of further debate and testing. Since workforce retention is influenced by an array of organizational, economic, and personal factors, action to improve retention will be most effective if guided by carefully constructed and tested theories. The coherence between the findings in this study and those by Ellett (2000) provide a beginning point for further testing and refinement.

Implications of the Study for Practice

Guided by Action Theory, this research was consciously designed to create the opportunity for implementation of the results within the child welfare systems participating in the research. This study includes the analysis of respondents' perceptions of supervisory practice and the relationship, if any, between supervision and consideration of looking for another job. The findings supported this connection. The theoretical framework for this research offers the opportunity to work with the participants to use the results to create system

change. The purposeful link between research and practice is an important element of the Action Theory framework.

How is this carried out? Upon completion of the larger workforce retention study, each commissioner received an individual report describing the analysis of the data for that county. A member of the Workforce Retention Study Team personally brought the report and an executive summary of the results from the study as a whole to the commissioner and the county's leadership team. The report was discussed and the team members had the opportunity to discuss the results in depth. Part of each discussion was how to use the results in the district. This same process will be carried out with the districts for the more in-depth analysis of the supervisory data from this study. What are some possible implications for practice?

Districts now have a blueprint of specific supervisor behaviors that reflect best practice and have been demonstrated to reduce the odds that workers will look for another job when they have supervisors with skills in these areas. Commissioners have the opportunity to meet with supervisors and discuss the results of this research. The team can review the survey items, and discuss supervisor strengths and areas for development. They can discuss necessary administrative supports for development and improvement in specific areas. Supervisors can seek feed back from their workers on specific suggestions for improving supervisor practice. Districts can use the survey items to gather input from workers on an annual basis. Participatory research offers districts the

opportunity to use their data as a tool for continuous quality improvement. It creates a partnership between research and practice application and facilitates the refinement of the research questions as we learn more through evaluation of the application. The use of participatory research is creating a partnership between the county-based child welfare organizations and the Social Work Education Consortium, with the potential for long-term collaboration. This method creates continuous feedback opportunities with a focus on strengths based capacity building within the child welfare team. The inclusion of workers and supervisors as active partners in the research process will strengthen the benefits of this partnership. Participatory research with an action theory framework is an applied practice, where research is a particular practice method for organizational development.

Limitations of the Study

The examination of workforce retention requires longitudinal research or retrospective inquiry if one wants input from workers who actually stay and leave. Longitudinal research is not recommended for dissertation studies for obvious reasons. Retrospective studies often encounter challenges with sample size as it is difficult to locate a sufficient number of employees who have left their job and are willing to respond to a survey or interview. In workforce retention research, the expression of intention to leave is considered a proxy indicating an increased likelihood that one might leave. The act of looking for another job is a further indication of intention because an actual behavioral step is added, job-seeking

behavior. These are all imperfect approximations of actual leaving and staying behavior.

This study cannot make any claims about retention because we do not know who has actually left their job. We can only infer that respondents who say they have looked for another job in the past year are more likely to actually leave. This study will be greatly enhanced by following this cohort over 4 years to see who actually leaves and stays. The supervisory factors in this study will be included to determine whether supervisor knowledge and support are shown to affect leaving and staying behavior over time.

A second limitation of this study is the exclusive focus on one element of worker retention. The limited focus was taken purposefully, in an effort to examine the supervision dynamic more intensively. Participatory research is designed as a research partnership. In this study, the partnership is between the local district commissioners in high turnover counties, their leadership team and the Social Work Education Consortium. The commissioners were the ones who identified supervision as a primary factor influencing worker retention. How accurate is this perception? If supervisors are perceived by their workers to be modeling preferred supervisory practice, are workers more likely to say they have not looked for another job? What theory could help the commissioners understand the link between supervision and worker retention that is directly applicable to their organization? These important questions guided the design of

this study. The opportunity to respond to the immediate questions of the research partners guided the focus of this inquiry.

