

"LOST IN THE SHUFFLE"
FOLLOW-UP WITH VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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ANNE M. MORRIS



"LOST IN THE SHUFFLE"
FOLLOW-UP WITH VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE

BY

©Anne M. Morris, B.A.

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Abstract

Child abuse has become an important topic in today's society. Increased awareness of abuse as a problem has led to a rise in the number of reported cases, which has put pressure on already overburdened social service agencies. In an effort to improve service to clients the Department of Social Services in St. John's, Newfoundland established a Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit. This thesis looks at the ability of the social workers at the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit and the district offices of the Department of Social Services, within the St. John's area, to provide adequate treatment and follow-up to their clients. Information is based on a period of participant observation at the Unit during which time the social workers there and at the district offices were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with 36 clients who had been referred to the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit to determine their perceptions of the types of services they received. These clients discussed positive and negative aspects of their treatment and offered suggestions for improvement.

The findings suggest that the social workers' efforts to help their clients were constrained by the bureaucratic structure in which they operated. They were overworked and overburdened with large case loads. They lacked sufficient financial and referral resources. Workers experienced feelings

of isolation in the district offices where job satisfaction was low and staff turnover high. The workers at the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit developed an informal organization or sub-culture which did not solve the structural problems but allowed them to acquire informal mechanisms to cope with the situation and thus provide a better service to clients.

These findings suggest that changes are necessary in the organization of Child Protection Services as part of the bureaucratic structure. The positive aspects of the Unit, e.g. the support network for the workers, need to be reviewed and extended to others involved in child protection services. An ongoing evaluation that consults with clients as the service receivers should be a component of child protection services. This would enable adjustments to be made on a regular basis that would improve service to clients and make the social workers' job easier.

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Introduction

In recent years, Child Abuse has become a topic of growing concern in our society. Almost every day, newspapers are filled with new reports of abuse. Increased awareness and a decrease in our society's acceptance have led to a substantial increase in the number of reported cases. This has stretched government and community based resources which deal with these problems to the limit. Governments everywhere have been forced to evaluate existing programs and reorganize where necessary to successfully address the problem. In the area centered on St. John's, Newfoundland, there was a significant increase in the number of reported cases between 1986 and 1987. As a response to this increase, the provincial government's Department of Social Services established a Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit to coordinate child abuse services.

The research reported in this thesis focuses on follow-up services for victims of child abuse after initial referral to the Child Abuse Unit. A period of participant observation at the newly established Child Abuse Unit and interviews with staff and with clients who have received services from the Unit provide the basis for analysis. The thesis also explores the extent to which sociological research on client-centered organizations can shed light on Unit operation and how follow-up activities are performed.

It became apparent that follow-up services offered to victims of child abuse and their families were not always what the social workers felt were necessary or what was expected by the families. The social work staff appeared to be working beyond an acceptable limit in terms of time available and case load. It was also clear that certain organizational factors contributed to the difficulties of social workers had providing the type of follow-up they would have liked. These are the issues which will be explored in this study.

Knowledge of the follow-up that victims of child abuse and their families actually receive is a crucial factor for consideration when developing policy on prevention and treatment. Since the Unit had been set up only a short time prior to this research, clearly documenting its development and operation in responding to referrals and co-ordinating services in child abuse was a critical task to determine its effective delivery of service in the future. Research, guided by a literature review of similar organizations, can therefore assume an important function. Adjustments in service delivery are usually necessary along the way and should not be made ad hoc.

Another important objective of this study was to integrate the perceptions and strategies of the various individuals who receive and provide services dealing with child abuse. Discussions were held with the social workers who supply the clients with services, some of the outside agencies they interact with and most importantly the families who

receive the service. All had different perspectives on the nature of the follow-up offered. The social workers had insight into the problems that exist working within the system. The outside agencies and the clients themselves had valuable comments to offer about their overall satisfaction with the interactions that took place between them and the Department of Social Services. By presenting the research in a straightforward manner it is hoped that an important educational process can be initiated in which greater understanding is acquired through seeing the organization from multiple perspectives.

The research for this thesis began in the fall of 1988. Although a number of changes have taken place in the structure of the Child Abuse Unit since that time, they have not diminished the relevance of this work. It continues to provide a statement about how the Child Abuse Unit functioned as a small, knowledgeable, cohesive group of workers and how they were able to succeed as such. The analysis can hopefully serve as a valuable example for future programs. The interview data from the social workers and clients is important because it is likely the problems they identified still exist and are being dealt with on an ad hoc basis. Because of the volume and intensity of the work, those involved have neither the time nor the reflective capacity to sit back and contemplate how things could operate better, let alone implement the changes to such ends. The information in this thesis provides the

opportunity for staff and policy makers to view the process through the eyes of an impartial observer.

Chapter One

The Research Problem

This chapter provides necessary historical background about the development of child abuse as an issue in society in general and Newfoundland in particular. Following a brief review of the abundant literature on child abuse, the development of the Child Abuse Unit and its mandate are considered. Some suggestions of potential problems for this type of organization are offered based on a review of relevant sociological literature. The chapter concludes with an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

Definition and History

Child abuse was first formally identified as a medical condition called 'battered child syndrome' by Dr. Henry Kempe in the early 1960's. Since that time numerous definitions have been presented with the consequence that the 'battered child syndrome' has been expanded to include such behavior as physical neglect, emotional maltreatment, and sexual abuse. For example, Gelles, Steinmetz and Straus, (1980) define child abuse as acts, committed by parents or others against children, which society views as inappropriate or harmful. This definition depends on historically and culturally relative judgements for its meaning. Burgess and Garbarino (1983) define abuse as any non-accidental injury sustained by

a child under the age of 18 and resulting from acts of commission or omission by a parent or guardian. David Gil (1978) defines abuse as any non-accidental physical attack or physical injury, including minimal as well as fatal injury, inflicted upon children by persons caring for them. Ellen Wood, M.D. (1979) defines physical abuse as a non-accidental injury that is the result of an act or omission on the part of the parent or guardian that violates the community standards concerning the treatment of children. Other definitions discuss emotional and sexual abuse. Under the Child Welfare Act of Newfoundland the definition includes neglect, abandonment, desertion and children in need of protection.

The problem with defining child abuse is that it happens mostly behind closed doors. A physical injury is often the only sign of abuse and it is usually only severe cases of physical injury that are seen and identified. Also, each individual case implies the application of individual expertise and community standards. What one physician feels is abuse may fall within the boundary of acceptable discipline for another. Within certain religious communities physical punishment may be encouraged and not considered abusive. No one definition of abuse seems to satisfy all groups. A professional definition will differ from how the general public views abuse. Middle-class values may be imposed on low-income families and influence what types of incidents get reported as abuse. The absence of a clear, operational,

uniform definition of abuse can cause problems for those working in the area. Choice of definition is crucial for child welfare policy and planning because it supports decisions about who is eligible for services and what kind of services they receive (Ezell, 1990). Unclear definitions can cause case management problems, under-reporting, over-reporting, low rates of substantiation, unnecessary intrusion into family life and unwarranted strain on the child welfare system (Ezell, 1990). Parton (1985) suggests that an understanding of abuse based on structural inequality can inform policy and practice. For the purposes of long-term strategy the definition of abuse should be broad and include all forms of child maltreatment at the individual, institutional and societal level. Ezell argues that the definition of abuse should be narrowed and focus on the needs of the children. Even though broader definitions expand the eligibility for social services and impress funders, the goal should be an improved quality of life for all children.

The legal definition of child abuse has also been broad and imprecise. The current imprecision in legal statutes is a serious problem because care-givers need a clear definition of what behaviour is expected of them in that role. A clear definition is also extremely important for research which hopes to measure incidence of child abuse or how it affects society (Finklehor, 1983; Gelles and Cornell, 1985).

With such a variety of meanings, it is not surprising that there are few behaviors which can unambiguously be recognized as child abuse. Dingwall (1983) describes it as a socially constructed term determined by a 1) an individual's accepted definition of abuse, 2) who applies the definition, and 3) labelling a person as abused or abuser.

Child abuse is not new and indeed did not always warrant public concern. Throughout history, there has been a tradition of physical and emotional abuse justified either by religion or as in the child's best interests (Gelles et al. 1980). There is considerable evidence of child abuse and infanticide throughout English literature. One has only to read the works of authors such as Charles Dickens, which portray the late 18th and 19th century as periods of indifference and even active cruelty towards children. Children worked alongside their parents and the head of the family had complete control over their behavior. Since authorities did not wish to undermine the emergent domestic unit, government intervention was unlikely. In pre-industrial times 'childhood' did not exist. It evolved much later, in the mid 19th century, during the middle stages of capitalism, with the introduction of required schooling. Even then, the approach toward children in need was still mostly punitive and voluntaristic. The emphasis was on children helping themselves; hence many children worked long hours in factories. The conditions were terrible and these children often worked for nothing more than a place to

sleep. Physical punishment was the norm in families and institutions that took in destitute children (Parton, 1980).

Societal concern toward neglected or abused children came late in the 19th century with the rise to prominence of the middle class and its attendant ideology of domesticity. Housewives who found themselves with free time became involved in charitable work. They collected food and clothing for needy children. Orphanages were set up either by religious orders or under private benefactors. Children were treated harshly in these institutions and often blamed for their situations. Governments still looked at children in terms of control; e.g. children who had been neglected or abused grew up to be criminals and thus society had to be protected from them. The first laws addressing children focused on this concern. They looked at childrens' rights as different from adults' rights. Laws were restrictive and punitive. As late as the 1930's, laws addressing children were still premised on nineteenth century ideas (Parton, 1985). Child care policy, practice, and legislation were still primarily put in place to control children and prevent criminal activity, the aim being to protect society from potentially troublesome children.

Child Abuse in Newfoundland

In Newfoundland, the first legislation dealing with abused or neglected children was passed in 1834. It was called "An Act to Provide Maintenance for Bastard Children." It addressed

the needs of unwed mothers and the issue of support payments by fathers more than the issue of mistreatment. The objective was to provide for children without them being a burden on the government (Godfrey, 1985). Some significant steps were taken by prominent citizens and the church on behalf of children in need from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1826, an orphanage was established by the Benevolent Irish Society to look after the needs of poor children of Irish descent. The push to develop special care institutions did not come until the second half of the nineteenth century as the consequence of a cholera epidemic. In 1894, an orphanage for girls was established by the Sisters of Mercy. Much later, in 1960, they also took over the care of children of unmarried parents. By 1886, orphanage care for Roman Catholic boys was becoming established in the form of a residential industrial school. By the 1930's Mount Cashel Orphanage was formally established under the Christian Brothers and provided care for over 200 boys. The denominational orphanages continued until 1965, when all children in these institutions came under the custody and care of the provincial Director of Child Welfare (Godfrey, 1985).

Other than the religious institutions there was little help for children in need. A child welfare association was established by Mayor Gosling of St. John's in 1921 and he appointed a trained community nurse to try to deal with the problem of high infant mortality. Also, a charitable

organization called The Child Welfare Association, which began around 1925, looked after the health concerns of children and dealt with their food and clothing needs.

Further government involvement with the issue came in 1921 through a statute which covered the "Protection of Neglected, Dependent and Delinquent Children." According to Godfrey (1985:150) it stated an offence of cruelty as being committed by:

one who wilfully assaults, ill-treats, abandons, or exposed such a child, or causes such a child to be assaulted, ill-treated, abandoned or exposed in a manner likely to cause such child unnecessary suffering or injury to his health.

In 1944 the Welfare of Children Act separated for the first time the definitions of neglected and delinquent children (Smith, 1971). A Department of Child Welfare was established in 1949 at the time of confederation, and welfare officers were placed at different locations throughout the province. These workers initially had no training. However, provisions were made for them to take courses at the University of Toronto School of Social Work. They were responsible for all welfare related issues within their area. In St. John's, where there was more than one social worker in each office, reports of cases of child abuse were handled by the social worker, who had a generalized case load. Later, workers in the district offices were designated as child welfare workers. These workers were responsible to the office

supervisor. Child abuse was one of many responsibilities of that worker.

The number of reported cases was small until 1986. For example, in 1985, 60 cases were reported but that number increased by 420 per cent in 1986 (Evening Telegram, March 5, 1987) and reached 438 in 1987 (Working Group on Child Sexual Abuse, . Reported cases of child sexual abuse increased from 14 in 1978 to 250 in 1986 (Working Group on Child Sexual Abuse). These are dramatic increases for just a short period of time. However, these figures do not necessarily reflect a change in actual behavior patterns (Fifth National Symposium on Child Abuse, 1976).

Statistics about child abuse have not been reliable. They represent only reported cases, i.e. only those cases which have been identified as serious enough to warrant medical treatment or some other form of outside attention. Because of the private nature of the family many cases are never discovered. Many deeply entrenched societal attitudes about physical punishment (e.g. spare the rod, spoil the child) have recently begun to be challenged. It was only in the early 1960's with the identification of the "battered child syndrome" that this serious social problem became an area of concern. The media have played a major role in arousing public awareness by documenting a number of dramatic cases. Governments have begun education programs within various departments. The medical and teaching professions are

developing policies to deal with the issue. The rise of the Womens' Movement and growing concern about the breakdown of the traditional family have all contributed to an increasing public discussion of the problem. The establishment of a law requiring anyone suspecting a case of abuse to report it has been an important factor. The much publicised cases of prominent individuals who have been convicted of child abuse, as well as exposure of problems within institutions such as Mount Cashel, have further served to heighten sensitivity to the issue.

The Child Abuse Literature

Because child abuse has become such an important topic in society it has been widely written about. The literature often deals with specific issues surrounding abuse, such as the definition of abuse (already discussed), the prevalence of child abuse, the causes of child abuse, the characteristics of the abusers and the abused, and the types of intervention and follow-up that take place with victims of abuse. The following review focusses on these topics.

Prevalence of abuse

The literature discusses the difficulty in determining the prevalence of child abuse. Finklehor et al.(1983) describe the difficulties recording accurate statistics due to the under-reporting of cases in the past, and more recently, the

massive increase in numbers of reported cases. Although child abuse has been ever present in society, public concern about the issue is a fairly recent. The introduction of mandatory reporting laws has had a major influence on this increase. Gelles et al. (1980) point out that official statistics only represent the cases that come to public attention. The reporting of these cases is determined by the socially and culturally constructed definitions of those doing the reporting. So changing definitions also become a problem trying to specify how prevalent child abuse is in our society. Thus it is impossible at present to be certain how common child abuse is or how much its prevalence has changed in Canada in recent decades.

Causes of Child Abuse

The causes of child abuse have been written about in great detail. It appears that opinions have changed over the years about what causes child abuse thus a number of models have been developed that try to provide causal explanations.

The psychiatric model attributes abuse to deviant behavior by the abuser. It states that the person committing the act must be unstable, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This approach is very narrow in scope and, in fact, less than 10 per cent of abuse should be attributed to personality traits, mental illness or psychopathology (Gelles and Cornell, 1985; Shields and Hanneke, 1983).

The social learning theory attributes family violence to background factors and is called a 'generational approach'. This theory suggests that growing up in a violent home increases the likelihood of a person becoming an abusive adult (Fagan et al. 1983). The individual learns that violence is the way to handle certain situations and sees this as the norm. Similarly, the evolutionary theory described by Burgess and Garbarino (1983) offers a switch from psychiatric profiles of abusive parents to a more social psychological approach. It describes styles of parent-child interaction associated with increased likelihood of abuse. Children who have been disciplined in a physical way are more likely to discipline their own children in the same way. This model goes a step farther than the social learning theory and correlates patterns of family interaction with other social events, e.g. high levels of stress and the inability to cope with problem situations (Gelles, 1983).

Another theory that focuses on the individual discusses power dynamics. The more powerful person takes advantage of the less powerful one. It is suggested that abusers are trying to compensate for their own feelings of powerlessness in terms of being able to control social conditions (e.g. work situation or financial problems). It states that abusers have not only physical power over their victims but psychological power as well. This leads to victims blaming themselves, shame and humiliation, and feelings of entrapment (Finklehor, 1983).

The social-situational model is more comprehensive in its explanation. It sees two main factors contributing to child abuse: 1) structural stress, e.g. being out of work, on welfare, having financial or personal problems; and 2) cultural norms about force, violence and the use of physical punishment (Gelles et al. 1983). Linked to this theory is the socio-ecological approach which cites as factors contributing to abuse social isolation, geographic isolation, high household density (large number of children in the family), and family composition (families made up of step-parents or single parents) (Tierney and Corwin, 1983).

Feminist analysis recognizes abuse as rooted in unequal power relations. It presents women and children as victims. Cases in which mothers abuse their children are claimed to be the result of societal and interpersonal pressures on women. Thus the violence stems from womens' own oppression. The mother's role in the family is said to draw more attention because of the impact of cultural expectation and social expectations (Washburne, 1983; Martin, 1983; Kalmuss and Straus, 1983).

It is difficult to find a theory that provides an all-encompassing explanation. Gelles, (1983) felt the theory which best integrated aspects of all approaches was exchange theory (Gelles, 1983). This theory stated that human exchange was guided by the pursuit of rewards and the avoidance of punishment and costs. If an individual offered a reward to a

person, he felt he was entitled to one in return. If this reciprocal exchange kept happening the relationship will continue. If the exchange stopped the relationship would end. In the family situation, it is not feasible to end the interaction even if there is no reciprocity. This can sometimes lead to anger, resentment, conflict and violence. Gelles, (1983), states that violence is not always the last resort to solving problems within families. Spanking children is fairly common because of its wide cultural approval as a training method for children. Indeed, the family is probably the most violent institution in society. The private nature of the family reduces social control and people hit and abuse other family members because they can and get away with it. This theory has been used as a basis for treatment and policy issues.

Any usable theoretical model about the causes of abuse should consist of a combination of many different causal factors.

Who are the abusers?

There is much discussion about the characteristics of abusers and the abused in the child abuse literature. Gelles et al. (1980) suggest that mothers are more likely to be abusers than fathers, because mothers spend more time with the children, who sometimes interfere with their plans or self-concepts. They go on to say that this is probably the only situation

where women are more violent than men. Women are strongly programmed into motherhood; yet there is a lack of support or understanding for parenting that affects mothers more than fathers (Washburn, 1983). Often both parents are involved in the abuse. One actively participates and the other takes part in a passive fashion (McNeese and Hebel, 1979). It is also suggested (as discussed in the section on "causes") that children who were abused are more likely to become abusers themselves. More cases of child abuse are uncovered in urban areas than in rural areas but this is because more than 75 per cent of the population live in urban areas and the resources to detect abuse are also more abundant in the city. While child abuse is thought to be unrelated to social and economic position, it is most often reported in low income families. Some data suggests that the poor are more prone to family violence because of the stress caused by their financial situation. But the high rate of reporting may be due to the fact that the poor come under closer scrutiny living in high density housing areas or by being on social assistance. Although abusive parents appear to be randomly distributed throughout the general population, some studies report that abuse seems to be more common in certain groups; these include members of fundamentalist religious groups or other people who feel God expects them to discipline their children severely in order to raise them correctly, personnel on military bases, and families with financial problems. The vast majority of

parents who abuse their children are not criminals or mentally ill, although this aspect cannot be overlooked (McNeese and Hebeler, 1979). Who the abusers are is a question that cannot be answered in isolation from other factors as discussed above (Finklehor et al., 1983; Gelles and Cornell, 1985).