Working exclusively with the commissioners and their leadership staff excluded workers from direct participation in the development of the survey. The research team discussed this omission with the whole group. Some of the commissioners sought input from their workers and supervisors, but this was on an ad hoc basis and did not give voice to the workers in a formal way. Since the commissioners were the ones requesting the study, as a tool for improving worker retention, the decision was made to work with the commissioners, with a goal of involving the workers at a later date, and the recognition that their silence in the process was a compromise to true participatory research.

The second hypothesis was not tested due to limited data provided in the survey. In retrospect, the question about supervisor background may not be one that workers can answer with certainty unless told in advance that this information will be requested. The very limited data on this one section of the survey was in stark contrast to the rest of the survey where the response rate was high. Out of the original 409 respondents, there were only five surveys excluded due to a lack of information. Respondents appeared to be positively inclined to complete the survey. Researchers noted that participants at each site commented about the importance of getting input from workers on workforce concerns. A repeated theme from the workers across survey sites was "Thank you for asking us for our opinion".

Another difficulty in answering any questions about the influence of social work education on practice in these systems is the small percentage of respondents in this study who have social work degrees. It appears unlikely that this hypothesis could have been tested even if the data were available. Of the 356 respondents who identified the discipline of their baccalaureate degree, 6% (22) are social workers. Of the 57 respondents who identified themselves as having a master's degree, 24% (21) are social workers. This represents 5% of the total sample for this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study provides a more in-depth view of the importance of supervision as a factor in a worker's decision to consider looking for a new job. The analysis is from year one of a projected four-year longitudinal study with thirteen (13) county social services organizations. The same analysis of supervisory factors will be carried out in years 2 through 4 to see if the relationship between supervisory factors and the odds of deciding to forgo looking for another job remain significant. This data set also offers the opportunity to analyze organizational factors more thoroughly to see if these factors are significant as well. A further analysis could contrast organizational and supervisory factors and see if there are distinctions among these factors.

The use of a participatory research method has led to the opportunity to expand the survey to 13 low turnover counties in 2003. The commissioners who co-designed the current study asked for the comparison study and recruited their

colleagues in the other counties to participate. This is an example of the power of participatory research. Our research partners have paved the way for the expansion of this workforce retention research. This second phase of work offers the opportunity to explore the differences and similarities between supervisory factors in low and high turnover counties thereby improving the generalizability of this research to New York's child welfare workforce.

The current study provides the groundwork for further testing of the theoretical framework. The results of the first wave of data analysis has been given to the counties and discussed at length with them. Several counties are in the process of identifying ways they want to use the study results to improve current supervisory practice. We have the opportunity to follow these change efforts and see if they make a difference in worker retention over the next four years. The opportunity to work with an organization over an extended period of time is essential to building a body of research on workforce retention that is both valid and reliable. The choice of research method supports the use of research as a practice strategy to improve organizational practice.

Implications for Social Work Education

In the early part of the twentieth century, child welfare practice was a primary domain of professional social work. The history of the profession across North America had deep roots in work with orphaned and abandoned children, families of immigrants, and families trapped by poverty, mental illness, and other social problems of the times (Barter, 1992; Donzelot, 1977; Gibelman, 1999; Gil,

1998; Kitchen, 1995; Merrick, 1996; Pelton, 1989; Platt, 1977; Richmond, 1917/1944; Struthers, 1987; Wharf, 1990, 1993). Numerous authors have documented the abandonment of child welfare by the social work profession (Briar-Lawson & Wiesen, 2001; Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992; Jones, 2003; Liberman et al., 1988; Pecora et al., 2000; Zlotnik, 2003; Zlotnik & Cornelius, 2000). On the other hand, several studies have shown the relevance of social work training for child welfare practice (Booze-Allen and Hamilton, 1987; Dhooper, Royse, & Wolfe, 1990; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Fox et al., 2003; Jones, 2003; Liberman et al., 1988; Scannapieco & Connell, 2003).

New York State has 29 accredited baccalaureate social work programs and 12 accredited graduate level social work programs. Undergraduate programs are distributed more widely across the state than graduate programs, but most regions of the state are within a 2-hour drive of a school program. In 2002, four new programs applied for accreditation, including two in upstate New York. Data from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) indicates that 20% of each year's graduates in social work come from schools in New York State (S. Gelman, personal communication, September 2002). With additional schools seeking accreditation, this percentage could grow in the next four years. In spite of the large numbers of professionally trained social workers in New York and the evidence that a social work degree is the best preparation for child welfare practice, only 5% of the respondents in the current study indicated that they had a social work degree. Where are the social workers in New York State's public

child welfare system? The data from this survey represents a shockingly low number of social workers as employees in child welfare.

The low number of social workers may be indicative of a number of external challenges facing these counties such as geographic location (rural), low salaries, and population declines. It may also signal poor recruitment, selection and socialization processes, or problematic organizational structures, including supervision. Social work programs are well positioned to join with these child welfare systems as strategic design team partners to begin to address professionalization concerns.

Efforts can begin with tuition support for current employees to pursue graduate social work degrees. Schools can offer tuition incentives for public sector employees and re-designed field placements, which can accommodate educationally sound, but feasible internship opportunities. Schools can also become strategic partners to address perceived union barriers to the recruitment, selection and promotion of professionally prepared workers. New York State Civil Service regulations offer significant leeway for local districts to design civil service rules that are flexible and support effective recruitment strategies. Commissioners may not have the expertise in civil service law to pursue more flexible local rules. There may also be political barriers within the local civil service system, which could be overcome with community support. Community based social change activity is well within the scope and mission of social work education.

At the curriculum level, schools can examine the integration of child welfare content across the curriculum. Issues that are particularly relevant to practice in child welfare include; the connection between micro and macro practice, the mission and purpose of the organization in the context of the needs of those being served, and social work practice in bureaucratic environments with an emphasis on transformative change. A number of model curricula have been developed by states with several years of Title IV-E experience. California has developed a competency-based approach to curriculum development within the schools of social work. All of the schools of social work preparing child welfare practitioners have redesigned the curriculum for Title IV–E students to match the knowledge and skill acquisition objectives of the California Social Work Education Consortium (CalSWEC). There is an expectation that this will prepare practitioners to deal with the demands and stresses of the work and remain employed. Current research indicates early success for this initiative (Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Jones, 2003).

Kentucky has developed a similar approach for baccalaureate trained social workers. Five public and one private university developed two special courses and an intense practicum with a common syllabus for 35 selected students annually. The results of this initiative have been very positive with more than 80% of the students remaining employed after the mandatory 2- year payback period (A. Barbee, personal communication, September, 2002).

In the area of supervision, social work programs can offer training and consultation for supervisors. This study identified supervisor behaviors that represent effective practice. Training and consultation activities can be designed to reinforce necessary practice skills. Administrators can be encouraged to build the organizational supports necessary for effective supervision. Interviews with workers can enhance our understanding of supervisor knowledge and support. Participatory research creates the relationships necessary to move research results into action strategies. This study is grounded in a participatory method and can be used to develop improvement prescriptions specific to the individual county in the area of supervision. The study results indicate that workers will be less likely to consider looking for another job, if supervisory practice reflects the behaviors identified in the survey.

The New York State Social Work Education Consortium was created in August 2000 to begin to address the professionalization of the child welfare workforce in the state. The Consortium is a collaboration between the graduate deans and the county commissioners. This partnership has been successful in creating new opportunities for using the results of research, such as this supervisor study, to effect child welfare practice across the State. Schools of social work are well positioned to join as strategic partners with child welfare organizations in system change activities based on models of practice with empirical support.

Efforts in New York can benefit from research being carried out in other states as well. Schools of social work are the location for educational programs, which can prepare the next generation of employees for child welfare practice. This education can be designed to provide both skill and application knowledge for practice in the child welfare system. Other states have paved the way for designing educational pathways that improve retention of professionally trained staff. What is critical to the long-term success of this partnership is the commitment to sustain collaboration that tests program innovations and revises program models based on new knowledge with a continuation of the testing-implementation cycle. Serving vulnerable children and families effectively, demands that we put into practice the theory upon which this research is based, a Type II learning system designed for continuous learning and improvement.