The literature provides some information about who the possible victims are. It suggests that often children with mental or physical handicaps or children that were unwanted become the victims of abuse (Gelles et al. 1980). These factors also cannot be considered without looking at the context and issues discussed above.

Types of Interventions Provided

Franklin (1977) discusses the importance of the crisis situation as a potentially productive time in providing service to victims of child abuse. It is at this time that the foundation for future management is laid. He states the importance of providing parents as well as children with an initial management plan that can combine protective as well as therapeutic roles. This includes keeping parents well informed, helping to reduce external stresses, using volunteers and coordinating therapy with parents. He suggests that all abused children should undergo psychiatric assessment. He also emphasizes that efficient management by a consistent person is very important and that contact should be maintained long after termination of services.

Two different approaches to intervention are presented by Gelles and Cornell (1985). The compassionate approach views the abusive parent as a victim who should be provided with as much support services as necessary. This could include education in how to be an effective parent, day-care support to offer mothers a break, or homemaker services to provide support in the home. The control model places full responsibility on the individual. This approach assumes that society affords equal opportunities for all parents to provide needed physical, emotional, and social resources to their children. Intervention would involve removal from the home and criminal conviction. This approach advocates increasing the cost of intrafamilial violence by cancelling the hitting licence. Finklehor et al. (1983) and Gelles et al. (1980) agree that a combination of both approaches is the best answer. A combination of services including immediate crisis intervention, support for families that will help alleviate stress, an emergency 'hotline' to help parents deal with crises, education, counselling and self-help groups, continuity of care and proper training of police officers to respond to family violence situations are all essential interventions (Baxter, 1985; Ezell, 1990).

Washbourne (1983) feels that from a feminist perspective intervention with families has failed to focus on the right issues. Treatment goals have re-inforced traditional female roles and behavior. Treatment programs and self-help groups

have focused on women becoming better wives and mothers. Only recently have the real issues been challenged by some innovative approaches using assertiveness training and self-improvement courses.

Prevention of further abuse or of abuse in general is an important consideration when discussing treatment. Fundamental changes need to take place in the values and beliefs that shape society. Norms that legitimate violence in the family need to be eliminated. The stresses families face because of economic or gender inequality need to be reduced. Families need to be integrated into a network of support, either family or community. The response capacity of the criminal justice system and child welfare needs to be improved (Finklehor and Yllo, 1983; Gelles, 1983).

Follow-up Studies

Follow-up studies in this area have mostly dealt with the long term impact of the abuse on the victims. A main focus was on victims of sexual abuse. A number of studies (Finklehor, 1987; Briere and Runtz, 1987; Conte and Schuerman, 1987) were done comparing adults who were abused as children with groups who were not. They found that most helping professionals underestimated the role of aversive childhood experience in the development of adult psychopathology. Adults who had been abused as children displayed different behavior patterns than those who were not. They exhibit feelings of betrayal,

powerlessness, depression, self-contempt, inability to trust or develop lasting relationships and suicidal feelings. These feelings affect how they perform in everyday life. Researchers also suggest that family support and the severity of the abuse are crucial factors in dealing with any type of abuse. Particular traumatic experiences of abuse can leave children with inaccurate or harmful ideas about healthy relationships with adults. A non-supportive family can counteract the ability of counselling and group support to help the individual (DeJong, 1988; and Mickey and Wyatt, 1987).

Other studies have addressed the issue of what is the outcome of having been identified as an abused child. Lynch (1982) conducted a study with 40 children and their families. These children had been admitted to the Park Hospital Family Unit in England. Lynch describes the initial problems the families faced and how they were followed. Follow-up included; what happened after children were removed from home, charges were laid and or prosecution occurred. Analysis showed few positive affects after therapy and the follow-up processes. The author points out the importance of treating each case individually and realizing the importance of the child's needs when treating the family as a whole.

An area that has recently become very important to caregivers and policy makers is the relevance of the types of services being offered to victims of abuse and their families. A few studies have been completed that begin to give the

consumers of the service an opportunity to reflect or express their views about the intervention they experience. Studies by Rivera (1988) and Shireman et al. (1991) though limited in size and scope, have become valuable sources of information about services. They present parents' perceptions of the treatment they received, what they saw as the most important services and their expectations. These families can have important input into case management procedures. Parents interviewed for these studies felt strongly about the services they received and about individual workers. Their definitions of different aspects of treatment e.g. 'counselling' often differed from the social workers. Clients usually thought 'counselling' would involve long term regular visits to the social workers until a problem was resolved. The social workers often called short telephone conversations where they had offered some advice 'counselling.'

Although clients can be the most valuable source of data, there is a lack of literature discussing 'client satisfaction'. But, the information clients provide about service can be the most appropriate to inform changes in policy and delivery. This thesis intends to broaden the scope of this small body of literature by providing a detailed analysis of problems of follow-up and the perceptions of clients of the St. John's Child Abuse Unit. The practical aim of the research is to offer suggestions to improve services for victims of child abuse and their families.

Problems Associated with Doing Research on Child Abuse

A number of problems have been identified by researchers when dealing with the area of child abuse. Finklehor (1987) and Ezell (1990) point out the diversity of individuals studying the problems. They come from a variety of disciplines and methodological traditions and provide explanations related to their own areas of expertise. There has not been a consensus approach to how issues are dealt with. Also, due to the nature of the issue, methodological problems have been of the utmost importance. It has been very difficult to get accurate samples of abuse victims and their families. As found by Lynch (1982) these families are very difficult to track down after the fact. The use of only publicly identified cases of child abuse can confuse any causal explanations and determination of prevalence. Once a sample is located it is difficult to get those involved to share information. Many want to forget about the incident, are embarrassed by it or feel threatened being questioned about it.

Because of the shame and secrecy surrounding child physical and sexual abuse the subject has been plagued with a history of myth and stereotype. Knowledge of and societal awareness about child abuse has increased significantly over the years as have the focus of the literature and explanations it provides.

The Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit

The increase in public awareness and in the number of reported cases of child abuse required state agencies to develop new policies and programs. Due to the massive increase in reported cases in Newfoundland from 1985 to 1986, people within the Department of Social Services recognized that some restructuring was necessary to make sure needs were met. It was discovered that an undetermined number of referrals had never been looked into. As well, referrals had even occasionally been lost, probably because there were not enough staff trained to deal with cases in this area. A committee, made up of some experienced social workers, was set up within the department to address this issue. From this committee came the idea for the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit. The Unit began as a pilot project in March 1987. In announcing its opening, the Minister of Social Services, Charles Brett, stated that: "The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador intends to increase public awareness of child abuse with a view to improving treatment to the victims as well as reducing its occurrence" (Evening Telegram, March 28, 1987).

The Unit's original mandate was to provide professional social work assessment and formulation of treatment programs for all reported cases of child abuse. Other tasks included research, initiation and utilization of a special team approach, public prevention programs and participation in training activities. A number of guidelines were set up for

the Unit concerning its operation and staffing. It was to be staffed by a social work supervisor and four full-time social workers. One of these workers was to be the lead worker and was to assume the supervisor's responsibilities when she was not available. Four social workers from the St. John's and Kelligrews offices were to be assigned as backup workers. The staff would deal with referrals within the immediate St. John's and Kelligrews areas. Workers from other areas could consult with Unit staff about a specific course of action with a particular case where necessary. All new abuse referrals were to be made to the Unit. Any cases re-opened after three months would be handled by the Unit, and all referrals would be acted upon within 24 hours wherever possible. Cases where the child was judged to be in danger were to take priority. Referrals for truancy and other less dangerous situations had to wait. The social workers would do an initial assessment of the referral. This might involve a trip to the home, a visit to the child at school or a visit by the family to the Unit. The staff were to consult all other possible sources of information to aid them in assessment, e.g. police, medical professionals, and the justice department. The completion of the assessment phase would be concluded by doing the necessary paperwork and forwarding it to the Director of Child Welfare.

Cases were to be held by the Unit for a maximum 30 day period unless otherwise justified. Short-term cases that did not require further services would be closed. Cases could be

transferred to the district offices before court appearances, but initial court appearances were usually to be attended by the worker from the Unit. When cases were transferred, the record would include copies of all information obtained during the assessment and other required paperwork. Case consultations were to occur between the Unit supervisor and the district office supervisor in all cases, and the worker from the district office was to attend the termination interview with the client and the worker from the Unit. The district office supervisors were to be notified verbally of all cases transferred to them. An operational chart of the Unit is attached as Appendix One.

This initial mandate was very extensive for a newly created program with a staff of only five people. It was important to know after a period of time in operation, how well the Child Abuse Unit had been able to follow its mandate. Had its inception indeed improved child abuse services? Although a research component was part of the unit's initial mandate, it was discontinued after a short time due to financial constraints. With no method for assessment, staff of the Unit and the Department of Social Services have no systematic means to evaluate the program. As stated earlier the most logical people to judge if a service is effective are those who receive it. Even though the operations of the Department of Social Services are client-centered, the clients

themselves had never been approached for their opinions about the service they received.

The Research Task

The research contained in this thesis came from an interest in the kinds of treatment/follow-up being done with cases of child abuse. It began with a series of preliminary interviews with several knowledgeable people who worked in the area. After discussions with the supervisor of the Child Abuse Unit and the Assistant Director of Child Welfare it was decided to design a project through which ongoing and former clients could express their attitudes toward the the Child Abuse Unit and the follow-up services they received. The clients could be asked questions addressing specific aspects of their contact, such as rapport with the social worker, amount of contact, duration of contact, availability of the social worker and what types of follow-up they received. Their comments could then be used to identify positive aspects of the service and identify any gaps that might exist. This would provide an opportunity for the Unit to re-group in certain areas if necessary.

According to Rivera (1988), there is a strong possibility that some problems would be found. She suggests that often new programs and procedures have to be implemented very quickly in response to a particular pressing need. There is usually little recognition or testing as to the effects the new

program could have on the clients. Thus, assessment must be done after the fact, if at all. This was the case with the establishment of the Child Abuse Unit.

Literature also suggests that client-centered services have particular problems because they are part of a larger, state bureaucratic structure. A few key problems will be discussed briefly here and later in more detail as they relate to the operation of the Child Abuse Unit. In focusing on the Child Abuse Unit as an organization the work of Anselm Strauss is particularly helpful. Strauss (1964:16) states that every organization has a structure. By this he means all the rules, agreements and understandings that exist for that particular organization. He tells us that, although these structures often develop as rational solutions to specific problems, unforeseen things happen and thus there are often unintended consequences. Without any formal testing of a new idea or new organization actual procedures are often based on a process of trial and error. Strauss (1964:15) says that:

As in any organization, in order to get things done people must not only violate certain rules periodically but must co-operate when no existing rules seem to guide action.

What often makes an organization succeed in spite of the constraints on its activities is its separateness. Strauss (1964:15) also describes the setting itself as being very important.

It is precisely here that the specialists see one another in action and work with one another. It is here that professional philosophies brought from training centers are

strengthened, muted, or transformed and that individuals undergo changes in their occupational and therefore personal identities.

The people within the organization come to support and depend on one another. They count on each others' expertise and experience dealing with different situations. The extent to which Strauss' comments apply to the Child Abuse Unit will be a core component of the analysis in this thesis.

Although the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit existed in a separate physical space from the Department of Social Services it was part of a bureaucratic structure. Dingwall (1983:20) tells us that:

fieldworkers in the public services operate within a legal and organizational context which constructs the data available to them and limits the conceptual or practical options for action through resource allocation and supervisory decision.

In serving clients, they are limited in the amount of decision making power they have. Moreover, there are legal boundaries, and fiscal restraints imposed by government cutbacks that constrain workers when trying to set up services for clients. Social Services Departments are, after all, an administrative arm of the state. They become a part of the great chain of command from voter to government to state action (Dingwall, 1983:107). They are one of many departments within the government looking for more money and are often at the mercy of whatever lobby group is most vocal at that particular time. A major problem facing the social worker within the bureaucracy is that they must operate on a set of rules

created by others who typically lack appropriate professional training. Decisions can be made by politicians who have no experience dealing with such problems thus decisions are often taken out of social workers hands. As Dingwall (1983:106) states:

Clients are dealing with office holders as representatives of an agency rather than with personalized service-providers. Moreover, those office-holders are themselves under pressure to ensure that their actions fall within the organizations charter. This implies the existence of a system of management, supervision, and review, linking service delivery with political objectives.

The social workers can end up providing a service that suits their supervisors more than one that is appropriate for the client. To what extent are such constraints relevant to the social workers at the Child Abuse Unit and to others who work in the district offices with child welfare cases? Because of the nature of the work, quality cannot be controlled by the inspection of a tangible product (Dingwall, 1983). As Strauss (1964) argues it is only by looking at the specific purposes for which an unit was organized that one can see if it is meeting its goals, and if so how. The Child Abuse Unit was set up to improve child abuse services in the areas of coordination, delivery, follow-up, and education. Was it in fact able to provide a better service? Was its ability to do so affected by its link to a larger bureaucratic structure? These are some of the questions that will be explored in the following chapters.

This chapter has provided background information on the issue of Child Abuse. Discussed was the historical development of child abuse as an issue and government's response to it. The inception of the Child Abuse Unit was described as a response to the massive increase in numbers of reported cases in the mid-1980's. Some of the problems associated with client-centered organizations as part of a larger bureaucratic were presented will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters. Chapter Two reviews the research process. It focuses on the methods used to study the Child Abuse Unit and to reach clients to be interviewed. It describes why these particular methods were chosen and problems that arose with the research process. Chapter Three discusses how the Child Abuse Unit operated and also how follow-up is handled by the social workers in the district offices. It describes the day to day operation of the Child Abuse Unit and the types of cases that are handled there. The mandate the workers are expected to perform and the elaborate routines and shortcuts that develop to cope with problems faced operating within a bureaucratic structure are reviewed. The literature suggests that the more expansive and intensive the expectations of the workers by their clients and superiors, the more likely it is that elaborate informal routines will develop.

It is noteworthy that problems encountered during the research process dealing with why clients could not be reached or were not contacted for interviews make a strong statement

about how ineffective the follow-up services of the Department of Social Services actually are.

Chapter Four presents the interview data with a focus on the different types of interventions clients received and their perceptions of how effective they were. The information discussed in this chapter re-emphasizes problems discussed in Chapter Two. The clients also offer many suggestions for how they feel the services could have been improved. These appear in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five provides an interpretation of the information collected. It will be argued that many of the problems observed are inherent to bureaucratic structures. Finally, Chapter Six summarizes the main points of the analysis prior to offering policy implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

The Research Process

This chapter examines the research design utilized in this study. It reviews the sources of information and how each contributes to the overall research. The chapter then discusses the sampling procedure, including initial sample size, the number cases finally interviewed, and the procedure whereby actual access to informants was secured. Finally, an attempt is made to describe various departures from the initial design and explain how and why they came about.

Research design is particularly important in a project of this type. It must be chosen with great care because of the sensitive nature of the subject. While it was difficult to decide on the proper approach to take to collect information the biggest challenge turned out to be accessing the clients themselves. This difficulty has major implications for what type of assessment can be done of a new service. In the course of this discussion it will become obvious that problems with access are themselves of great importance. They lead one to obvious conclusions about the service before one ever interviews clients.

The work for this thesis began in February, 1988 with a series of preliminary interviews with people employed in the area of child abuse. A four month period of participant

observation at the Child Abuse Unit began in September, 1988 and the final client interview was completed in September of 1989. This study was conducted in an exploratory manner; the methodology was largely inductive and "grounded" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Thus relevant questions and hypotheses emerged from observations and interviews with clients and/or social workers attached to the Unit. The general literature served primarily as a "sensitizing guide". The work is therefore best understood as an organizational assessment focusing primarily on staff and client concerns and reactions.

Information was gained from the following sources:

1. Participant observation at the Child Abuse Unit.
2. Semi-structured interviews with social workers working in the area of Child Abuse.
3. Time spent as a participant observer in client interviews and home visits with Unit staff.
4. Review of clients' files.
5. Client interviews by the researcher without staff present.

Field Research at the Child Abuse Unit

Finklehor (1983) stresses the importance of the participant observer approach in this type of study because of problems specific to workers within social services departments. These problems are tied to the bureaucratic structure and political nature of government departments. Any study involving these workers must be rooted in the day to day operation of the particular institutions in which they work. The specific types

of legal and organizational limits that shape their work options and practice can only be effectively described if the researcher is involved alongside those actually working within the process. A period of participant observation can also allow the researcher to note events as they happen and to assess the relationship between workers' descriptions of their jobs and goals and their actual behaviour. Participant observation helps make sense of data contained in records because it provides access to the context in which these reports are written. Finklehor (1983:21) states:

Records, reports or whatever are not literal descriptions of some reality: they are, rather, accounts which organize and, in some sense, create the reality which they describe, within the constraints of some particular occasion on which they are read. Researchers' observations, questions and inductions are, then, closely united.

A period of three months was spent as a participant observer at the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit. The physical layout and work structure of the Unit are described in Chapter Three. The time at the Unit was spent reviewing files, sitting in on interviews between clients and social workers, and attending case discussions. In each case I was introduced as a researcher working at the Unit and clients were asked if they minded having me present. If permission was granted, I also accompanied workers on home visits and sat in on court cases. I helped out when necessary by answering the phone or watching children while the workers were busy making arrangements for them. During this period there were a number

of informal discussions with the social workers about their jobs and the problems they encounter. The purpose of the study was explained to them and they were asked for input regarding the types of questions they would like the clients asked. This was an important period for gaining an understanding of how certain types of cases are dealt with, the informal mechanisms the social workers use for prioritizing cases, as well as the informal structure of the Unit. These observations will be discussed in the chapter on the Unit itself and in Chapters Four and Five.

Interviews with Social Workers at the Unit

During the period of observation and discussion some new cases that were referred to the Child Abuse Unit were "followed" by the researcher. This was necessary to gain a clear understanding of how cases were handled at each stage of their progression through the Child Abuse Unit. While following these cases and noting the types of interventions that took place with them, a number of questions concerning service became obvious. These questions referred to types and duration of follow-up, waiting periods and availability of resources. These were added to the questions arising from the legislative objective of the Unit and the general literature on client-centered bureaucracies. As indicated above, the social workers themselves suggested questions they would like raised with the clients. They expressed concerns about clients having to wait

while they fought bureaucratic 'red tape' to get financial assistance services. They also expressed frustration at not being able to get services for some clients who needed them. They were worried about the inadequate follow-up the clients were receiving and complained about their heavy work loads and their inability to give clients as much time as they would have liked. The workers really wanted to know how well they were doing their job. They wanted to know if the clients really felt they had been helped and how they could have helped them better. Another area that concerned the social workers was staff turnover. They wanted to know how the clients felt about that issue. Most of the workers had discussed at some point the problems the clients saw with the "system". They felt they knew most of the problems in providing services to clients and that most of the clients would know them too.

Review of Clients' Files and Sample Selection

The next three months were spent at the Unit reviewing files in search of an appropriate sample. The eventual sample was from a population of referrals that came to the Unit over a six month time period, October 1, 1987 to March 31, 1988. These dates were chosen to allow me to talk to clients six months to one year after their initial contact with the Child Abuse Unit. After this length of time they should have been able to make comments about follow-up services. Referrals to

the Unit, which came for many reasons and from a number of sources, were grouped by the social workers into three types.

Re-routed Cases were cases that had been referred to the Unit but were found to be on existing case loads at other offices. They were then re-routed to that office. This usually involved a phone call to the supervisor at the other office to let him or her know there was a problem with that case. This was followed with a written copy of a referral that was then sent to the appropriate office. A record of each re-routed case was kept on file at the Unit.

Transferred Cases included those cases that were initially dealt with by the workers at the Unit but required long term involvement. After the initial intervention had taken place and appropriate treatment had been set up, these cases were transferred to the district offices in their area for long term follow-up.

Closed Cases were those cases that were handled from start to finish by the workers at the Unit. These cases involved primarily sexual assaults that the workers felt needed special handling. They required counselling and court preparation and the workers felt the continuity obtained by having the same worker throughout was important.

The referrals that came to the Unit were recorded in a log book by the supervisor. They were listed according to reason for referral, when they came in, and whether they were re-routed or assigned to a Unit worker. Cases for the study

were initially taken from the names listed in this book for the relevant period of time. The names were located in the files at the Child Abuse Unit. The total number of referrals received during this time period was 328. Of these, 70 cases were closed at the Unit, 82 cases were transferred to the district offices, 63 cases were re-routed when received and 113 were still active on the case loads of the social workers at the Child Abuse Unit. The initial intention was to have a random sample of cases, but the eventual sample was somewhat more selective. Ten cases that had only one contact with a social worker or were deemed by the worker to be false reports were excluded from the study at this time. Some of the staff felt that a detailed examination of one difficult case might be more helpful than ten others with minimal contact. One social worker asked me if I would interview a client who had been having major problems and wanted someone to document the frustrations they had both experienced. This was included in the sample of cases closed at the Unit. Of the 70 cases closed at the Unit, 35 were chosen by taking every second case in alphabetical order. The number finally included in the sample was 170. These were drawn from the three categories of cases discussed above, regardless of the reason for referral. From the discussions in the literature it was obvious that a relatively large number was needed to get an adequate number of completed interviews.

The final number of clients interviewed was 36. This smaller sample size allowed time for each client to be treated on a personal, detailed level. Yet it was still an adequate number for the purpose of my research. Reasons for the small number of clients interviewed in comparison with the original sample size are outlined in the flow chart (Appendix B) and discussed in detail later. At this point it is sufficient to know that the factors that eliminated some clients from the study may have introduced bias in the sample because some clients appear to have been selectively excluded or included. For example, the social workers were relied upon to make initial contact with clients to ask them to participate in the study. The social workers tended to exclude the cases they had the least contact with or that caused them problems. An example of when this could happen would be the case of a family the social worker did not want to contact because he/she had a bad experience with them on the last visit or a family that the worker was embarrassed to get in touch with because contact was long overdue. This sampling procedure could provide a more conservative sample than a truly random selection. Clients interviewed were probably those who had good relationships with the social workers or were easy to contact. Given this bias any negative findings from client interviews might be even more significant.

Client Access

Client access and approach was considered an area of particular sensitivity. How could one elicit meaningful responses from clients? Because of the sensitive nature of the information to be gathered and to respect the privacy of the clients, it was agreed clients would not be contacted directly by the researcher. Any participation in the study was to be voluntary and the clients were to be assured anonymity. As mentioned, social workers who last had contact with the client or on whose case load they appeared were asked to approach them on behalf of the researcher. A brief outline of a suggested approach to take with the client was written by the researcher and given to each worker. It was hoped the social worker would emphasize the importance of the study and its possible benefits for clients or others. Because most victims were juveniles, it was decided to focus interviewing on the victims' parents or guardians, but to include the victim wherever possible.

A list of the cases to be contacted was sent to the supervisor in each district office, with a covering letter describing the study and the cooperation needed. This was followed up by a phone call to each supervisor and finally a visit to the office. At this time most of the workers at the district offices were interviewed and the study was explained to them more fully. They were told how important their cooperation was in getting the clients to cooperate. After the

initial list was presented to each of the workers, follow-up phone calls and visits with the workers were carried out to see how many people they had contacted. If a person refused to participate, an attempt was made to discover a reason. If social workers could not contact a person, they were asked to record this next to their name on the list.

The workers at the Child Abuse Unit were approached individually and given a list of names of clients they had been involved with. They were asked to contact these clients when they had the time. This was followed up in the same way with reminders by the researcher. If clients expressed a willingness to participate they were then contacted by the researcher. An appointment was made to visit the clients in their own homes. When the researcher visited them, the project was explained in great detail and a consent form was produced for the client to sign. This was read to the client by the researcher if necessary and again anonymity was assured. After this the interview began.

Research Instrument

Finklehor (1983:22) suggests the interview as the most appropriate method for this type of study:

The trend of the evidence at the moment points to the advantage of interviews over self-administered questionnaires. The personal interview appears to allow for greater rapport, gives opportunities for clarification, and reminds the respondent of the expectation of honesty.

After much discussion with my thesis advisor and the supervisor at the Unit, it was decided that the best approach to take would be an informal interview, largely open-ended with a fixed set of questions (Appendix C). From reading the files it appeared that many of the clients were receiving social assistance and probably were not well educated. This, and the sensitivity of the issue, ruled out the use of a general survey. An interview, during which the clients would be encouraged to discuss the history of their involvement with the Department of Social Services, seemed the best approach. They would know the information they provided might help themselves or others in the future. They would be assured this information would remain strictly confidential and that their names would never be used. The interview would be guided by the researcher to ensure that all questions would be covered unless the client did not want to discuss a certain aspect or issue. New questions would be added to the list as areas that had not been considered emerged in subsequent interviews. Not all questions would be suitable for all clients and they would be adjusted when necessary. For example, different questions might be asked to a single parent than to a middle class family.

Problems Encountered in the Research Process

There are a number of problems that can influence certain types of research. Some authors describe several problems

specific to research in the area of child abuse, many of these did have an impact on this study. Franklin (1977:109) discusses the problem of tracing families who have been involved in child abuse. He notes that many victims possess lower incomes and are residentially mobile without leaving forwarding addresses. Furthermore, he suggests, there is sometimes improper documentation of the intervention received by the individual or of other relevant information such as correct addresses. For these reasons the clients are often difficult to locate. As shown on the chart (Appendix B), 29 of the original sample had either moved away or could not be contacted. It is also possible, Franklin suggests, that some parents who have had contact with Children's Services will resist future evaluation of their children and may feel any further contact is an invasion of privacy. Because contact for this study came through Social Services, this concern could have influenced the willingness of some clients to participate in the study. Twenty-two of the people approached refused to participate.

Lynch (1982:3) argues that diminishing samples are not uncommon in studies of child abuse. Lynch cites a study by Martin et. Al, (1974) in which 65 per cent of the cases were not followed up. The attitudes of the professionals whose help the researcher must depend upon is a very important factor. Lynch says that some professionals see themselves as hard-working and overburdened and may resent the researcher and

feel the extra things they are asked to do cut into their existing work schedule or add to it. Also, professionals may be suspicious of a study which they think is evaluating their performance. They are aware of the constraints that affect how well they do their jobs but cannot trust others to see them. These factors could have been very important considering that in 65 cases there was no attempt made to contact the families. The significance of this number compared to the total population can be seen in Appendix D. The problems specific to this study can be categorized under the following headings: time delays, staffing changes, cooperation and access to clients.

Time delays were a problem from the very beginning. The researcher waited six months from the time the initial proposal was submitted to the Department of Social Services to the time the project was approved by them. This was a period of several follow-up phone calls and interviews. Indeed, the idea of conducting the research had all but been abandoned when approval was finally given.

Time delays were not a problem during the participant observation period but became a problem when making contact with the District Offices. Supervisors were difficult to contact. Phones were not answered, messages either were not received or calls not returned. The social workers themselves proved even more difficult to contact than the supervisors. When contact was finally made and they had a list of clients

in hand, there were long waiting periods before they had time or were able to contact people that could be interviewed. Sometimes things moved quickly and there were interviews to be done every day, but other times a week would go by with no new cases having been contacted by the social worker. The social workers had so many more pressing tasks to perform that to ask them to contact these clients for whatever reason sometimes seemed a terrible imposition, even though most of the clients should have been on their case loads.

Another factor that became a problem and augmented the time delays were the staffing changes. Supervisors changed at least three times in two of the District Offices. This meant re-contacting the office, often sending a new letter of introduction to the new supervisor and making follow-up phone calls to enlist their support.

A much bigger problem in terms of contact people was the turnover in social workers. In one office the two social workers had only been assigned to these case loads for less than six months. As they have to operate on a crisis intervention basis to cope with the high case loads, they were not familiar with many names on the list and in fact could not find any record of some. They did not feel comfortable contacting someone who was on their case list if they had not already had some contact with them in the last few months. In another office the two social workers had only been attached to their case loads for about a month. They were the third

workers to be in charge of those case loads that year. They found some of their clients were hostile because they had been shifted around so much from worker to worker. They were also not familiar with many of the cases on the list. Both of these workers moved from these caseloads sometime during the course of this study. At this office a student was assigned to help contact clients and ask them to participate. Although the student was very helpful, it was felt that the worker who was "permanently" involved with the family and had a trusting relationship with them would be better able to convince them that participation in this study would be in their best interests. Interestingly, for the period of three or four months that the student was there he was probably the most permanent fixture in the office.

A student was assigned to me at one of the other offices as well. She did a good job contacting clients, but it was still felt the social workers who had the clients on their case loads should also try to contact them about the study on their next visit or whenever possible. Two of these workers had been in their caseloads for a substantial time period but one was temporary and not totally familiar with all the cases.

The only site with no turnover and only a few additions during the period of the study was the Child Abuse Unit itself. Unfortunately, this had no impact on the number of people contacted to participate in the study. The workers at the Unit had case loads of over 100, were constantly getting

new referrals that required instant intervention and had no time to spare. The staff at the Child Abuse Unit were very cooperative. They put up with having me around on a permanent basis. They explained procedures to me in great detail and took me with them when appropriate. Some did not seem to find the time to contact the cases for me, which meant the number of interviews based on cases closed at the Unit was not as large as intended. To ask them to add a new task, which could mean several phone calls, to their overburdened day seemed a great imposition. They did try to help where possible and contacted nine out of the 35 in the sample of closed cases.

In general, the staff was cooperative to talk to. Interviews were informative and they outlined what concerns they felt should be addressed with the clients. Some of them considered my requests to contact people a drain on their already limited time and did not give it their best effort. Social workers at one office in particular complained to the District Manager that to ask them to contact 48 cases was too much. The supervisor at the Unit sent a letter in reply stating the importance of the study and that most of these cases should be on active case loads and should be contacted at some time anyway. It was at this time that the summer students were asked to assist me.

Actually getting to talk to clients was the major problem for this study. From an initial sample of 170 only 36 clients were interviewed. The places of fallout can be seen on the

chart (Appendix B). The most significant of these is the number of cases in which the clients were never contacted by the social worker. This reflects some of the problems that exist within the system.

To summarize these problems I begin with the difficulty in trying to contact supervisors and workers. If I had so much difficulty getting in touch with these people, a client with a problem that might need immediate attention would be in serious trouble. Another problem I ran into that would have a serious effect on clients was staff turnover. A client might just get comfortable with a worker and find the next time they visited they were talking to a new worker. There seemed to be no consistent mechanism to notify clients that their worker was changing; they just found out on their next contact. This approach seemed very inconsiderate of the clients' feelings.

The workers were also unsure of how long they would be in a position. The idea of "temporary" in a position needs to be evaluated. Workers cannot be expected to give a job their utmost effort when they may only be in a position for a few months. Most staff seemed to be hired on a temporary basis and were not sure if someone with more seniority might decide they wanted this job. I found it a very frustrating experience to phone for a worker I had been dealing with a week before to find they had been reassigned to another area. Consistency in follow-up would be difficult with this kind of situation in place.

High case loads caused major problems for the workers and were a factor influencing which clients got contacted. Because of the high numbers on their case loads, some clients who were supposed to be followed had never been contacted. There was just not the time to do so. Every day there was a crisis to deal with. This meant that a client who might have been followed closely by the worker at the Unit had not been contacted again once the case was transferred. If the client had a problem he might then try to contact the worker he was familiar with at the Unit. This re-enforces the statement by the workers at the Unit that they sometimes hold onto cases longer than they should for this reason.

Along with having a serious impact on the clients and the type of follow-up they receive, these factors have a tremendous impact on the social workers themselves. They feel overworked and overburdened. They have to deal with hostile clients because they have been unable to contact them as much as they should. They deal with hostile community groups who do not like the constant turnover in staff. They feel embarrassed to contact clients when they know they have not been able to do their best for them. Some of the workers were straight from school with no child abuse experience and felt totally lost in their case loads. They sometimes felt embarrassed to contact a client if they had been unable to get a service for them they knew was needed. The social workers were also hesitant to contact clients with whom their last contact had been

negative. They avoided contacting some cases where they were afraid a bad situation would exist that would require much time.

These were the types of problems encountered during the course of the research. These comments make a statement about the problems that exist within the bureaucratic structure, specifically the social services department. They will be discussed again in Chapter Five. The next chapter describes the Child Abuse Unit and its organization.

Chapter 3

The Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit

This chapter describes the Child Abuse Unit and its operation. The information was obtained during a period of four months spending every day at the Child Abuse Unit and the following four months dropping in on a regular basis.

Physical Setting

The Child Abuse Unit occupied a large older house on Waterford Bridge Road in St. John's. The overall setting was pleasant, with a friendly atmosphere. There was lots of open space and common areas for the social workers to gather. The house was formerly a home for delinquents. During the time the Unit was housed there some of the rooms still had bars on the windows; these spaces were used to store office supplies. To the left of the building was a big sign on which was printed "Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit." It was completely separate from other offices of the Department of Social Services and had enough space so that clients could visit for interviews and counselling. When this research first began, all of the social workers at the Unit were female. Each had her own office and her own phone. After a few weeks the number of staff increased and some social workers occupied desks in the hall and shared phones. The secretary had her own office. This was a check-in area where the phones were answered,

messages were taken, information on the location of each of the workers was listed on a board on the wall, and the different types of forms that appear in clients' files were kept. All individual client files except the ones the social workers currently had in their own offices were kept in filing cabinets in this room. All referrals that had been received were filed alphabetically under the headings; closed cases, transferred cases or re-routed cases. Directly outside the secretary's office and at the foot of the stairs was a waiting area for clients. Along with chairs for adults there was a set of table and chairs for children and a large box of toys. There was a kitchen where the staff gathered for coffee in the morning and for lunch. This also served the function of an informal meeting room, because many of the cases were discussed at these times. Interviews with victims of sexual abuse, were often held in a second floor room that had a two way mirror. The police and a social worker attended these interviews. This informal atmosphere was conducive to cooperation and sharing among the social workers. It was also a comfortable place for clients to visit workers away from the stigmatized district offices of the Social Services Department.

Staffing

When this research began in September 1988, there were five social workers, one supervisor and one secretary at the Child

Abuse Unit. A fourth year student from the School of Social Work came Thursday and Friday from September to December. A second student, in her fifth year, served a work term at the Unit and came every day from January to April. All the social workers at the Unit had experience working with child welfare cases. Their experience working with the Department of Social Services ranged from four years to eleven years. The supervisor was an experienced and knowledgeable person and the other workers brought their problems to her. The supervisor reported directly to the Assistant District Manager at the St. John's Regional Office. She consulted with him often, usually on approval for certain services. The Assistant District Manager was also informed when what was deemed to be a difficult or problematic case came in. Above this person in the chain of command were the District Manager and the Director of Child Welfare. Above them were the Deputy Minister and the Minister of Social Services. The Director never actually visited the office during the time I spent there, but I did meet the Assistant Director. The Director sometimes phoned to speak with the supervisor or certain workers about specific cases.

The secretary at the Unit occupied a very important role. She knew where everything was at all times. She also knew which social worker was handling which case. She was constantly busy answering the phones as well as doing secretarial duties. She was conspicuous by her courteous phone

manner. All the social workers were available for phone calls unless otherwise occupied. Calls were never intercepted by the secretary unless absolutely necessary and then messages were taken for the social worker when she was free. The staff worked very well together, with an obvious spirit of cooperation.

Types of Referrals

Referrals to the Child Abuse Unit came for a number of reasons; some did not directly involve abuse.

These reasons included:

1. physical abuse
2. protection (this includes neglect)
3. emotional abuse
4. sexual abuse (can include incest)
5. truancy
6. children beyond parental control
7. custody disputes
8. being the offender in a physical or sexual assault
9. any of the above in combination

Based on the list of reasons for referrals, it seems that the social workers are expected to be knowledgeable in many areas. It is also likely that many cases which are not actually child abuse (c.g. truancy) will consume considerable time and energy.

Numbers of Referrals Received

New referrals were taken over the phone by any of the social workers. The cases were recorded by the supervisor in a special book and assigned to the social workers. From September 1988 to November 1988 there were 74 new referrals. At that time each of the social workers had an ongoing case load of close to 100 cases. Each social worker did a monthly statistical report on the status of her caseload. This included the number of new cases, closed cases, cases transferred to the district offices and cases still being followed by the social worker. Sometimes the workers could receive as many as seven or eight new cases in one week. Not all the cases on a worker's case load required constant attention. Some were "dead", just waiting for the paperwork to be done on them so they could be closed. Some cases were waiting to have services put in place and then they would be transferred. Others were being followed closely. Between October 1, 1987 and March 30, 1988, 328 referrals were received by the Child Abuse Unit. Of this number, 48 were found to be already active at District Offices. The majority (75 per cent) of these referrals were physical or sexual abuse and protection cases.

Sources of referrals

Referrals to the Unit came from a number of sources, which included:

1. school (including teachers and counsellors)
2. medical profession/Janeway Children's Hospital
3. police
4. the victim
5. self-referrals from abusing parents
6. anonymous sources
7. parents who need help with their children
8. financial assistance officers
9. other professionals (other social workers, psychologists)

The supervisor mentioned that they got a large number of self-referrals. The referrals the workers seemed to find the hardest to deal with were the incest cases. The calls they disliked the most and found took time away from what they considered to be more important cases were the custody disputes and the truancy calls. The teenagers out of control also presented a problem because many of them were close to 16 and then would not come under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare. Many had behaved in this fashion for years and were very difficult to deal with at this stage. This was very frustrating for the workers because these kids needed intensive counselling and the services were just not available. The agencies that provided these services had long waiting lists and adolescents had to wait as long as three months to see someone.

Case Dispositions

There were three possible things that could happen to referrals to the Unit. The first option was that after referral the cases would be followed from start to finish by a social worker at the Unit who provided whatever counselling or other services were necessary. This was often the case with sexual assault cases. The worker at the Unit would prepare the victim for court and provide all necessary follow-up during the court process. In the second instance, cases that would require long term intervention would be followed for one to two months by the worker at the Unit and then transferred to the appropriate district office. The Unit worker would provide the necessary intervention when the referral was first received and set up whatever services might be necessary and then transfer the case out. The third possibility was that a new referral could come on a case that was already active in one of the district offices. This referral would then be passed on by phone to the supervisor in the office. A copy of the referral sheet would be kept at the Unit and a copy sent to the district office (see Appendix A).