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SOCIALWORK EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
WORKFORCE RETENTION STUDY
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Social Work Education Consortium Workforce Retention Study

SECTION A We would like to ask you some questions about various characteristics of your job/organization.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your job and the agency you work in by circling the appropriate number. Please circle only one number.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No Opinion4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. There are clear job expectations and performance standards for my work	1	2	3	4	5
2. There are clear measures of success and progress indicators for work with clients	1	2	3	4	5
3. My work uses client focused interventions	1	2	3	4	5
4. My work uses helping strategies that work	1	2	3	4	5
5. There is a "can do" attitude among co-workers	1	2	3	4	5
6. We have computer technologies that make the job easier and better	1	2	3	4	5
7. There are clear and effective incentives and rewards for a job well done	1	2	3	4	5
8. In my work, I have a feeling of success and accomplishment	1	2	3	4	5
9. I receive support and recognition from supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
10. I receive support and recognition from co-workers	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have a good relationship with my clients	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle only one number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. I receive support and recognition from clients	1	2	3	4	5
13. The work I do is recognized by other professionals in the community	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have the support to make work-related decisions when appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
15. My professional opinions are respected in this agency	1	2	3	4	5
16. On the whole, I have sufficient emotional energy for the job	1	2	3	4	5
17. My work offers opportunities to make a difference	1	2	3	4	5
18. My work offers schedule flexibility	1	2	3	4	5
19. My work offers opportunities for improving knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4	5
20. Physical work space is satisfactory	1	2	3	4	5
21. My work offers opportunities to ensure the safety and well-being of clients	1	2	3	4	5
22. My agency is committed to my personal safety in the office	1	2	3	4	5
23. My agency is committed to my personal safety in the field	1	2	3	4	5
24. There is a good fit between my personal life and work life	1	2	3	4	5
25. There is a good fit between my family life and work life	1	2	3	4	5
26. I receive support and recognition from family members	1	2	3	4	5
27. There is a good fit between my job and my personal health	1	2	3	4	5
28. The initial orientation to my job was adequate	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am prepared for my job because of my prior training and	1	2	3	4	5

education					
Please circle only one number	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
30. Training provided by the state is helpful to my work	1	2	3	4	5
31. There is a good fit between training and the demands of my job	1	2	3	4	5
32. The work has the right level of challenge	1	2	3	4	5
33. On the whole, I am able to do my job and not burnout	1	2	3	4	5
34. This job enables me to continue living where I live now	1	2	3	4	5
35. This job fits with my career goals	1	2	3	4	5
36. The pay is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5
37. The benefits are sufficient	1	2	3	4	5
38. On-call demands are reasonable	1	2	3	4	5
39. There is a lack of availability of other jobs	1	2	3	4	5
40. Interviewers for the agency give prospective workers an accurate picture of the work and the agency	1	2	3	4	5
41. In my agency, there is more emphasis on the quality of the services than on the number of clients served	1	2	3	4	5
42. The support staff in the agency is adequate	1	2	3	4	5
43. The agency provides the resources I need to help families and children	1	2	3	4	5
44. The amount of paperwork is reasonable	1	2	3	4	5
45. The computer systems used to track families are user friendly	1	2	3	4	5
46. The computer systems make my work easier	1	2	3	4	5
47. Uniform Case Records are helpful in day to day casework	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle only one number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
48. Uniform Case Records are helpful in my work with clients	1	2	3	4	5
49. I have adequate legal support at my disposal	1	2	3	4	5
50. I am able to distinguish between local rules and state regulations	1	2	3	4	5
51. The workload is reasonable	1	2	3	4	5
52. Cases are assigned in a fair manner	1	2	3	4	5
53. In the agency, work processes are efficient and streamlined	1	2	3	4	5
54. The agency's purpose is clear to me	1	2	3	4	5
55. The work reflects the agency's purpose	1	2	3	4	5
56. The agency helps me to implement best practices	1	2	3	4	5
57. The agency is respected in the community	1	2	3	4	5
58. When my co-workers are successful, I feel successful	1	2	3	4	5
59. When outsiders attack my agency, I feel they are attacking me	1	2	3	4	5
60. I would recommend my agency to others seeking employment in child welfare	1	2	3	4	5
61. All in all, I feel good about what my agency does for children and families	1	2	3	4	5
62. All in all, I am satisfied with my job	1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

SECTION B Next, we want to ask you about your future plans.

Have you considered looking for a new job within the past year? Yes___ No___

If **YES**, list the THREE most important reasons why you have considered looking elsewhere.

1.

2.

3.

List THREE changes that would make it possible for you to continue in this work.

1.

2.

3.

If **NO**, list the THREE most important reasons why you plan to stay.

1.

2.

3.

Additional Comments:

SECTION C Next, we would like to know about your work experience.

1. In about what month and year did you start working with this child welfare agency?
   Month_____ Year_____

2. In about what month and year did you start in your current position with this agency?
   Month_____ Year_____

3. In about what month and year did you start your first child welfare job?
   Month_____ Year_____

4. All together, about how many months have you worked in child welfare?
   Months_____

5. Please identify the child welfare service areas/departments in which you've worked, indicating how long you have done so.

	From (Mo./Yr.)	To (Mo./Yr.)
___Child Protective Services (CPS)	From _____	To_____
___Court Unit	From_____	To_____
___Prevention	From_____	To_____
___Adoptions/ Permanency Planning	From_____	To_____
___Foster Care	From_____	To_____
___Family Preservation	From_____	To_____
___Other	From_____	To_____

(Please Specify)_____

6. On average, how many hours per week do you work in your county child welfare job?_____

7. Please indicate the percent of the work week that you devote to the following (the total should equal 100%):

_____ % Direct services for/with clients
_____ % Supervision/ Consultation/ Training
_____ % Management/Planning/Evaluation/Research
_____ % Community Organization/Advocacy/Education
_____ % Paperwork/Computer Work
_____ % Time in Court
_____ % Other (Please Specify)_____

8. Please indicate the average number of hours per month you spend on-call
_____

9a. Are you a supervisor? Yes_____ No_____

9b. **Supervisors,** how many caseworkers do you supervise? _____

10. On average, how many children are in your caseload? _____

11. On average, how many foster care families are in your caseload? _____

12. On average, how many biological parents are in your caseload? _____

13. When you began planning your career, was casework your first choice?
Yes_____ No ____

14. Is this your first full-time job? Yes___ No ___

15. Is this job a "step up" from your last job? Yes___ No ___

16. If you turn back the clock and revisit your decision to take this job and join this agency, would you make the same decision?
Yes____ No ____

Why or why not?

SECTION D Next, we want to ask you some questions about your current immediate supervisor and your relations with this person.

How long have you been supervised by your current immediate supervisor?

_____1 Month or less
_____1-6 Months
_____More than 6 Months

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your immediate supervisor by circling the appropriate number. Please circle only one number.