Interaction with Other Agencies

The social workers at the Unit cooperated with a number of other professionals. They were in constant contact with

medical staff at the Janeway Hospital who help assess cases, and with the police and officials at the Justice Department who help decide if charges should be laid and advise on court appearances. The social workers at the Child Abuse Unit had neither time nor resources to provide all necessary services to their clients. Thus, they depended on agencies within the community that could provide these services. There were a number of agencies in St. John's that the workers at the Unit referred to on a regular basis. These included:

1. Adolescent Health Counselling Services
2. The Anderson Centre
3. Group Homes that exist in the St. John's area
4. The Family Life Bureau
5. Elizabeth House
6. Emmanuel House
7. Kirby House
8. School Counsellors
9. Psychiatric Services at the Janeway
10. Medical Services at the Janeway

This is only a brief list. There were many other agencies that interacted with the Child Abuse Unit. Usually the staff at the Unit got along very well with these other agencies. They seemed to have a very good relationship with the police and the RCMP, they worked with one or the other on a day to day basis. They had a good working relationship with the Janeway Hospital and with most of the schools. They were

sometimes concerned that educational therapists at the schools might try to handle situations themselves without contacting the social workers, but they usually did have a good relationship with the schools. This co-operation was essential because, in the cases of abuse by a parent, the workers tried to talk to the child in the school first. They referred many clients to the Adolescent Counselling Services and the Anderson Centre, even though there were not enough counsellors in these places and the waiting lists were really long. The workers got frustrated with the lack of services available, especially for teenagers. There were too few foster homes and group homes in which to place troubled teenagers. The drug dependency foundation also had a long waiting list. No group therapy sessions were being offered at that time. People within the Department of Social Services who were interested in doing group counselling sessions could not get funding. Students did hold group sessions occasionally, although they had little formal training in this area. The general consensus was that the Department of Social Services was very hesitant to put much money into prevention services with the consequence that when problems did arise and intervention was necessary it cost twice as much. There were some private counsellors available in St. John's, but they were expensive and the department would not always pay for them. There was also a shortage of parenting groups, which the social workers at the Unit felt would be a very valuable service. None was

being offered at that time. The workers often counselled families themselves but they kept getting new referrals and were limited in time.

The workers at the unit dealt with the legal profession on a day to day basis and they sometimes found this frustrating. They said that winning a particular case often depends on how good the lawyer is. This could affect an application for wardship or temporary custody of a child. The social workers often appeared in court where they had to give evidence and were subject to cross-examination. Waiting to be called to give evidence could be very time consuming and was time spent away from other important duties.

Some of the workers at the Unit also attended regular meetings at group homes and institutions such as Mount Cashel. They had input into decisions involving who was placed in these institutions but were usually subject to the rulings of the boards that ran them.

The social workers at the Unit and the supervisor in particular, also spent time visiting schools and talking to various community groups interested in learning more about child abuse. They did workshops with other professionals who work in the area to explain to them their role in dealing with child abuse. They also took social work students from the university under their wing and introduced them to their methods of intervention and follow-up.

A Day in the Life of the Child Abuse Unit:

Describing a day in the life of the Child Abuse Unit is a very difficult task. The days are so varied and so full that it is almost impossible. I will attempt to describe the stable events and most common variations. The day at the Unit began at 8:45 A.M. The staff gathered in the kitchen to have coffee. This gathering became an informal case conference where they discussed cases that were dealt with by the person on-call the night before. Any problems that arose from the previous day or that a worker expected for the coming day were discussed. Times were set aside with the supervisor for anything that needed to be discussed privately. The phone rang constantly and whoever was closest answered it. These calls were often referrals or clients trying to reach the workers before they got tied up with other things. Not all the staff were always present for these informal meetings. Some might have had early appointments or had to appear in court.

At around 9:30 the staff left to go their separate ways. The supervisor went to her office to review new referrals, record them and assign them to workers. She was usually bombarded with phone calls by people asking advice or referring clients. She made phone calls to the district offices to check if new referrals were already active on the case loads of the workers there. If the cases were already active in district offices, they were transferred out immediately. Records of the cases referred were kept in a

special book along with which social worker they were assigned to. The ones that were sent back to the district offices were distinguished by highlighting with a yellow marker. The date and time a referral was received were recorded so they could later assess their response time. The supervisor filled out a screening/incident report on every referral and these were passed directly to the workers to whom the cases were assigned. Lists were kept of how many cases each worker had and they were usually assigned new ones in turn. The supervisor said that although all workers at the unit had expertise in all areas there were workers who were better suited to certain kinds of cases and the supervisor made the decision about who got which cases. Sometimes if a worker felt she might have a conflict with a particular case (i.e. if she had been involved with the people before, or knew them) the case was passed on to another worker. Most of the supervisor's morning was spent in consultations over the phone. There were many long involved discussions. The social workers at the Unit were constantly visiting the supervisor's office looking for advice and support. The supervisor's role was an important one. She was knowledgeable and a big part of her job was giving advice. She was an important resource person for the Unit staff and staff at the district offices.

The social workers were careful to record all appropriate statistics about the cases referred. They recorded the date the case was opened, the response time, if it was sent to

district office, when it was sent, if it was closed at the unit, and when it was closed. As mentioned, case workers kept their own statistics about their case loads and passed this information in once a month. Up to the time this study was done they had recorded over 1,000 cases. The supervisor felt it was time for some revisions to be made in the operating procedures. Theoretically, the staff at the Unit were a crisis intervention group. They intervened when needed, set up the appropriate service for the client and then referred the case out to the worker at the district office for the area where the person lived. Often the workers felt that they had a really good handle on a situation and were reluctant to transfer the case out. The workers stated they felt it was necessary to follow sexual assault cases because of the time it took to establish rapport and get a disclosure from the victims. The workers also expressed concern about what happened to cases they transferred out. They knew how busy the social workers were in the district offices and were afraid that their cases would not get the attention they deserved. They constantly received phone calls from clients whose cases had been transferred out but who were frustrated trying to contact their new workers. I found in all the workers a concern that their cases might get lost or neglected at the district office level. This made them hang on to them longer. They also felt that once a case was transferred out they got no feedback on how it was doing except on a very

informal level. The method of transferring files needed to be changed and time had to be set aside to do paperwork. The workers tried a system of each taking a week in which they concentrated on paperwork and took no new referrals. This proved very difficult to do while trying to follow the cases they already had. Another reason the workers tended to keep cases for a longer time was simply because they could not find the time to do the paperwork involved for the transfer of cases. All these problems contributed to the very high case loads carried by each worker, often over 100.

To summarize, the tasks the social workers at the Unit perform in a day are many and varied. They included the following types of activities; home visits to clients, visits to schools to interview clients, court appearances, preparing clients for court, accompanying clients to court when they appeared, interviewing clients with the police present either at the Unit, the police station or somewhere convenient for the client. They also had clients visit their offices for interviews or counselling. They spent alot of time doing paperwork, including report writing and closing or transferring cases. They spent considerable time on the phone returning calls and calling agencies trying to arrange services for clients. They had to deal with any emergencies that might arise. They accompanied victims to the Janeway for assessment. They supervised social work students and took them

on home visits. They visited schools to discuss child abuse with students as part of the educational program.

These were only some of the tasks the social workers performed as part of the daily routine. The only sure thing about organizing a day at the Child Abuse Unit was that something will happen and plans and schedules would have to change. The police were constant visitors to the Unit. There was always an emergency that might need the involvement of more than one worker. There were meetings to attend at Confederation Building, where the provincial government is housed, or the district offices. Any breaks that were taken were very informal and out of total necessity. The phones went on an answering machine for one hour at lunch time, which did not necessarily mean the workers would have time for lunch. The day ended officially at 4:45 p.m. but often the workers stayed late to sort out problems or do paperwork. Along with the protection workers from the district offices, they worked on call from Friday to Friday. They were usually quite busy and averaged about 35 hours overtime during this period. They could not possibly handle all the cases picked up during this time by themselves, so they were redistributed to the other workers. One thing was obvious - there was always more work to be done. There were always more reports to be written and referrals to check on. The workers at the Unit were also constant sources of advice to the workers at the other offices. As mentioned before, the supervisor, especially,

spent much time advising others about how to handle things. From the number of phone calls she got this would appear to have been an important and valuable part of her role.

There were not enough staff to deal with all the referrals. There were not enough agencies to provide all the necessary services for clients. Hours were wasted trying to have certain things approved by the powers above. There were many frustrations associated with the jobs these social workers had. They were, however, dedicated. They worked hard with the available resources and had developed among themselves a system for prioritizing which work had to get done and which could wait. Even though they were supposed to respond to all referrals within 24 hours, this was not always possible. They assessed if the child was in immediate danger of injury, how long the abuse had been going on, and what type of abuse it was. It was definitely not a case of first come first served, but which case was the most at risk. Considering that 75 per cent of all the new referrals were for protection concerns, intervention with new referrals took up most of the social workers' time.

There are a number of things about the Unit that contributed to its success. The presence of a very knowledgeable and supportive supervisor was an important factor. To support the view of Strauss (1964), mentioned in Chapter One, it appears the Unit functioned effectively because it was separate. The staff was small in number and

developed informal mechanisms among themselves for dealing with the stress of their job. They seemed to get along very well with each other and looked to each other for support. They had a mutual respect for each other's abilities. There existed a sub-culture of understandings and priorities, and there were friends to call on for help. They had developed a professional identity that suited their particular situation. They were respected by the outside agencies with which they interacted. Still they were part of the bureaucratic structure and subject to the frustrations caused by it. They had limited decision-making power in certain areas that slowed down the intervention process. They faced fiscal restraints, which was always a concern when planning for clients. They only had control over certain areas and, because of this, sometimes provided a service that suited their supervisors more than themselves. This was frustrating because decisions could be taken out of their hands by others who had no practical experience in the area. They sometimes had to live with decisions made more for political reasons than because they would benefit the client. They occasionally were not trusting of other workers they encountered in their dealings with the district offices and this affected how they handle some cases (e.g. they were hesitant to transfer them out). They also had disagreements with the social assistance workers whom they described as treating the money as if it were coming from

their own pockets. These themes will be developed further in Chapter Five.

The Unit operated under a set of rules and regulations but it had to be flexible. In order to get things done the workers sometimes had to circumvent rules and make up new ones as need be. When deemed necessary, shortcuts were taken to bypass certain procedures. Some examples are provided in Chapter Five.

Summary

Based on the preceding discussion it is obvious the social workers at the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit had a multi-faceted job. They dealt first hand with victims of abuse and their families. They co-ordinated the necessary follow-up for these families. They prepared victims for court when necessary and appeared in court themselves. They co-operated with many other groups in the community working with victims, families and offenders. They performed an education and public awareness function within the community and they provided educational experience and guidance to those entering the same career.

The workers' level of effectiveness was hindered by their high case loads, scarce resources, and the limits put on their decision making power by their superiors. How these problems affect the types of services clients receive is put in

perspective by the clients' comments about treatment and follow-up discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Nature of Action: Client Perceptions

This chapter contains information collected from interviews with victims and/or their families. Section I summarizes demographic characteristics of the sample including age of the victim, marital status of the parents and whether dependent on social assistance. Section II outlines the types of questions clients were asked and their responses. The information from the interviews is organized in the following way. Initial client expectations of treatment compared to their actual perceptions of treatment are discussed. Quotes from individual clients are used to highlight perceived positive and negative aspects of the interventions they received. Clients then comment about their interactions with other agencies including the police, court system and counselling services. Section III addresses problems specific to single parents who become involved with Child Welfare. This chapter presents the strengths and weaknesses that exist in client follow-up as stated by the clients. Chapter Five offers an analysis of why these problems exist. Clients suggestions for how services could be improved are presented in Chapter Six.

The types of services social workers provide and their perceptions of problems with service delivery have been discussed previously. Many of the problems mentioned by the

clients echo those of the social workers. Clients described the ways in which they found their contact with social workers and other agencies helpful as well as lacking. Many described how they felt services could be improved upon generally or how their particular case might have been handled differently. Clients were very clear in describing their perceptions of needs and how they wanted to be treated.

Sample Characteristics

The sample included cases referred to the Child Abuse Unit for a variety of reasons. The workers at the Child Abuse Unit and child welfare social workers in the district offices were expected to be able to handle cases referred for a variety of reasons. Because children referred for different reasons often had different needs, the opportunity existed for information about a greater range of services. The types of interventions necessary differed as well as the agencies with which families came into contact. Some of the families had contact with the police and courts, whereas others had contact restricted to the social worker at the Child Abuse Unit. However, all clients should have benefitted from their contact.

Appendix E provides a listing of selected demographic information collected about the families interviewed. The following paragraph provides a brief summary.

The total number of clients interviewed was 36. In 31 of the cases the interviews were conducted with the victim's

mother. The mother was the most easily accessible person because the children were in school during the daytime. Also, the child could only be interviewed with the parents' permission. In three cases both parents were interviewed. In one case the victim alone was interviewed and in one case the parent and the victim were interviewed together. Twenty-one of the families were single parent families. Most of the victims (27 cases) were between the ages of 10 and 16. The cases in which the victims were younger were those usually referred for physical abuse or neglect.

Of the 36 clients interviewed, nine cases had been handled from start to finish by the social workers at the Child Abuse Unit. Thirteen had been transferred to the district offices and fourteen re-routed to them. Twenty-four families were on social assistance; the majority (16 cases) were single parent families. Table I provides a breakdown of referral sources and Table II outlines the reasons children were referred.

Table I: Sources of Referral

<u>Referral Source</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
school	12	33.3%
police	9	25.0%
anonymous	5	13.9%
parents	4	11.1%
doctors	1	2.8%
others	5	13.9%
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 36	<hr/> 100%

Table II: Reason for Referral

<u>Reasons for Referral</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
sexual assault	9	25.0%
physical abuse	11	30.6%
beyond parental control	12	33.3%
other	4	11.1%
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 36	<hr/> 100%

Twenty of the 36 cases had police involvement; 15 of these continued through the court system.

Table III summarizes information about the victim's gender, family form, and dependence on social assistance for types of abuse. Of note for this particular sample were the number of sexual assaults against females (8) vs. males (1), and the number of males (11) vs. the number of females (2) referred for being beyond parental control. The fact that 24 of the referrals were families on social assistance and that 16 of these families on social assistance were single parent families deserves a closer look and will be discussed in detail later. It was inappropriate to make generalizations from a sample this size. Thus, the characteristics found might be specific to this sample only and cannot be considered as conclusive evidence about clients in general.

Table III: Type of Abuse by Other Variables.

<u>Type of Abuse</u>	<u>Sex</u>		<u>On Social Assistance</u>		<u>Single Parent</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Sexual Assault	1	8	7	2	4	5
Physical Abuse	4	8	8	4	7	5
Beyond Parental Control	11	2	7	6	6	7
Other	2	0	2	0	2	0
Total	18	18	24	12	19	17

Interview Procedure

The interview schedule can be found in Appendix C. Typically clients were asked to present a history of their involvement with child welfare, beginning with the initial contact with the social workers from the Child Abuse Unit or district offices. Often the client's view of how they became involved and what has been described in files is quite different. One client stated that she had called a social worker because she was having trouble dealing with her daughter. The file stated in this particular case that a referral came from the school because the child was coming to school dirty and tired every day. The question of how they came into contact with the social workers seemed to be an area of confusion for many clients. They often said they were not quite sure or did not

want to admit how they became involved. Many probably felt embarrassed about the circumstances of the referral and did not want to discuss it. Most of the clients were very cooperative in describing their experiences. They were asked specific questions only if they had omitted points that the interviewer considered important. In addition, they were asked about the types of interventions they received, their initial expectations of the process, if they were satisfied with the treatment they received, what specifically pleased or displeased them, and how they felt the service could have been better, if in fact it could.

Relationships with Social Workers

The clients were asked if they had expectations of their experiences with social workers. Most had an idea of what they required in the way of help or, at least, how they wanted to be treated. These expectations can be summarized as:

- 1) being treated with respect
- 2) having access to their social workers
- 3) having a consistent worker to deal with
- 4) having an experienced social worker
- 5) being informed about their options.
- 6) receiving follow-up services
- 7) being treated as a family

All these points will be discussed in more detail in this chapter or in Chapter Five.

Respecting Clients

Twenty-four of the clients interviewed were on social assistance which presented them with a special set of problems. Most of the clients who were on social assistance thought their workers did not treat them with respect. They often felt they were begging for things they needed and that they were always under scrutiny. This was particularly true of their dealings with financial assistance officers. The clients on social assistance felt that the assistance workers were impossible to contact and never returned messages. These were some of the feelings they expressed:

"Social assistance workers are something else. They make you feel like the money is coming out of their own pockets. You never know what you are entitled to and they don't seem to want to tell you."

"I hate going up to the welfare office, but I have to pick up my cheque."

"The red tape a person has to go through to get something is terrible."

"Every time I go to the office they make me feel so bad. I feel like I'm begging. Last time I went to the Confederation Building and kicked up a fuss. After that I had no problem."

"Some people can get anything they want from social assistance. They know how to cheat. If you're honest you can't get enough."

One family was really upset because the financial assistance worker reported them to the Child Abuse Unit for something that they felt was unfounded without asking them about it or letting them know he was doing it. They felt because they were on social assistance they were under closer

scrutiny. They did not resent the worker from the Child Abuse Unit who came in to investigate, but were very upset it had been done behind their backs. They said it upset their children and that they did not deserve it. The father stated:

"I'll never go looking for anything from them again. Just because I was looking for another bed I got into all this trouble. The kids are frightened to death they're going to be taken away. I thought he was really nice. I feel like I got to be on my guard from now on, I'll never trust another worker again."

Other clients commented;

"Because you are on social assistance your life is not your own."

"Because we're on social assistance someone is always watching us."

"Child welfare totally intruded on my life. They treated me like dirt. They were quick to believe things other people said about me and wouldn't believe anything I said. It got so bad my friends were afraid to come over, I was afraid to leave a babysitter. Everywhere I went I had to take my kids. Then they came and took my kids away without even talking to me."

Another parent commented that sometimes it was worth it to get a referral to child welfare:

"I see people on child welfare getting things for their children that people on social assistance can't."

Five of the clients had been referred anonymously and were not pleased with the way their referrals had been handled. They felt the allegation should have been discussed with them before removing their children from school without their knowledge or coming into their homes and taking children

out of bed to check for bruises. They were quite upset about this. Most of the clients this happened to said the allegations were unfounded. They felt they had been treated very poorly.

"An anonymous report was made about me. A social worker came in with the police. It was really a frightening experience. The social worker who came in was really saucy and didn't explain what was going on. We were all really scared."

"I felt the social worker should have come to see me immediately and said what was going on. They went to the school and took the kids. They acted on a little bit of information without even checking it out. They should have come to talk to me first."

Access to Social Workers

Generally, clients found the social workers at the Child Abuse Unit easy to contact. They were always able to reach the worker by phone if she was available. If not, messages were always returned. The clients who dealt with workers at the district offices had a different story. They felt it was almost impossible to contact their workers. They seldom got them the first try and found that their messages were not returned. They found this very frustrating. They had to call over and over until they finally managed to get the worker. Some of their feelings are expressed as follows:

"I was calling the social worker at the district office for two weeks to try to get a tutor for my son. I finally called the Confederation Building and talked to some man. Ten minutes later a social worker called me to say a tutor was approved."
"My social worker is really good. She is just difficult to get a hold of. Sometimes they don't answer the phone at the office and I wonder if she

gets messages when I leave them."