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= No Opinion 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My supervisor genuinely cares about me	1	2	3	4	5
2. My supervisor gives me help when I need it	1	2	3	4	5
3. My supervisor shows approval when I succeed	1	2	3	4	5
4. My supervisor provides the help I need to complete my required tasks	1	2	3	4	5
5. My supervisor provides the help I need to complete required paperwork	1	2	3	4	5
6. My supervisor supports me in balancing the demands of my job with my personal life	1	2	3	4	5
7. My supervisor supports me in difficult case situations	1	2	3	4	5
8. My supervisor helps me learn and improve	1	2	3	4	5
9. My supervisor demonstrates consistency in decision making	1	2	3	4	5
10. My supervisor values and seriously considers my opinions in case decision making	1	2	3	4	5
11. My supervisor assists me in setting and assessing long-term case goals	1	2	3	4	5
12. My supervisor encourages creative solutions	1	2	3	4	5
13. My supervisor explains those decisions that I do not agree with	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle only one number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. My supervisor can accept an alternative perspective	1	2	3	4	5
15. My supervisor is appropriately flexible when it comes to applying rules	1	2	3	4	5
16. My supervisor is knowledgeable about effective ways to work with children and families	1	2	3	4	5
17. My supervisor reinforces the core training curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
18. My supervisor is supportive of any on-the-job-training I attend	1	2	3	4	5
19. My supervisor is available to me when I ask for help	1	2	3	4	5
20. My supervisor regularly evaluates my performance	1	2	3	4	5
21. My supervisor helped me learn the ropes of the agency	1	2	3	4	5
22. My supervisor helps me prevent and address burn-out	1	2	3	4	5
23. My supervisor demonstrates leadership	1	2	3	4	5
24. My supervisor is competent in doing his/her job	1	2	3	4	5

25. If possible, please identify the academic degree(s) obtained by your immediate supervisor.

Degree_____ Discipline_____

Degree_____ Discipline_____

26. Is your supervisor a male or female? Male_____ Female_____

Additional Comments:

SECTION E **Next, we would like to ask you a few questions about salary. Please circle the appropriate response.**

1. What is your annual salary in your current job at this agency?
   a) Less than $15,000
   b) $15, 001 - $20,000
   c) $20,001 – $25,000
   d) $25,001 - $30,000
   e) $30,001 – $35,000
   f) $35,001 - $45,000
   g) More than $45,000

Please rate the level of satisfaction you have with each item by circling the appropriate number. Please circle only one number.

1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Somewhat Dissatisfied 3 = Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied 4 = Somewhat Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
2. My salary at this agency	1	2	3	4	5
3. The non-salary benefits I receive	1	2	3	4	5
4. Opportunities for promotion	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION F **Next, we would like some personal information. Please print or check the appropriate responses.**

1. Age_____

2. Gender: Female_____ Male_____

3. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please check)

_____Black or African American
_____Hispanic/Latino
_____American Indian
_____Two or more races
_____Pacific Islander
_____Asian
_____Caucasian/White
_____Other (Specify)_____

4. Do you work more than one job? Yes_____ No_____

5. What is your annual **household** income? (Circle the amount)

e) Less than $15,000	d) $35,001 – $50,000
f) $15, 001 - $25,000	e) $50,001-$70,000
g) $25,001 – $35,000	f) More than $70,000

6. What county do you work in?_____

7. Degrees: a. Baccalaureate Degree_____Major_____

   b. Masters (please specify)_____

   c. Post-graduate (please specify)_____

8. Are you interested in furthering your formal education? Yes____ No____

   If yes, in what area?_____

SECTION G Training

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the applicability of the training listed below to your job by circling the appropriate number. Please circle only one number.

1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Somewhat Dissatisfied 3 = Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied 4 = Somewhat Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Never Taken
1. Child Protective Services CORE (In place through Spring 2000)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Permanency Planning CORE Curriculum (In place through 1999)	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Child Protective Services Interim CORE (In place Spring 2000-Spring 2001)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Child Protective Services Response Specialty (In place						

Spring 2001)	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Child Welfare/Child Protective Services Caseworker Common CORE (In place 2000-present)	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Child Welfare Supervisory CORE (In place 1999-present)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Other agency mandated training	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Other Child Welfare courses	1	2	3	4	5	6

Additional Comments:

- SURVEY END -

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions on this survey. Please turn to the following page for instructions on how to create your personal code.

CODE

Please use the following chart to create your personal code.

_____ _____ First Second Letters of your mother's first name	_____ _____ First Second Letters of your father's first name	_____ Month you were born	_____ Day you were born

FOR EXAMPLE: If your mother's name was Sally and your father's name was George and you were born on May 1st, you would enter:

SA GE 05 01

Once you have figured out your personal code, please write it in the box below.