"I had a worker come to my house to help me with my daughter who was involved in drugs. The worker said she would come back but she didn't show up. I called and left messages that weren't returned. I finally had to call the supervisor to see what happened to her."

"Sometimes it's weeks before I hear from my social worker. She can't be too concerned with how the kids are doing. I'm not going to try to call her because it's always busy or they don't answer the phone."

Consistency of Social Workers

Many of the clients identified turnover in social workers as a major problem. Some long-term Child Welfare clients had dealt with numerous social workers. Others, in a period of involvement of a year, had four or five different workers. The most common complaint was that they hated telling their story over and over. They might have just begun to trust one worker, but the next time they called she had moved to another job. Clients wanted to be informed by their worker if he/she was leaving and told who their new worker would be. They were very seldom notified that their worker had changed. They only found out when they tried to contact them or if the worker came to visit. They wanted to be told if their case was being transferred, who it was being transferred to and why. They wanted to have the option to change workers if they found there was a personality clash with their current worker. They expressed these concerns in the following comment::

"I moved here from out of town and I had lots of problems. I got really attached to the first social worker I had. She was really good with the kids. Then I got moved to someone else. I had five different workers in one year. I hate having to tell my story over and over."

"You can't expect to get along with every social worker. It's terrible when you find one you like and they move you."

"Changing workers is hard on the kids. They ask who is this person and what is she doing in our house."

"We had three social workers in six months. We all found it really upsetting. We didn't know what was going on."

"I don't see the social workers as being very helpful. You have a different worker every time. They don't know you or your family. Sometimes you even see student social workers."

"I've had three different social workers in the last six months. They're nice and I don't mind them dropping in, but it's hard telling your story over and over."

"The social worker you have should let you know if she is leaving and introduce you to your new worker. It would make you feel like they are really interested."

Inexperienced Social Workers

Some of the clients felt that their workers were very young and inexperienced and did not really know what they were doing. Some parents felt the young workers were closer to their children's ages and in cases where they were having problems controlling the child the worker took the child's side against the parent. The parents found it hard to relate to these workers and questioned whether any assistance had really been offered. Some parents felt that their children

tried to use Child Welfare to manipulate them and that only an experienced worker could deal with this type of situation.

Parents expressed their feelings in the following

comments:

"The social worker we had seemed very young and inexperienced. She didn't seem to know how to deal with the kids. "

"We've made many complaints in this neighborhood about a person who is really abusing her kids. Nothing ever happens to her because they are afraid of her. If they can walk over you they will but they're afraid of someone who is really abusive. That's because there are too many young inexperienced workers. It must be very intimidating when they're unsure of what they're doing."

"Some people seem to get whatever they need. Others can't get anything. I think it's because of the individual workers. The ones with more experience know how to get things for you. Lots of times people are never told what they are entitled to."

"I think the workers are really young and don't understand how the mother feels. Most of them don't have families."

"I had a worker come when my daughter was on drugs. The Janeway called Child Welfare. The worker was nice and seemed to want to help, but she didn't seem to know what to do. She let my daughter call the shots."

"I found some of the social workers very young. They were almost like my daughter's peers. They could identify with her. I couldn't talk to them. They always sided with the children. The more experienced social workers are really good. They look at all sides of the story."

"I think child welfare made the problem worse. They shouldn't interfere in some things. The young social workers don't know enough and they believe lies."

One parent felt that the social workers never tried to see her point at all.

"I felt abused by child welfare. They never tried to work with me to help my daughter. They believed everything my daughter said and not what I said. Sometimes kids try to use child welfare against their parents when they are upset with them."

Being Kept Informed

Some of the parents stated that they were not always sure what was going on with their cases. They were not informed of what was going on in terms of organizing treatment or follow-up services. They also wanted to be kept informed about the progress of their case throughout. Specifically, clients who had been involved with the police in terms of laying charges and going to court felt this was extremely important. They were not always sure what to expect. They wanted to be well prepared for going to court if they had to. They wanted counseling through this time period and the social worker's support in the court.

"We never felt like we knew what was going on when we went through the courts. We would have liked to have known what was going to happen to us."

Follow-up Services

Another problem identified by clients was the lack of follow-up they received. Clients wanted to be followed to the extent that the workers checked to make sure services they had been referred to were received and beneficial. They expressed the concern that Child Welfare came on very strong at first and then quickly faded from the scene. One client stated:

"When my daughter came back we were supposed to be monitored. Where were they then. We never saw

anyone for two months. They come on really strong at first and then they disappear."

Another client said:

"If I'm supposed to be on someone's caseload, where are they. They were quick enough to come and take my children away. I've got my kids back now. Shouldn't they be checking on me."

Some clients felt that the social workers were intrusive in their lives. One lady felt that every time she got a baby sitter or left her children for a few minutes to go to the store there was a worker at her door upsetting the children. One client expressed the opinion that if you do not like the social worker you are assigned you are stuck. She stated:

"I would not call child welfare if I had a problem. You don't get to choose your worker. There could be a personality conflict and then you won't get any help."

Other clients felt they would have liked to have more contact for a longer period of time. They felt they really needed someone to talk to on a regular basis and that when it was difficult to contact the social worker they felt lost. Three clients stated that they had been told by the worker at the Unit they were being transferred to a district office, but that they had never been contacted by a social worker and did not even know their new worker's name.

Clients also said they hoped treatment would involve interaction with the whole family, not just the client, but this was not the case.

"When I phoned the social worker to get help I thought we would get family counselling. They didn't tell me my boyfriend would be taken away and put in jail."

"Everyone was dealt with individually. I thought we would be dealt with as a family."

Not all the comments about the social workers were negative. Most of the clients found the social workers to be helpful. Most felt the workers wanted to try to keep families together. One parent stated:

"One social worker we had was really good. She got us all together as a family and tried to help us work things out."

"They all felt the social workers were very busy and overworked. They were understaffed and had high case loads. The clients felt this severely limited the amount of time they could devote to cases. One client stated:

"I feel most of the social workers work their limit. The approval from above to get things done is what takes weeks."

Clients noticed frustration in the workers they dealt with when they were trying to organize services for them. They knew outside resources were limited and they had long waiting periods for counselling and other services they might need. They did not blame the workers for the lack of services. Many saw the child welfare social worker as an arbitrator on their behalf with the financial assistance workers. Some found they could not get the things they felt they needed until they had come into contact with Child Welfare and then the social worker intervened on their behalf.

Clients stated they would like Child Welfare to have more to offer them in the way of support groups for single parents, effective parenting groups, and activities or programmes for children.

Those who were on social assistance and had participated in training or work projects seemed to really enjoy this experience. They were very disappointed when their time period was up and they were laid off to go on unemployment insurance. They felt it did not matter whether they did a good job or not; the end purpose of the project was to get them off. Most stated that they would really like to work, but that they could not afford to. They felt that the system encouraged them to stay on social assistance.

Contact With Outside Agencies

Clients who had contact with different types of services had things to say that were specific to those services. They described in which ways they found the service most helpful and in which ways they found it lacking. Many described how they felt the services could be improved upon or how their case in general could have been handled differently.

Contact with Police

Nine of the families interviewed had been referred to the Child Abuse Unit by the police. Of the total number of clients interviewed twenty had some kind of contact with the police.

This could have been to deal with other matters. The clients were generally pleased with the police intervention in their cases. They felt the police were there to help them, and that they tried hard to put their children at ease. Some clients even felt that their problems were only taken seriously when the police became involved. They felt that becoming involved with the police was the turning point for receiving help for their child. They commented:

"I knew what kind of help he needed. I begged for help, but he only got it when he got in trouble."

"For eight months I was trying to do something with him. I couldn't handle him at home. Finally he got arrested for committing a break and enter. Then finally someone decided to do something for us."

"The police have been really good. They know what the kids are up to. They treat things seriously."

Parents said the police made an effort to make sure the children felt comfortable telling their stories. They were understanding and sympathetic. These clients thought the police were very discreet, especially when they visited children at school. One parent stated:

"They went to the school to interview my daughter. They were dressed in plain clothes, so no one knew who they were. They called her out to the office and she spoke to them. No one else knew. We really appreciated that."

Some parents also stated that the police seemed to understand what difficulties they might be having with their children. Others thought that the police really did care, offered advice and helped where they could. Some parents felt that they did not always side with the child against the

parents. They tried to see things from the parents' perspective. One parent commented:

"I find the police are generally very good. They realize that the kids are hard to handle and that they get into trouble."

Although comments were generally positive, some parents did express concerns about their dealings with the police. Three parents expressed the concern that their children found it difficult talking to male police officers. Some parents of young children wondered if police involvement for these children was necessary at all. They stated the children found it frightening. One 11 year old was interviewed by an officer in uniform and she found it quite distressing. The mother stated:

"My daughter was very confused by the whole incident and was quite frightened by the officer in uniform. I don't think they should wear a uniform when they talk to young children."

Another mother stated her daughter was quite disturbed by having to talk about a sexual assault to a male police officer.

"She didn't want to talk about it at all and was very embarrassed to see a male police officer. She didn't want to tell him about it."

Some other parents felt they were not always well informed by the police about what their options were in terms of laying charges. The mother of one victim said she found it difficult to get information from the police:

"I never felt like I knew what was going on. I wanted to know if he was being charged, if he was

in jail, and if they could keep him away from my daughter. Every time I called, they passed me on to someone else and no one gave me any answers."

Four of the clients mentioned confusion about laying charges. They were not sure whom the decision was up to. In one case the parents were consulted and it was decided charges would not be laid. In another case the family did not want charges laid but they were laid anyway. Clients stated they would have liked to have been informed or at least consulted beforehand.

Two parents felt it depended on the police officer with whom they had involvement. Some were very good and some were not. Parents with children out of control felt that some police officers did not take it seriously if their child was missing because often they had been reported missing before. They made comments like:

"Sometimes the police were helpful and sometimes they weren't. It depended on which policeman it was. Sometimes they don't take it seriously enough when you call to say your kid is missing."

"We were never sure who to contact at the police station. They gave us the impression there was no sense doing anything when our son ran away."

The main area of concern in dealing with the police seemed to be that there are inconsistencies in how situations were handled. Sometimes clients were interviewed by an officer in uniform, sometimes by an officer in street clothes. Sometimes female victims were interviewed by male officers when they might be more comfortable with female officers.

Police officers did not always attach the same seriousness to certain types of problems that parents did. These types of issues need to be investigated further by service givers in this field.

Court Contact

Many of the clients, especially those who had been victims of sexual assault, had contact with the court system. Although generally they found the crown prosecutors helpful and supportive and felt that the social workers from the Child Abuse Unit had prepared them, they found the experience very traumatic. Their comments describe difficulties during preparation for court, courtroom experiences, and sentencing issues.

Clients complained that the length of time from when the actual offence occurred to when they went to court was very long and stressful for the children. The cases were often postponed and the social workers were not always available for counselling during this extended period of time. Sometimes the children had forgotten the experience and had to dredge it up again. This was also stressful. Parents commented:

"My daughter was sexually assaulted. The trial was postponed until August. That was almost a year after it happened. People found out about it and it was very difficult for her. After that time we just wanted to forget about it."

The children were afraid of the actual experience of going to court. They found the presence of the judge and

lawyers intimidating. They felt the entire court procedure should have been explained thoroughly to them beforehand. Some parents were quite pleased with their preparation, others felt they could have been kept better informed. Relevant comments included:

"The crown attorney and the social worker were very helpful. They kept in touch with us and let us know what was happening."

"We never met the crown attorney until we went to court. He spoke with us for a few minutes before we went in. He seemed nice, but I wished we had talked to him before so we would have known what to expect before we got there."

Parents were pleased with the social workers' efforts to make them more comfortable by taking them down to the court house before they had to appear and explaining the procedure to them. They also appreciated the fact that usually the social worker stayed with them all the way through the trial. One parent stated:

"Going down to the court with the social worker before the trial really helped. But my daughter was still pretty nervous when it came time for the real trial. There must be a better way to do it than to have the kids go through that."

Other parents stated that their children did not like the idea of the offender and his family being in court watching them as they took the stand. One parent commented on the use of the screen in the courtroom:

"We felt using a screen in court was a really good idea. She felt much better about testifying with it there. She was really afraid of having him look at her."

Many of the parents were not pleased with the sentences the offenders received. They felt they were too lenient and made the child feel that the court did not see this offence as being a serious one. Some said they were sorry they had pursued the matter. One parent commented:

"The sentences are too lenient. This was the boy's fourth or fifth offence and he got six months probation. My daughter spoke out in court and told the truth and it got her nowhere. We were unhappy with the legal system. What good was that to her?"

Some of the youth referred to the Child Abuse Unit had themselves been involved in criminal activity. The typical types of crimes they committed were break and entering, robberies, and sexual assaults. The families of these youth also found going to court very stressful. They felt there was a negative attitude towards them. They felt Legal Aid lawyers could have been more helpful. Parents felt they were not always informed of what the options were for their children. They would have liked to have been consulted and to have been part of the decision-making process about their son's future. Parent's comments were:

"The lawyer at legal aid was very negative and the judge made us feel like it was our fault that our son got in trouble."

"We ended up with a different social worker when he got into trouble. We saw her once but we really weren't told what was going on. We didn't know if it was best for him to go to the Youth Centre or a group home. We wished someone would have explained the difference to us."

Parents of children who had been in trouble felt it was very difficult to get help with out of control teenagers.

Several had been seeking help for their children for a long time on their own initiative. Some had been to see various social workers. They had been involved in some counselling services, but all felt that no real effort had been put into helping their children until they actually became involved in criminal activity. One parent commented about her son:

"Once he got into trouble it actually felt like someone was going to try to help. I knew we needed help. I begged the worker to help us, but they didn't have time. When he got into trouble, he got help."

Some parents felt that social workers were not always supportive and cooperative with the parents' wishes. They felt that they would like to have a stronger say in how problems are approached. They would like to have counselling as a family to help deal with their problems. They basically wanted someone to guide them and work with them. They felt that it often takes a crisis situation to get the help you need.

Contact With Outside Referral Agencies

Clients of Child Welfare are often involved with a number of community agencies which provide services. Often they were referred to these agencies by the staff at the Child Abuse Unit, but sometimes they had sought help themselves. The most important agencies from which clients received services are listed below along with their general impressions of them. This discussion is based on the comments of small numbers of clients who had contact with those agencies. It has been

included for the sake of completeness and because these comments were important to the clients who made them. The small numbers make it impossible to generalize from their statements.

The Alcohol and Drug Dependency Foundation

Three of the clients had been referred to this group and all were very pleased with the help they received.

The Janeway

The victims of Sexual Assault who had been seen at the Janeway all felt very satisfied with the way they had been treated. They felt proper importance had been placed on the problem and that they had been treated with respect.

Psychiatry at the Janeway

Eleven of the clients had been treated by Psychiatric services at the Janeway. Six of these were pleased with the help they received. The remaining five recalled different experiences. Complaints included: 1) they hardly saw the psychiatrist, 2) they were not well informed of their child's progress, 3) they received no feedback, 4) they never got the counselling they thought they would get, and 5) some felt the treatment was totally useless.

The School

The school was involved in helping eleven of the clients deal with their problems. Some were involved with school counsellors and the principal often helped students deal with sensitive issues. Most of the families found the school, the guidance counsellors, and the educational therapists very helpful. Two of the clients had been referred to the Child Abuse Unit by someone at the school. One of these families did not even know they had been referred. Both families suggested that if the school felt their child had a problem they should have contacted them first. They were annoyed that the social worker was allowed to take the child from the classroom without the parent's permission. These people felt very distrustful of the school and that they were now always under scrutiny.

Groups for Single Mothers

Three of the clients attended a group for single mothers at Centre Office. They felt that this was very beneficial. One mother attended a group for single mothers at the Avalon Community College. She found this very helpful.

Coach House

Six of the families had children at Coach House at one time or another because of their involvement with Child Welfare. They all had positive things to say about it. These children were

out of control at home and the parents felt they needed the structure and discipline that a place such as this provided. One mother was very pleased with a group for parents that she attended while her kids were at Coach House.

Corrections Group Home on Canada Drive

Four clients had children who had been through this facility. They were very pleased with it. They felt the discipline was good. The only problem mentioned by one parent was that while her son was in this facility the clothes and other things he received were much better than she was able to give him when he returned home. They also got to go on outings to the country, movies, etc. that were not available to them when they came home because of limited funds within the family. She felt these types of supports should be available to the family when the children return home.

Mount Cashel

Four of the children had lived at this institution. The parents felt the rules and structure were good in setting guidelines for the children to follow. The discipline was provided that parents felt they could not manage at home. They were kept very well informed about their childrens' progress. The parents of boys who had been in trouble with the law or were very difficult to manage at home felt that facilities such as Mount Cashel which provide structure and rules for the

youth are a necessity. They also felt that the boys could get more opportunities to lead normal lives in these types of places than they could offer them at home on the limited resources some of the parents had available.

Adolescent Counselling Services

Six of the youth seen by workers at the Unit were referred to Adolescent Counselling Services. One youth only went for a single visit and refused to go back because he felt it did him no good. The other parents felt the counsellors really understood their children and had been able to help them. Three of these clients were disappointed they had to wait such a long time for an appointment.

Womens' Centre

One of the mothers attended a group at the Womens' Centre. She found it very good. She also had individual counselling sessions with a counsellor and found her always available and very helpful.

Family Life Bureau

One of the families whose son had been in trouble with the law had counselling at the Family Life Bureau while waiting for an appointment with Adolescent Counselling Services. The mother found the counselling very helpful but felt her son did not benefit from it.

Anderson Centre

One person interviewed tried to have her son seen at the Anderson Centre, a new counselling centre set up by the Department of Health to deal with the problems of youth. She said the waiting list was months long. Because they could not wait, they sought help elsewhere.

Presentation House

Four of the clients had children who had at one time or another been placed at Presentation House, a foster home run by the Presentation Sisters where younger children are placed, usually for short periods of time. Three of them were very pleased because they felt they were kept well informed and always made to feel welcome when they visited their children. One of the clients did not like the place. She said they made her feel like she was intruding every time she phoned or tried to visit her kids.

Foster Homes

Four of the clients had their children placed in foster care for various periods of time, some before referral to the Unit and some by the workers at the Unit. Three of these had been very pleased with this arrangement. They had felt it was a necessity at the time and that it worked well. One client stated she did not have a problem with the foster home, but would like better communication with her child while she was

there.

Enmanuel House

One client was attending counselling sessions here and found the interaction with other parents in similar situations really good.

The clients have received various services from a wide range of agencies. Most have been pleased with these services. Even though the list of agencies seems long, all have limited resources and space. They are unable to keep up with the demands. The biggest complaint from social workers and clients is the frustration of finding appropriate services and getting access to them quickly. The most problematic of these is counselling services. By the time most clients receive intervention, they are in crisis situations and need these types of supports as soon as possible.

Single Parents

Being a single parent in itself is stressful, but having to cope on Social Assistance becomes an added nightmare. Of the 36 families interviewed, 21 were single parent families and 16 of these were on social assistance. Some of the women interviewed who were on Social Assistance stated that they got as little as \$400 a month for food, light, telephone, clothes, etc. The only expenses covered for them were rent and heat.