- - -

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your cooperation and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Please place this survey in the enclosed envelope, seal it, and return the envelope to the secured box in the designated area. If you wish to mail the survey, attach the address sticker and send by first class mail.

Should you have any questions about this survey form or the study, please feel free to contact Mary McCarthy at (518) 442 – 5338 or by email at: mccarthy@albany.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a subject, contact the Compliance Office, Office for Sponsored Programs at (518) 437 – 4569.

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
WORKFORCE STUDY

January/February 2002

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a study of child welfare caseworkers and supervisors. This study is being conducted in 14 counties in New York State. The purpose of the study is to understand the factors that influence a caseworker's or supervisor's decision to stay in child welfare services.

We are inviting all child welfare caseworkers and first line supervisors in your county to complete the survey instrument. Assuring your confidentiality is very important to us. Please note that your responses will remain confidential. Only the research team will know your name and all identifying information is strictly confidential. No respondent will be identified to the commissioner, supervisor, any DSS employee, or anyone outside the research team. When we have compiled the data, we will present a composite report to the Commissioner. **Neither the commissioner nor your supervisor will know whether you have participated in this study. Data will be reported in a way that protects the identity of individuals participating in this study. Your position in the agency will not be affected by your decision to participate or not to participate.**

If you complete the consent form on the first page of the survey, you are indicating your willingness to participate in the study. We want to reiterate that while the research team will know your name, all identifying information will remain confidential. You are not required to complete every question, and you may withdraw at any time. Each survey has a cover sheet that has the title of the study. Please keep the cover on the survey. This procedure will ensure that your responses remain confidential during distribution and return of the instrument. At the end of the survey we will ask you to create a unique code based on information that is familiar to you. Your responses will be linked to this code, and only you will know this code. All responses will remain confidential. When you complete the survey, please put it in the envelope provided and return it to the designated collection box.

If you do not wish to participate in the study simply put the survey in the envelope provided with the cover sheet intact and return it to the designated collection box. Only the researchers will know if a survey is not filled out.

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
WORKFORCE RETENTION STUDY
SCRIPT FOR SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

Today we are asking for your participation in a survey designed to help us learn more about your experiences in child welfare. The Social Work Education Consortium developed this survey in consultation with the commissioners of 14 counties experiencing high turnover. We are inviting you to participate because we believe that the work you do is some of the most important work that there is. You input can help us understand better the factors that support caseworkers and front line supervisors in their jobs.

The Consortium is a joint undertaking by the Deans of Schools of Social Work, the County Departments of Social Services and the New York State Office of Children and Families; the Consortium's goal is to maximize the effectiveness of the state's child welfare services. We know that you are an important part of accomplishing this goal.

This survey is being administered in 14 Counties in the state. We are trying to learn more about the conditions that support workers in *staying* in these important jobs.

Assuring confidentiality is very important to us. Please note that your responses will remain confidential and no information shared with the Commissioners will be linked to you. Only the research team will know your name, and all identifying information is strictly confidential. No respondent will be identified to the commissioner, supervisor, any DSS employee, or anyone outside the research team. Composite data from this research will be made available to the County Commissioners and to any of you that are interested in it. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your response should take no more than sixty minutes. Although many participants are being surveyed, your participation is critical to the success of the study.

We will distribute the surveys and an envelope, which you should use to return the survey to us. Please circle only one number for the scaled questions. If you encounter a question where you may feel different on different days, please use the survey to express how you feel **on average.** When we are finished here, you will be able to return to your desk to complete the survey. When you are finished, put the completed survey in the envelope and seal it. If you do not wish to respond to the questions in the survey, just put the survey in the envelope and seal it. Please return the sealed envelope with the survey inside to the box by the member of the Workforce Study Team that has distributed it. If you have any questions, you can ask us now or call any member of the Team at a later date;

our names and affiliations are listed in the cover letter that you will receive with the survey.