They had trouble providing the necessities for their families and could not provide any extras the children wanted to keep up with their friends at school. They did not have the funds to put them in sports or other extra-curricular activities which would have provided them outlets for their energies, encouraged their creative talents and kept them out of trouble. They made comments like:

"It's really difficult trying to survive on the money I get. The boys are in group homes and get lots of things. When they come home for weeknds, I can't give them that much. It makes me feel embarrassed."

Some preventive programs to get children involved in activities which provide them with an opportunity to develop self-esteem would be helpful for these single parent families. Parents stated their frustration about trying to find the funds to get their children involved in activities.

"We should be able to get some money to put our children in activities that would keep them out of trouble. Then maybe we wouldn't ever see a Child Welfare worker. Half the time they get into trouble because they're bored."

Parents stated the only time any of these extras become available was when they had contact with Child Welfare and the help of the Child Welfare worker.

"If I hadn't gotten involved with Child Welfare because of sexual abuse, I never would have gotten any extra things for my child. I asked the financial assistance worker several times and she couldn't do anything for me. When I got involved with the worker from the Unit things started to happen."

Unfortunately, with this contact also comes the stigma of not

being able to control children or of being an abusive parent .

Some of these women stated they were themselves escaping abusive situations in their marriages and that they came into contact with Child Welfare because of violent situations in their homes. They needed considerable help and guidance getting their own lives together and they also needed help dealing with their children. Some were attending groups for single parents at the centre office of the Department of Social Services. They found these types of groups very helpful. One mother stated:

"The single parent group at centre office is great. The workers are really nice and it gives you a chance to meet new people. You really need someone to discuss your problems with."

One mother was attending a group for single mothers at the Avalon Community College which she found helpful. Many had contact with Transition House, a shelter for battered women. They found the staff there very supportive and felt the programs they had available to help women very beneficial. A pervasive interest expressed by these women was their eagerness to enter the work force. Some had been involved in training programs. They felt being involved in these types of programs improved their self-esteem and confidence. Unfortunately, many of them found the types of jobs they could get on completion of these programs paid only minimum wages. They could not support their families on this amount of money and often ended up in debt. Once they had a job, all the

extras such as medicine, heat and transportation costs that had been covered by the Department of Social Services were cut off. They could not manage all these extra bills on their new salaries and became very frustrated. They commented:

"It wouldn't be worth my while to go to work while I have small children. I can't afford to have them looked after and have anything left over."

"I went back to school through a program at the Status of Women Council. It looks good on paper, but I couldn't manage. The allowance for day care wasn't adequate. You can't survive and pay your bills. The government won't allow women to go to work."

"I took a course as a teacher's aide. I really liked the work. It's very frustrating. It's impossible to manage on \$5 an hour with two children. You make more on welfare. It's really hard to get ahead. Once you start a job, no matter how little it pays, all other benefits are taken away. The drug card, the subsidized rent and heat really helped."

"Social Services projects are total scams. They only put you on them to get you on U.I. You end up worse off because you have to pay everything out of it. You couldn't possibly manage on it. They should subsidize you. It's even worse if you like the work and start to feel better about yourself. Once your time is up you are let go so someone else gets your job to get them on U. I. They don't care how good you did the job. It's really demoralizing."

They felt the system constantly discriminated against them to force them back onto welfare. There was no incentive for them to improve themselves with the hopes of getting a job. The biggest problems for these women were lack of confidence, lack of support, and lack of financial resources.

Conclusion

Clients described a number of problems that existed in their interactions with social workers. This information came from interviews with clients about their perceptions of treatment. This chapter first presented descriptive characteristics of the sample of clients interviewed. The total number of clients interviewed was 36. In most cases the mother was interviewed. Eighteen of the victims were male and 18 female. Twenty-seven of the families involved were single parent families and 24 of the families were on social assistance. The largest number of referrals came from the schools. The majority of the cases were referred for physical abuse or because the children were out of control. It would be dangerous to make generalizations about the larger population from this small sample.

The next section of the chapter discussed clients expectations of treatment by the social workers and what their actual perceptions were of the treatment they received. Clients stated that there were major differences between their expectations and their treatment. They identified problems in the following areas:

- 1) being treated with respect by the social workers
- 2) having access to social workers
- 3) having a consistent social worker
- 4) having an experienced social worker
- 5) being kept informed of the progress of their case
- 6) receiving adequate follow-up

7) being treated as a family

Clients then discussed their interactions with the police and court system. They identified some problems in their dealings with the police. Specifically mentioned were young female victims being interviewed by male officers and inconsistencies in how situations were handled. The clients also expressed some concern in their contact with the court system. They were unhappy with the length of time it took for cases to get to court, how uncomfortable some of the children were about actually going to court and about having the offender and his family present in the courtroom. Families of youth who had been in trouble with the law had some other concerns about their contact with social workers and the legal system. They felt it was difficult to get help with the children until they got into trouble, even though they had sought it beforehand. They felt they were not always kept informed of what was happening with the case and that they had been left out of the decision making process. The clients comments about their interactions with outside referral services were generally positive with the exception of complaints about long waiting periods. The last section of the chapter dealt with single parents and how their particular situation amplified the problems they experienced in dealing with their children.

The next chapter provides an analysis of why the problems identified by the clients exist within the child protection

services. Organizational theory provides the basis of analysis and the problems are viewed in terms of the structural components, first of the overall system and then of the Child Abuse Unit. Clients have offered a number of suggestions for how they feel services can be improved and these will be presented in the final chapter.

Chapter 5

The Problem of Structure: Bureaucracy and Child Protection Services

This chapter analyzes the data presented in the previous chapters. First, a brief outline of relevant sociological literature on organizations is presented. This literature is then linked to the types of problems that exist in child protection services in St. John's, especially at the district office level. Finally, the Child Abuse Unit is discussed in terms of its capability to overcome problems within the larger organizational structure because of the social workers' ability to develop a sub-culture or informal organization within the larger bureaucratic system.

Earlier chapters have described difficulties in selecting a sample of clients, the operating procedures of the Child Abuse Unit, social workers' comments and clients' perceptions of the types of services they received. A number of problems with intervention and follow-up with clients became apparent during the research. The information gathered suggests that such problems can only be understood by placing the child abuse services within the larger bureaucratic structure. Within this bureaucratic framework, the chapter will explain how existing problems place pressure on the actors, thus making it difficult to provide consistency in follow-up services.

Organizational Theory

Most work in industrial societies is carried out within large scale formal organizations. Organizational theory discusses these various kinds of organizations and the ways in which they function. Blau and Scott (1966:5) define an organization as a social unit designed for the explicit purpose of achieving certain goals. Mouzelis (1975:4) states that purposiveness and goal specificity seem to be the two crucial criteria that differentiate organizations from other types of social units. The formal organization makes up the immediate environment of the groups within it.

All organizations make provisions for continuing activities directed towards the achievement of given aims. Meeting the aims of the organization requires the co-operation of the many people who make up that particular organization. Co-operation is achieved because work is formally structured. Regulation in activities such as task allocation, supervision, and co-ordination is developed. The specific jobs are parcelled out in the division of labor. According to Salaman and Thompson (1973) these components make up the structure of the organization. This is how the Division of Child Welfare within the Department of Social Services can be seen. It is a department within an arm (The Department of Social Services) of the larger bureaucratic system, the provincial government. As such it competes for financial resources with several other divisions within this arm and also several other government

departments. It was established for the specific purpose of dealing with problems specific to children. Within the district office setting, child protection services are only one area of concern among many. For the purposes of this research the Department of Social Services is the formal organization which encompasses all the smaller groups within it. In theory, all these groups co-operate in various ways to meet the overall aims of the organization. In practice this is not always the case. As Mouzelis (1975:59) states in his work on people and organizations:

The rules of formal organizations do not refer simply to inert materials and tools, but to people who act as whole human beings, they never succeed in completely controlling the situation and in directing the organizational activities towards their predefined goals. Individuals have goals of their own which do not always coincide with organizational ones.

The work of Max Weber has provided a framework for much of the literature on organizational theory. Weber considered bureaucracy to be the organizational form best able to efficiently coordinate and integrate the multitude of specialized tasks conducted in a large factory or office. He describes a bureaucracy as being a system of authority, its hierarchical structure, formal lines of authority and impartial rules and regulations designed to elicit co-operation and obedience from employees. Given that bureaucracies have a highly specialized division of labour, which can also lead to increased productivity, it would seem,

according to Weber, that bureaucratic work organizations are the ideal for efficiency (Nouzelis,1975).

However, bureaucracies have serious flaws. They are typically overly complex and difficult to manage, resistant to change, and unable to cope with uncertainties. Working conditions within bureaucracies can be dissatisfying. Moreover, they sometimes appear to be huge and cumbersome, slow to respond and adapt. Unfortunately, instead of achieving efficiency bureaucracies often create inefficiencies. Employees who strictly obey the rules can undermine the bureaucracy. The rules become the ends in themselves, rather than the goals of the organization. Organizational goals are established by those in positions of power. These goals are, therefore, rational from managements' perspective, but not necessarily from the perspective of the workers. According to Krahn and Lowe (1988) the assumption of the general acceptance of goals is contradicted by the struggle and conflict between employer and employee. Gilbert Smith (1979) found that there was often conflict concerning goals between management and social workers in his study of social work in various types of organizational settings.

Weber's study of bureaucracy was overly formalistic. For example, he did not address the informal relations and unofficial patterns that develop within formal organizations. Such informalities have been shown to be equally important for understanding organizational functioning (Gouldner, 1964) This

was especially the case at the unit studied. Members did not just act in terms of the prescribed roles they occupied. In their study of formal organizations, Blau and Scott (1966) found that, although it is often suggested that the group climate influences individual conduct, the fact that the individual may act in terms of his own attitudes and values must also be considered. Consequently, rather than being the model of efficiency, for many people today bureaucracy is synonymous with inefficiency, emphasis on 'red tape', excessive writing and recording, and an inability to actually concentrate on real tasks (Krahn and Lowe, 1988).

A key element for understanding formal organizations is power. With the use of the term "power", organizational theorists imply a theory of action or decision-making in organizations. According to Biggart and Hamilton (1985), if decisions are not solely determined by a problem, are not simply the willful act of fully informed, rational individuals, and are not merely made to produce a stated result, then decision-making is always shaped by organizational actors attempting to control the perceptions and actions of one another. Indeed, decision-making shows the essence of power in organizations as distinguished from structure. Krahn and Lowe (1988) conclude from their readings on bureaucracy that the structure of bureaucratic organizations changes constantly and that these changes arise from shifts in the balance of power in organizations from

management to workers. This discussion raises the question, how does structure influence the ability to get things done? According to Hall (1968), structure does not totally determine the conduct of individuals. What is important is how the members of the organization interpret and respond to the structure. The social workers at the district offices found it difficult to work within their structural setting which will be discussed in more detail below.

Hall (1968) describes three essential features of organizational structure. The first, complexity, concerns the division of labor within the organization. It can be horizontal or vertical. The complexity of the division of labour presents organizations with problems of control, coordination and conflict resolution. These problems can occur when organizations operate in multiple locations and where they appear to be composed of numerous small units, each with its own vertical or horizontal axes. Problems of control and conflict escalate with increased complexity. These problems were apparent in the district offices in which there were many different departments or groups. The child protection worker was often isolated within his or her own area. All the other workers were busy with their own responsibilities and the supervisor had to deal with all these various sections. Coordination of services and supervision becomes much more difficult in this setting. However, this type of complexity was not a problem for the Child Abuse Unit. All the workers in

that office were there for the same reason and the supervisor was focused on this one area.

The second essential feature of organizational structure is formality. This includes the codified rules of the organization. These are usually written down to ensure consistency. The formality varies greatly from organization to organization. The Child Abuse Unit, for example, is separate from other services and therefore could operate on a less formal basis. The rules could be adjusted within the small group when the need arose. By comparison, at the district office level, the atmosphere remained more formal because it lacked the small group in which discussions could be held about various decisions.

The third essential feature is the centrality of authority within the organization. High centrality implies tight control and low centrality implies small groups make decisions on their own. The social workers at the Unit and at the district offices felt they had some autonomy when dealing with clients. What they lacked was the time, financial, and referral resources to organize the necessary services for their clients. According to Hall (1968), it is often assumed that the most important problems faced by the organization will be those which are of concern to the prime beneficiary, usually presumed to be the client. This is not always the case. There are often conflicting concerns and, in fact, the major problems may be for staff. The problems of high case

loads, staff turnover, inexperienced staff and inadequate financial and referral resources within the child protection services had an effect on staff directly and clients indirectly. The staff were concerned about how they could actually help their clients while working within the constraints placed on them by the bureaucratic structure.

According to Salaman and Thompson (1973), the function of the organization is often confused with its formal ideology and its policy in operation. The formal and informal objectives of the organization are independent and often in conflict. It is only by understanding these conflicts that we can understand the most important features of an organization's structure. The social workers wanted to provide the appropriate interventions and follow-up for their clients. The aim of the Child Abuse Unit was to respond to all referrals within a 24 hour period. What actually happened in practice was different due to the limited number of staff, the large number of referrals and the many active cases. This conflict between stated goals and actual achievements had an impact upon the social workers themselves and the overall structure of the organization.

Krahn and Lowe (1988) suggest that human actors modify, transform and subvert formal organizations. Large bureaucratic corporations consist essentially of social relations among individuals and groups. The concepts of power and authority are integral parts of work organizations. Organizational

management must try to find a balance between designing tasks that allow the workers to experience job satisfaction, on the one hand, but are economically efficient and profitable on the other. This was a problem for the child protection services. To provide children and families with the types of services they needed was costly. Child protection services had to compete with all other divisions within the larger Social Services Department for funds. It was a continuous problem for the social workers to work within fiscal restraints when trying to find the best services for clients. This added to the stress of an already stressful job.

The concept of structure, as mentioned above, is important to modern organizational theory. It implies that all the different units of the organization stand in some relation to one another (Salaman and Thompson, 1973). The structure of an organization plays a role in determining the conduct of its members. But the structure does not totally determine that conduct, which also depends on how the organization's members interpret and respond to it. The workers at the Child Abuse Unit were able to respond to the overall bureaucratic structure in a different way than the social workers at the district offices for a number of reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter. Social Service organizations deal directly with clients and thus have problems that are specific only to them. These will be discussed in the next section.

Service Organizations

A service organization is one in which the prime beneficiary is some specified 'public.' According to Blau (1974) its basic function is to serve clients. The crucial problems of service organizations center around providing professional services. The clients' welfare is presumed to be the chief concern. Since the client often does not know what will serve his/her best interests he/she is vulnerable and potentially subject to exploitation. Depending on the integrity of organizational staff, professionals' actions are expected to be governed by their judgement of what will serve clients best. The client beneficiaries are presumed not to be qualified to determine what is in their own best interests. The professionals in service organizations must not lose sight of the welfare of their clients, whether through concern with their own status and career or through preoccupation with administrative problems. The latter may become manifest in ritualistic adherence to and enforcement of procedures or in permitting budgetary considerations to protect the taxpayer rather than to serve clients adequately. On the other hand, professionals must not become the captives of their clients and surrender to them the power to determine the nature of the service furnished (Blau and Scott, 1966). Workers cannot allow clients to control their own treatment or tell them what kinds of services they want. This conception of service organization is an ideal type or oversimplification.

As services were organized, finding the appropriate balance was difficult for child protection workers and clients. Many clients who could not articulate their needs did without services. This was apparent from client interviews. It has already been stated that if clients were not in a crisis situation it was unlikely they would be contacted once their case was transferred to the district office. It was not possible for the social workers to address all their work demands. Unfortunately, a client whose case was transferred out may have been told by the social worker at the Unit that he/she would be followed on a bi-weekly or monthly basis and might never be contacted. The non-assertive client was particularly vulnerable. This was not the fault of the social worker, who was overburdened and overworked, but rather the fault of the overall system.

As described above, a bureaucratic orientation in service organizations often has negative consequences for employees and clients. Blau (1974) described bureaucratization in service organizations as a process by which energy is diverted from providing services to clients and applied to the creation and implementation of new rules and procedures. Merton (1968) called this "goal displacement," a process by which the goal of service is supplanted by the goal of the system. Often a new system is put in place without any formal needs assessment or ongoing evaluation component which would allow for changes or adjustments as needed. Bureaucratization allows for the

control, centralization, and coordination of large numbers of workers in one location. It includes changes in the content of work, increases in the division of labor, and increases in specialization (Arches, 1991). Within limits, organizations also control the criteria for promotion, work schedules, and means of advancement. Individuals must be willing to accommodate organizational structures and demands, establish working relationships with supervisors and subordinates, and adjust to success or confront failure.

Social Service Agencies

Because of the nature of their work, social workers employed in bureaucratic organizations experience specific problems. The types of problems social workers face and the effect they have on their work performance will be discussed in this section. Dressel (1984) maintains that despite the setting, the services provided, or the needs addressed, the difficulties that social workers experience lie with the larger system. These systemic sources of burnout constrain and limit workers' effectiveness for clients.

In explaining clients' and social workers' perceptions, the concept of alienation is useful because it not only implies the subjective notion of how clients and workers see themselves, but also the structural category describing the social and economic characteristics of the bureaucratic system. Social workers and clients have no control over the

bureaucratic structure; the workers do not oversee their work environment or pace of their work. The workers do not choose their clients, they are assigned by the supervisor. They do not control the types of services that will be available for their clients. Alienation is thus embedded in structural constraints, not individual deficiencies. Bureaucracy can be viewed as a specific instance of the process of alienation (Mouzelis, 1975). The bureaucrat is not always aware of the oppressive nature of his job. He sees himself as indispensable for the interest of the public. This attitude is reinforced within the authority structure.

Although workers have some flexibility in the way they do their jobs, they are constantly under pressure to conform to the expectations and demands of their supervisors or department guidelines. Professional social workers in the bureaucratic organization find themselves constantly adapting to administrative rules. Chen and Regan (1985) state that there are inherent strains and conflicts between professional ideals and the rules of organizational life. The conflict involves the structuring of work, leadership issues, peer evaluation and recruitment procedures. The social workers have little control over their own workload, who gets promoted or who gets hired. These issues are dealt with by administration. In his study of social workers in various types of community agencies, Smith (1979) found problems similar to those identified by Chen and Regan (1985), Dingwall (1983) and

Strauss (1964). Smith described two areas in which professional and bureaucratic structures conflict. These areas are administration and professional practice. In social work agencies the professionals are expected to make casework decisions while the administration maintains files, makes the financial arrangements, allocates staff and office accommodations. There often tends to be conflict and confusion at points of contact when a field worker needs financial resources for clients and cannot get the amount necessary for what he/she considers to be appropriate services. The bureaucrat sees the professional as undisciplined and the professional sees 'red tape' as restricting his/her specialized skills. These types of problems were described by the social workers at the district offices and at the Child Abuse Unit.

Rothman (1987:10) and Smith (1979:26) define a profession as a group of individuals who have control over a certain expert body of knowledge and have professional autonomy because their associations have been able to control the content of training, right to practice, licensing procedures and internal discipline. They also have a monopoly over or exclusive rights to do certain types of work. They are self-regulating to the extent that they have been able to translate their expertise into conditions of work. Smith argues that social work has not yet been able to gain full professional status and thus enjoys less autonomy within the

organizational setting than other established professions. The social workers are more closely tied to their supervisors, they must report their activity in greater detail, they do not have total control over decision making and they usually cannot refuse to work with a client. The clients are part of the standard case load referred to the worker from above. Often the social workers' professional judgement is limited. There are rules and regulations which define their duties and how cases must be handled. In cases of doubt he/she must always refer to a senior official and this limits discretionary powers. The workers also have to operate within certain fiscal guidelines, which affects provision of services. An underlying struggle for autonomy governs much of their behaviour (Rothman 1987). The role expectations of the social workers conflict with what actually takes place. These types of dilemmas facing professionals working in bureaucratic organizations provide an important basis of analysis for the operational problems that exist. The social workers work under dissatisfying conditions which create inefficiencies (Smith, 1979). Rothman (1987:10) states:

As professionals, they have developed expectations of self-control and self-regulation, but they are subject to the same supervisory authority and general set of rules as other white collar workers.

Conversely, Chen and Regan cite Hall (1968) as stating this type of conflict within organizations can often be resolved. Engel found in her study of physicians working in organizations that it is the degree of bureaucratization that

limits professional autonomy. Hall believes that bureaucratic centrality (previously discussed) need not adversely affect work activities if the superior's authority is viewed as legitimate. If the organization can set broad enough limits to allow the social workers to do their work, conflict will not arise. As suggested in Chapter One, limits were too narrow and work activities were affected in the organization of child protection services.

Social work agencies have been classed by Blau and Scott as service organizations; yet Smith (1989) feels clients and staff might view them as instruments of social control. This feeling was expressed by some of the clients who felt being on social assistance made them more visible to child welfare. The control structure for professionals employed within the bureaucratic structure is different from those employed in private practice. The source of discipline within a bureaucracy is not the colleague group but the hierarchy of authority. Formally, performance is controlled by directives received from one's superiors rather than by self-imposed standards and peer-group surveillance. This difference is social control.

Service employees in bureaucratic organizations who are required to serve both the system and clients tend to experience role ambiguity and role conflict. The social workers expressed the feeling that their inability always to provide what they felt was an appropriate service for their

clients left them frustrated and stressed. Case loads were high and demands on their time were constant. Also, financial resources were controlled elsewhere. They sometimes were not sure what their role was or who they should please. Role ambiguity and conflict have been shown to be related to negative employee outcomes including dissatisfaction with the job, frustration, a lack of confidence in the organization and a propensity to leave the firm (Chen and Regan, 1985).

Employees experience role stress when they perceive management as primarily emphasizing system requirements that the employees perceive to be in discord with client needs. A work place negatively affects workers in varying degrees if it constrains autonomy and promotes bureaucratization. As social workers become part of the bureaucracy, they are often unable to use the sophisticated techniques they have been taught in school. These feelings were expressed by many of the social workers. There was little time in the day to provide group sessions or individual counselling and money was not available for groups after hours. Many of the social workers interviewed had certain expectations about their careers when they left school. These involved the types of services they would provide for people. The conflict between their expectations and the reality of working for the Department of Social Services sometimes caused them considerable stress. These findings were similar to those of Arches (1991) and Parkington and Schneider (1979).

Working within this stressful type of situation can have considerable effects on the type of service clients receive. The problems can be caused by a number of factors. These include, high case loads, frustration, high turnover in staff, lack of job satisfaction or feelings of doing a good job. The child protection workers at the Child Abuse Unit and in the various district offices had to deal with all these problems on a day to day basis.

Case Loads

The social workers at the Child Abuse Unit and at the district offices were overburdened with high case loads. As discussed before, some of the workers at the Unit had case loads of over 100 clients. Workers in the various district offices averaged as many as 70 cases. Since the child protection services were underfunded and understaffed, the effectiveness and efficiency with which cases were handled tended to be less than optimal. The social workers were constantly concerned about caseload management and related quality of care. On the one hand, thanks to media exploitation, the public believed that the answer to the problem of child abuse was to report. On the other hand, the overburdened child protection services, although its mandate was to deal with all referrals within 24 hours, had to adopt a "seriousness" criteria to screen out all but the most critical cases until time became available for them. The reality was that all the child protection workers

could manage was initial investigation, preparation of the case for court if necessary, and referral to an outside agency if necessary. Fritz (1989) found a similar situation in her study of screening procedures in child welfare agencies. Mills and Ivery (1991) stated that high numbers of complaints that appeared to have no substance upon initial contact sometimes clogged the system. This could have been a consequence of the inability of workers to conduct careful and adequate investigations. Another concern for the field of child protection was the development and monitoring of interventions once a case had been confirmed. This was very difficult with such high case loads. Chen and Regan (1985) explained that when workers found themselves in these overworked situations they were likely to experience 'role overload.' This occurred as a response to conflicting priorities. The worker had to decide which pressure had to be attended to immediately and which could be put off. Rothman (1987), Bacharach, Bamberger and Conley (1990), and Klenke-Hamel and Mathieu (1990) also found that workers may become anxious and frustrated because of their inability to reconcile all pressures and this contributed to feelings of stress and job dissatisfaction.

One of the tasks that was low on the priority scale for many of the social workers was record keeping. With the high number of cases came the accompanying paperwork. The task of keeping files up to date and recording appropriate statistics was time consuming. Often the social workers were forced to do

this type of work in the evenings or during their lunch break. They had more pressing tasks to attend to during their regular working hours. Often the files were not written up as well as they should have been and this caused some difficulty when trying to reach the sample. Some of the information about clients, such as most recent address or phone number, was not available.

The workers had little time left for personal or family counselling and, as mentioned, there was no funding available to do group work after regular hours. Often, because of limited resources and time, the child protection workers focused all their efforts on the child and overlooked the most important element in a child's life - his or her family. This was expressed by the clients during interviews. They wanted to be treated as a family and this did not always happen. Fritz (1989) stated that part of the problem in dealing with families was the inability of workers to take a holistic approach. To focus totally on the victimized child only served to isolate the child vis-a-vis his or her family.

Fiscal restraints were another source of stress for the workers. They could not always get money or approval to provide the services they thought were necessary for their clients. There were long waiting lists and competition for outside services. It also took a long time to organize services for clients. This could involve many phone calls or letters. Sometimes social workers felt embarrassed to contact

clients because they had not been able to arrange the needed services. Sometimes the clients had not connected with the services they were referred to and their social worker never knew.

Similar to the findings of this study, Mills and Ivery (1991) found that workloads, typically with a number of very difficult cases, were overwhelming, time demands were unreasonable, and there was little free time available in workers' schedules. This increased workers' stress and contributed to staff turnover. Thomas, Fryer, and Miyoshi (1989) found the manifestation of the workers' stress was sometimes cynicism and irritability, attributes which were destructive to the quality of their work and to their relationships with clients. These feelings were expressed by some of the social workers interviewed and by some clients in their opinions about how they had been treated.

The overall task of child protection workers included assessing family situations and implementing plans that ensured the safety and well-being of the children involved. These have been described in detail in Chapter Three. To accomplish these tasks, workers needed to have extensive contact with client services and be available to clients throughout the intervention process. When demands on the workers time were such that they could not accomplish these tasks to their satisfaction they experienced role stress.

The effects that high case loads had on the clients will be discussed here in more detail. Handling a large case load had an effect on whether or not the client actually had any contact with the social worker. Because social workers had such large numbers of cases, some clients whose cases had been transferred to district offices from the Unit had never been contacted. The workers stated they just did not have time. Unless individuals had a crisis and called for help, they might never be contacted. Every day, social workers had new crises to deal with. This meant that clients who should have been receiving continuous follow-up never did. This probably had disastrous consequences for prevention of future abuse. It also meant that the workers at the Unit received no feedback about clients they referred out to the district offices. This made those workers hesitant to refer cases, which then stayed on their already high case loads.

Working with such high case loads also limits experienced staffs' ability to initiate new social workers properly. Orientation periods were short and new workers and students were quickly thrown into the realities of child protection. This was governed by the necessity of having an extra body to share the work load. When I was at the Unit I helped out as much as I could by answering phones, directing clients to various workers and looking after children when necessary. Students and new social workers who came to the unit and district offices stated that they felt very unsure of what

they were doing at the beginning. I accompanied social work students who went out to handle cases when they lacked confidence in their abilities. The inexperience of some workers was obvious to clients, who expressed these concerns during interviews.

It was obvious that the social workers, working with such high case loads, could not be expected to attend to all cases in the best possible way. Stein, Callaghan, Douglas and McGee (1990) found that agencies must adopt realistic caseload standards to ensure that workers have the time to pursue agency goals. They felt that 10 to 20 cases would be an appropriate number. This would provide the social workers with the time to meet all their clients' demands including individual, family and group counselling.

Turnover

Accountability and effectiveness issues have made child protection an unpopular field of specialization. Daniels (1989) found that worker burnout and recruitment and retention problems among child welfare workers were major concerns.

Turnover was important because of the extensiveness of its impact on the organization. It likely produced a growth in administrative staff relative to the productive staff because it involved more administrative work such as recruitment and training of new employees. The rapid turnover in staff suggested that many social workers were dissatisfied with

their jobs. This problem was related to the workers' inability to do what they felt was a good job. Social workers enter jobs with certain expectations of how they can help clients. When the realities of their situation are that they are overworked and overburdened, and these realities conflict with their expectations, they experience frustration and eventually burnout. As Steven Lukes (1986:21-22) put it:

The bias of the system is not sustained simply by a series of individually chosen acts, but also, most importantly, by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions, which may indeed be manifest by individuals inaction.

It sometimes became easier for the social workers to ignore situations which caused them stress. Rothman (1987) described various responses workers develop to deal with role stress. Workers can lobby to reduce their overall workload and workers can avoid the situations that cause the most stress. Workers can practice selective conformity. They can conform to the expectations of one group, e.g. managers, at the expense of clients or they can respond to the clients demands, thus incurring problems with management. Examples of coping with this situation would be: putting off dealing with particularly difficult clients; not contacting clients because it had been too long since the last contact; or accepting the fact that the waiting list for a much needed service is too long, instead of fighting to get it sooner.

Turnover also affected the social workers. It produced less integration, e.g. participation in groups and close

friendships, because it reduced the amount of interaction between the same individuals. There was less support of workers for one another, because individuals did not have time to get involved. Some of the social workers at the district offices expressed feelings of isolation in their jobs. The workers, especially at the district office level, were often unsure of how long they would be in a position. Many of them occupied their present jobs on a temporary basis. Workers cannot be expected to give a job their utmost effort or get seriously involved with clients when they may only be in a position for a few months. Occupying positions for a short period of time lowers job satisfaction. Increased turnover will likely result in less productivity. This fast turnover in staff also did not allow the workers time to develop relationships with their co-workers that may have provided them with the necessary support they needed to cope with their jobs.

This constant turnover in staff had serious effects on the clients as expressed by their comments during interviews. Consistency in follow-up was difficult with this kind of situation in place. Clients expressed concerns about not being able to reach their workers and often being told they were no longer working in that office. They had not been notified that they would be assigned a new worker. Social workers were left with feelings that they had abandoned their clients and

clients felt they had been abandoned. The clients felt this behaviour showed a lack of respect for their feelings.

Results of a study with 30 high risk mothers conducted by Pharis and Levin (1991) emphasized the importance of consistency of social workers during follow-up. They said that, after a period of 1-4 years of intensive involvement, the study showed that, if compromised adults are really to be helped to reawaken their own potential for growth and develop capacities to help their children grow in healthy ways, the concrete services need to be supplemented, mediated, and delivered by people who have firm, consistent and caring emotional relationships with those in need. Having to deal with new social workers meant the client had to tell their stories over again. It meant that any treatment or counselling that was going on was interrupted. Trusting relationships between social worker and client had to be re-established. Also, after this had happened to clients more than once, they became distrustful and hesitant in their attempts to develop a rapport with a new social worker. Sometimes clients became hostile because they had not been contacted or were unable to contact the worker themselves. Schools and other agencies that had referred clients and called back for information became hostile when they were confronted with a different social worker yet again. The new social worker probably was unaware of the services in place for all clients on the case loads they took over. Also, the workers usually became quickly

involved in crisis intervention with new cases and existing cases did not get the required attention.

An increasing supply of social work graduates would not solve the problems of agencies that were unresponsive to workers' attributes and aspirations and clients' needs. The new social workers would quickly run into the same problems that caused their predecessors to burnout and leave their positions. Ewalt (1991) points out that the quality of personnel should be the most important characteristic of human service agencies. Setting standards of competency is important. Too much emphasis can be placed on the education (knowledge) end of the continuum and not enough on actual on the job training. Student social workers can spend too much time on academics and not enough practical experience. A period of close interaction with an experienced worker in a variety of situations is essential to ensure that a new worker knows how to handle every eventuality. Moreover, close supervision is necessary when the workers first start dealing with clients independently. Lack of this type of introduction may lead to what has commonly been referred to as a case of the 'blind leading the blind' which can have severe limitations, even if the leading is done with empathy and care. The implications of this approach can have a negative impact on the client. Also, if negotiations are necessary on behalf of the client, then knowledge of where and to whom to go are part of the expectations (Daniels, 1988). Some clients

expressed concern about how experienced the social workers were. They stated they knew the difference between an experienced and an inexperienced worker and that it affected how they were treated.

The preceding comments make a statement about the problems that exist within the bureaucratic structure, specifically the child protection services. The Child Abuse Unit was set up to help cope with the increased reporting of abuse and to co-ordinate services for victims. In some ways it has been able to circumvent or develop a structure which enables it to cope with some of these systemic problems. Based on client interviews it appears this capability improved the quality of care provided to clients. The next section discusses organizational sub-cultures, why they exist and how a sub-culture of the child welfare system within the Child Abuse Unit was able to overcome some of the problems inherent in the larger structure.

Organizational Sub-Cultures

Workers perform as members of groups, either informal or formal. Informal groups emerge in situations where people work together in the same setting for any length of time. Such informal organizations reinterpret, resist and adapt to work structures and management directives. Workers construct their own culture in the work place, replacing official rules and norms with their own.

Organizational sub-culture refers to the system of shared meanings about how organizational life ought to be conducted. It can express how things really get done at an informal level. This perspective shifts emphasis away from the structure of an organization toward the processes by which employees actually carry out and collectively interpret work activities. Informal relationships and work place norms along with relationships with supervisory personnel must be taken into account if we are to understand the dynamics of work organizations.

Human actors create organizations by their social relationships (Blau and Scott, 1966). Shared experiences, working conditions, or problems can create a bond among workers. This fosters the development of a work sub-culture, discussed by Rothman (1987) and Blau and Scott (1966) as shared perceptions of work, its meaning, and common understanding of appropriate behaviour. Sub-cultural norms defining the level of effort and quality of work have been found in most work groups. These norms were seen as collective responses to the demands of the work situation and acted to help alleviate any major problems that arose. Rothman (1987) suggests these sub-cultures are an adaptation to the social and physical working conditions and frequently promote objectives at variance with those formally espoused. Blau and Scott (1966) and Arches (1991), among others, observe that an informal organization emerges in response to the

opportunities and problems created by the formal social structure. Participation in the informal structure constitutes an important means of resolving the conflicts and contradictions created by the formal structure. Most of these stem from the organization's attempts to control the behaviour of its members. The formation of cliques, codes of conduct and ceremonies help to resolve conflict or generate satisfaction in otherwise alienated or meaningless work lives. Individuals in organizations are reservoirs of untapped resources, who if properly motivated can be creative and hard working.

Arches (1991) states that isolation, fragmentation, and deskilling are the consequences of bureaucratization. Feelings of isolation occur, whatever the size of the setting, when rule-governed and codified behaviour, constraints on scheduling, and separation of services inherent to the bureaucratic structure limit peer consultation and informal interactions. This was the situation in which the workers at the district offices found themselves. Because of the turnover of both supervisors and staff, they did not have the ability to develop an informal network of support. They also experienced isolation as one small section of an office that dealt with numerous other issues. They tried to seek support by consulting with the supervisor and workers at the Unit when they needed advice. This fragmentation of services prevented workers from approaching their tasks holistically, led to an inability to make decisions in certain situations, and

contributed to their frustration and burnout. This enhanced the bureaucracy's control over pace of work, direction, scheduling, and evaluation of work by necessitating hierarchial lines of authority and supervision.

Sub-Cultural Adaptations Within The Child Abuse Unit

The Child Abuse Unit has been discussed in detail in Chapter Three and becomes a focus of analysis in this section. The clients were consistent in their opinions that the social workers from the Child Abuse Unit were not only easier to contact, but also seemed to have more time to offer and were more experienced than the other workers with whom they had contact. Many of the reasons for this success can be found in the informal adaptations successfully created within the Unit.

To support the view of Strauss (1964), expressed in Chapter One, it appears the Unit was able to provide better services to clients because it was separate. The staff was small in number and the setting conducive to constant contact and sharing with the other workers. The workers had been able to develop informal mechanisms among themselves to cope with the stress of their jobs. Each worker had developed a system of prioritizing cases to make sure they dealt with the most serious ones first. Other cases had to be shelved until time became available to deal with them. Workers often had friends or contacts in various referral agencies who could reduce the time spent waiting for services. They shared this information

with their co-workers. They seemed to have a mutual respect for each other's abilities and drew on other worker's experiences in areas in which they might not be as well informed. They also were able to use the supervisor and other workers for a sounding board if they felt frustrated or needed to talk about a difficult situation. They had developed a professional identity that suited their particular roles within the child protection service. Still, they were part of the bureaucratic structure and subject to the frustrations it frequently caused. These frustrations were minimized by being able to discuss them with someone who might offer solutions or suggestions for dealing with 'red tape.'

Consistency and Experience

The social workers at the Child Abuse Unit were also able to deal with the problems caused by turnover and inexperienced workers. The staff had been fairly stable since the Unit opened and all the workers had considerable experience in the area of child abuse. The feelings of isolation described by workers at the district offices were not a problem for the workers at the Unit. The setting they worked in was conducive to sharing of problems and developing relationships. As described in Chapter Three, the Child Abuse Unit occupied a comfortable old house with common areas such as the kitchen and secretary's office that became a meeting place for staff. They had the same group of staff to work with every day. They

were familiar with all the available services and how to access them as quickly as possible. This enabled them to provide a better service to their clients. The clients benefitted from the consistency in staff by having the same worker deal with them from start to finish, particularly if they were involved in a case that went to court. The difficulty arose when the clients were transferred to the district offices. Many of them still tried to stay in touch with their workers at the Child Abuse Unit. This consistency and experience had considerable benefits for the clients in terms of follow-up services. The clients reported that the workers were easy to reach and available when needed. They were more proficient in arranging services for their clients and made an effort to provide counselling themselves if it was possible.

Informal Coping Mechanisms

The Unit operated under a set of rules and regulations but it had to be flexible. In order to get things done the workers sometimes circumvented rules or made up new ones if needed. When deemed necessary, shortcuts were taken to bypass certain procedures. Individual goals sometimes conflicted with organizational ones. Formal rules were in conflict with informal rules or norms of conduct. The workers at the Unit sometimes had to be inventive to get things done for their clients, e.g. they intervened on their behalf with financial

assistance workers or they kept clients on their case loads longer than necessary because if they were not being followed by Child Welfare, services they needed would not be paid for. These measures were necessary to cope with difficult working conditions and to justify to each other that they were actually doing something beneficial for their clients.