We want to reiterate that your responses will remain confidential. The research team will know your name, when you sign the consent form, but all identifying information is completely confidential. No single worker will be identified to the commissioner or supervisor. Your position will not be jeopardized by your participation in this study. You are under no obligation to complete the survey. If you begin the survey and decide you do not want to finish answering questions, just place the partially completed survey in the envelope and seal it. Return it to the box by the member of the Workforce Study Team.

Some of you will be invited to participate in an individual interview. If you receive an invitation you are free to decide whether you will participate in it. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your job in any way. A year from now we will return to your county and invite all caseworkers and front line supervisors to complete another survey. You are free to decide whether or not you will participate. We are interested in understanding those factors that influence a worker's decision to stay in a position in child welfare services and can learn more about these factors by talking with workers over several years. You are always free to participate or not in any future research initiatives.

We recognize how busy child welfare professionals are today and greatly appreciate your time and contribution in thoughtfully completing the attached survey.

I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL LETTERS

University at Albany for original Workforce Retention Study

University at Binghamton for original Workforce Retention Study

University at Albany for dissertation research

Memorial University of Newfoundland for dissertation research

Office for Sponsored Programs

Management Services Center

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

TO: Mary McCarthy

FROM: Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 22, 2002

SUBJECT: **REVIEW OF PROTOCOL # 01-320**
ENTITLED: "Workforce Study"

After the University at Albany Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your request for a **modification (revisions to the survey instrument, research team script, and the letter to participants)** to the above-referenced protocol, under the expedited review process, it was given final **approval** effective **January 22, 2002, until October 1, 2002.**

If approval for the above protocol lapses, all research must stop immediately until IRB review and final approval has been obtained.

If you question any of these determinations, you have the option of requesting a full review by the IRB that will make the final determination. NOTE: The IRB may request a full review to consider any protocol approved under expedited review. You will be notified in advance of this review.

Cheryl Savini, CIP
Research Compliance Administrator
On behalf of the IRB

Att: 1

BINGHAMTON
UNIVERSITY

State University of New York

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 10, 2001

TO: Laura Bronstein, SEHD

FROM: Gary D. James, Chair
Human Subjects Research Review Committee

SUBJECT: HSRRC Approval of Research Project

Under the expedited review procedures described in the "Investigator Guidelines for Human Research Protocols", and in concurrence with the institution's approved Federal Wide Assurance of Protection of Human Subjects of March 28, 2001, the project entitled *"Workforce Retention Study"* has been found by the Committee Chair to be consistent with the principles established by this University governing human subjects research.

GDJ/ac
cc: file
Mary McCarthy

Office for Sponsored Programs

Management Services Center

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

TO: Mary McCarthy

FROM: Institutional Review Board

DATE: July 5, 2002

SUBJECT: **REVIEW OF PROTOCOL # 02-240**
ENTITLED: "Workforce Retention Study – The Influence of Supervision on Worker Retention (Dissertation)"

After the University at Albany Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above-referenced protocol under the expedited review process, it was determined that the study involves minimal risk and has given **final approval** effective **July 3, 2002.**

This approval is valid for one year only. You must request a continuation of the approval if the activity lasts more than one year. If approval for the above protocol lapses, all research must stop immediately until IRB review and final approval has been obtained.

If you question any of these determinations, you have the option of requesting a full review by the IRB, which will make the final determination. NOTE: The IRB may request a full review to reconsider any protocol approved under expedited review. You will be notified in advance of this review.

Cheryl Savini, CIP
Research Compliance Administrator
On behalf of the IRB

Att: 1
Cc: Kenneth Barter

Memorial
University of Newfoundland

Office of Research

July 16, 2002

ICEHR No. 2001/02-085-SW

Ms. Mary McCarthy
School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

Thank you for submitting your proposal for the research project entitled *"Supervision as a Factor in the Retention of Child Welfare Casework. A Doctoral Dissertation"* and a copy of the letter of approval from the committee on research ethics at the State University of New York, Albany.

It is the opinion of the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) that the recently proposed work does not involve research with human subjects, and therefore does not review by this Committee.

Thank you for submitting your proposal. We wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Inglis
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

GI/en