Other informal coping mechanisms included the morning coffee meetings described in Chapter Three and the lunch break when phones were forwarded to an answering service. These times were essential for the workers to share problems, informally discuss solutions, or do activities (e.g.crafts) that totally took the focus away from work activities for a period of time. This time enabled them to vent frustrations, seek advise or just escape from the pressures of work for a brief period. This was a period of sub-cultural catharsis. They interacted with others who shared common experiences, problems, and rewards. They accumulated specialized knowledge, developed a common language, and devised informal rules for dealing with problems. As a result, they saw themselves as a group. Although much of the structure was imposed by the bureaucracy, much of it was also shaped by themselves. Rothman (1987) suggests that membership in the group of individuals that formed the sub-culture was not automatic, it was earned. Any new staff member had to prove they could work to the level of competency the other members exhibited to be accepted and become part of the friendship network that is also common in

these types of working relationships. The sub-culture provided a protective and supportive atmosphere and allowed the workers to function more effectively in their jobs.

Supervision

Supervisors can have a tremendous impact on how well social workers perform in their jobs. The presence of a very knowledgeable and supportive supervisor is important. The supervisor at the Unit filled her role well and also provided support and advice for people in the district offices. Service may be provided more effectively if the supervisor can keep the employees' efforts and attitudes focused toward benefitting clients. This kind of client-centered orientation is referred to as an enthusiastic orientation to service (Parkington and Schneider, 1979). The supervisor at the Unit was concerned with the progress of all cases. Moreover, she was available for consultation at any time and usually had good advice to offer.

Some supervisors, especially those who have worked as front-line workers, use the workers as their reference group. They are willing to adapt their role performance to the needs and activities of the workers. Informal work group norms are respected. Pleasant and unpleasant tasks are fairly distributed. Schedules and work assignments are accommodated to workers' preferences. Supervisors can help to minimize system vs. client role dilemmas for service workers. In short,

they can generally allow workers to function autonomously and attempt to protect them from interference by management because the supervisor takes on the role of advocate. This had to be the case at the Child Abuse Unit because workers had to make all requests through their supervisor. Taking the position of advocate is likely to produce high morale but it may also alienate management, which saw the supervisor as its representative. The loss of trust of higher management could put the supervisors' job at risk or lessen their overall influence (Rothman 1987). The supervisor often finds her/himself in a precarious balancing situation and cannot always provide the support necessary for the workers. This precariousness was largely avoided at the Unit.

The supervisor at the Unit had also been a front-line worker and had considerable experience dealing with victims of abuse and their families. She was very careful about distributing cases fairly, sometimes taking into consideration who was better equipped to deal with certain types of cases and assigning them on this basis. She was available to negotiate with higher management when workers were having difficulty getting services for their clients. She also was constantly trying to improve the working conditions for the social workers.

Conclusion

For a number of reasons, the social workers at the Child Abuse Unit were able to develop their own informal organization or sub-culture. This happened because they were housed separately, in a conducive setting, were small in number, had a competent supervisor and were all experienced in the area of child protection. This informal structure did not enable workers to totally overcome the problems with the overall bureaucratic system, but allowed them to form a support network that helped them cope with problems so they could be more effective in providing services to clients.

The next chapter briefly summarizes the research findings. It then offers suggestions for how services to victims of child abuse and their families could be improved and some areas for future research. The suggestions come from social workers, clients, and the research process itself.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Policy and Research Implications

This chapter summarizes the findings of the thesis. It presents suggestions for improvements in services offered by the clients during interviews and then outlines some policy implications for the Department of Social Services that arise from this research. Finally, the chapter discusses a number of important research topics requiring further investigation.

Summary of Findings

The structure of a bureaucratic system limits the type of service social workers can provide to clients in spite of their best intentions. Constraints on how they operate are an inherent part of any large organizational system. Problems described by the clients in Chapter Four arise because of the bureaucratic nature of child protection services. Personnel were faced with high case loads, which caused them to be overworked and overburdened. The result was a high level of role stress and burnout, potentially leading to high staff turnover. These problems in turn had a serious impact on the types of services the clients received. Follow-up services were most adversely effected. The Child Abuse Unit managed to have better success dealing with clients because the social workers at the Unit were able to develop their own organizational sub-culture. Within this sub-culture, social

workers, with the support of their supervisor, were able to develop coping mechanisms that limited staff turnover and associated problems. Where constraints could not be overcome, e.g. high case loads, strategies for addressing problems of competition for scarce services arose. The workers pooled their knowledge by sharing of information. They managed to follow the cases dealing with sexual assault until they were completed, but experienced difficulty transferring cases to the district offices because they were unsure clients would receive the necessary follow-up. They were unable to change the structure of the overall system to lessen case loads or increase numbers of workers or available services. However, they were able to develop their own structure within the larger one, which made it possible for them to provide better co-ordinated services and better follow-up to clients. The basis of this achievement was an informally developed support system. The fact that the Unit was separate, with a small number of workers, and in an appropriate setting allowed the coping mechanisms described in chapter five to develop, enabling the workers to be more effective in the service they provided to clients.

Policy Implications

A number of recommendations for improvement arise from the information in this thesis. They are based on comments from social workers, some worthwhile suggestions from clients as

receivers of the service, and my own observations. The implications are that changes are needed in the structure of child protection services, more services need to be made available to clients, changes need to take place in how the police and courts deal with cases of abuse and that an emphasis should be placed on the conditions of work for social workers. There is no significance in the ordering of these recommendations.

- 1) Organizational changes need to take place within child protection services. Social workers should be assigned realistic case loads. To expect workers to carry case loads between 60 and 100 cases and to expect them to respond to crisis situations every day is impossible. The number suggested as manageable by Shireman et al. (1990) is between 20 and 30 cases.
- 2) To be really effective in helping clients, social workers must have extensive contact with them and their families. The workers must be easy to reach. To accomplish this there should always be someone to take messages which should have to be returned within a set period of time, possibly 24 hours. Social workers should be available to their clients on a regular basis for as long as necessary.
- 3) If a social worker must move from a case load the clients should be notified that their worker is changing and a period of overlap should occur during which the old

- worker helps the new worker become familiar with the clients on the case load. This shows respect for the clients and allows the new social worker a period of adjustment during which any problems can be worked out.
- 4) Social workers should try to deal with clients and their families as much as possible. Problems should be approached in a holistic manner.
 - 5) The social workers should maintain their good relationships with community services, such as the police, courts and Janeway, that have contact with the children. Team conferences should be held about clients with input from several disciplines.
 - 6) Based on concerns expressed by clients, consideration should be given to whether male police officers should interview young female victims. Police officers should not be in uniform when they interview young children.
 - 7) Matters should be dealt with quickly by the courts to lessen the traumatic waiting period for the child. The time between the charge and the court case is too long. The time between the verdict and sentencing is also too long.
 - 8) Counselling should be readily available to the family while waiting to go to court, and for as long as necessary after the court appearance.
 - 9) Children should not have to testify in front of the offender and his/her family.

- 10) Young victims need to feel that courts treat the abuse cases seriously. The children must feel that it is important for them to tell their story and that the person who hurt them will be dealt with accordingly.
- 11) A support system, in the form of group sessions or access to an individual counsellor when necessary, should be set up for the social workers to help them cope with the stress of their jobs. This includes support for coping with sensitive issues as well as support for feeling overburdened. Improved working conditions would increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover, which in itself causes many problems.
- 12) The idea of "temporary" positions needs to be evaluated. It causes problems with service delivery to clients and promotes low job commitment and satisfaction on the part of the workers.
- 13) Social workers should not be constrained by finances when trying to organize appropriate services for their clients. Mechanisms should be put in place to cut through bureaucratic 'red tape' when dealing with victims of child abuse. Social workers should not have to feel embarrassed to contact clients without being able to arrange services for them.
- 14) The scope of duties of the child protection workers should be narrowed to only include actual cases of child abuse or some workers should only deal with certain types

- of cases. It should be clearly defined what types of cases they handle. Custody disputes or truancy referrals, which can take up considerable time, should not be looked after by workers who are also giving time to physical and sexual abuse cases.
- 15) There should be more para-professional services, e.g. homemakers, tutors, or child care workers, available to work with families who need help in those areas, to relieve the burden of the social workers.
 - 16) Social workers should offer clients more support services, e.g. groups for single parents, effective parenting groups, and activities or programmes for children.
 - 17) Social workers should then encourage clients to form support groups among themselves. These could be started by the social workers and continued by the clients. These groups could lessen the time a client would need to be followed closely by the social worker.
 - 18) Clients who were on social assistance and had participated in training or work projects seemed to really enjoy this experience. They were very disappointed when their time period was up and they were laid off to go on unemployment insurance. They felt it did not matter whether they did a good job or not; the end purpose of the project was to get them on unemployment insurance. Most stated that they would really like to work, but that

they could not afford to. They felt that the system encouraged them to stay on social assistance. This type of system sets clients up to fail and is damaging to self esteem. If clients participate in training or work projects, the projects should lead to full time work and they should continue to be provided with the necessary financial support to provide an adequate living for their families.

- 19) Single mothers who are able to complete training programs and obtain jobs, usually for minimum wage, should be provided with subsidized day care and after school programs for their children and continued financial support where necessary, e.g. rent or heat subsidies. These measures enable them to keep their jobs without the added stresses of how to support their families on low salaries.
- 20) Effort should be put into preventative measures for children at risk. These might include ideas proposed by parents such as provision of financial resources to put children in activities that would keep them occupied and help them develop interests. This should be addressed with families on social assistance who seemed to make up most of the abuse cases. Subsidized quality day care and after school services discussed in the previous recommendation could help address these issues.

- 21) There should be a definite period of internship or orientation for new social workers in the child protection area. The new workers should work very closely with senior workers for every case they deal with until they show that they are comfortable and capable of handling situations by themselves.
- 22) Child protection services should be provided with adequate funding to hire enough staff to offer all necessary services to clients instead of always having to look for outside agencies to provide those services. However, where services cannot be provided by the Department of Social Services itself, money should be available to contract services.
- 23) An evaluation component should be part of child protection services. Assessment of services should be done on a continuous basis to see where changes need to be made to improve them.
- 24) The co-ordinating group of child protection services should remain as small as possible on the style of the Child Abuse Unit. This will allow for consistency of service and improved quality of services for all the reasons outlined in the thesis.
- 25) Because the Child Abuse Unit had success it is likely that similar types of Units could function effectively in other areas of the province.

- 26) There needs to be a constantly updated information system that makes it easy to locate clients for follow-up. It is essential to maintain contact with the clients until they are able to cope themselves in order to provide support or to prevent future abuse.

Future Research Considerations

Clients are the most valuable source of information about how effective a service is. Although this study adds to the scarce literature on clients' perceptions, a tremendous gap still exists. If service givers really want to reach out to help these troubled families, more studies should be done that talk to the clients directly to determine what they see as satisfactory interventions and follow-up procedures. Future researchers need to keep in mind the difficulty locating an adequate sample as pointed out by Shireman et al.(1990). A number of the clients moved frequently, did not have telephones, or did not wish to be contacted. Improving data systems, as suggested above, could help when trying to locate clients.

A study similar to this one but with a much larger sample would provide more information about the kinds of services most beneficial to clients. The informal interview is probably still the best method to get information even with a larger sample.

More research needs to be done on the effects of working in the area of child protection on the social workers. This thesis has pointed out that it can be a frustrating and unrewarding job. Social workers themselves have much to offer about how services could be improved to benefit the client and increase their own job satisfaction. These issues should be explored with a larger number of social workers in a variety of different settings. It would be interesting to know if social workers who work in other departments of child welfare, e.g. adoption services or foster care, experience the same difficulties. A comparative study based on information gained through interviews would be most informative.

Research should be carried out to determine if child protection agencies should provide all necessary services to their clients. Is this the best approach or is it just as effective or beneficial to clients to be referred to outside services? Does referring to outside agencies have an effect on consistency and follow-up with the client? This could be accomplished by doing a comparative study of two or more agencies using these different approaches. The clients could provide the main source of information by offering their perceptions of services. The social workers could also be interviewed to determine which type of agency they prefer to work in and why.

Research needs to be done on the multi-disciplinary approach to dealing with child abuse. Social workers cannot

provide all the necessary services to their clients. Research needs to be done to determine the roles of the various other disciplines that work with children, e.g. school counsellors, educational therapists, and medical personnel, to determine how they can best work together to address the appropriate issues. This could be accomplished by interviewing representatives of all the different groups that work with the children for their views on what their role is and how they can most effectively work with other groups.

It is impossible to cover all issues in one study. The problems specific to single mothers who were clients was discussed because its importance became apparent during interviews. The plight of single mothers on social assistance is an important area for further research. A much larger sample needs to be interviewed to see if the problems the mothers described in this study are pervasive. The problems they face dealing with their children, and the consequences, need to be clearly documented so they can be addressed by social policy. A comparative study with a group of single mothers who are not on social assistance could be done to see if they experience similar problems with their children. A study could also be done that addressed the impact on these women of being involved in a work or training program, the sole purpose of which is to have the person qualify for unemployment insurance. A number of women who have been involved in this type of situation could be interviewed. Further research in

this area is of great importance and any changes in social policy it could bring about could be beneficial for the prevention of child abuse.

Although, obviously there is more research that could be done in the area of clients' perceptions of treatment, this thesis has made a contribution to a small body of literature. It has presented valuable information about the problems that exist within the bureaucratic structure of social service departments based on researcher observations and interviews. From this research come a number of important suggestions for policy makers to consider, which could improve the work situation of the social workers and the types of services clients receive and ultimately address the issue of prevention.

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APPENDIX A

CHILD ABUSE REFERRALS

ALL TYPES OF REFERRALS

SOURCES

School

Victim

Police

Medical

Parents

Other Includes

Anonymous

Friends

Social Assistance Workers

Go to

|

Child Abuse Unit

RE-ROUTE CASES

Already being followed
at other offices

CLOSED CASES

*Provided intervention and
treatment to case closure
(mostly sexual assault)*

TRANSFER CASES

Provide intervention
set-up treatment
Transfer to other offices
for long-term follow-up

Appendix B

POPULATION FALLOUT TO FINAL SAMPLE SIZE

	35 Unit C		22 Center office R T		49 West office R T		46 East office R T		18 Kelligrews R T		TOTALS
Total	35	11	11	21	28	23	23	4	14	170	
Refused	4	0	0	5	6	1	3	0	3	22	
File not found	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	5	
Transferred to another office	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	0	0	8	
Moved away	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	1	3	10	
Researcher couldn't contact	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	0	0	6	
Could not be contacted	6	1	2	0	2	1	2	1	4	19	
No contact made	18	4	6	5	11	7	10	2	2	65	
Interviewed	* 8+1	4	2	7	4	6	3	0	1	36	
TOTALS	9	6	6	11	4	9	3	1	1	36	

Total Population 170

C = Closed at Unit

R = Re-routed to other offices

I = Transferred to other offices

* = Mother and Victim Interviewed (8+1)

Appendix C

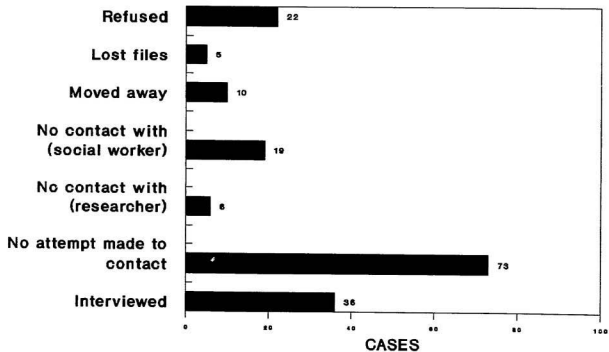
Interview Guidelines

Clients were asked to run through the history of their involvement with Child Welfare. The interview was conducted in an unstructured fashion with the client taking the lead. The following questions were used as a guide for information gathering if necessary.

1. How did you come into contact with the Child Welfare?
2. Had you heard of the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit? If so, how did you hear it and what do you think the purpose of the Unit is?
3. How long were you involved with Child Welfare?
4. How many social workers have you dealt with?
5. Have you been involved with social workers at the district offices as well as workers at the Child Abuse Unit? Was there a difference in how you were treated?
6. What type of intervention/services did you received?
7. Did you feel these interventions were appropriate to help with your problems.
8. Did you feel you could contact your social worker at any time if you needed him or her?
9. Was your social worker easy to reach?
10. Did you have a good relationship with the social worker/workers you were involved with?

11. Would you describe your involvement with Child Welfare as being positive and helpful? Why or why not?
12. Were you involved with other agencies, e.g. police, courts, school counsellors, psychiatrists, other?
Was this involvement helpful, How?
13. Has being involved with child welfare or other agencies had an impact on other areas of your life, if so how?
14. What were the positive things about your contact with Child Welfare, the negative things?
15. If you needed help in the future would you contact the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Unit or a social worker at the district offices?

APPENDIX D POPULATION BREAKDOWN



Appendix E

Data From Client Interviews

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Gender of victim	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	F
Age of victim	12	13	12	9	11	2	12	10	14	2	10	12	14	12	15	6	15
Marital status of parents	Separated	Married		M	S	M	M	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	M	S	M
Person interviewed	Parent/c/claims	Both parents	mother	mother	mother	both parents	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother
Type of case	close	close	close	close	trans	closed	close	close	re- route	transfe- route	transfe- route	close	re- route	re- route	transfe- route	transfe- route	transfe- route
Reason for referral	sexual abuse	beyond parental abuse	sexual abuse	beyond parental abuse	sexual abuse	physical abuse	sexual abuse	sexual abuse	beyond parental abuse	physical abuse	other (prot.)	sexual abuse	physical abuse	beyond parental abuse	beyond parental abuse	beyond physical abuse	physical abuse
Referral source	school	parent	police	parent	police	other	school	police	school	anon	school	school	police	police	police	anon.	school
on social assist.	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
single parent family	mother only	mother only	no	no	mother only	no	no	mother only	mother only	mother only	mother only	no	no	mother only	no	mother only	no
police involvement	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Court involvement	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Gender of victim	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
Age of victim	12	15	11	15	9	15	13	8	11	9	15	9	15	11	7	16	12	13	11
Marital status of parents	Separated	Married	S	M	S	S	S	M	S	S	M	S	M	S	S	S	M	S	S
Person interviewed	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother	mother
Type of case	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral	referral
Reason for referral	beyond parental control	beyond parental control	physical abuse	physical abuse	beyond parental control	beyond parental control	beyond parental control	beyond parental control	sexual abuse	other	sexual abuse	physical abuse	physical abuse	physical abuse	physical abuse	physical abuse	physical abuse	beyond parental control	beyond parental control
Referral source	school	school	police	Anon	parent	friend	school	physician	school	police	social worker	Anon	police	crisis line	Anon	school	school	parent	school
on social assist.	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	work	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Single parent family	mother only	no	mother only	no	mother only	mother only	mother only	no	mother only	mother only	mother only	mother only	no	mother only	mother only	mother only	no	no	no
Police involvement	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
Court involvement	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes

